A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SELECTED CHURCH PLANTING MODELS MEASURED BY CONVERSION GROWTH AND NEW CHURCH STARTS

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APPROVAL SHEET

A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SELECTED CHURCH PLANTING MODELS MEASURED BY CONVERSION GROWTH AND NEW CHURCH STARTS

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Date 5/8/05

To Amy,

who loves me more than I deserve,

and whom I strive to love as much as she deserves,

and to our children,

Samuel, and our yet unborn child,

gifts and heritage from God

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PREFACE

No work of this magnitude is completed without the help of others. Dr. Brad Waggoner, Dean of the School of Leadership and Church Ministry and my supervising professor, has provided both exhortation and encouragement during this process. He has challenged me to think in a critical yet unbiased way throughout my studies. I also wish to acknowledge Dr. Mark Simpson, who has been and continues to be very helpful with regard to style matters, as well as the soundness of the research.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the panel of experts who have guided me thus far. Dr. Dino Senesi has been a dear friend and a strong supporter of my work, who does not hesitate to challenge me concerning the practical implications and applications of my research. Floyd Tidsworth has provided invaluable insight as a church planting veteran of thirty-two years. In addition, Dr. Ed Stetzer has been most helpful in providing his own doctoral research data as a population from which I could draw a sufficient sample to conduct my own research. I also wish to thank the North American Mission Board for giving me access to valuable data and precedent literature, and for taking a vested interest in this research.

During the course of writing, the Lord moved my family and me to a new place of service, and both my former and present areas of ministry have allowed me the freedom to continue pursuit of my research. My colleagues at the Greenville Baptist Association were most helpful and most understanding during this time, as are my

present partners in ministry at the Mid-Maryland Baptist Association. They have understood both my need to be out of the office more often, and the benefit that this research may provide to church planting strategy. Each of my co-workers has shown concern for how I am handling the load placed upon me, and their support has meant much.

Bob Ethridge, Director of Research for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, has also provided crucial guidance in shaping the research, and his suggestions have greatly improved the consistency of my study. Charlie and Retta Draper have been both valuable mentors and dear friends for several years. Their willingness to open their home to me each time I came to Louisville is but a small illustration of their giving spirit, and love for students.

My interest in and love for the church began at an early age, thanks to my parents. God gave me in Earl and Guynelle Rainey a couple who took seriously their responsibility to raise their son in the fear of God. I love the church because my parents taught me to love the church, and to see it as central in the life of anyone who aspires to godly living.

No words could express the gratitude I feel for my wife, Amy, for her support during the completion of this work. Throughout my doctoral studies, our family has made financial and time sacrifices that have cost her as much as they have cost me. Yet I have never received anything but encouragement and support from her. Our son, Samuel, has also made some sacrifices, as this research has often taken time that he could have otherwise spent with his daddy. Thankfully, this will not be the case with our soon-coming second child! We give God the praise for blessing us with another little one

during this time. My entire family has been very supportive, even as time with family has been limited.

God's people at Sanctuary (formerly True Life Church) in Greenville South Carolina have been the inspiration for this research. God allowed me to plant a wonderful church, and the majority of my knowledge about church planting is directly related to the fact that these dear people allowed me to be their pastor for almost four years. I look forward to observing how God uses that congregation, and others, to spark a church planting movement in North America. I also want to thank the church planters, both in South Carolina and Maryland, with whom I have had the honor of working. Their vision and determination in their own fields of service motivated me to complete this research, in the hope that in some small way, it might contribute to the advancement of the God-sized tasks to which they have been called.

Finally, I marvel at the grace of God, that has brought me to this place. I do not deserve the blessings He has so richly poured out on me, but I will remain eternally grateful for having been privileged to hear, and empowered to respond to the Gospel. I pray that this research will in turn facilitate the further proclamation of that most beautiful of messages, and help in bringing more people to give Him the offering of worship that He deserves. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Joel Owens Rainey

Mt. Airy. Maryland

May 1, 2005

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

The following is an exploratory study that seeks to measure the conversion growth and congregational reproduction rates of selected North American church planting models. The study explores the relationship between the model selected, conversion growth rate, the rate of new church starts occurring within each church planting model, and the various geographic, generational, and ethnic contexts in which the church was planted. The desired outcome is a more thorough understanding of which church planting models are more effective in certain contexts at bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Research Problem

In the past fifteen years evangelicals have borne witness to a renewed interest and investment in church planting. For example, in 1990 C. Peter Wagner observed "that the average Christian in the pew and the average pastor give little, if any, thought to planting new churches" (Wagner 1990, 12). Little more than a decade later, Wagner's description of church planting as "the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven" (Wagner 1990, 11) has made large in-roads with a declining evangelical population in North America. This renewed emphasis is evident in the Southern Baptist Convention, which has set a goal of 60,000 new congregations by the year 2020. These observations vindicate the fact that in large measure

"Christians are beginning to realize, once again, the need to place an emphasis on church planting in North America" (Stetzer 2003, 11).

Accompanying this resurgence of interest in church planting is debate concerning what these new churches will look like. Discussion of various church planting models has evolved greatly over the past twenty years. Southern Baptists are but one group who have joined this recent discussion. The Program-Based model, which worked so efficiently for Southern Baptists in the past, continues to be successful in many areas of North America. Still, the increasing geographic, ethnic and generational diversity in North America demands other models of church ministry which are more contextualized to the particular target audience. Oscar Romo well notes that America, "hardly the 'melting pot' described by history texts, has been a land that from its beginning was marked by diversity, not homogeneity" (Romo 1993, 41). As the Anglo majority in North America continues to shrink, Romo's observation of the ecclesiastical consequences of this shift demonstrate the need for alternative models of ministry. Stuart Murray states that future church historians "will regard as the most significant development, not the planting of thousands of churches, but the emergence of new forms of church life and new understandings of how Christian community may be expressed" (Murray 1998, 138). Conversely, Murray observes that the decline of the evangelical church during the decade of the 1980s "was related less to where these churches met than to the kinds of communities they were and the kinds of subculture they represented" (Murray 1998, 137).

The need then, is to ascertain which models of church ministry will best fit the various cultural, geographic, and ethnic contexts that now exist on this continent.

"The *unthinking* replication of existing churches betrays a misunderstanding both of the needs of our society and the potential of church planting" (Murray 1998, 136). One possible way of measuring the effectiveness of each church planting model is the variable of "conversion growth."

Conversion Growth is defined by Peter Wagner as "new believers joining a church for the first time" (Wagner 1990, 36). A more particular way to define this term that reflects this understanding, yet honors more Baptistic traditions, is to say that conversion growth is church growth that comes as a result of individuals coming to faith in Jesus Christ and being subsequently baptized into the fellowship of the church. Wagner asserts that while other types of growth, such as biological growth and transfer growth, should not be totally ignored or avoided, the growth of the church via evangelistic conversions "represents the most dynamic expansion of the Kingdom, and might be considered the most important form of church growth" (Wagner 1990, 36). Previous studies have been conducted that determined effectiveness according to attendance at the primary worship services of a given church. While measuring the growth in attendance in the first years of a young congregation is certainly an important ingredient in observing effectiveness, the observation of attendance alone, when studying various models of ministry, may bias the researcher toward those ecclesiastical models which produce the greatest amount of sheer numerical growth. The following research measures conversion growth as the primary indicator of effectiveness, with the assumption that churches are planted for the primary reason of reaching the unconverted. To utilize conversion growth rather than attendance will also balance the effectiveness of larger churches with those who follow a model conducive to smaller

congregations. Also, examining the rate of new church starts by church planting model helps to ascertain if there is a particular church planting model more conducive to starting new churches.

In the attempt to reach greater numbers of people with the gospel, church planters have employed various church planting models. While each model has certain commonalities with others, there are certain contours that identify one predominant model of ministry in each church. The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has identified six such predominant models, which may reflect the primary methods of church planting in North America. The Program-Based model remains the most common ministry model among Southern Baptists. As the etymology suggests, this model is defined according to the programs which make up its essence. Yet over the past twenty years the successful employment of other models has increased the popularity and subsequent employment of alternative church structures in certain contexts. Chief among those successfully employed church planting models is the Seeker-Targeted Model. This model is defined in terms of its exclusive focus on the "felt needs" of the unchurched. The Purpose-Driven model, while also seeking to address felt needs issues, is more accurately defined by its focus on what it observes as the five biblical purposes of the church. While many congregations seek to implement focus on these biblical purposes, the full employment of the Purpose-Driven paradigm is realized when a church staffs, evangelizes, and programs around those purposes.

While most churches practice holistic ministry to some degree, the Ministry-Based model of Church Planting utilizes "servanthood evangelism" as the core value and practice of congregational life. This model utilizes various kinds of service-

oriented ministries to meet the practical needs of the surrounding community. The Relational Model genuinely keeps the building and development of personal relationships as its primary means of bringing people into the Kingdom. While programs may exist, and the accents of other models may also appear in various forms, "the term is broadly used to define any kind of church that is based on relationships, and is mostly used of smaller churches with loose structures and fluid organizations" (Bergquist 2000, 3). One expression of the relational model which is also examined in the current study, but which has grown into a category of its own is the House-Church, which is defined primarily in terms of its meeting location. The House-Church Model is often used in multi-housing situations, and other contexts where the ownership of church property is, for one reason or another, not feesable. Other contexts in which this model is employed are also explored in the current study.

These six models are representative of the majority models employed in North America, and they are the models examined, and compared with their respective conversion growth and the rate of new church starts in various contexts. Prior research has indicated the advantages and disadvantages of each of the aforementioned models, and has also determined certain correlations between the model employed and the attendance of the congregation. Yet there remains for study the relationship of each of these models to certain contexts to determine which model in which particular context will produce the greatest numbers, both of new converts, and new congregations. Tom Steffen has noted that certain church planting models "are more effective in rural than in urban settings. Some work better among the upper class than among the lower class" (Steffen 1994, 370). As such, the wise Church Planter "will conduct a thorough

investigation of the host people so they can select or design a model that reflects the audience's worldview, as well as its personal philosophy" (Steffen 1994, 368).

It is believed that further research to examine the relationship between church model and mission field will lead to a deeper understanding of how church planters might be more effective in reaching lost people with the gospel through their discipline. If indeed a relationship exists between church planting models, conversion growth and the rate of new church starts in the various contexts in which these congregations are planted, determining the particularities of those correlations will be beneficial to those who seek to plant churches in North America. Such is the ultimate aim of this work.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine if a relationship exists between the conversion growth and the rate of new church starts in churches of various cultural contexts and the church planting model employed. It is believed that by examining sufficient numbers of new churches from each of these models, it can be determined who they will best reach, and in what geographic areas they will most likely succeed.

Delimitations of the Study

In order to focus more particularly on the relationship between the conversion growth and rate of new church starts and the church model employed, it was necessary to limit the scope and focus of this study. Studies have already taken place comparing the effectiveness of certain church planting models that are employed abroad (Bush 1999). While the increased cultural diversity in North America increases the validity of examining models of ministry utilized in other nations, this study is delimited to

churches planted in those areas served by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The focus of this study is on the evangelistic effectiveness of churches in North America in particular. As such, the necessity of this delimitation becomes clear.

Certain doctrinal factors, as well as denominational commitments, could also contribute to this field of study. Nevertheless, this study is interested primarily in how the various church planting models are being employed by Southern Baptists. As such, this study was also delimited to church plants that are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

It is also the desire of this study to focus particularly on new churches that have experienced a degree of success. Those churches that have navigated successfully through their third year of existence by the time of the current study can be considered to have accomplished the goal of establishing a congregation. Conversely, older congregations have most likely passed through certain "life cycles" and consequently have experienced certain dynamic changes that now more closely identify them with established churches (Tidsworth 1990, 93). As it is the desire of this study to focus only on new churches, the study was delimited to those congregations that were planted between the years 1998 and 2001. In short, the focus of the current study was delimited to churches that are between three and seven years old at the time that the research was conducted.

Finally, it must be admitted that the number of church planting "models" that exist most likely exceeds the number included in the current study, and that endless studies could be conducted on the peculiarities of how each congregation applies the

model it chooses. It is also admitted that many congregations employ more than one model, although it is believed that the predominant model employed by a given congregation can be ascertained. As such, it is necessary to delimit the scope of this study to the six church planting models that are used most frequently in North America. These models are heretofore identified as the "Program-Based" model, the "Seeker-Targeted" model, the "Ministry-Based" model, the "Relational" model, the "Purpose-Driven" model, and the "House Church" model.

Research Questions

In studying the relationship between conversion growth rate and church model selection, the following research questions serve as the investigative focus:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the individuals reached by each of the church planting models?
2. What is the relationship between the geographic target area of a church plant and model employment?
3. What is the relationship between the church planting models and generational conversion growth rates?
4. What is the relationship between the church planting models and the responsiveness of various ethnic groups?
5. What is the frequency of new church starts by church planting model?

Terminology

The following terms and definitions are given for the purposes of clarifying their use in the current study:

Boomers. A term used to describe individuals appearing in this study who were born between 1946 and 1964 (Rainer 1997).

Bridgers. A term used to describe individuals appearing in this study who were born between 1977 and 1994 (Rainer 1997).

Builders. A term used to describe individuals appearing in this study who were born prior to 1945 (Rainer 1997).

Busters. A term used to describe individuals appearing in this study who were born between 1965 and 1976 (Rainer 1997).

Church planter. A visionary leader who provides significant direction in the early stages of starting a church (Malphurs 1998, 103).

Church planting model. A precedent organizational paradigm within which the new church forms its philosophy of ministry and executes its mission and vision.

Church planting process. A plan for training, assessing, and deploying church planters as derived by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (Stetzer, 2003).

Congregational reproduction rate. The mean percentage of new churches planted by each church planting model observed in this study.

Conversion growth rate. The percentage of growth a given church experiences as a direct result of individuals coming to faith in Jesus Christ and being subsequently baptized into its fellowship.

Downtown. A geographic designation used in the current study to describe churches who indicated that they were located in medium or large downtown city settings.

Generational conversion growth rate. The percentage of conversion growth occurring within each age category observed in the current study.

Geographic location. This term will be used to define any of ten different "location codes" determined by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Lower class. An indicator used in the current study to describe individuals with a household income of less than $25,000 annually.

Middle class. An indicator used in the current study to describe individuals with a household income of between $25,000 and $75,000 annually.

Neighborhood. A geographic designation used in the current study to describe churches who indicated that they were located in small cities, and medium or large neighborhood settings.

Rural. A geographic designation used in the current study to describe churches who indicated that they were located in open country, village, or small town settings.

Suburb. A geographic designation used in the current study to describe churches who indicated that they were located in medium or large city suburban settings.

Upper class. An indicator used in the current study to describe individuals with a household income of above $75,000 annually.

Procedural Overview

Information in answer to the aforementioned research questions was obtained in two phases. The first phase consisted of gathering previously collected research containing interviews with six hundred church planters (Stetzer 2003), and ascertaining the number of congregations in this population that met the aforementioned research criteria. The first step in this phase was to identify which of the 600 churches in this

population indicated the ministry model they employed, as well as identifying those whose model could be easily ascertainable by contacting the planter or current pastor by telephone. Next, those churches which were planted before 1998, or after 2001, were eliminated from the pool. After this, the churches in the population that did not indicate employing a particular church planting model were contacted by phone or email to determine which model was employed to start the church. The completion of phase one tendered a sample of 59 Purpose-Driven churches, 56 Relational churches, 36 Program-Based churches, 26 Ministry-Based churches, 20 Seeker-Targeted churches, and 3 House churches, for a total of 200 congregations.

The second phase of this research involved sending a survey to each of the churches in the sample. This specialized survey instrument was designed to retrieve specific information from each church planter or current senior pastor. The survey was examined and edited by a panel of experts in the field of church planting, who all contributed invaluable input into the design process. The survey was also field tested in three Baptist Associations in South Carolina. Upon successful field testing, the survey was sent to 200 churches that met the research criteria of the current study. A deadline of October 25, 2004 was set for all surveys to be returned. Follow-up phone calls were made after the initial deadline of October 25 to those who did not respond. Ninety-nine of the 200 congregations invited to participate returned surveys. Approximately 50 % of the congregations representing each church planting model responded, thereby tendering a sufficient sample from which to examine the results.

Information gleaned from this survey instrument included the geographic location of the church according to LifeWay location codes, as well as specific

information on the ethnic and generational makeup of the congregation. Information was also gathered which delineated the numbers of persons within the ethnic and generational categories who were converted as a result of the ministry of the new church. These factors were then used to determine the percentage of individuals in each ethnic and generational group who became a part of the church via conversion growth. Finally, an attempt was made to determine what if any correlations exist between model selection and whether the church reproduced itself by planting a daughter church. It was hoped that the responses given in this research would reveal which models work best in reaching converts in the various contexts that were examined.

Research Assumptions

The past ten years have seen explosive growth and interest in church planting on both practical and academic levels. The implementation of the Nehemiah Project into Southern Baptist seminary curriculum and the rapid deployment of trained church planters have changed the landscape of church planting for the better (Stetzer 2003, 23). Prior research reveals that further study is needed in the area of Church Planting models, especially as North America becomes ever more diverse. This research, while examining the effects of particular models in various contexts, must at the same time presuppose certain truths. One of these assumptions is that although cultural realities demand churches to employ more indigenous outlooks, Scripture alone determines the central essence and function of the church. Regardless of the model selected, there will be certain elements common to every New Testament church.

Paul Heibert states that a truly indigenous church ultimately "will remind us that the kingdom of God is always prophetic and calls all cultures toward God's ideals,

and that citizens of that kingdom are to form living communities that manifest the nature of that kingdom" (Hiebert 1994, 103). In addition, Brock confesses that ultimately, it is not the model which converts the heart, but the Bible. Regardless of the outward appearance of the church "there is one thing in common, it is the Book" (Brock 1994, 87). While the focus of this research examines the paradigmatic ways in which the church manifests itself in various contexts, the assumption that those things that define a church are biblical and theological rather than cultural remains as a presuppositional foundation.

Another assumption related to church planting models and methods provides a corollary to the above observation. It is assumed that while Scripture alone dictates the essence and function of church, the way in which these congregations manifest themselves must be sensitive to cultural realities. This research assumes that a variety of forms of church ministry exist. Hiebert laments that many in the West "see their theological formulations as final" and predicts that "Christianity is in danger of becoming a Western civil religion" (Hiebert 1994, 103). In a nation noted for multicultural diversity, it is assumed that various models and methods of church ministry are being employed in an effort to reach a greater variety of people.

This study also assumes that a diversity of both present and existing models of ministry is a missiological reality. Cultural diversity demands paradigmatic diversity. Stetzer predicts that as a result of rapid cultural transition "not all church plants will look the same" (Stetzer 2003, 136). Murray agrees, stating that as new models of church life emerge, some "may become familiar or even dominant forms of

church life" and "even those which do not endure may pose important questions" (Murray 1998, 138).

This study also takes for granted that the primary reason for starting new churches, as well as new forms of church, is to fulfill the Great Commission by producing converts who become fully functional followers of Jesus Christ. In short, churches are planted primarily so that "conversion growth" can be realized in greater numbers. Malphurs states that while many churches in North America are in a plateaued or declining state, "the number of unchurched people in America is increasing" (Malphurs 1998, 35). The assumption is that the church employs models which most effectively reach lost people "so that we might begin to pursue the unchurched lost people of this generation and those . . . to follow" (Malphurs 1998, 39).

Finally, the validity and accuracy of the research conducted by the North American Mission Board prior to this study is assumed. The Mission Board has identified six models which it considers the predominant models employed in North America. While other models are likely evolving as this research is taking place, it is assumed that those models identified in previous research are still the predominant models employed in a North American context.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

This exploration of precedent literature will focus on concerns related to church planting models and the various contexts in which these models are employed in North America. Elements of the literature to be examined include the biblical and theological foundations of church planting, and the missiological rationale for church planting. Descriptions of each ministry model, and the perceived effectiveness of each of these models as described in the literature will also be examined.

Biblical and Theological Foundations of Church Planting

The review of literature relevant to the biblical and theological foundations of church planting includes the biblical basis for church planting, church planting ecclesiology, and the relationship of church planting to soteriology and conversion growth.

Biblical Basis for Church Planting

Charles Chaney states that while the strategic aspect of church planting is important, the primary mandate for church planting must be Scriptural. "I believe it is important to ask the right questions. I also believe it is important to operate from a strong Biblical base" (Chaney 1991, 22). Ed Stetzer, in his recent work on church planting in a postmodern context, agrees, stating that the biblical basis for planting new churches

begins with the commissionings of Jesus. Stetzer claims that in response to these commands "the earliest church believed they were fulfilling the Great Commission by planting new congregations. The Great Commission calls us to evangelize and congregationalize" (Stetzer 2003, 33).

Stetzer's contention is that the commands of Jesus as He sent out His first disciples were focused not only on bringing peoples to Himself, but also into the fellowship of a local church that is contextualized within the culture one is trying to reach. This includes the discipling of all people groups. "Jesus commanded believers to 'seek and save the lost' among every people and ethnic group" (Stetzer 2003, 33). He then applies this command to the homogenous makeup of North American culture by stating that "we need to ask whether different people groups live on the North American continent" because "'all peoples' means we must work within the culture of those groups we wish to reach" (Stetzer 2003, 34-35).

To "disciple" is in Stetzer's view a task subsequent to conversion that also has its primary locus in the church. "That process is meant to take place in the local church . . . . Baptism is a local church ordinance with local church purposes" (Stetzer 2003, 35). From these observations, Stetzer's belief that the evangelistic commands of Jesus apply to starting churches as well as bringing people to faith in Christ becomes clear.

Chaney also sees this connection between evangelism and the planting of new congregations. Chaney states that the church as the people of God is ultimately, as quoted by W.O. Carver, "The extension of his [Christ's] incarnation. A local church is the manifestation of Christ in its community" (Chaney 1991, 8). The church, therefore, becomes central in the evangelistic enterprise of Jesus. Chaney emphasizes that the

pillars on which church planting is built are biblical pillars, which present the local congregation as "a ministry to God—to exalt Him, to praise and adore Him, to be His heritage among the sons of men" (Chaney 1991, 11).

Chaney cites three primary biblical pillars that serve as the foundation for his philosophy of church planting. The ecclesiological pillar includes a proper understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. As has been previously mentioned, Chaney sees the church as the physical incarnation of Christ's presence in the world. "When churches are planted in the diverse and sometimes antagonistic cultures of mankind, it is the Holy Spirit who makes those human societies into something else—into real manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world" (Chaney 1991, 10).

Chaney also sees an anthropological pillar in the Scriptures related to starting new churches. His own observation about the nature of man brings him to the conclusion that church planters must adapt their message to the cultural conditions of their hearers by meeting them where they are. "Man's sin alienated him from God, from himself, from his neighbor, and even from nature" (Chaney 1991, 14). The purpose of the church as related to this truth is to bridge the gap between the lost world and the gospel (Chaney 1991, 16).

A final pillar that Chaney sees as essential for a proper biblical foundation is a theological pillar. Simply put, this pillar includes a correct understanding of the nature and character of the triune God. Chaney states that the purpose of the Father, the Lordship of the Son, and the present ministry of the Holy Spirit are all essential ingredients to a church planting strategy that is thoroughly biblical. "The missionary task of the Church has its origin in the nature of the Triune God" (Chaney 1991, 19).

Veteran church planter Charles Brock brings the strongest argument in favor of a biblical foundation to church planting when he states that "fresh, Biblical church planting will be made possible only with a corresponding Biblical theology" (Brock 1994, 10). Brock contends that success lies foremost in "dependence on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit" and stresses the need for a strong biblical foundation and calling. "To go forth to plant churches without full confidence in the Word of God is as exciting and fruitful as the going to the forest without an ax . . . the planter's personal confidence is measureable by his faith in the power of the Word" (Brock 1994, 25)

Brock unfolds 1 Thessalonians 1:5 to describe his understanding of the biblical requirements neccesary for a successful church planting effort. The power of the Holy Spirit combined with the message of the Gospel contained in the Scriptures, and applied by the church planter to the lost person is a dynamic "that pervades the church planting experience from beginning to end if it is to succeed" (Brock 1994, 30). C. Peter Wagner also stresses the need for recognizing the spiritual forces spoken of in Scripture that are at work during the planting of a new congregation. He stresses the Scriptural emphasis on prayer and spiritual warfare in planting a church.

> I realize that some of our church traditions are not especially tuned in to spiritual warfare . . . but I do think that in this day and age it is at least prominent enough to mention in a book of this nature. As we plan to plant a church we should be aware that some of Satan's attacks might be aimed directly at us, and that God has equipped us with the neccesary power through the cross of Christ to overcome them. (Wagner 1990, 50-51)

The literature is unanimous in articulating a strong biblical foundation for church planting, anchored in the commands of Jesus to make disciples. Inherent in this command is the biblical mandate to congregationalize. Those who stress the biblical basis for church planting are uniform in their insistence, not only for evangelists, but for

evangelistic churches who act as the sending agencies for those who preach the gospel. Therefore, it is imperative that church planters operate from the assumption that their task is undergirded by a tenacious biblical mandate, and particular biblical instruction. "We would be wrong to send out planters with marketing tools but not the fundamental truths of God's Word and the principles of Scripture from which to work" (Stetzer 2003, 32).

Church Planting Ecclesiology

> The church is at once a very familiar and a very misunderstood topic. It is one of the few aspects of Christian Theology that can be observed. For many persons, it is the first point, and perhaps the only point, where Christianity is encountered. (Erickson 1998, 1036)

The above quote reflects a significant juxtaposition. On the one hand, the church is the beginning point where Christianity is encountered. The literature is uniform in its insistence that the Gospel is preached, taught, and guarded by the church. Thus, the church is, as Erickson suggests, the point at which individuals come into contact with the redeeming God.

On the other hand, understanding the essence of "church" has often caused confusion and misunderstanding. Grudem introduces an explanation of *ekklesia* by defining it in terms of its existence in both universal and local forms. In one sense, Grudem contends that "in the Old Testament . . . . God thought of His people as a 'church,' a people assembled for the purpose of worshipping God" (Grudem 1994, 853). This understanding evolved from the Hebrew word meaning "to gather," to the Greek term first used in the Septuagint to translate this term, and which meant "to summon an assembly" (Grudem 1994, 853). Thus, the term "church" can be understood to mean a local gathering of people to worship God. In another sense, the church "is the community of all true believers for all time. This definition understands the church to be

made of all those who are truly saved" (Grudem 1994, 853). Therefore, the church is identified by the literature as being at one and the same time local, and ubiquitous.

Discussion and debate surrounding the identity of the *ekklesia* is not new. It is a discussion that has caused spirited debate many times through the history of the church. Certainly, there are organizations that identify themselves as the church, but who, in the end, are simply not reflecting the marks of a true, New Testament community. American Catholic theologian Avery Dulles suggests that the term "catholic" can be used in concert with the term "church" in such a way as to differentiate between "true or authentic as contrasted with false or heretical. This polemical use of the term is found in many Church Fathers, especially after AD 150, and is much in use among Greek Orthodox theologians of our own time" (Dulles 1985, 185). Such a distinction between the genuine expression of Christ's body and disingenuous replications of congregational life are necessary if a base definition of "church" is to be discovered.

It was John Calvin who identified the church in such a way as to set its definition by Protestants to the present day. He contended "that the distinguishing marks of the church are the preaching of the Word and the observance of the sacraments. These can never happen without bringing forth fruit and prospering through God's blessing" (McGrath 1997, 270). Calvin went on to state that beyond this base understanding of church, there should be understanding that produces unity, while at the same time carefully examining the message and practices of each local body. He emphasized "not condoning error, no matter how insignificant it may be . . . but I am saying that we should not desert a church on account of some minor disagreement *(dissensiuncula)*, if it upholds

sound doctrine over the essentials of piety, and maintains the use of the sacraments established by the Lord" (McGrath 1997, 271).

Along with the various definitions given throughout history in an attempt to identify the common marks of the church is a uniform and consistent observation by those who study the church that there are certain common elements that make a given group of believers a "church." As the literature will be shown to support, the forms of congregational life that exist in North America are many. However, a scriptural beginning point for speaking of "church" is suggested in the literature, and has already been delineated to a certain degree by the above sources. The essentials of what makes a biblical congregation are further discussed and applied utilizing contemporary sources that follow.

Brock contends that there are certain essentials that must be present when a new church is being planted. Again citing 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Brock stresses four essentials for every church planting campaign which he believes come from this text. First, there is the Holy Spirit, who empowers the entire effort. Second, the evangelist must be present to sow the seed. Brock notes that the "harvest is dying on the vine due to a lack of church planters," and states that an essential ingredient of any New Testament church is the presence of evangelism and evangelists (Brock 1994, 39).

A third essential ingredient is the Bible, which Brock identifies as the "seed " in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. The centrality of the Word in congregational life is a non-negotiable for Brock, who states that the true church, as well as the true church planter "has only one book that is authoritative, and the closer he sticks to that book, the Bible, the greater his success will be" (Brock 1994, 35). Finally, Brock states that lost people,

whom he sees as identified in the Thessalonian correspondence by "soil" must be present to hear the Word and receive it. "There is no substitute for being among the people if we would plant churches" (Brock 1994, 40).

As one who comes from a background that includes extensive experience in cross-cultural church planting, Brock is a true minimalist in the sense that he desires to strip the church of all things superfluous. Nevertheless, Brock is quick to note that "while we must be on guard for excess baggage, we must keep uppermost in our minds the basic essentials." Of Paul's ministry, Brock asserts that "he stayed with the essentials and the Lord blessed his efforts" (Brock 1994, 42). Beyond the essentials previously mentioned, Brock notes that many aspects of church life in the west, while contexualized, are not biblically neccesary in other contexts, and is amazed at "how man-made, extra-biblical tradition can come to the place of being considered sacred" (Brock 1994, 43).

With this in mind, Brock spends a great deal of time dealing with what he believes to be a flawed ecclesiology, and contends that "a perverted and tarnished view of what a church is constitutes one of the greatest hurdles faced by church planters. Unless a biblical view of the church is clear, the road of church planting will be rough and uncertain" (Brock 1994, 49). In dealing with this issue, Brock forwards four truths about the universal church, and applies them to the church in its local expressions. Brock believes that all authentic New Testament churches recognize Jesus Christ as their head, understand Christ as the only source of power, foster oneness and unified cooperation within their membership, and recognize the importance of every member exercising his or her spiritual giftedness for the benefit of the entire body (Brock 1994, 54). In seeking a synthesis of these truths, Brock proposes a succinct definition of church:

> A church is a group of people who have turned from their sins to place full trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. They are then baptized by immersion. These individuals continue to meet on a regular basis as members of the family of God. They will fellowship in prayer, praise, and Bible study for the definite purpose of glorifying Christ and expanding His Kingdom on earth. (Brock 1994, 55)

Chaney adds to this discussion with a pointed description of the Gospel that he believes must be preached. Speaking of the central *kerygma* of the early church, Chaney, in the tradition of New Testament evangelism scholar Michael Green, sees the essential aspects of the Gospel message as centered on the person and work of Christ, and the call to repentance. Chaney states that the message preached by the first century church was simple, positive, practical and pervasive. "The basic message was the same, but the articulation of it depended on the time, the place, and especially the audience addressed" (Chaney 1991, 35). Stetzer concurs, seeking to strip any attempts to enculturate the Gospel while at the same time emphasizing the absolute essentials of the Gospel. On the one hand "the message church planters present should never be anything other than the Word of God" (Stetzer 2003, 37). Yet Stetzer is careful to note that the Gospel itself is a barrier "that includes the stumbling block of the cross" (Stetzer 2003, 37).

These insights into the literature point to the principle that a local church has a simple, yet precise definition. Brock states that in order to plant a church the church planter needs to know both "what he is looking for" and "what it is he is seeking to plant" (Brock 1994, 99). As such, the literature provides helpful guidelines in identifying the elements common to all New Testament churches.

Church Planting and Soteriology

One other issue presented by the literature is a biblical understanding of salvation applied to church planting. The connection between salvation and the church

has been discussed since the earliest periods of the church, and for the most part a close connection between the two has been assumed. Origen went so far as to contend that "outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved *(extra hanc domum, id est extra ecclesiam nemo salvatur)* . . . . The sign of salvation was given through the window because Christ by His incarnation gave us the sight of the light of godhead as it were through a window; that all may attain salvation by that sign who shall be found in the house of her who was once a harlot, being made clean by water and the Holy Spirit, and by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and power forever" (McGrath 1997, 260-61). While the present day Protestant church may take issue with some of Origen's assertions, the shared assumption that soteriology and ecclesiology are inextricably linked is delineated strongly and clearly in the literature. Salvation, it is argued, is learned of, received, and developed only within the context of the body of Christ. Brock therefore, contends that for a new church to function as it should, a proper understanding of God's plan of salvation by the leadership, and entire faith community is essential.

> A fuzzy concept of what God is doing through Christ will leave a planter frustrated and with little motivation. To catch a glimpse of God's eternal purpose and how man fits into it will carry the planter far down the church planting trail. (Brock 1994, 23)

Brock continues by stating that the proper motivation for evangelism in the church planting context "comes from knowing that people without Christ are eternally lost," and that Christ, "provided one way of escape. To by-pass the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and build bridges composed only of religious rituals will surely leave a people hopeless and forever lost" (Brock 1994, 24-25). Coupled with Brock's exclusivist understanding of salvation is his conviction that "the Holy Spirit is the only

one who can adequately open hard hearts to be receptive to the Word of God" (Brock 1994, 26).

Stetzer also stresses the need for a biblical soteriology that focuses on the centrality of Jesus Christ.

> The sending God sent His Son. We join Him in His mission of seeking and saving the lost. Then we become God's sent people to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness in the power of the Holy Spirit both locally and worldwide to all people groups. (Stetzer 2003, 37)

Joining God in this evangelistic mission involves a focus on reaching those who remain outside the faith and outside the church. Just as Jesus came to seek and save the lost, Stetzer states that "the planter must seek the unchurched" (Stetzer 2003, 38) Stetzer sees the seeking of unchurched persons and the starting of new congregations as inseparable, and consequently sees church planting as dependent on a biblical soteriology. He claims that church planting was not unique to the ministry of Paul, but rather permeated the book of Acts and was fueled by the early Christians' understanding of lostness. His conclusion is that Paul's ministry and the patterns in Acts demonstrate "early Christians believed in and practiced church planting as a normal part of their lives" (Stetzer 2003, 47).

Along with the discussion of soteriology is debate concerning what constitutes "conversion" in the local church. Missiologist Paul Hiebert conjectures a fictional tale of "Papayya," an Indian peasant with a strong Hindu upbringing who returns to his village to hear a stranger who has come to share the story of his God. He hears of a God who came in human form in the person of Jesus, and is challenged to bow to this new God. After his conversion, there are many questions about the differences between his new-found faith and the faith of his upbringing. Hiebert then proposes the following question:

> Can Papayya become a Christian after hearing the Gospel only once? Our answer can only be yes. If a person must be educated, have an extensive knowledge of the Bible, or live a good life, the good news is only for a few.
>
> But what essential change takes place when Papayya responds to the Gospel message in simple faith? Certainly he has acquired some new information. He has heard of Christ and his redemptive work on the cross . . . but his knowledge is minimal . . . If we accept him as a brother are we not opening the door for "cheap grace" and a nominal church? (Hiebert 1994, 108)

The questions posed by Hiebert have no easy answer, and certainly no uniform approach by modern churches. Yet Hiebert's observations are generally applied by the literature by suggesting a stronger emphasis on the building of relationships in evangelism, so that new converts are converted to "community" just as they are converted to Christ. Thus, there is a necessity for participation in the community of faith both to come to conversion, and also to grow as an emerging disciple. Most converts and soon-to-be converts "are thinking and living within an interdependent, interactive ethos. They perceive, comprehend, and interact with the world as much as participants as observers" (Sweet 2000, 54). Therefore, conversion not only happens within a local church context, but must be developed within that same context. This means that local churches must cultivate an environment conducive to the production and development of converts to be biblically effective.

Missiological Foundations of Church Planting

William Carey, the "father of the modern missions movement," spoke of effective missions always in the context of a local church. Mark Shaw states that "Carey's concept of mission is one of the greatest breakthroughs in church history" (Shaw 1997, 153). During his own time, Carey believed evangelicalism to be largely indifferent to missions, yet his strong emphasis on national leadership in the local church

sparked a movement of new evangelical churches that, in Shaw's words, made the evangelical church in general "obsessed with missions" (Shaw 1997, 152). Carey and his contemporaries on the mission field were strong advocates of indigenous church planting as a means of bringing the unconverted to faith in Jesus Christ. Carey saw this as the duty of the missionary, "as soon as possible, to advise the native brethren who may be formed into separate churches, to choose their pastors and deacons from amongst their own countrymen . . . it is only by means of native preachers that we can hope for the universal spread of the Gospel throughout this immense continent" (Shaw 1997, 164-65). Thus, the fulfillment of the Great Commission in Carey's mind was wholly dependent on the ability of the evangelical church to start more indigenous congregations that would be effective in reaching their own spheres of influence.

In delineating a more contemporary missiological rationale for church planting, Daniel Sanchez states that from observation of the New Testament one can conclude "that church planting was the primary method the apostles utilized to fulfill the Great Commission" (Sanchez 1998, 467). Sanchez also observes that the same demographic phenomena which characterized the cultural context of the first century are present today. He states that there is a rapid population growth taking place all over the world, resulting in a "worldwide demographic explosion" (Sanchez 1998, 468). He then contrasts this observation with the apparent plateauing of the established church. As churches age, "they tend to concentrate on maintenance activities and lose the evangelistic fervor they had in their initial stages" (Sanchez 1998, 469). New churches, by contrast, "can adapt quicker to the needs of their communities" (Sanchez 1998, 469).

Sanchez also observes that demographic diversity makes the planting of new churches all the more crucial. As diversity in North America continues to rise, "there exists a need for different churches to meet the different tastes and styles of the people" (Sanchez 1998, 469). New churches targeting these diverse populations seem to reach more of those populations than the established church. "Studies completed by several denominations indicate that a great portion of their conversions and baptisms are due to the efforts of the newer churches" (Sanchez 1998, 469).

In light of these observations, Sanchez suggests five principles of church planting strategy. First of all, he states that "established churches must be willing to share their human and financial resources" with new churches. This, he says, is not only a biblical precedent, but a missiological reality (Sanchez 1998, 470) A second principle observed by Sanchez is the principle of targeting specific people groups for evangelization by new congregations. In other words, new churches should be planted and designed with the target people in mind. Third, Sanchez notes the principle of relevance, and the mandate to "communicate the message of salvation in a way which is relevant to the target group" (Sanchez 1998, 471). As support for this observation, Sanchez makes note of the various approaches to Gospel proclamation as they occur in different portions of Acts.

A fourth principle is that of the importance of congregational gathering and retention. In short, the objective of conversion growth is not exhausted in conversions, but also the retention of those who claim allegiance to Jesus Christ in the churches. Of the apostolic strategy in Acts, Sanchez notes that "rather than just 'getting decisions,' they dedicated themselves to the task of congregating and discipling new believers"

(Sanchez 1998, 471). Proof of this principle is observed in the fact that "in A.D. 47 there were no Christian churches in Asia Minor, but by A.D. 57 congregations had been started by Paul and his coworkers in each of the provinces of that region" (Sanchez 1998, 471).

A final principle suggested by Sanchez is that of observing the different kinds of growth necessary for a healthy church. "Paul and his coworkers did not just congregate the believers, but they helped the believers grow in their spiritual lives" (Sanchez 1998, 472). Each of these principles will serve as the outline of discussion as the missiological foundations of church planting are explored.

Churches Planting Churches

Sanchez's claim is that Scripture sets a precedent for congregations being birthed by other congregations. Stetzer concurs with this observation, stating that "it is evident that the first hearers of the Great Commission assumed its fulfillment required multiplying disciples and forming new congregations" (Stetzer 2003, 36). A multiplication of disciples inherently suggests a multiplication of congregations in which those disciples are housed, taught, and equipped for ministry.

Building off the work of John Nevius, Brock also recognizes the centrality of the local church in the extension of new congregations into the world. Brock states that all churches should be able to govern themselves, support themselves, and express themselves in worship and witness (Brock 1994, 94). The end result of this "self" movement is what Brock calls "self-propogation," wherein the church will be involved in the starting of new churches (Brock 1994, 95). Thus, the local church, rather than the denomination or para-church ministry, is the center from which new congregations will be launched to reach a broader segment of the population.

Contextualized Congregations

The literature suggests that the church in the west has progressed slowly with respect to contextualizing worship and evangelism. Missiologist Paul Hiebert states that from 1850 to 1950 "most Protestant missioinaries . . . . rejected the 'pagan' beliefs and practices of the people they served" (Hiebert 1994, 76). For most of this period, the church not only introduced potential converts to the Gospel, but also to the culture of the church in the west. The post-colonial period of missions has witnessed progress in this area, both on International and North American fronts. For example, Charles Chaney speaks of contextualization as a tool to introduce people to the Gospel without placing unnecessary barriers in front of them. He stresses that "it is good to have as few significant cultural or social barriers as possible for the team to cross" (Chaney 1991, 28).

It is this issue of contextualized church that is the theme of Charles Brock's writing. Another way Brock expresses this principle is by referring to the "indigenous" church. Brock contends that every church should be able to relate to the culture that surrounds it. To be successful in this attempt, he suggests that the ministry of the church must be built on the idea of indigenous ministry.

> Indigenous means it is able to grow within the culture where it finds itself, without outside interference or control . . . . Indigenous church planting is sowing the Gospel seed in the native context of thought and things, allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work in His own time and way. (Brock 1994, 89)

The church planting models utilized in North America are a result of applying the principle of contextualization. The contextual approach to church planting is based on the understanding that everything, from the name of a church to its location and worship style will determine who it will reach. As Bob Logan states, "We have structured too many churches for the sake and comfort of those who already are

Christians and are attending them, rather than for the sake of those people who are unchurched" (Logan 1989, 63).

Cultural Relevance

Bob Logan states that a church must possess a philosophy of ministry that is relevant to the culture one is trying to reach. In his own experiences as a church planter he states that "generally people had been turned off not by the message of Christ Himself, but by the way Christ had been presented" (Logan 1989, 60). The "major stumbling blocks" Logan is referring to were primarily the cultural trappings of a church that was in no way connected with its community.

Logan contends that the path to relevancy begins with the understanding of the world and the needs of those the church planter is trying to reach. Hiebert notes that the church planter must have both an understanding of himself, as well as the people he serves on the field, stressing that "cultural baggage can be a major barrier to Gospel communication" (Hiebert 1994, 145). Once the planter begins to understand the culture, Logan suggests what he calls "naïve listening." In other words, investigate the concerns, cares, worries and aspirations of the target population.

> What are their felt needs? What barriers are preventing them from responding to the Gospel? I firmly believe that a leader should not start a church without at least an informal opinion survey, and then a comprehensive demographic survey of the target community. (Logan 1989, 69)

Logan assumes that targeting a particular population is a necessity. He calls the belief that "we can be a church for everybody" a mistake. "No church can serve everybody. Every successful church has a unique angle, something special to offer a particular population segment" (Logan 1989, 71). The principle of cultural relevance

asserts that the church planter should select a particular target group, determine that group's felt needs, and then develop a missionally driven philosophy of ministry that uses the felt needs of the target population as a schematic. According to Logan, "It is this distinctive approach to ministry that will give your church its unique personality . . . it will help you more fully reach the unchurched" (Logan 1989, 75).

Congregationalizing and Retaining the Unchurched

Stetzer notes that the task of evangelism and discipleship "is meant to take place in the local church" (Stetzer 2003, 35). Brock also states that the evangelistic task is not exhausted in bringing people to faith in Christ, but continues as the planter perseveres in building an outpost of the Kingdom of God (Brock 1994, 24-25). These statements are representative of a consensus in the literature that subsequent to conversion and baptism, new converts are to be assimilated into congregations where they can grow and serve. Conversely, Peter Wagner identifies conversions that result in church growth "represent the most dynamic expansion of the Kingdom, and might be considered the most important form of church growth" (Wagner 1990, 36).

Focusing on Various Types of Growth

Sanchez observes that the growth of the church in the book of Acts was characterized not only by an increase in the number of disciples, but also by the depth of discipleship (Sanchez 1998, 472). These various types of growth are observed as the new believer grows in his or her relationship to God, as well as to each other. Hiebert notes that in many non-Western societies, "the central issue in Christianity is not order but right relationships. The Gospel is good news to them because it speaks of *shalom*—of human

dignity, equality, justice, love, peace, and concern for the lost and marginalized" (Hiebert 1994, 144). As individuals grow deeper in their relationships with God and each other, the issues Hiebert mentions receive greater concern and attention by the Christian community.

Oscar Romo observes that America, "hardly the 'melting pot' described by history texts, has been a land that from the beginning was marked by diversity, not homogeneity" (Romo 1992, 41). The literature suggests that missiological principles need to be employed by those who seek to plant churches in North America, with a particular focus on developing plans "for sharing the Gospel contextually" (Romo 1992, 187). The aforementioned principles have to date served as the philosophical guide for many who seek to reach populations of persons that are yet unreached with the Gospel.

Models of Church Planting in North America

The corollary observations of the exploding growth in population and the decline of the church in North America illustrate the waning effects of the church on North American culture (Sanchez 1998, 468-69). As such, the increasing diversity in North America causes many to suggest that new models and forms of church life are a missiological neccesity. For example, Stuart Murray states that "most church plants do not reach different sectors of society or new subcultures, even if they are effective in reaching more members of those sects of society where the church is already quite well-established" (Murray 1998, 161). Murray sees the emergence of new forms of congregational life as at least part of the answer to this dilemma, stating that "cloning more churches of the kind we already have will not do" (Murray 1998, 161).

Presently, there are six predominant models being employed by church

planters in North America. These six models have been identified by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as those most often utilized in North America. Each of these models is examined below, including a brief overview of their history, philosophy, structure, and perceived effectiveness according to the literature

The Program-Based Model

The Program-Based Church was the classic model employed by Southern Baptists, and was the most frequently employed model during the periods of the Convention's greatest growth. Gary Bulley states that "this movement reached its apex in the 1940s and 1950s, and advocated the consolidation of smaller churches into larger ones capable of supporting a full program" (Bulley 2000, 4). Other titles have been given to this model as well, including the "Full Service Church" and the "Five Star Church." The axis of this model is the centrality of certain non-negotiable programs as the essence of church life.

History of the Program-Based model. As Bulley states, "Program-Based churches are believed to be a creation of Arthur Flake from his 1922 book *Building a Standard Sunday School.* It is here where the five star Baptist church movement (Sunday School, Training Union, WMU, Brotherhood and Music Ministry) was first espoused" (Bulley 2000, 4). From the advent of Flake's text until the 1970s, Program-Based churches grew both in popularity and number.

In 1978, Jack Redford introduced the Program-Based church planting model for the first time in print. Redford's assumption was that a church should start with programming, which in his view was central to the church's identity.

> Church programming should start with the Bible and the first convert, moving on to a fully age-graded Sunday School, followed by a worship experience . . . . The Growth of the program and its format should progress in keeping with the number of persons available and the intensity of need. (Redford 1978, 25)

Redford's entire process of planting a church, from forming a missions committee to formal constitution of the new congregation, was governed by a program-based mindset. Every step of the process was begun with and measured by programming. As Redford saw it, "a church's programs are but a reflection of a church's understanding of its mission" (Redford 1978, 93). Programs therefore, were essential in Redford's mind to the success of the mission. Sunday School, along with other "educational arms of the church [including] the training organization, missionary education, and stewardship development . . . . [were] a prime growth tool for churches" (Redford 1978, 151).

Philosophy of Program-Based church planting. Today, many refer to this model as the "traditional" model, although that term may mischaracterize the true focus of this ministry paradigm. The literature describing this model makes no mention of the term "traditional" even though many churches which follow this model may also express themselves through traditional forms of worship. This is not always the case however. Thus the term "traditional" is not to be desired in describing this particular model of ministry, and is not an accurate term in describing the central philosophy of the Program-Based church.

Instead, Bulley states that "evangelism and discipleship are the two heartbeats of program based churches" (Bulley 2000, 5). There is an emphasis in the program-based strategy on doing evangelism and discipleship in efficient and measurable ways. For example, the Sunday School program has been historically viewed within this ministry paradigm as a measurable and effective way to reach unbelievers. Larry Lewis points to the centrality of Sunday School in evangelism when he says that the Sunday School "serves the church not only as an effective program for in depth teaching of the Bible, but becomes the outreach agency for the new congregation" (Lewis 1992, 81).

The essential of planning is also central to the philosophy of the Program-Based congregation. Bulley states that any ministry in the Program-Based church must be highly organized, and it is presupposed that an organization requires an organizational structure. For example "if the youth need attention, a youth program is created; if the church needs to focus on the lost, an outreach program is created" (Bulley 2000, 5).

Contrary to other models that will be examined, the Program-Based structure values organizations as worthy of attention, maintenance, and nurture. In many cases, supporting the programs and organizations, and supporting the Kingdom of God are seen as one and the same. Bulley states that in this structure, "when we fail to respond to God's call to join Him in His ministry through our church, we fail in our mission and let God down" (Bulley 2000, 6) The ministry of the church is the ministry of God, and that includes the programs, which many who operate within this paradigm see as essential in defining the mission and vision of their church.

Another essential aspect of Program-Based philosophy is the mentality that larger churches can perform the tasks of the church in a more effective way. This belief

in the program-based model is coupled with the belief that the best ministry is a professional ministry. The Program-Based church places a high value on professionalism and organization, highly trained clergy, and an emphasis on doing things "decently and in order."

> People respond to quality, and quality is improved with more resources coupled with good strategy. This may sound pragmatic, but it translates into changed lives and people being reached for Christ. (Bulley 2000, 5)

Larger churches with seminary trained professionals on staff are the generally preferred manifestation of church to those who advocate a Program-Based strategy in church planting. Bulley notes that the seminaries of most denominations train ministers in accordance with this structure, so that the average Master of Divinity graduate is more than competent to lead a church of this style.

Another preferred aspect of this model by those who advocate it is an intentional program of missions education in the form of a missions program. Redford places great emphasis on the development of missions programs as this model is being planted.

> As soon as strength allows, a missionary education leader should be designated to be the contact person with the national missionary education offices. When the church develops sufficiently, missionary education organizations for men, women, youth, and children should be established. (Redford 1978, 152)

An organized approach to missions education and missions deployment are important to the Program-Based philosophy. As Bulley notes, "Missions education, missions giving and the starting of new churches is important in the life of a church" (Bulley 2000, 6).

Central characteristics of a Program-Based church. Consensus in the literature points to four central characteristics of a Program-Based ministry. First of all, a congregation following this ministry model consists of programs that are non-negotiable. Much of the reason for this characteristic lies in the past success of the Program-Based model, and the assumption that "if something has worked over the long haul, there is no need to change it" (Bulley 2000, 5). As has already been illustrated in above examples, programs are seen as essential parts of congregational life, and in planting a church of this model, the aim is to establish and develop these programs as soon as it is financially and strategically possible.

One example of this view of programs as non-negotiable is seen in Larry Lewis' understanding of the establishment of Sunday School in the new church. As Lewis sees it, this program fulfills "a need for in-depth Bible study by every member of every family, closely graded so that Bible study will be on the level of every student" (Lewis 1992, 81). When contemplating the absence of such a program, Lewis conjectures a negative outcome.

> If no age-graded Sunday School is provided, where will the children and the youth get specific information for their own age? In most cases, it will not be adequately provided in the home and first and second graders will likely get very little quality Bible teaching simply by listening to the Pastor. (Lewis 1992, 81)

A second characteristic of the Program-Based church planting model is the implementation of team-based leadership, which usually exists in the form of committees or ministry teams who meet to administrate and execute the various aspects of the church's ministry. This is the primary way the Program-Based model secures heavy lay-involvement. Lewis suggests that in the early life of the church, committees should be limited to only as many as are needed to assume responsibility for all the programming.

The number and extent of committees and ministry teams should grow as the new church grows.

> That one council can serve as the missions committee, the evangelism committee, the baptism committee, the Lord's Supper committee, and music committee, etc., without taxing the time and energies of the entire membership with diverse committee assignments. As the church grows and develops, it may be neccesary to add additional committees. (Lewis 1992, 84)

Bulley described the Program-Based church as having an "abundance of . . . . committees" (Bulley 2000, 6). When compared to the other literature, it is observed that this need not always be the case. Yet the committee/ministry team structure is central to lay involvement in this ministry model. As Lewis states regarding this, churches need "as few as possible" but at the same time "as many as necessary" (Lewis 1992, 84).

A third characteristic of the Program-Based model of church planting is that this model emphasizes "campus centered" ministries. There is an admission by those who follow this model that facilities alone will not grow a church. Lewis states unequivocally that "empty church buildings throughout the land attest that buildings alone will not reach people. People, not buildings, reach people" (Lewis 1992, 62).

Nevertheless, he also states that a central, active location "can be a tremendous tool for the establishment of a permanent, functioning body of Christ." This allows the church to "offer a full program of activities, not only Sunday Bible study, training and worship, but weekday activities as well. The church becomes a precious, spiritual home for its congregation" (Lewis 1992, 63). Bulley's comments on the Program-Based model echo this same sentiment with regard to the facilities. He states that in this model "there does exist a preference . . . . to keep ministries tied to the central physical location" (Bulley 2000, 16). Redford's work also stresses the need for a central location, and cites

the establishment of the "mission chapel" as something to accomplish early in the church planting process. Lewis' budget worksheet, which acts as a schematic tool for those seeking to plant a program-based church, also assumes a campus-centered structure, as the building budget is the largest of the line items (Lewis 1992, 156).

A final characteristic common to all Program-Based models is an "institutional" perception of church. Within this ministry model, the church is seen almost exclusively as a modern institution. Lewis reveals this view when he admits that "we have often thought of the church and the church building as inseparable" (Lewis 1992, 63). Redford also reveals this view of the church by this model when he states that the constituting of a church should not take place until "everyone concerned is convinced the group is spiritually mature and sufficiently stable to govern themselves" (Redford 1978, 97). That point, according to Redford, is defined solely in terms of the state of the church as an institution, when "the membership of the chapel has become numerically and financially adequate to perform the ministry needed in the community." Again assuming that larger churches with institutionalized structures will perform more efficiently, Redford notes that "many mission congregations constitute with too few members to be effective in reaching and witnessing to their field" (Redford 1978, 98).

Perceived effectiveness of the Program-Based model. Casual observation found in the literature suggests that Program-Based church plants are highly resilient, and thus able to survive and even thrive in a variety of settings. Yet the Program-Based model is assumed primarily to reach people who are accustomed to this institutionalized view of church life. Bulley cites as a more particular demographic those who are "conservative, stable, and middle class" (Bulley 2000, 12).

Among the middle class who are perceived to be reached by this model are family units. Bulley notes that "busy families can be attracted to a church that serves the whole family, offers community and demands little in return" (Bulley 2000, 3). Historically, the Program-Based church is an invention of the Builder generation, or those born prior to 1945. As such, the literature perceives that this model will be most appealing to the builders, "because they best express the institutional and stability values of builders" (Bulley 2000, 3).

One of the reasons for the popularity of this model is the perceived ease with which it can be implemented. Precedents for this ministry model are many, and exist throughout North America. As such, a great amount of information and training can be obtained on how to plant and develop a church of this style. Resources are readily available for the planter who desires to start a church that follows this model.

> Program based churches are not only easy for leadership to grasp, but easy for laypeople as well. Every program worthy of implementing will contain a guide, a series of steps, and helps to enable anyone with the maturity and gifts called for to implement the program. Planters starting program based churches need not reinvent the wheel. (Bulley 2000, 9)

Another reason this model is so pervasive is that it is well established in the denominations. Religious denominations lean naturally toward this model because of the way in which it mirrors their own structure. As such, denominations "will be an advocate for this type of planting" (Bulley 2000, 9).

In spite of the advantages of this model, Tolar and Nelson warn that a program-based church can become centered on itself.

> A majority of their [program-based churches] programs and ministries are structured toward maintaining their present churched attendees. They are not answering the questions that the unchurched are asking. They are not aware of the

> invisible barriers that keep so many people from walking through the doors once, let alone twice. (Tolar and Nelson 1999, 171)

There is also a perception that the Program-Based model will not work as effectively in certain areas. For example, because highly urban populations tend to be multicultural, socially liberal and single, the perception is that the Program-Based church may not be as effective at reaching people in these areas. "None of these constituents are the strength of program-based churches" (Bulley 2000, 13). Postmodern contexts and people are also perceived to be difficult to reach with this model.

> The post modern has a *rage against the machine* mentality, and thus desires something more organic, personal, and empowering. Many postmoderns view the program-based church as attempting to plug them into a religious machine and they resist it. (Bulley 2000, 13)

One other area in which the Program-Based church is perceived to be less effective is a low population area. Bulley contends that "many churches under 100 in attendance attempt to be program based, but quality and variety suffer because workers and resources are extremely limited" (Bulley 2000, 13). The assertion of the literature is that these types of congregations thrive best in suburban areas and "county seat" locations among conservative, middle class families who share an "institutional" campus-centered vision of church.

The Seeker-Based Model

While it does not share the rich history of the Program-Based model, the Seeker-Based model has enjoyed great success in many areas throughout North America. This church planting paradigm has its roots in Chicago, Illinois, beginning with the Willow Creek Community Church in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The driving force behind this model is the desire to make an exclusive reach to those who are

"unchurched," and "turn the irreligious into Christ-followers" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 3). Other titles that have been given to this model include "Seeker-Targeted," and "Outreach-Oriented."

Historical background of the seeker-based model. The Seeker-Based movement began in the mind of Bill Hybels in the early 1970s. This paradigm was birthed out of a youth ministry called "Son City" located within South Park Church in a Chicago suburb. Hybels was invited by Dave Hulmbo, Minister of Music at South Park Church, to come to the church and serve as a youth volunteer. Eventually, Hybels left his place of employment at the Awana Youth Association's national headquarters and came to South Park to fill the gap left by their departing youth minister.

During all of this, Hybels "decided to teach a five-week series on evangelism to the core group of young teenagers, then challenge them to bring their unchurched friends to a special outreach event that he and Dave would develop" (Hybels and Hybels 1995, 29). The youth responded with willingness to reach out to their lost friends, provided the youth leadership agree to "de-church" the youth meetings. From the musical style to the teaching style, the group totally redesigned the worship experience as something they believed would fit the tastes of their unchurched friends. On a May night in 1974, the service was held with over 600 in attendance. Half of that group was converted to Christ, and according to the testimony of Lynne Hybels, the Seeker-Based strategy was born.

> It all came together for him [Bill Hybels]. The Holy Spirit was giving him a message he would never forget. It was a question, actually, and it went something like this: *Where would those kids who received Christ tonight be if there hadn't been a service designed just for them, a safe place where they could come week after week and hear the dangerous, life-transforming message of Christ?* I look

> back in awe of that moment when Bill committed himself to the concept of what we now call the "seeker service." I thank God for protecting that moment. (Hybels and Hybels 1995, 40-41)

The youth ministry began to take off, and along with the positive issue of growth came tensions between the youth department and other departments at the church. Eventually, the ministry known as "Son City" was to become its own entity. Largely through the influence of Gillbert Bilezikian of Trinity College, a new vision was revealed for a different kind of church. Hybels resolved to begin a new congregation. According to his own testimony, "every other goal I had considered seemed to pale in comparison to the thought of establishing the Kingdom of God here on earth" (Hybels and Hybels 1995, 48). Willow Creek Community Church was born in 1975, and since that time has grown from an original core of 100 members to an average weekly attendance in excess of 15,000. Since this time "the seeker church movement has been gaining momentum" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 3).

Seeker-Based philosophy. What drives the Seeker-Based model is an attempt to reach unchurched people. George Hunter lays out the philosophy of this paradigm when he states that "we all know that many churches are growing but they may not be reaching, or even targeting, secular people" (Hunter 1996, 25). The values of the Seeker-Based model reflect the passions of those who would seek to plant such a church. They believe strongly in the truth that lost people matter to God. So strong is this belief that the Seeker-Based church is planted with the lost person at the center.

> The seeker-targeted church can be distinguished by its focus on doing church exclusively for the unchurched/unsaved. Seeker targeted churches usually have a large group gathering designed exclusively for the unchurched/unsaved. While this large group gathering looks and feels very much like a worship service; it is not. It

> is in fact a very well put together production or presentation of some basic Christian truth. (McCrary and Putman 2000, 4)

This attempt to reach the unchurched/unsaved seeks to remove any unnecessary barriers between the "seeker" and the Gospel. In the environment of the Seeker-Based church "church members place a high priority on the needs of the seeker and make every effort to remove any and every barrier that might impede the seeking process" (White 1997, 46). While the ultimate goal of the Seeker-Based church is to bring individuals to Christ, "the key is to begin where people are and then to make the message as clear and compelling as possible" (White 1997, 47).

In describing the philosophy of the Seeker-Based model, Hunter contends that the passions that guide this church planting paradigm are grounded in history. He points out that "Gospel Services" or "evangelistic services" were conducted "for over 150 years" (Hunter 1996, 69). Therefore, the focus of the Seeker-Based model is nothing new, but rather is simply taking on a new cultural understanding.

In order for this model to be effective, those involved in its planting need to be keenly aware of the minds and hearts of the seekers. Hunter states that the unchurched, to a large degree, "resist becoming Christians because they 'don't want to become like church people'" (Hunter 1996, 59). Any barriers, including "church language" barriers, are removed, because the unchurched "are alienated when they overhear church people using an 'alien language' or a 'pious jargon'" (Hunter 1996, 59).

Because the Seeker-Based model seeks to remove "church" barriers, McCrary and Putman note that "the degree in which a church is seeker targeted is the degree in which it becomes believer hostile" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 4). This does not mean that Seeker-Based churches compromise the message of the Gospel. Yet there is a sense

in which many who have been part of Gospel community for some time feel uncomfortable in a seeker service. Yet the literature makes note of the fact that the centrality of the Bible is a crucial part of the values of the Seeker-Based model.

> Seeker churches believe that the Bible is true and better yet, relevant for today. They believe that the inspired scriptures give the seeker truth and application. A phrase that one will hear most seeker-based churches echo is that their "teaching is relevant for today." (McCrary and Putman 2000, 8)

Another core value of the Seeker-Based philosophy is that of excellence. The literature suggests that seeker-driven ministry is for the most part extremely costly. This is due in large part to the commitment of those utilizing this model to a high standard of excellence. As McCrary and Putman note:

> To do things right requires resources. Many churches are not willing to pay this price. They [seeker-based church planters] base their findings on how unchurched people view many existing churches. They feel that many of the existing churches are in this time warp and therefore repel seekers rather than attract them. They believe that excellence will attract the unchurched/unsaved person. (McCrary and Putman 2000, 9)

Authenticity is another important philosophical value of the Seeker-Based church plant. The literature suggests that because this model was being developed during the fall of many prominent televangelists, there is an almost reactionary approach to living above reproach.

> You will hear the word "transparent" quite often. The leaders tend to talk about their real life struggles instead of trying to hide behind a title or pulpit. They believe that seekers want the truth and do not buy into the idea that pastors and Christians live in their own sterile world where they do not fall. In fact, we know the opposite to be true. Christian leaders of all sorts have fallen. They desire to live a life above reproach, but do not want to give a false notion that they are not real and that they do not struggle in every-day life and temptations. (McCrary and Putman 2000, 10)

One final value found in a Seeker-Based philosophy may on the surface seem contradictory to the model as a whole. The seeker-based model values high expectations.

While those who seek truth are approached "on their own ground," those who do claim allegiance to Jesus Christ are in the Seeker-Based model held to high moral and ethical standards.

> In one way this model may propel consumerism, but it does not for the member. They have a high expectation that each participating member should give their all to the cause of Christ and His church. They believe that service is a part of their worship (Romans 12). They teach and model that the core should give their life to this mission, and should learn how to feed themselves and not rely on the Sunday morning service to feed them . . . . they do not believe that the church should be focused on meeting the member's needs, but meeting the needs of the seeker. (McCrary and Putman 2000, 11).

Seeker-Based structure. Because its essence is not that of programs, the Seeker-Based church can take on many different forms. There are, however, certain elements common to every Seeker-Based church that can help to identify this model of church planting ministry. First of all, the Seeker-Based model employs the main worship service exclusively as an evangelistic tool. James Emery White describes this atmosphere.

> Seeker service contours include anonymity, time to decide, "user friendly" messages, the encouragement of spiritual questions, and casual dress. In essence, a safe place is created for seekers to hear and explore a very unsafe message. (White 1997, 51).

Most of the time, creating this type of atmosphere means dichotomizing between the "seeker service" and the "believers service." Hybels believes for example that "you cannot, maximally, in the same service, meet the needs of both Christians and non-Christians" (Hunter 1996, 72). Therefore, elements of worship that are believed to be reserved for believers, such as the Lord's Supper, are sequestered from the primary service designed for seekers.

Another element common to most Seeker-Based models is that they start by mobilizing a large crowd. This model "begins with a seeker service, therefore it elevates the mission of the church and focuses it's people resources on bringing their lost friends to church from day one" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 16). Relational and "contagious" evangelism is the foundational core value of each and every Seeker-Based church.

Beyond these common elements, any number of variations can exist in this model. The Seeker-Based model is understood by the literature to have the ability to contextualize to any setting. As McCrary and Putman explain, "A seeker church in Birmingham will look very different from a seeker church in Seattle. Seeker churches adapt to the seekers around them" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 17).

Perceived effectiveness of the Seeker-Based model. McCrary and Putman observe that although the manifestations of this model will differ in different regions of North America, "a planter wishing to start this type of church could contextualize it to fit his area" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 18). Yet casual observation has revealed certain contexts wherein the Seeker-Based model might be most effective. For example, largely due to the early emphasis on large crowds, and the utilization of "crowd to core" evangelism, "there must be a large pool of people who are disenfranchised from organized religion that can be targeted" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 18). In addition, the typical demographic that is reached with this model includes those in the upper-middle class professional category who are of the anglo race and live in suburbia (McCrary and Putman 2000, 18). Conclusively, the literature suggests that "the seeker approach may be effective in some areas with some people, but it is not for everyone in every area" (McCrary and Putman 2000, 18).

The Purpose-Driven Model

A modified form of the Seeker-Based model exists in the Purpose-Driven church paradigm. Since the publication of *The Purpose-Driven Church* in 1995, this ministry model has soared in popularity among Southern Baptists, and principles from the book have been utilized in churches employing other models. Yet the Purpose-Driven model has its own category. Chiefly, this model is defined as a church which implements organization around what Rick Warren identifies as the five biblical purposes of the church (worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism).

History of the Purpose-Driven model. In 1979, Rick Warren moved from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, to the Saddleback Valley in Orange County, California. Less than six months after his move, over 200 people attended the first service of the Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Vejo. Since its first service in 1979, Saddleback has grown to have more than 18,000 in attendance every Sunday. Over twenty daughter churches have been planted, and missionaries have been sent all over the world. Purpose-Driven church conferences have been held since 1990, helping churches employing this as well as other ministry models to be more effective in fulfilling the Great Commission (Warren 1995, 25-46).

Purpose-driven structure and philosophy. Warren cites two necessary ingredients in order to produce a church driven by purpose. First, there must be a proper perspective, in that "you must begin to look at everything your church does through the lens of five New Testament purposes and see how God intends for the church to balance all five purposes" (Warren 1995, 80). Second, there must be a process "for fulfilling the

purposes of the church" (Warren 1995, 80). In other words, the Purpose-Driven church model is realized when a church staffs, budgets and structures everything around the five purposes.

The philosophy of the Purpose-Driven model is clear. "The starting point for every church should be the question 'Why do we exist?'" (Warren 1995, 81). Warren contends that this focus builds morale among staff and laity, reduces frustration, and allows greater concentration and cooperation among the people of the church. The purpose statement of Saddleback Church reflects this ministry paradigm:

> To bring people to Jesus and membership in His family, develop them to Christlike maturity, and equip them for their ministry in the church and life mission in the world, in order to magnify God's name. (Warren 1995, 107)

Most churches that employ the Purpose-Driven model are also sensitive to the needs of "seekers." Yet what sets this model apart from its seeker-driven cousin is that there is no dichotomy between the "seeker" service and the "believers" service.

> This service is designed to try and reach unchurched lost people and nourish believers at the same time in one service. Both the worship and the sermon attempt to be "seeker friendly" and to appeal to both groups. For example, the music is usually upbeat and contemporary, while the sermon pursues needs and issues from the Bible in a way that is relevant to both groups. (Malphurs 1998, 196).

Malphurs trims down the definition of the Purpose-Driven model into two primary categories: "the pursuit of lost people," and "the edification of saved people" (Malphurs 1998, 121-27). Nevertheless, the purpose-driven model has an intense focus on the biblical purposes of the church that result in both evangelism and discipleship.

Perceived effectiveness of the Purpose-Driven model. In discussing focus group identification, Stetzer calls his reader's attention to Saddleback's "Sam." "Saddleback Sam" is the well-educated target of Saddleback church. He likes where he

works and lives, prioritizes fitness, and is skeptical of organized religious expression. Although the target group of a given Purpose-Driven model will differ from place to place, Stetzer notes that "Saddleback's process for profiling (not their profile *per se*) provides a model for church planters in North America" (Stetzer 2003, 178).

The particular focus on purpose is appealing to a wide demographic, but the literature suggests that it is most appealing to "baby boomers" who have for years relied on material wealth and professional accomplishment for fulfillment. "They sense people are losing direction and purpose as a society due to the extreme emphasis on self. Boomers are a perfect reflection of that concern" (Barna 2001, 59).

Other observations in the literature suggest that the Purpose-Driven model may not be the ideal choice when attempting to reach a younger, postmodern generation. Stetzer claims that "postmoderns want a spirituality that is authentic above all else. A true postmodern spirituality does not have to be perfect, but it must be genuinely and humbly held." With this in mind, he further states that "many 'seeker' services have yet to recognize that seekers may wish to be more engaged than just as spectators" (Stetzer 2003, 139).

Ministry-Based Model

This method of church planting is described by Ken Weathersby as "the planting of a healthy church through meeting real, felt, anticipatory needs" (Weathersby 2000, 3). Two predominant examples of this type of ministry in North America are Steve Sjogren's Vineyard Church in Cinncinatti, Ohio, and Charles Roesel's First Baptist Church of Leesburg, Florida.

Although it was not a church plant, Roesel's ministry is portrayed by the literature as a shining example of this type of church model. Beginning in 1980, the church shifted its focus toward a Ministry-Based paradigm. Donald Atkinson says the following concerning how this model is "fleshed out" in Leesburg.

> Ministry evangelism has brought many changes to the church. Church properties now include the original buildings plus 19 contigious properties and buildings.. The church's income has increased from $180,000 in 1979 to more than $2,000,000 annually. Most importantly, the church regularly baptizes more than 300 persons each year. A miracle has taken place in Leesburg Florida. The members of First Baptist Church call the miracle ministry evangelism. (Roesel 1995, 10)

Steve Sjogren's Vineyard church is an example of a church plant done through the Ministry-Based model. Sjogren began Vineyard by utilizing what he calls "servant evangelism."

> Servant evangelism is a way of sharing the good news of Christ with others in your community through simple, practical means that can be done by people in everyday situations—from washing cars to giving away soft drinks to cleaning up a neighbor's yard. (Sjogren 2003, 14)

Ministry-Based philosophy. Sjogren claims that "in our skeptical age, it is absolutely essential to *show* God's love before we speak about it. People might remember the words you say for a few hours, but they are likely to remember your acts of generosity for months, years, and in many cases, the rest of their lives" (Sjogren 2004, 91). The underlying philosophy of this ministry model is based in the drive for the church to become the penetrating, illuminating influence that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 5:13-16. To foster this drive, the Ministry-Based model of church planting employs a "go and do" rather than a "come and see" approach to reaching out to the lost

and unchurched. Sjogren again points to how this ministry model makes "belonging" synonymous with "doing".

> Too often being part of a group has to do with affirming a set of doctrines or values. It's only natural—it's the way the system of church in America has been established . . . . You must communicate that the aim of your church is to produce disciples who do stuff, not disciples who only know stuff. (Sjogren 2003, 27)

Ministry-Based structure. Implementation of this church model is as diverse as the number of communities in which it is often employed. Ray Bakke states that the people of any given congregation can utilize their skills and talents for the church and serve the Kingdom of God with the skills they use everyday in their place of employment. Particularly in a low budget, urban area, Bakke suggests that "Pastors. . .should build networks of peer professionals in law, geriatrics, medicine, education, and other areas" (Bakke 1987, 123). These "established caring systems" serve as the structure of the ministry-based model. Ken Weathersby stresses that in this model the key is to "provide ministry opportunities for lay leaders to be at the hub of ministry" (Weathersby 2000, 7).

> Many [lay] leaders are not comfortable in filling positions in the church building but will feel at home working with their hands, using their vocational abilities, and utilizing other skills as ministry. The church planter should not be afraid to ask sister churches to provide lay leaders to help with the assessment of the community. In fact, this process will stimulate the lay people to go back to their churches and ask "Why are we not doing this assessment in our communities?" (Weathersby 2000, 7-8)

Perceived effectiveness of the Ministry-Based model. Weathersby cites several slow yet steady changes occurring in the North American demographic which he believes the Ministry-Based model of church planting will minister to most effectively. First of all, he points to the "graying of America," and predicts that with the aging of the baby

boomers, new holistic needs will become issues, such as housing, health care, and retirement. He asserts that the church will be confronted with these issues soon.

Second, Weathersby calls his reader's attention to the increasing fragmentation of the American family as something that will have a strong effect on the church of the future.

> It has been said that strong churches make strong families. To the contrary, it is strong families that make strong churches. There are many needs the new church will need to address relating to the family. More women are in the workplace today, creating opportunities for child care and family ministry. The changes taking place in Congress regarding welfare reform will create many opportunities for the new church to minister to the needs of families. (Weathersby 2000, 10-11)

Other issues, such as the changing ethnic mix in North America, the rise of the "black urbanite" as a large part of the urban demographic, and the mass migration of millions of Americans to the southern states, suggest that there are opportunities for the successful employment of the Ministry-Based model in many places in North America. Craig Ellison speaks of the way in which Pentecostal churches have adapted their congregations to a more Ministry-Based approach in urban areas.

> I don't think it's an accident that around the world, the most rapidly growing churches in large cities are Pentecostal. It has little to do with glossolalia, in my opinion. Rather, they've caught the heartbeat of urban dwellers and have shaped their ministry to the masses. (Conn 1997, 99)

Overall, the literature suggests that this "incarnational evangelism" (Roesel 1995, 10), as it is called, will be most effective in highly urban areas among the lower class, and ethnic groups. As Weathersby observes:

> It is estimated according to Don Mabry that most central cities in the United States have 30% to 40% of households living in poverty. It is estimated that 95% of more of families living in poverty do not attend church. In the Southern states, 25% to 35% of all families live at or near the poverty level. Many families living in poverty have a non-reader as the head of the household. There is a Third World country located at the heart of America, the Mississippi River Valley. It will take

special, smaller, new churches to reach families living in poverty. (Weathersby 2000, 13).

The difficulties in planting a church of this model are primarily related to the primary resources of time and money. Weathersby states that the Ministry-Based church will take longer to become self-supporting simply due to the affluence level of the primary target group. Problems and hardships are faced on a daily basis, and the expense of providing services is oftentimes high (Weathersby 2000, 17). At the same time, "community organizations are willing to assist in the ministry . . . . The planter starting a Ministry-Based church can find many partners to enhance his church plant" (Weathersby 2000, 16). This reality puts the Ministry-Based model in the unique position of receiving funding from sources perhaps not available to other models.

Relational-Based Model

Nomenclature can often be misleading. Such could be the case with this particular form of congregational life, as all church models employ a relational aspect in their growth strategy. A more pointed definition of this model is given by Linda Bergquist, who describes this term as "used mostly of smaller churches with loose structures and fluid organizations" (Bergquist 2000, 3). In other words, the Relational church has programs just as the Program-Based church has relationships. What sets this particular model apart is the centrality of relational evangelism, and the emphasis on mutual care for and accountability to one another.

Bergquist lists three types of Relational churches. These include House churches, which are discussed below as a separate model, cell networks, and "intentional Christian communities," or relational networks of people who hold each other

accountable make up the three predominant expressions of this model. Each of these congregational expressions promote the relational aspect of the church as the most adhesive quality.

History of the Relational model. Bergquist notes that Relational models are the types of churches described in the book of Acts. In the post-Constantinian age, the institutionalized church eclipsed this more primitive model, but pockets of this model continued to exist throughout the history of the church. Expressions of relational values are observed in the Anabaptist movement in Europe, and the Pioneer Baptist movement of nineteenth- century North America. Bergquist points to the post-reformation Anabaptists as the strongest advocates of this approach to church structure.

> The Reformation addressed theological and ecclesiological shifts needed in the Church, but some of the institutional realities which most needed reform were never addressed, and the post Reformation Church became almost as institutionalized as what it left behind. "Sola Scriptura" was needed not only as a cry against the traditions of the church, but also it's structures. If realized, a new kind of reformation could assist the Church in being more flexible, and missional in contextualizing it's message. (Bergquist 2000, 11)

The present Relational model assumes these same realities in the modern church, and seeks to overcome them by planting small, householding type communities which center around the model expressed in Acts 2:42. Here, Bergquist notes that the church is caring for one another, meeting regularly, studying God's Word together, remembering Christ's sacrifice through communion, and sharing meals together.

Relational philosophy. The primary cultural rationale for the present Relational church is the imposing presence of postmodernism.

> The church in North America is beginning to realize that it stands in the doorway of an overwhelming cultural and world view shift that is shaking it's

> deepest roots . . . . With its current techniques and strategies, the modern Church has reached those they still know how to reach more effectively than ever, but there are growing numbers of peoples among whom Christians have no idea how to plant the gospel of Christ. (Bergquist 2000, 13)

The postmodern themes of deconstruction, anti-foundationalism, and decentralization run counter to the values of many churches today. Loren Mead identifies the struggle between the "modern" church and its "postmodern" mission field in the following way.

> All the structures and institutions that make up the churches and the infrastructure of religious life, from missionary societies to seminaries, from congregational life to denominational books of order and canons, are built on the presuppositions of the Christendom Paradigm. (Mead 1991, 18)

Mead defines what he calls the "Christendom Paradigm" as a movement of civil religion which "begun by the Emperor Constantine in 313 A.D. and [continuing with] the missionary frontier disappeared from the doorstep of the congregation, and became, in effect, the political boundary of the society itself" (Mead 1991, 14). He contrasts this paradigm with what he calls the "Apostolic Paradigm," and cites a need for the postmodern church to return to its Apostolic origins, which he describes as both an organic community that was at one and the same time communal and missional.

> The central reality of this church was a local community, a congregation "called out" (*ekklesia*) of the world. It was a community that lived by the power and the values of Jesus. That power and those values were preserved and shared within the intimate community through apostolic teaching and preaching, through fellowship itself, and through ritual acts, preeminently the sharing of bread and wine of the Eucharist. (Mead 1991, 10)

Consequently, the Relational model is largely reflective of the desire for genuine community and significance that characterizes the emerging culture. Randy Frazee states that presently in North America "there is an increasing sense of isolation, distress, and powerlessness . . . . among many today, fueled by loneliness" (Frazee 2001,

23). Frazee also observes that a Relational model of ministry demonstrates well that "the church is truly one institution that has the function of community as part of its strategy to achieve its mission—which is the development of people who follow Jesus Christ" (Frazee 2001, 35). In order for the church to meet the needs of an emerging postmodern culture, Frazee states that the church must begin again to take its programming and strategies from a more relational, and interdependent perspective.

> We can no longer fashion church programming on the backs of individualism, isolationism and consumerism. We must declare this to be unacceptable, and then commit ourselves to work feverishly to provide a communal alternative. (Frazee 2001, 157)

Leonard Sweet echoes this perspective, stating that the effective Relational church is one that promotes an inherent connectedness among its parishioners. In many cases, this means decentralizing the church to accommodate a greater sense of community, while at the same time emphasizing corporate worship in a way that appeals to those seeking a connectional framework.

> What would it mean to decentralize something like worship? Worship must become a key component to every small, separate cell group that is free to worship in its own way while integrated into the larger church. Eighty-five percent of churches now offer cell-group opportunities, each one of which should include a worship component. At the same time, hyper-centralized worship services, where the whole body comes together for celebrations, become more important than ever. (Sweet 2000, 121)

Perceived effectiveness of the Relational model. Casual observation as well as cultural examination in the literature suggests that the Relational church will reach those who share its goal of genuine community and missional outlook. Primarily, the literature suggests that the targets of the Relational church are anti-institutional and non-

institutional individuals with a postmodern understanding of the world and few preconceived notions of what church is supposed to be in a modern context.

Generationally, the greatest numbers of people with the above-described perception are the "Busters" or "Generation X." For the purposes of this study, the Busters are that group of individuals born between the years 1965 and 1976 (Rainer 1997, 6). Hahn and Verhaagen assert that "at the core, GenXers hunger and thirst for satisfying relationships with God and others" (Hahn and Verhaagen 1998, 21). The value this generational group places on relationships and connectedness is intimately related to their life experiences.

> Many of us are from broken homes, so talk of our friends being like family is not sentimental, idle chatter. Such talk reflects our heart hunger to connect, to experience belonging and community. The great irony is that we are less well equipped to connect and live in community than almost any other generation. (Hahn and Verhaagen 1998, 173)

The Relational church that is able to communicate the value of community effectively will find vast numbers of Busters and others longing for community at its doorstep. "Our generation craves community but has no idea how to find it. This stark fact is a source of great hope for followers of Christ who long to disciple Generation X" (Hahn and Verhaagen 1998, 176).

The cravings for community among postmodern individuals mean that the Relational church will take much longer to plant. Bergquist warns against false expectations by those seeking to start relational-based churches.

> Those planting the church need to be free from burdensome expectations (their own and other people's) about quantitative growth. While to be certain it matters that reproduction happens, real transformation growth may take a longer period of time to begin. Meanwhile, teams learn to live in covenanting communities, and God's Spirit breaks rocky soil. It also takes several generations of church reproduction for exponential growth to become significant. (Bergquist 2000, 29)

In short, the Relational model is recognized by the literature as the preeminent model for reaching the urban postmodern. The process of planting such a model is, however, a slow one. Yet the decentralized structure of this model is cited by observers as a good match for the complex makeup of urban areas (Bergquist 2000, 17). Douglas Copeland, who coined the term "Generation X," describes in the following monologue the spiritual search of the postmodern who is perceived to be reached via a relational-based model.

> I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love. (Copeland 1994, 359)

House Church Planting

One manifestation of the Relational model that has grown to a place of earning its own category is the House Church. Kirk Hadaway describes the house church as "groups which seek to embody all aspects of a New Testament church in group meetings in homes rather than in a church building" (Hadaway, Wright, and DuBose 1987, 12). Robert and Julia Banks suggest that the popularity of this particular church model is growing.

> All over the world the church has started to come home to smaller, face-to-face gatherings of Christians. Through the centuries Christians have occasionally returned to the humble quarters from which the church began; now people of God in many countries are deciding it is time to do so once again. (Banks and Banks 1998, 2)

History of the House Church model. The literature is uniform in insisting that the House Church finds its origins in the church gatherings of the first century. Hadaway, Wright and DuBose hold up the House Church as the exclusive model for the first two centuries of the church.

> Until the year 200, the house church was the common structural expression of the Christian congregation. There is some evidence that the homes of wealthier members (who were very much in the minority) were used for larger gatherings. However, the homes of the rank and file became the scene of ongoing fellowship and greatly enhanced the sense of community which characterized the early church. (Hadaway, Wright, and DuBose 1987, 42)

Hawaday, Wright, and DuBose observe that a noticeable presence of the House Church also occurred in the Middle Ages among the monastics, and during the Reformation period. In North America, the House Church rose in popularity in concurrence with the "Jesus Movement" of the 1960s. In fact, the literature suggests that many western House Churches still share the values and passions of the Jesus Movement. (Hadaway, Wright, and DuBose 1987, 43-51). Still others, such as Donald Durnbaugh, believe that contemporary expressions of the House Church are a part of what he calls the "believer's church" tradition. As evidence of his view, Durnbaugh cites several examples of House Churches as part of an "underground" network of churches presently ministering in North America (Durnbaugh 1968, 202-03).

Regardless of how one views the contemporary expressions of this model, the literature is in agreement that this ministry model enjoys the greatest amount of antiquity in Christendom, as well as the greatest amount of structural fluidity. Hadaway, Wright, and DuBose observe that many of the largest denominations in North America were made so largely due to the influence of the House Church movement.

> Most modern denominations had their origins in house meetings. This was true of Baptists and Disciples, as well as the Methodists. The Holiness revival that swept the United States the latter part of the nineteenth century and the modern Pentecostal movement which began in the early part of this century had their genesis in home meetings. (Hadaway, Wright and DuBose 1987, 50)

Philosophy and values of the House Church model. The literature suggests three primary core values that drive the House Church. The first is a strong sense that community is a priority among God's people. Robert and Julia Banks describe this sense of community as foundational to a healthy church.

> It would be a mistake, however, to view these [house church models] as expressions of the latest approach to church renewal or church growth. They are not to be understood as new programs for helping congregations change and become more relevant; rather, they spring from a concern to do justice to what the Bible has to say about community and mission. (Banks and Banks 1998, 24)

Another core value that drives the House Church model is the conviction regarding the centrality of the home in worship. Again, Robert and Julia Banks explain that corporate worship has a history of beginning in the home, beginning with the Old Testament period.

> The household (Deut 8:10-18) provided the setting for circumcising all male children (Gen 17:10, instructing the young in the Jewish faith (Deut 4:5-14), and celebrating the Passover (Exod 12:11). The Sabbath was also spent in the company of one's extended family. Responsibility for ensuring that God was honored and obeyed fell firmly on the parents, who acted, so to speak, as "priests" of the household. (Banks and Banks 1998, 25)

The literature makes a close connection between the family structure of the home and the communal structure of the church. Speaking of Paul's approach to church, Banks and Banks again state that "he does not use 'church' of any building, of any network of churches, or of all Christians scattered throughout the world." Rather, he uses

the term to define "the body of Christians in a particular locality" (Banks and Banks 1998, 28).

A third important value that is inherent in the House Church model is the house church understanding of mission. The literature suggests that in the House Church, "mission does not always have to take place through organizations and programs. Members of home churches do not have to share the same vision for mission but may be led in different ways" (Banks and Banks 1998, 230). The result of this multi-faceted approach to holistic involvement in one's community is that the House Church, while small, is able to provide an all-encompassing and comprehensive approach to evangelism and missions.

> Just as eating and drinking together is central to what happens in a church, so it is central to what happens in evangelism. Home church members realize that their best opportunities for evangelism lie with people who form part of their everyday contacts, what Tom Wolfe calls the wider 'oikos' or network of relationships. (Banks and Banks 1998, 233)

Perceived effectiveness of the House Church model. The casual observation of the literature suggests that because it is so relationally-driven, the House Church may in fact serve as the most effective model for "concentric circle" evangelism. Family and close friends are usually the primary evangelistic targets of the House Church model. There is a sense in which the House Church keeps a more localized focus than some of the larger models.

> There's a tendency to work for a great missionary effort in Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world and miss our Jerusalem, our own neighborhood. A church may have large numerical growth, but is evangelism taking place? (Jacks and Jacks 1986, 15)

Unlike many of the other models examined, the literature suggests that there is no particular grouping of people that are more receptive than others to this particular model. Banks and Banks state that successful implementations of the House Church model have been accomplished in all types of cultural situations in North America.

> In the west the majority of home churches, like the majority of the population, are suburban and middle class. In the third world basic Christian communities occur mainly among poorer groups in the population. In any case, as we have indicated in this book, home churches exist among a wide array of social groupings: poor groups, ethnic groups, blue collar workers, and countercultural groups" (Banks and Banks 1998, 250-51)

Profile of the Current Study

The current study seeks to determine if a relationship exists between the conversion growth and reproduction rates of churches in various cultural contexts and the ministry model employed by each church. The literature review affects the current study in a number of ways.

First of all, the literature provided a solid foundation for understanding the evangelistic mission of the church. The literature is unanimous in its perception that churches are planted in order to reach and assimilate those who are yet to know Jesus Christ. While conversion growth is not the only type of legitimate growth identified by the literature, it is demonstrated throughout the literature that it "represents the most dynamic expansion of the Kingdom, and might be considered the most important form of church growth" (Wagner 1990, 36).

The literature strikes a healthy balance between traditional and more contemporary approaches to outreach by focusing on conversion as the primary goal. Thus, church planters are encouraged in the literature to avoid placing too much emphasis on style, and in the process losing sight of the real goal. As Stetzer observes, "Christians

tend to love or despise the culture too much. Put another way, Christians tend to love either techniques or traditions to the detriment of the Christian mission" (Stetzer 2003, 15). Conversely, churches and church planters who focus on evangelistic conversion are believed to have unlimited potential. "As the church rediscovers its missional nature, it will acquire a renewed passion to be on mission" (Stetzer 2003, 31). These understandings of the true mission of the church grant legitimacy to the empirical study of conversion growth in church plants.

A second effect of the literature is based on the missiological principle of contextualization as applied to church planting. Tom Steffen contends that "until church planters have an in-depth understanding of a people group, selecting other than a generic church planting model can prove ineffective" (Steffen 1994, 368). The literature reviewed concerning the missiological foundations of church planting indicated that the planter must choose his model based on the perceived effectiveness of the model in reaching his chosen target population, with a view toward removing unnecessary barriers to the presentation of the Gospel. The result of this careful process will be "as few significant cultural or social barriers as possible for the team to cross" (Chaney 1991, 28).

The current study explores the relationship between the church planting model and the various populations in which this model is employed to discover whether a given model might be more effective in certain geographic, generational or ethnic contexts in producing both conversion growth and convert retention. This search is driven by the observations of the literature that the various models reach different kinds of people.

Finally, the literature provided an adequate description of each of the ministry models most frequently utilized in North America. Based on the literature, a concise

categorical definition and comprehensive description of each model can be ascertained. This aided the researcher in identifying each of the ministry models for the proposed sample described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

In exploring the relationship between conversion growth and convert retention in selected North American church planting models and the various contexts in which each church was planted, five research questions serve as the investigative focus., These research questions are related to conversion growth and congregational reproduction in new churches

Design Overview

Information in answer to the five research questions was obtained in two phases. The first phase included gathering previously collected research containing interviews with six hundred church planters who worked in cooperation with the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to start new churches (Stetzer 2003). Approximately 140 of these congregations were already identified by the church planting model they employed, and met the research criteria set by the delimitations of the current study. Along with ascertaining the model employed, information was gathered concerning when the church was started. Those congregations which were planted before 1998, or after 2001, were eliminated from the sample in cooperation with the previously mentioned delimitations. After these steps were taken, attempts were made to contact each of the planters, or current senior pastors by telephone to confirm that their church is still in existence, and that they were willing to participate

in the research. The remaining 460 congregations were also examined for compatibility with the research criteria. Of these congregations, 141 met the criteria set by the delimitations. Phone calls and electronic mail were then utilized to identify the church planting model employed by as many of the remaining churches as possible. Seventy-one of these churches responded to phone contact, and the church planting model employed was able to be ascertained in 60. The result of this process was 200 congregations representing the six church planting models as the sample.

The second phase of the research included the development of a survey instrument to measure the critical areas called for by the study, field testing of this survey, and sending this survey via mail to each of the churches in the sample. This phase also included follow-up phone calls to planters of current senior pastors who did not return the survey instrument in the time period requested, so as to maximize the response rate.

Information Gathering Phase

The rationale for this phase of the research was to utilize prior research involving six hundred church plants, approximately 140 of which were identified according to their ministry model. In 2003, Ed Stetzer conducted research related to the attendance of Southern Baptist church plants and compared these figures with the Church Planting Process and other selected factors. Among other variables, Stetzer chose to observe the methodological factors of selected church plants within his population by asking approximately 140 of these churches which church planting model was employed in the planting of their congregation. (Stetzer 2003, 6). Other new churches in this

population did not indicate a model in the previous research. Therefore, as a first step in this phase, these congregations were contacted to ascertain this information.

The data was gathered, and from this population, all churches planted after the year 2001 were eliminated in accordance with the delimitations of the current study. The congregations were then separated according to the ministry model employed. The result was five groups of congregations representing the Program-Based, Purpose-Driven, Seeker-Based, Ministry-Based, and Relational models respectively. The final sample included 200 churches from all of these models.

Further investigation was then conducted in one area. Stetzer's research combines the Relational model and the House Church in a single category. Those churches which indicated that they follow a Relational model were contacted to discover if they follow a House Church model, or one of the other Relational paradigms. As a result of these contacts, the researcher was able to separate purely House Church models from other, more general expressions of the Relational model, but only 3 out of the 59 churches identifying as "Relational" also identified themselves as house churches. This obviously affects the accuracy of any measurement of the House Church in the current study. Nevertheless, the result was six groups of congregations, each representing a church planting model included for study in this research. All of these churches served as the sample in the current study. There were 36 Program-Based churches, 59 Purpose-Driven churches, 20 Seeker-Targeted churches, 26 Ministry-Based churches, 56 Relational churches, and 3 House Churches included in the sample. Once the permission of the faculty was granted, the survey phase was initiated.

Survey Phase

A survey instrument was developed by the researcher based on the research questions guiding this project. This survey instrument consists of questions relating to the geographic location of the church, and the ratio of the present attendance of the church to the number of those attending who came into the church via conversion. Questions are also posed relating to the number of converts who are members of various generational groups, as well as ethnic and racial groups. The levels of education and affluence of converts is also measured. Finally, the survey instrument includes questions related to whether or not the church is tangibly participating in supporting a new church start.

These surveys were initially sent out by mail, with a return request date of October 25, 2004. Those not returning a survey by this date were contacted by phone for follow-up, as well as those who returned incomplete surveys. The phone call served as a kind reminder to return the survey, and in some cases, the survey was then administered by phone during the follow-up conversation. The researcher pursued making follow-up phone calls until a 50% return was realized in each of the church planting models represented in the current study. The purpose of the survey instrument was to ascertain the raw data necessary to determine if a relationship exists between conversion growth, congregational reproduction and model selection in various contexts among various kinds of people.

Population

The population for this study consisted of all current senior pastors in Southern Baptist church plants which were included in previous research conducted by the North

American Mission Board. The pastors of these churches may be full-time professional members of the clergy, part-time professional members of the clergy, part-time pastors who are not professional members of the clergy (i.e., they are not "ordained"), bi-vocational and volunteer pastors. In the event that the pastor is unavailable, other church leaders knowledgeable of the history of the plant were interviewed to gather information on the church.

Sample and Delimitations

The sample drawn from the population included pastors from each of the predominant church planting models employed in North America who met the previously mentioned delimitations and research criteria. The sample included those churches out of the 600 included in previous study in which the model employed is ascertainable, and in which it is determined both that the church still exists, and that it was planted during the time period set by the delimitations of this study. The churches which met this criteria, and agreed to participate were then categorized according to the church planting model employed. The total sample included the study of 200 church plants as observed by either the current senior pastor or present key leaders. Ninety-nine of the 200 congregations included in the sample participated in the current study. The researcher delimited the sample to the current senior pastor of each church plant. In some cases, the current leader of a church between four and seven years old was not the same leader who planted the church. In this case, the current pastor was the subject of the interview. If the current senior pastor was unavailable, then another leader knowledgeable of the history and operation of the plant was interviewed.

It was also the intention of the researcher to delimit the sample to those pastors who lead churches that were involved in the previous research regarding the Church Planting Process of the North American Mission Board. This prior research provides an adequate population of Southern Baptist church plants from across all of the models most frequently utilized in North America, and is based on surveys conducted from February 2000 through June 2002 (Stetzer 2003, 1). Thus, the model descriptions and time frame of the plants investigated are compatible with the aims of the current study.

Limitations of Generalization

The scope of this study is not intended to be universal. As such, certain limitations are recognized so as to sufficiently narrow the focus of the study. First of all, while there is a need to discover the effectiveness of certain church planting models utilized abroad, this research does not necessarily generalize to churches which are located outside the geographic area served by the North American Mission Board. Therefore, the churches included in this research do not include churches located outside the United States, Canada, or Puerto Rico.

Second, this research does not necessarily generalize to churches which were planted after 2001. This was determined by examining the previous research to ascertain the start date of each church plant. The start date was determined by the approximate date the planter arrived on the field. This date was ascertained either by the surveys from previous research, or by requesting such information during phone conversations with the church planters. Nevertheless, all of the churches examined in this research had demonstrated some degree of success by making it to their third year.

Third, this research does not necessarily generalize to the effectiveness of a church planted before 1998. Again, the start date was determined by the date the planter arrived on the field. This limitation ensured that all of the churches investigated were being measured during the time period when they were considered "new."

Fourth, this research does not necessarily generalize to churches that utilize a ministry model other than those identified by the North American Mission Board in previous research. It is recognized that the six ministry models examined are not the only models employed in North America. Nevertheless, as the six models described in the literature are seen as the predominant models used in North America, they are the focus of the study, thereby excluding other models from examination.

Finally, this research does not necessarily generalize to churches not planted in cooperation with the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Previous research conducted by the North American Mission Board included only those church plants which were involved in one degree or another in the Church Planting Process of the Mission Board. As the population for this research is taken from that previous study, it consists only of churches affiliated with the Church Planting Process who are cooperating congregations with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Instrumentation

The research included a single survey instrument, which was utilized to collect information about the conversion growth and the rate of new church starts among various people groups in the church plants examined in this study. An example of the survey instrument is found in the appendix.

The survey instrument was designed with the intent of collecting information regarding conversion growth and congregational reproduction among various people groups, and within various geographic contexts in each of the six North American church planting models selected for study. This survey instrument was examined by a panel of experts in the field of church planting. Each member of this panel made helpful revisions in the original draft of the survey, and each gave their approval of the final copy of the survey, in cooperation with the dissertation committee.

Upon the approval of the dissertation committee and panel of experts, this survey instrument was subjected to a field test, using church planters from three Baptist associations in South Carolina. Each planter was given an opportunity to respond to the survey questions, and then express their views on the survey instrument. All of the church planters included in this field test indicated that they understood how to respond to the survey, and also indicated their understanding of the data being requested. The only concerns voiced during the field test related to the type of information requested. A few church planters commented that some of their churches did not keep records of some of the types of data the survey requested. Others shared concerns related to the amount of time it would take for the survey to be completed by each participant. Overall, those participating in the field test said they believed the survey to be sound, conducive to ascertaining the information necessary to conduct the research, and understandable. Upon successful field-testing, and approval by the dissertation committee, the survey was employed to ascertain the information necessary to conduct the current study.

The basic approach of the survey began with questions related to confirming the ministry model employed as was indicated in previous research, as well as

discovering the physical location of the church plant according to the location codes provided on the Annual Church Profile by LifeWay Christian Resources. Where it was possible, such demographic information was obtained from previous research, or from state convention annuals, and simply confirmed by the respondent taking the survey.

Survey questions were asked regarding the present average attendance, and the number of present attendees who came into the church via evangelistic conversion. Further questions were then asked with a particular focus on those converted to Christ, including the numbers of converts from each generational category indicated on the survey. Other demographic and psychographic information was also gathered on those who came to the church via conversion to faith in Christ. This information included the marital status, ethnic group, education and economic status of each convert.

Finally, questions related to the retention of new converts and the involvement of the church plant in helping to start other churches was asked. This information was used to determine the relationship between the model employed and congregational reproduction. The retention question in particular was utilized to determine the future feasibility of studies related to convert retention in new churches.

These surveys were mailed out to the approximately 200 churches believed to meet the criteria of this study, and drawn from the original population of 600. A deadline of October 25 was given in order to receive the data in a timely manner. After October 25, follow-up contacts were made by phone in order to maximize the number of returned surveys.

When all of the information was gathered, the data from each question was tallied to obtain total numbers of attendees and converts from each church planting

model. For example, purpose driven churches reported 2309 attendees in all 30 of the churches included in the current study, which resulted in a mean attendance of 77. These 30 churches also reported 485 conversions, or a mean of 16 conversions. These figures translated into a 21 % conversion growth rate for purpose driven churches. In addition, the rate of new church starts occurring in each model was ascertained by tabulating the numbers of churches in each model who answered "yes" to question twelve on the survey.

The mean scores of conversion growth among generational groups, ethnic groups, and categories of education and affluence were also ascertained using the same method described above for the purpose of determining any possible relationships that may exist between the type of person converted, and the church planting model employed. Analysis of covariance was utilized to obtain data relevant to this study. Differences were assessed in the use of ANCOVA between the ministry model employed in the church plant and the various contexts in which the churches were planted. These were then assessed according to the dependent variables of conversion growth and congregational reproduction that took place in each model in each context. The mean conversion growth rate in each ministry model was compared with the generational categories, economic status, marital status, and other pertinent demographic information of those converted.

The researcher assembled an expert panel to review and validate the survey instrument. This panel included three individuals. The first individual has served as a church planter, church planting professor, and is currently employed by the North American Mission Board in church planting research. This individual holds a Doctor of

Philosophy degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his research is serving as the precedent research for this dissertation. The six hundred churches from which the population for this proposed study is acquired are from this research. The second individual holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and currently serves the South Carolina Baptist Convention as Director of Church Multiplication. His past work includes that of a senior pastor, and Director of Missions in Cincinnati, Ohio. The third individual is retired from thirty-two years of Home Mission experience in planting churches, and has authored two books on the subject.

The members of this panel helped to clarify the wording in the survey instrument, and advise as to the most accurate ways to obtain relevant data through the survey instrument. In addition, further questions posed by this panel resulted in additional questions on the survey instrument. Based upon input from this panel, the survey instrument was revised and submitted to the dissertation committee for approval. Upon dissertation committee approval, the revised survey instrument, located in the Appendix, was disseminated to the churches in the sample.

Procedures

Upon being given permission by the dissertation committee to do so, the survey instrument was field-tested using church planters from three Baptist associations in South Carolina. The field testing and finalization of the interview protocol included personal interviews with each church planter, along with opportunities for each planter to provide feedback as to their experiences with the survey. Surveys administered to church planters in the field test are identical to the survey located in the Appendix.

The initial survey phase of the research included surveys being sent via mail to each church planter. Follow-up contacts were made after the previously mentioned deadline for those who did not respond, so as to maximize the response rate, and thus the accuracy of the study. Upon gathering all the relevant information, the data was tabulated in accordance with each model studied to produce the mean conversion growth and congregational reproduction rates occurring in each church planting model. Mean conversion growth and congregational reproduction rates were also ascertained across the models related to geographic location, generational groupings, marital and family status, ethnic category, education and economic status.

The researcher initially received a low response rate, and after many follow-up calls, a 50% response rate was attained, or 99 churches from across all the models. This included 36 Program-Based churches, 59 Purpose-Driven churches, 20 Seeker-Targeted churches, 26 Ministry-Based churches, 56 Relational churches, and 3 House Churches. The data was analyzed to determine any relationships between the church planting model and other demographic data as it relates to the conversion growth and the percentage of new church starts. As a courtesy, a summary of the data collected was returned to any church planter or member of the expert panel who requested such a summary.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The recorded findings were analyzed in light of the concern for the relationship of conversion growth and new church starts in various cultural contexts to selected North American church planting models. Analysis of the data gathered during the survey phase of the research provided qualitative data that helped to discover whether there is a relationship between conversion growth, new church starting, and ministry model selection. The findings include references to the survey data as they relate to the study of this relationship.

Compilation Protocol

The findings gathered from this study were compiled in order to discover the relationship between conversion growth and the rate of new church starts in various cultural contexts, and the employment of selected North American church planting models. Initial contact was made with the majority of the pastors participating in this study by phone. After this initial contact, permission was granted for a survey to be sent to the pastor to be utilized in the collection of the data necessary to determine the aforementioned relationships. A single research instrument was employed in the collection of this data. See the appendix for the proposed interview protocol and survey instrument.

Compilation of the Survey Data

The survey phase was conducted by mail, and followed up after the previously mentioned deadline via a phone interview with those who did not return the survey. The survey was designed to collect information organized around the five Research Questions. The survey included twelve items in which specific numbers were reported to that the researcher could ascertain any relationships that might exist between the ministry models observed in the current study and the kinds of individuals who are brought to faith in Jesus Christ within those models.

The first two items on the survey were solely for the purpose of ascertaining certain demographic information about the church, as well as identifying the model employed by the church. Item 3 asked the respondent for the average worship attendance at the church from the most recent church year. Item 4 asked for the number of people out of the number in item three who came to faith in Christ through the ministry of the church. These two items were for the purpose of determining the rate of conversion growth that was happening in that church.

Item 5 asked the respondent to categorize from the conversion growth number according to age or generational grouping. Item 6 asked for the marital status of those converted, and item 7 asked for the ethnic background of each of those converted. Item eight requested the household income information of those who were converted, and item nine requested the education level of this group. All of these questions were designed in order to ascertain the most likely demographic group to come to Christ using that particular ministry model. Items 10 and 11 were for informational purposes only, to determine the feasibility of later studies on the relationship between ministry model and

convert retention rates. Responses to this item were very low, suggesting that accurate records relating to the retention of new converts is not kept by the churches. Item 12 asked whether the church being surveyed has ever, or was currently helping to start a new church. This question was for the purpose of determining whether a particular ministry model is more conducive to new church starts.

From a total of 600 congregations, 204 were found to fit the delimitations of the current study, and thus the criteria for inclusion in the current study. After closer examination, it was discovered that four of these congregations no longer exist, which left a total sample of 200 new congregations which met the research criteria. Initial phone contact was made with 71 of these churches to determine the ministry model they employed. The employed ministry model was ascertainable in 60 of the 71 congregations contacted. The model was then indicated on the survey sent to that particular church, and the 200 surveys were mailed. At the October 25 deadline, 52 churches had responded to the survey, and the follow-up phone calls began. The last of the surveys arrived around the middle of December, and the result was 99 useable surveys, which was a 50 % response rate across all of the models (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of surveys mailed compared with surveys returned.

Church Planting Model	# of surveys mailed	# of surveys returned
Program-Based	36	18
Purpose-Driven	59	30
Seeker-Targeted	20	10
Ministry-Based	26	13
Relational	56	25
House Church	3	3
TOTAL	200	99

Although 100% of those churches following a house church model responded, there were only three of these congregations. They are reflected above along with the other responses, and their responses are also recorded in the forthcoming pages, although it is admitted that the sample is not sufficient enough to tender an accurate picture of what is happening among House Churches in North America.

Various tables were developed, and the numbers attained from the survey instrument are displayed so as to illustrate the number of churches investigated in each geographic context compared with the ministry model employed. Other tables illustrate the number of churches investigated among each of the ministry models according to the size of the average attendance at either the main worship service, or the total average participation in the church if it follows a cell based structure. This average attendance measurement was compared in other tables with the number of those who came to be a part of the church as a result of converting to Christ and being baptized into the fellowship of the church. Tables also exist in this chapter that display the comparison between the total number of evangelistic baptisms in the church, and the number of those baptized who are still an active part of the church.

It must be noted that there were insufficient numbers of Southern Baptist house churches which were a part of the population that met the research criteria. Of the 600 congregations utilized and examined in previous research, only 3 house churches were discovered that fit the criteria for the current study. Therefore, it must again be stressed that the forthcoming information regarding the house church is not sufficient to make any definitive statements about the evangelistic effectiveness of house churches, or concerning the types of people that are reached by house churches. Nevertheless, all

three house church models responded to the survey, and their information is given in this research.

Findings and Displays

Data was analyzed in order to explore the relationship between conversion growth and new church starts in various contexts and the church planting model employed in that same context. The tables and figures below aid in understanding and describing the findings.

Interview Sample Demographics

The numbers of churches interviewed from each ministry model as they existed in various geographic contexts is given below. These are the churches which make up the interview sample, and they are given in accordance with the ministry model they employ, along with the corresponding geographic context in which they exist (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of the number of ministry models existing in each geographic context

	Area 1	*Area 2*	*Area 3*	*Area 4*	*Area 5*	*Area 6*	*Area 7*	*Area 8*	*Area 9*	*Area 10*
Program-Based	1	0	3	4	3	0	2	4	0	1
Purpose-Driven	1	0	4	5	0	2	5	0	6	3
Seeker-Based	1	0	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	3
Ministry-Based	1	0	1	4	3	1	1	1	0	1
RelationalModel	1	2	3	3	6	2	2	1	1	4
House Church	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Note: Area key: 1=Open Country/Rural; 2=Village; 3=Town; 4=Small City; 5=Medium City/Downtown; 6=Medium City/Neighborhood; 7=Medium City/Suburbs; 8=Large City/Downtown; 9=Large City/Neighborhood; 10=Large City/Suburbs.

The total number of participating churches in the sample was 99. Of this number, 4 did not respond to the geographic context question. The 95 responses given are all included in the above table.

The researcher also compiled the mean attendance according to the ministry model employed. These numbers are given for the purpose of comparing them with the mean conversions in each category to determine the average conversion growth rate in each ministry model (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of the mean worship attendance occurring within each ministry model

Ministry Model Employed	Average Worship Attendance
Program-Based Design	46
Purpose Driven	77
Seeker-Based	79
Ministry-Based	45
Relational	58
House Church	35

The above numerical values were taken and compared with the mean number of conversions occurring within each model in order to ascertain a conversion growth rate for each ministry model observed in this study. Out of the 200 which met the criteria for this research, 99 responded to a request for this information, and all of them indicated both their average worship attendance, as well as how many, from that number, came into the church as a result of being converted to the Christian faith and baptized into the fellowship of the church (see Table 4).

Table 4. Summary of the mean numbers of conversions occurring in each ministry model

Ministry Model Employed	Mean Number of Conversions
Program-Based Design	*13*
Purpose-Driven	*16*
Seeker Targeted	*31*
Ministry-Based	*13*
Relational	*16*
House Church	*13*

Survey Findings Related to Demographic Characteristics of Individuals (RQ1)

Research Question 1 (RQ1) is concerned with the types of individuals reached by the various church planting models. The findings resulting from this Research Question are displayed in figures which illustrate the mean conversion growth rates in each model according to the levels of affluence, education, and marital status of those converted. Each respondent was asked to take the number of reported conversions and divide them according to the average household income level. The mean of each of these figures was then computed so as to ascertain the average percentage of individuals reached by each church planting model in each income category listed on the survey. As this type of information is not usually recorded by the churches, several churches did not respond to this question, and when follow-up contact was made, it was explained that the church did not keep such records. Nevertheless, the majority of churches did respond to this question, giving the researcher a deeper look into the relationship between the household income of those converted and the church planting model employed. Figures are given to illustrate each of these respective income categories, and how well each of the church planting models performs at reaching those in each category.

For those churches who reported reaching individuals with household incomes of less than $25,000 annually, those identifying themselves as a Program-Based church has a mean of 21 percent of their converts from this category. Churches following a Purpose-Driven structure had a mean of 18 percent from this category come to Christ. A mean of 17.5 percent of the converts from the Seeker-Based model came from this income category. Sixteen percent of those reached by the Ministry-Based model were in this category, and 33 percent of the converts reached by the Relational model were found in this income level. Figure 1 illustrates the results for the below $25,000 category.

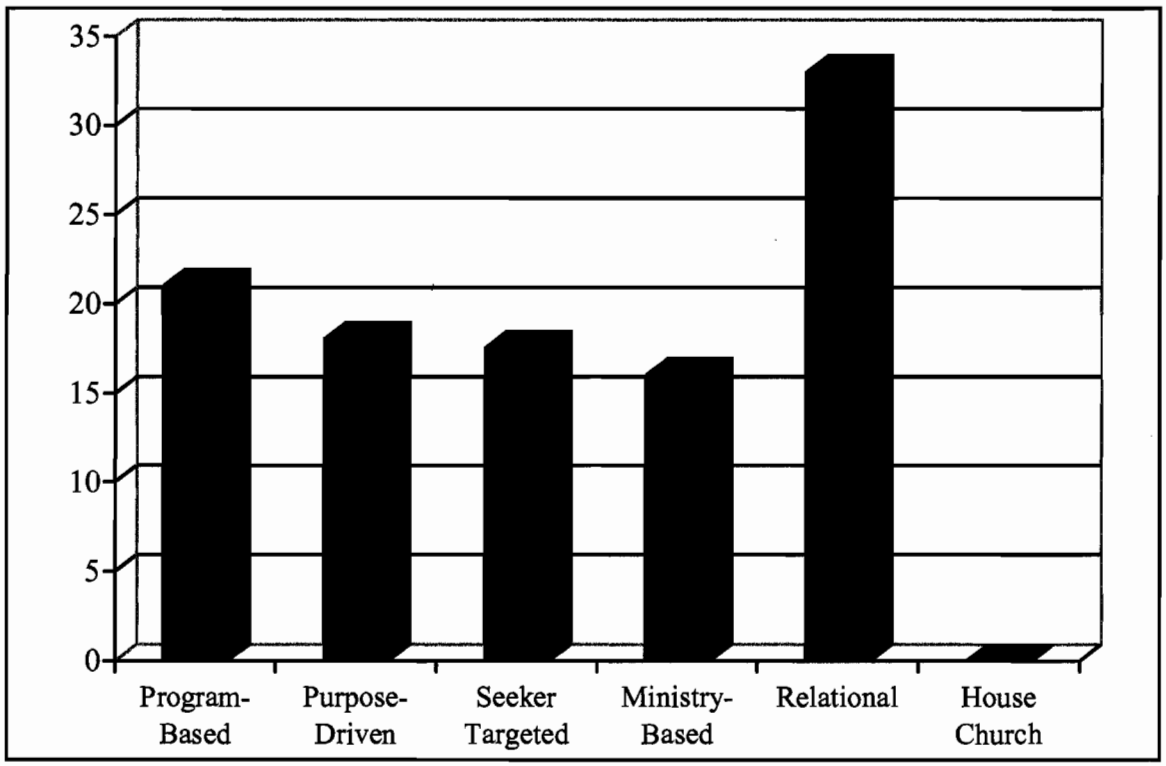

Figure 1. Mean conversion growth percentage of households earning less than $25,000 annually according to ministry model

The above figure illustrates that the churches in the sample identifying themselves as "Relational" reached an overall greater percentage of those with household

incomes of less than $25,000 compared with all of the other church planting models. The other four models who reported conversions from among this income group seemed to have results compatible with one another, with the Program-Based model having a slight advantage over the others.

For those churches who reported reaching individuals with household incomes of between $25,000 and $50,000 annually, the conversion growth percentage generally begins to rise. Figure 2 illustrates the results for this category.

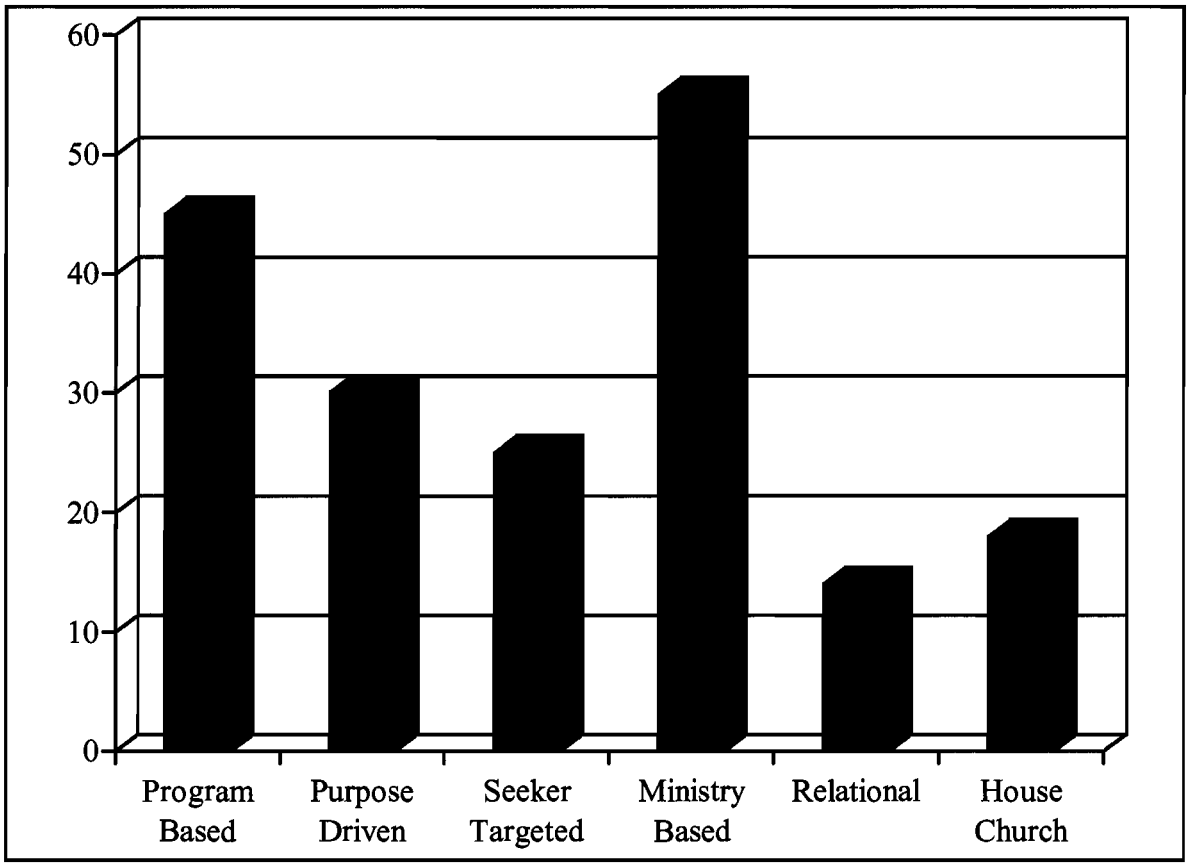

Figure 2. Mean conversion growth percentage of households making between $25,000 and $50,000 annually according to ministry model

When examining the percentage of converts each church planting model is reaching within the above income strata, it is observed that only the Relational model reaches less in this income level than in the lower income level. Findings from the surveys seem to indicate that the Ministry-Based model, followed closely by the Program-Based model, reaches a greater percentage of individuals in this income category.

The next grouping of data concerns those who make between $50,000 and $75,000 annually. Two of the church planting models reported a significant decrease of converts in this group compared with the previous income level. Other models reported only slight differences, indicating roughly the same results. Figure 3 illustrates the results for this category.

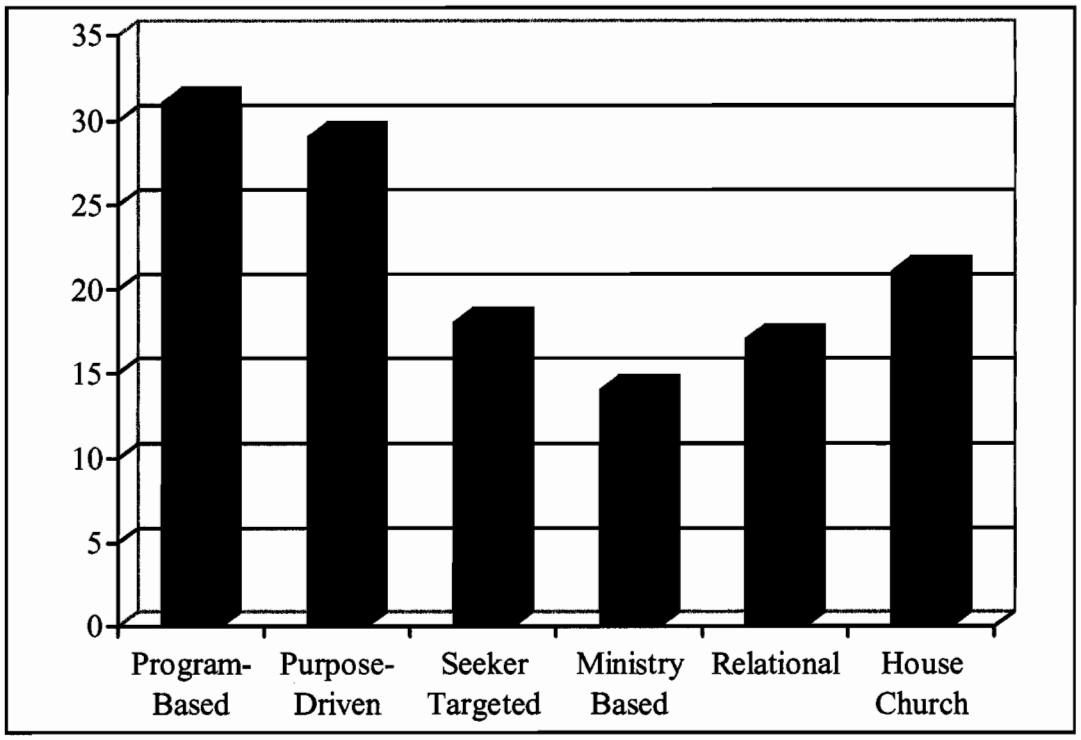

Figure 3. Mean conversion growth percentage of households making between $50,000 and $75,000 annually according to ministry model.

One can easily observe that the Program-Based model and Purpose-Driven model seem to reach a greater percentage of converts in this income category. However, at least 10% of the conversions in all the models come from this income category. From this point, the mean conversion growth rate begins to be reduced in all of the models.

Among those from households with incomes ranging from $75,000 to $100,000, it appears that the Seeker-Based model reaches a greater percentage. Figure 4 is illustrative of this observation.

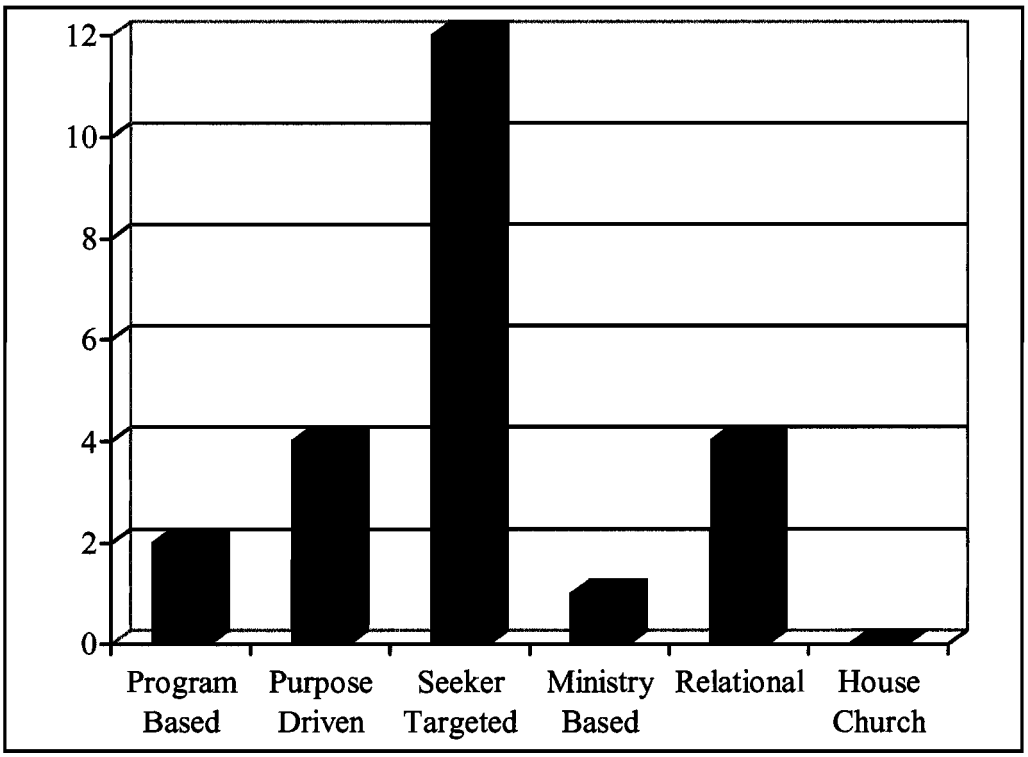

Figure 4. Mean conversion growth percentage of households making between $75,000 and $100,000 annually according to ministry model.

Two observations can be made from this figure. First of all, the Seeker-Based model clearly seems to be more successful in reaching people in this category. However, it should also be noted that no ministry model studied had more than 12 percent of its

converts come from this category of income. Beginning with the $75,000 level, it appears that the conversion growth percentage begins to fall off.

The final income category listed on the survey was for those making over $100,000 annually. Again, the mean of the responses is given in Figure 5 below.

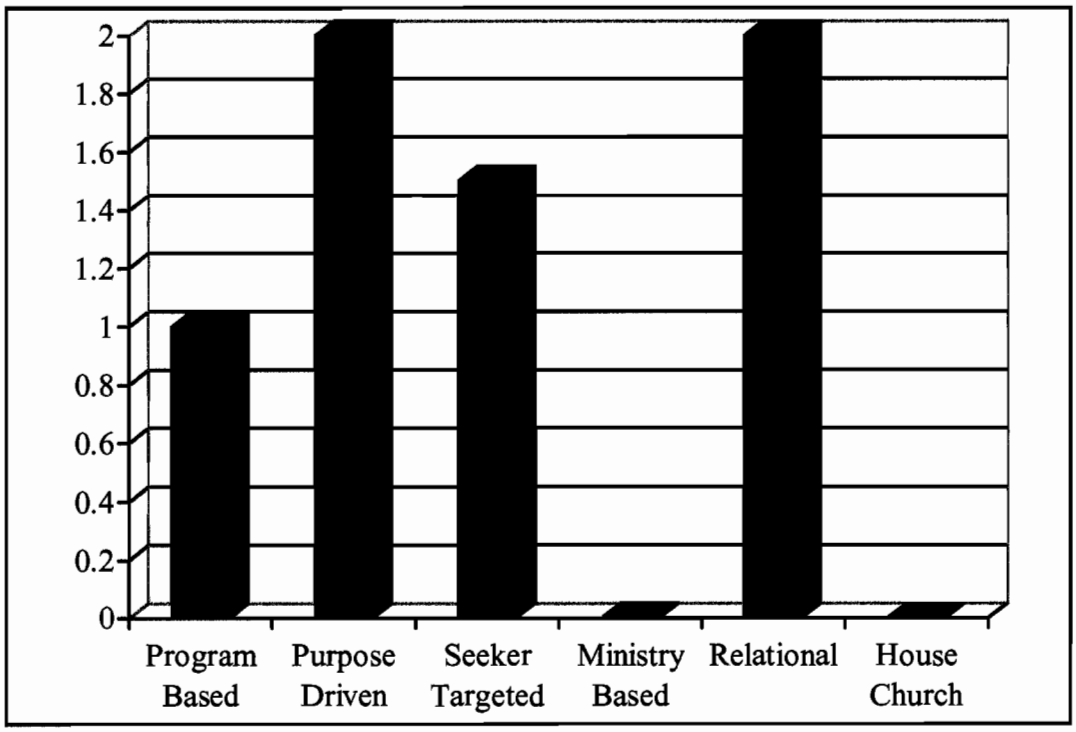

Figure 5. Mean conversion growth percentage of households making over $100,000 annually according to ministry model.

It becomes apparent from observing the above figure that few of the churches included in the sample saw enough conversions to register significant percentages of persons being reached from this income category. Of the responses generated, the Seeker-Based model indicated the greatest percentage of its converts from this income category among all the models. Yet even the Seeker-Based model only indicated a mean of 2 percent from this income category.

Comparing and contrasting the models according to a digest of the aforementioned data gives a clearer picture of who among the indicated income categories the various models seem to be reaching. Figure 6 illustrates the digest of the data.

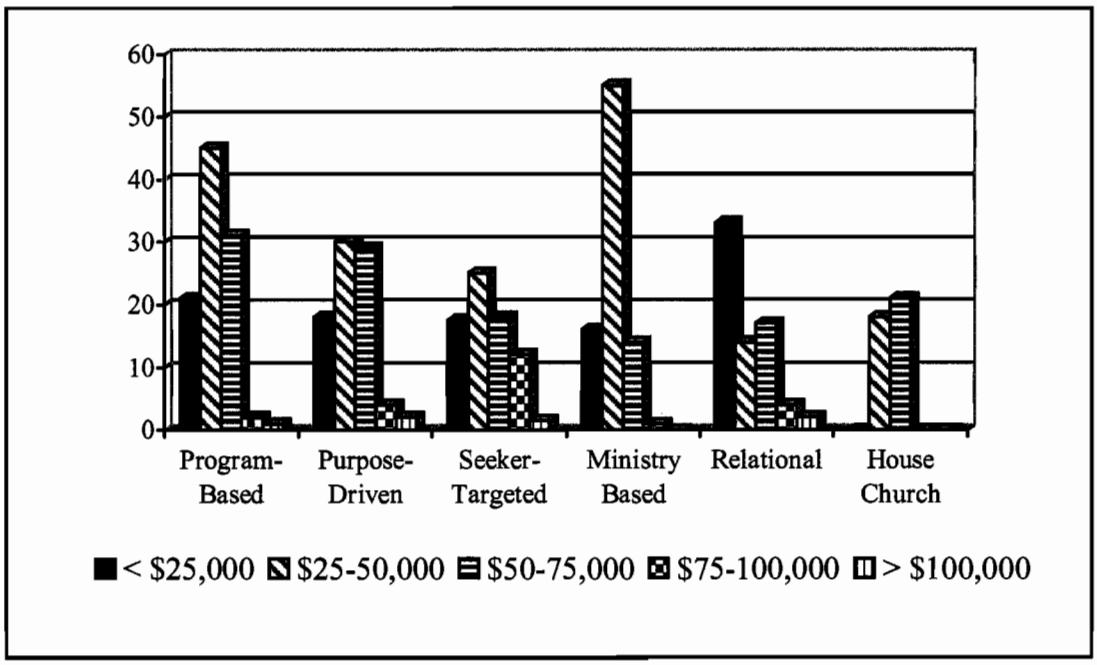

Figure 6. Mean conversion growth percentage of all income levels reported according to ministry model

The above figure reflects the effectiveness of the churches participating in this study in reaching the various income levels. It shows the Relational model with a 12 % lead over all other models in the number of individuals converted who are from households that earn less than $25,000 annually. The Ministry-Based model has at least a ten percentage point advantage over the other models in the number converted from households earning between $25,000 and $50,000 annually. The Program-Based and Purpose-Driven models seem to have reached the greatest percentage of individuals from

homes earning between $50,000 and $75,000 annually, with 31 % and 29 % of their converts coming from this income category respectively.

The Seeker-Based model churches surveyed have reached the greatest percentage of those coming from households earning between $75,000 and $100,000 annually, with 12 % of their converts coming from this category. While none of the models demonstrated any significant percentage of converts from households earning over $100,000 annually, all but the Ministry-Based model and the House Church model reported minimal conversions among individuals in this income category.

Overall, the data returned from the surveys was adequate to obtain a clear picture of the relationship between the economic status of converts and the church planting model employed by the church plant. Yet there are other demographic categories examined as well concerning findings for the first Research Question. Chief among these demographic categories is that of marital status. The literature suggests that different approaches to evangelism and outreach are necessary, and often depend on one's marital and/or familial status. Recent literature has suggested this to be particularly true of single individuals. Figure 7 below illustrates the mean percentage of each of the ministry models employed who are among the single.

From this figure it seems that both the relational model and the house church model show a greater percentage of singles as among those converted in their churches. However, it must be reiterated that the house church figures represent only thirty-nine conversions among only three responding churches which fit the research criteria. Therefore, it is necessary to state that the house church figures here may not be an accurate representation of the general effectiveness of house churches in North America.

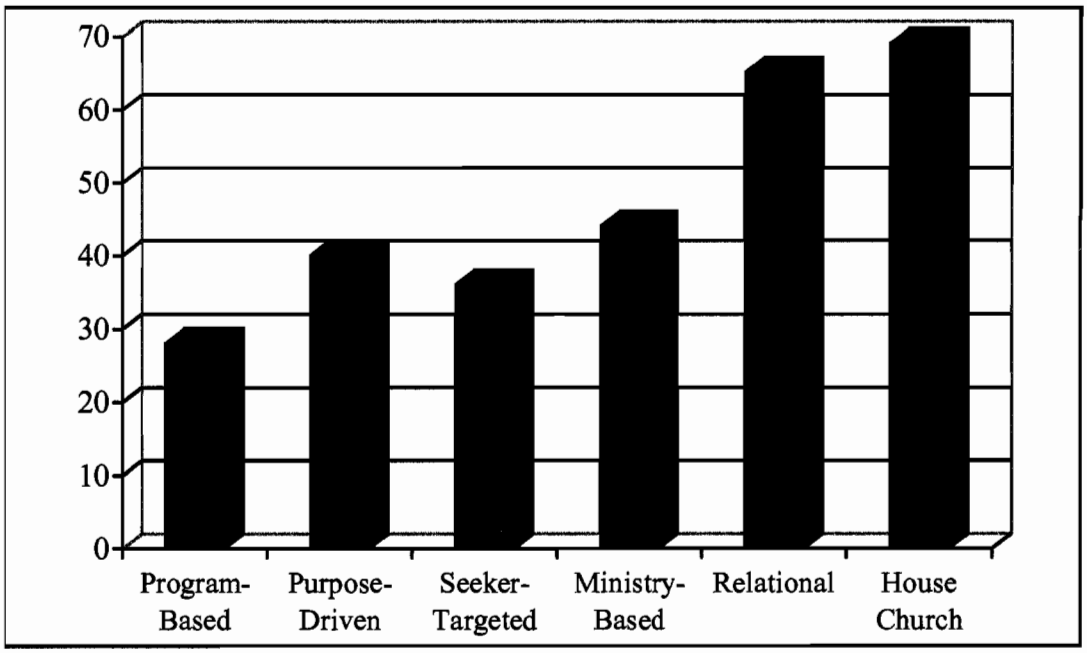

Figure 7. Mean conversion growth percentage of singles according to church planting model employed

When the data is examined in relation to the number of married individuals who are converted, a significant rise in conversion growth percentage is noted in some of the church planting models, while a significant decrease is noted in others. Figure 8 illustrates the conversion growth percentage data among married people who come to faith in Christ.

The mean responses show that the Program-Based and Ministry-Based church planting models reached a markedly higher percentage of married individuals than singles, while the Relational models surveyed reflected much higher percentages of single individuals coming to faith in Christ. The Purpose-Driven and Seeker-Based models seem to be able to reach both groups, although they did show more married people coming to faith than single people.

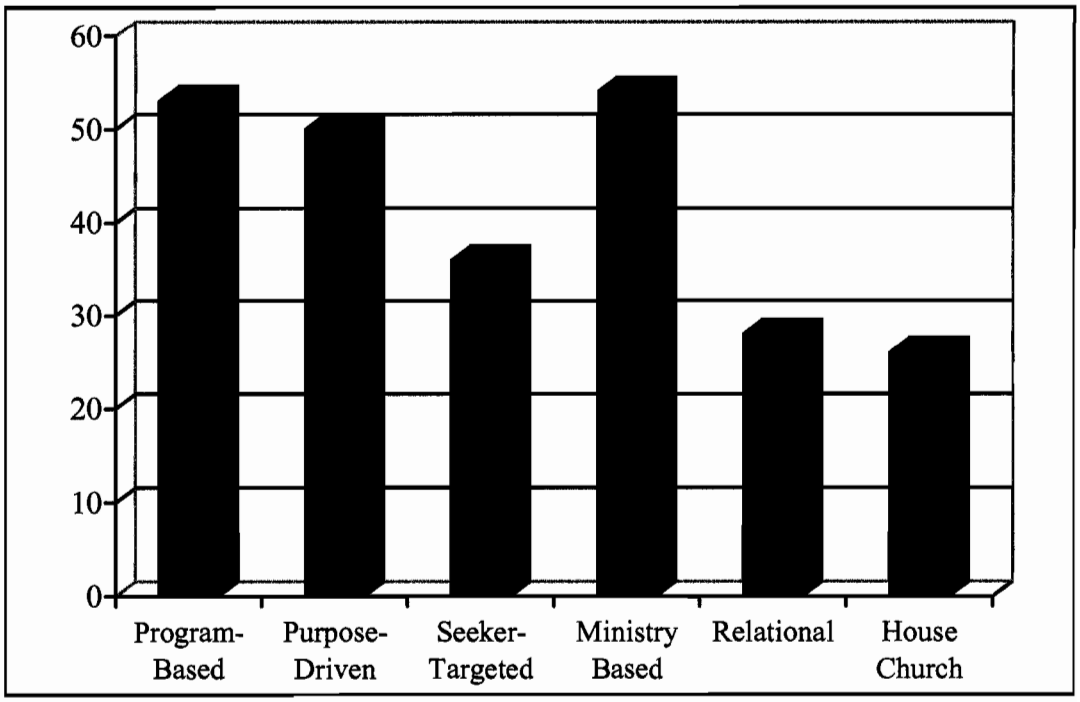

Figure 8. Mean conversion growth percentage of married individuals occurring within each church planting model

When observing the responses related to the conversion of divorced persons, there is a notable drop in the share of this group who come to faith in Christ. Part of this may be due to the fact that the survey questions did not differentiate among married individuals as to who among them had previously experienced a divorce. Nevertheless, Figure 9 shows the mean results from those responding to this question.

The mean responses show the Seeker-Based model as reaching a significantly higher percentage of divorced individuals than the other models observed in the current study. Three of the six models observed reported that the percentage of divorced individuals coming to Christ in their church was below 10 %.

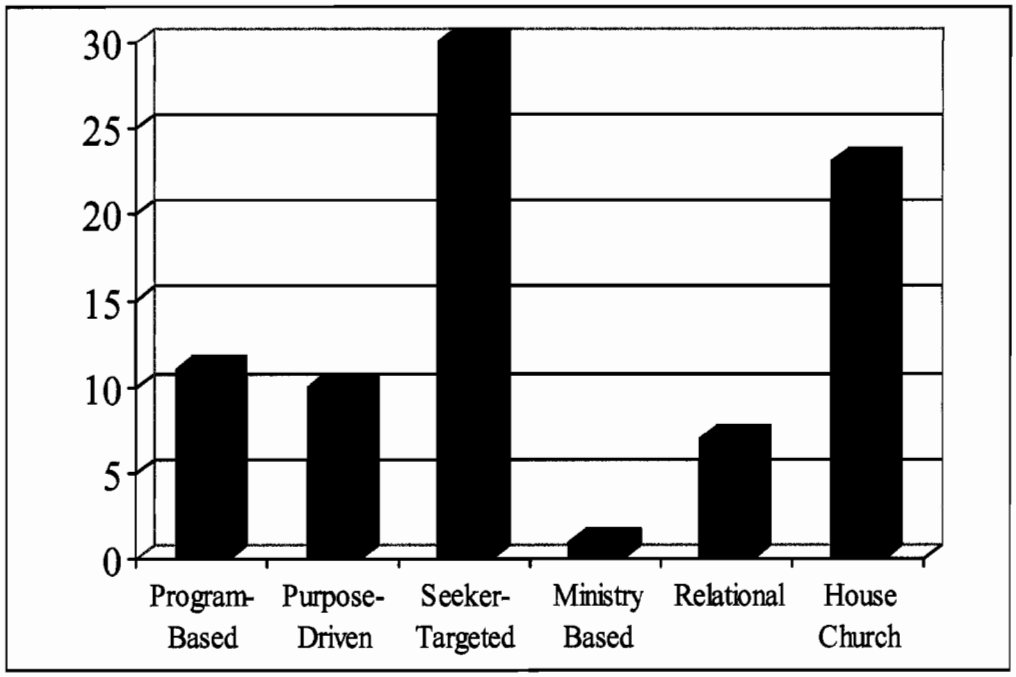

Figure 9. Mean conversion growth percentage of divorced individuals occurring within each church planting model

Purpose-Driven church plants reported 8 % of their converts as "widowed," while the relational church plants reported 7 % of their converts from this same marital category. None of the other church planting models reported any of their converts as being from this group. Therefore, it is safe to state that the percentage of widowed individuals being converted in any of the models is negligible.

When all of the aforementioned data is digested, a clearer comparison is seen of who among singles, married, and divorced individuals is being reached by the various models observed in the current study. This information, along with income and the forthcoming education information, will give an adequate picture of the general demographic characteristics of the individuals reached by each of the church planting models. Figure 10 displays the digest of all the data from question six of the survey.

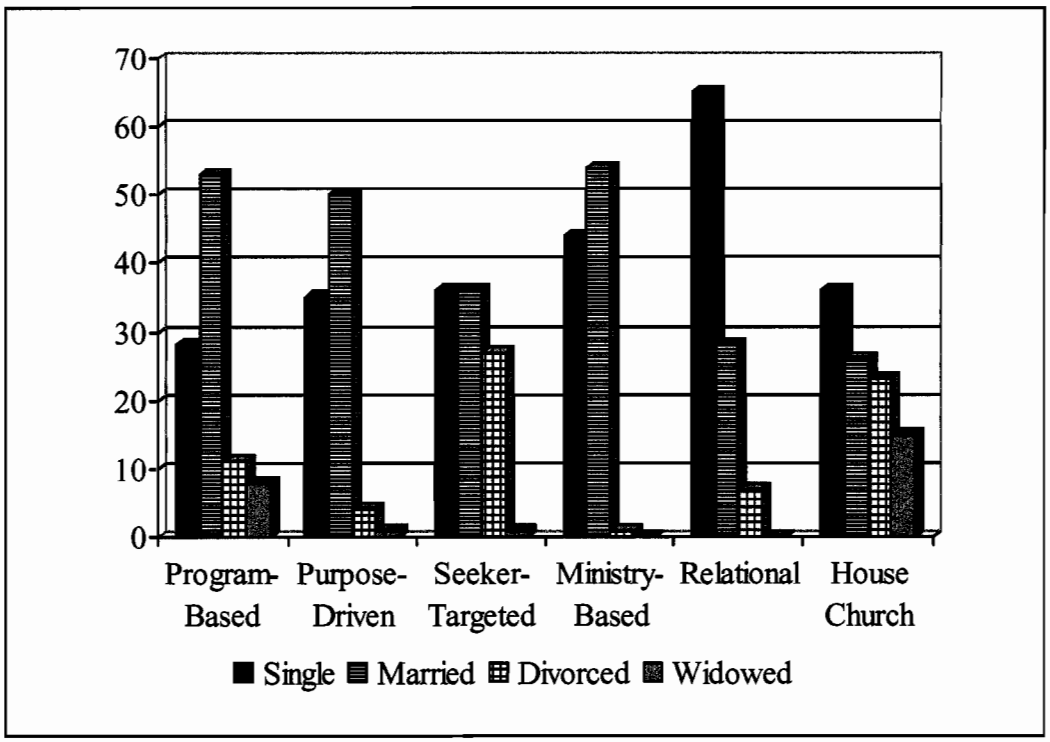

Figure 10. Mean conversion growth percentage reported in all marital status groups according to model.

When the mean responses are tabulated and displayed as in the above figure, a clear distinction seems to be apparent between the models and the marital status of those being converted to Christ in the respective churches. For example, the Relational model seems from the reported data to reach a significantly higher percentage of single people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Program-Based and Purpose-Driven models, by contrast, seem indicate married couples as occupying the greatest percentage share of their converts. The Ministry-Based model also seems, curiously enough, to bring a comparative percentage of married couples to the point of conversion.

Although none of the models seem to be reaching an overwhelming percentage of divorced persons, the Seeker-Based model appears among the 6 models observed in the current study to reach the highest percentage of this demographic group. Also, those

classified as "widowed" who were reported to be converted were few in number. Again, the "divorced" and "widowed" categories, upon reflection, may have been affected by the fact that the person being surveyed was not specifically asked to differentiate between married couples who have only been married once, and those who are re-married after either the divorce or the death of a spouse. More is said about this issue in the section of this chapter which deals with the evaluation of the research design.

One final demographic category relevant to Research Question One that was asked on the survey was that of educational attainment. Item 9 on the survey inquired as to the education level of those in each church who were brought to faith in Christ. The following graphs illustrate the mean percentage of conversions from each educational category listed on the survey according to church planting model. Figure 11 displays the mean results acquired from the Program-Based model.

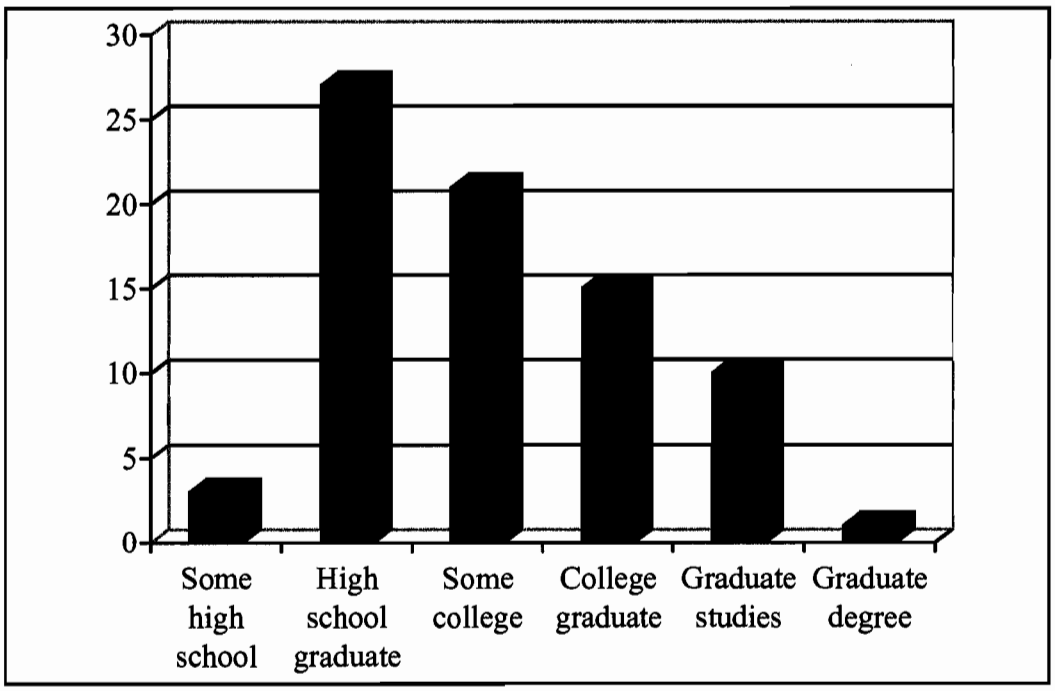

Figure 11. Mean conversion growth percentage of the various educational categories in the Program-Based model

The mean responses illustrate that the participating Program-Based churches reached the largest percentage of those who graduated from high school, with gradually lower percentages reported as the educational attainment status rose. Similar results were tabulated from the mean of responses given by Purpose-Driven churches, as illustrated in Figure 12 below.

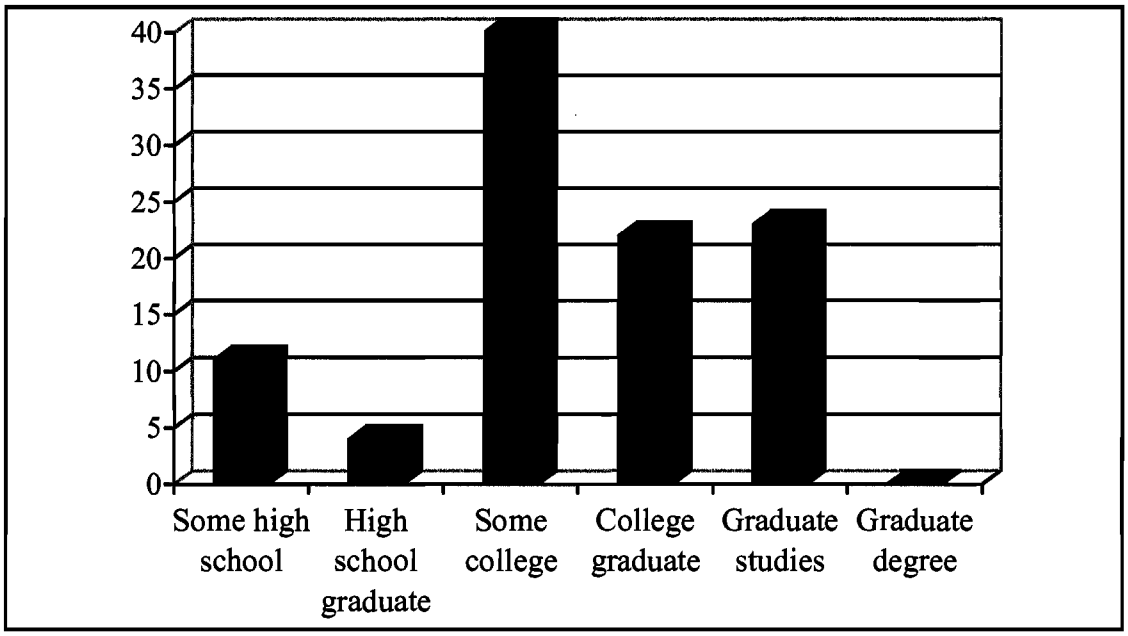

Figure 12. Mean conversion growth percentage of the various educational categories in the Purpose-Driven model

The mean responses illustrate results similar to that of the Program-Based model. Although the results from Purpose-Driven churches indicates that this model reaches a higher percentage of college graduates, as well as those who pursue further study beyond undergraduate education, no Purpose-Driven church in the current study reported the conversion of an individual who holds a graduate degree.

An examination of the mean results from the Seeker-Based model reveal a greater percentage of the more educated population of people coming to faith. Results

from the Seeker-Based model surveys illustrated results similar to the Program-Based and Purpose-Driven church planting models among high school graduates, and those with some college education, but slightly higher rates of individuals who have done graduate studies, and hold graduate degrees. Figure 13 below illustrates these results.

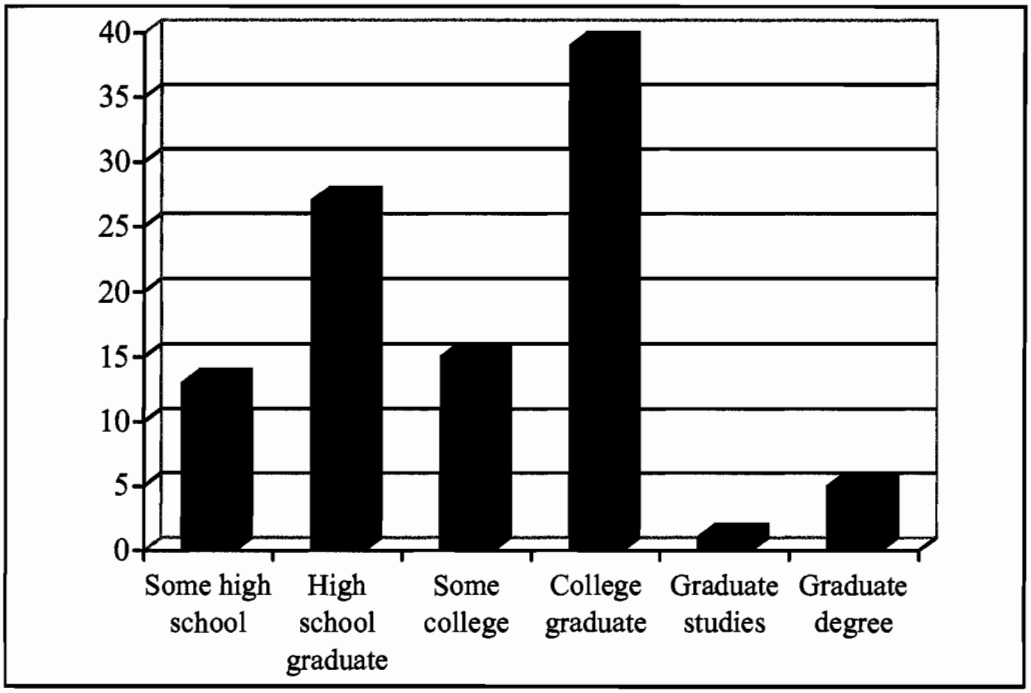

Figure 13. Mean conversion growth percentage of the various educational categories in the Seeker Targeted model

The mean responses illustrate a much larger response rate among college graduates, and a notably larger response rate among those with graduate degrees who come to faith in Christ in this model. The above results seem to almost completely contrast with those generated in surveys from Ministry-Based church plants. The mean results from these congregations reveals that the highest percentage of those who are coming to Christ as a result of the Ministry-Based churches utilized in the current study

are much less educated than those who come to Christ in other models. Figure 14 displays the mean responses.

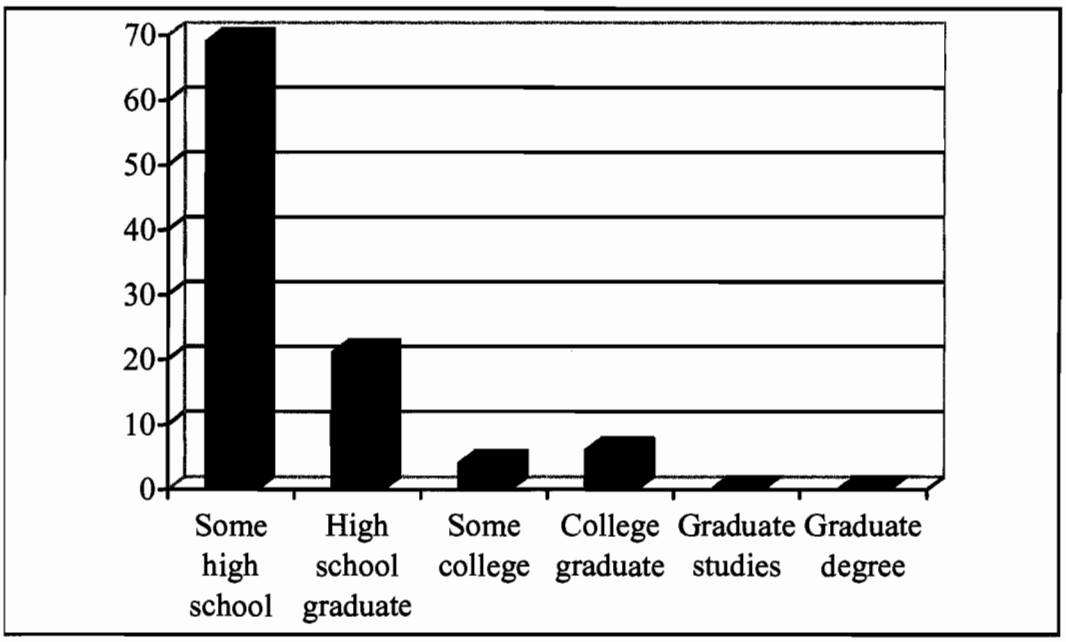

Figure 14. Mean conversion growth percentage of the various educational categories in the Ministry based model

The mean responses illustrate a comparatively less educated demographic that is converted to Christ via the implementation of the Ministry based model. The literature states that this model is often used in lower-income and lower social-status contexts with the belief that it will most effectively reach these demographic categories. Therefore, the results from this item as they relate to the Ministry-Based model seem to fit the other demographic categories in which Ministry-Based churches are most often planted.

The mean responses from this category in the Relational model revealed a somewhat more even distribution across all educational levels. Figure 15 below displays the mean conversion growth percentages among the educational categories for the Relational model.

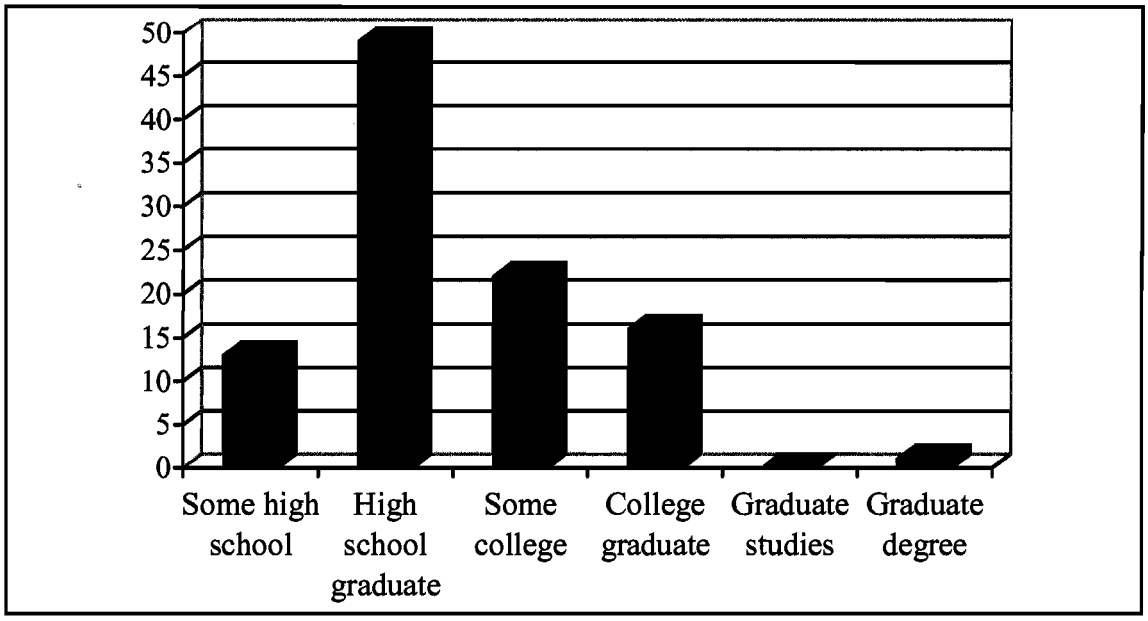

Figure 15. Mean conversion growth percentage of the various educational categories in the Relational model

It is apparent that like the Program-Based model, the Relational model churches included in the current study have gained a higher percentage of converts among high school graduates. In fact, these two models share a certain affinity as it relates to bringing people to Christ who are at similar places educationally. The results from this survey item were very helpful in obtaining a more detailed look at a crucial demographic characteristic.

Taking into account each of the items in the survey related to research question one, the returned data revealed much information on the types of individuals reached by the various church planting models included in the current study. Most of the reported data was in agreement with established assumptions about the various church planting models contained in the literature, the most notable exception being the income levels of those reached by the Ministry-Based model.

Survey Findings Related to Geographic Location of the Church Plant (RQ2)

Research Question 2 (RQ2) is concerned with the relationship between the conversion growth within each geographic target area of each church plant and the church planting model employed. Findings resulting from this research question are displayed in figures which illustrate the mean conversion growth rates in each geographic location compared by model selection. To obtain the data relevant to this research question, churches responding from each of the models examined in the current study were categorized according to four geographic locations. Those indicating on the survey that they were located in open country, village, or town settings were placed in the "rural" category. Those indicating that they were located in small cities, or medium and large neighborhood settings were placed in the "neighborhood" category. Those indicating that they were located in either medium or large city suburban settings were placed in the "suburb" category, and those indicating that they were located in either medium or large city downtown areas were placed in the "downtown" category. Precise definitions of these categories are given in Chapter One.

Within each church planting model, the churches were gathered according to the above criteria, and an average worship attendance figure obtained from each location. In addition, the average worship attendance was compared with the number of individuals converted in those churches. The forthcoming figures illustrate the resulting data. Among the Program-Based churches, the rural worship attendance average was 39. The neighborhood worship attendance average was 38, the suburban worship attendance average was 87, and the downtown worship attendance average was 38. In spite of these initial figures, the greatest conversion percentage did not come from the churches in the

area with the greatest average attendance. Figure 16 illustrates the mean conversion growth within the Program-Based church in each geographic location.

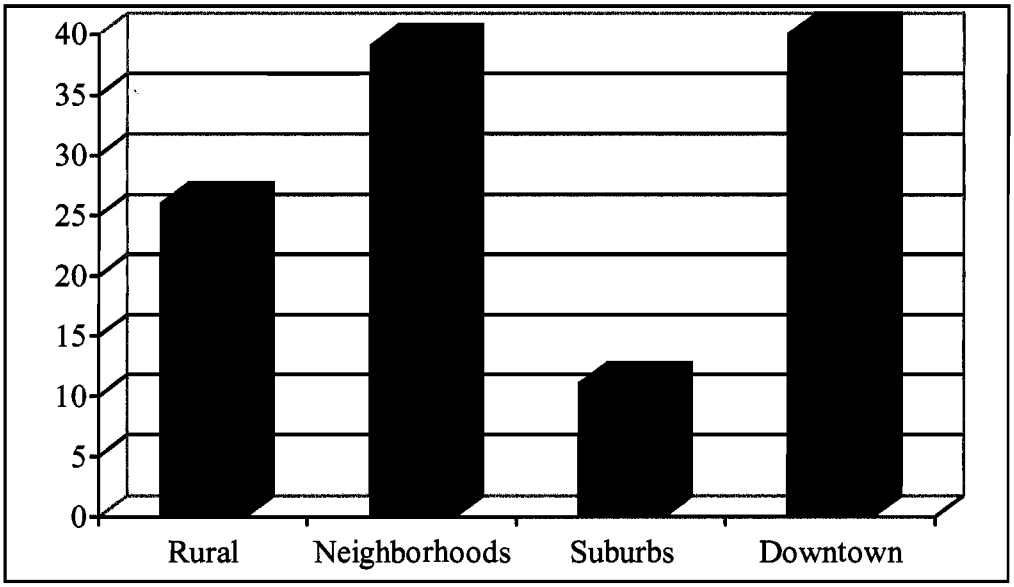

Figure 16. Mean conversion growth percentages in each geographic location occurring in the Program-Based model.

Strangely enough, the average size of the worship service in each geographic location was inversely proportional to the amount of conversion growth reported in each location. For example, Program-Based churches in the suburbs, while reporting the largest average attendance, report the lowest percentage of their congregations having come into the church via conversion.

This same phenomenon is observed when examining the mean conversion growth among the various geographic locations in the Purpose-Driven model. The average attendance at Purpose-Driven church plants in the rural locations was 70, compared with 109 in the neighborhood locations, 62 in the suburban settings, and 90 in the downtown locations. Yet the conversion growth percentages were, once again, almost inversely proportional to the size of the churches in which those conversions took

place. Figure 17 illustrates the mean results for those reporting churches utilizing the Purpose-Driven model.

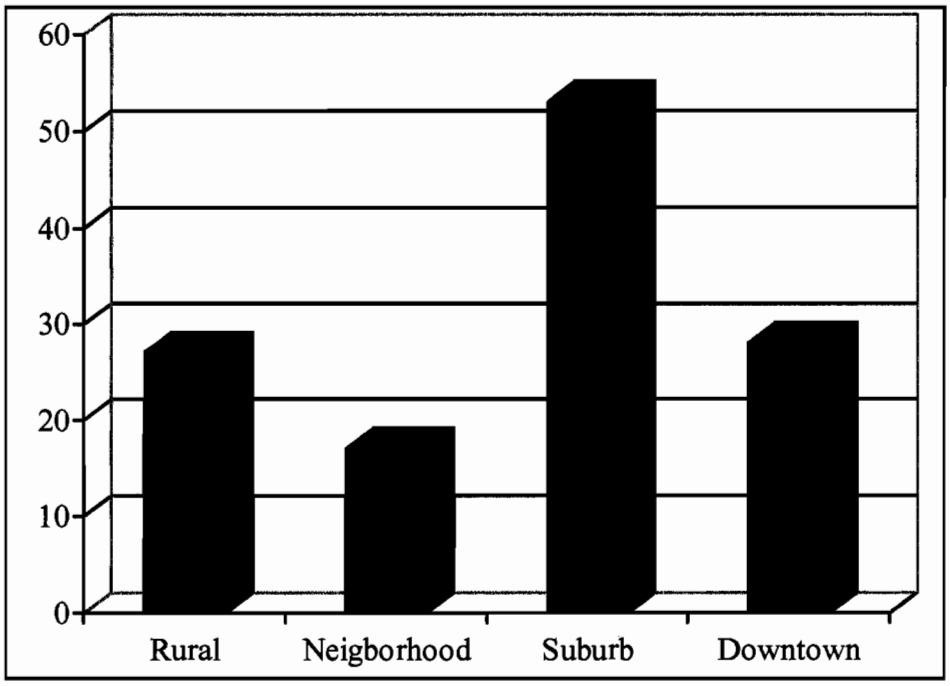

Figure 17. Mean conversion growth percentages in each geographic location occurring in the Purpose-Driven church planting model

While the Purpose-Driven churches in the suburban locations reported the smallest average worship attendance, they also reported the largest percentage of their congregations as having come to Christ through the ministry of their church. This trend is also seen among the Seeker-Based models included in the current study. One significant difference is that the Seeker-Based churches reported much higher conversion growth rates in all geographic locations than any other model examined in the current study. Churches identified as Seeker-Based who indicated that they were in a rural setting had an average worship attendance of 40. There was only one Seeker-Based congregation participating in this study identified as existing in a neighborhood setting,

and its average worship attendance was 220. Seeker-Based churches located in the suburban areas reported a mean worship attendance of 67, while those located in downtown settings reported an average worship attendance of 80. When these figures are compared with the mean number of conversions occurring in each location, the following results occur.

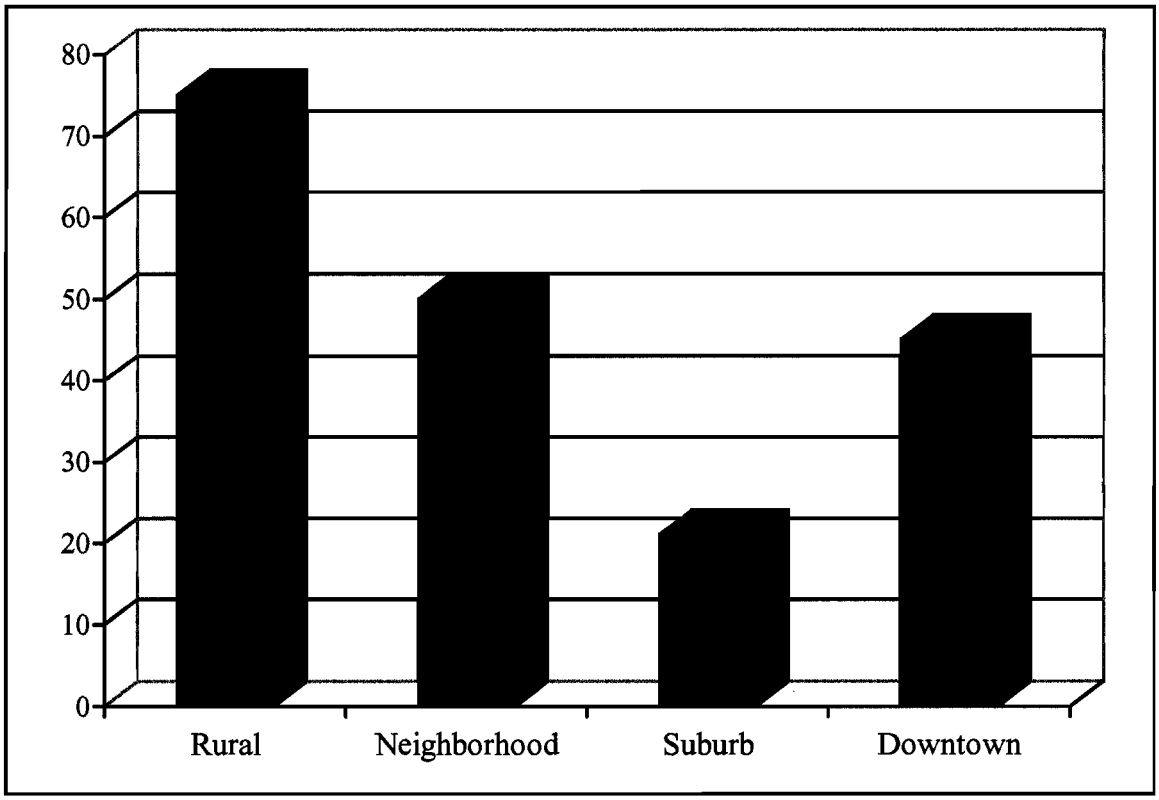

Figure 18. Mean conversion growth percentages in each geographic location occurring in the seeker targeted church planting model.

The data indicates that the greatest conversion growth among the Seeker-Based churches took place among those located in rural settings. As can be seen above, Seeker-Based churches in this area reported a mean conversion growth percentage at least 20 % higher than any other area. However, Seeker-Based churches in both the neighborhood and downtown locations also reported a strong mean conversion growth percentage. The

one surprise of these findings is the performance of the Seeker-Based model in the suburban areas. The literature suggests that suburbia is one of the best locations for a church of this model. The literature also suggests that the Seeker-Based model is most effective in areas where there are large pools of people from which to draw, which generally means that it would be less effective in rural areas, as these areas are usually sparsely populated. In short, some of the data reported for the relationship of the geographic location to the Seeker-Bssed model is not consistent with what the literature suggests as the norm.

Among the churches identified as employing the Ministry-Based model, the average worship attendance of those existing in rural areas was 30, while the mean attendance in neighborhoods was 44. Average attendance reported in the suburban areas was much higher, at 77, while 39 was the mean reported attendance among ministry based congregations located in downtown settings. The mean conversion growth percentages of these congregations as they occurred in each geographic location is given in Figure 19.

The above data suggests that the reporting ministry based churches had reached a greater percentage of converts in neighborhood areas. The literature suggests that downtown, urban locations are possibly the best areas in which to plant churches that follow this paradigm. Yet the literature also makes mention of the "graying of America," and contends that retiring baby boomers may benefit from this model of church planting, thereby making the Ministry-Based model as useful in neighborhood and suburban settings as it presently is in more urban areas. Therefore, the above data, while

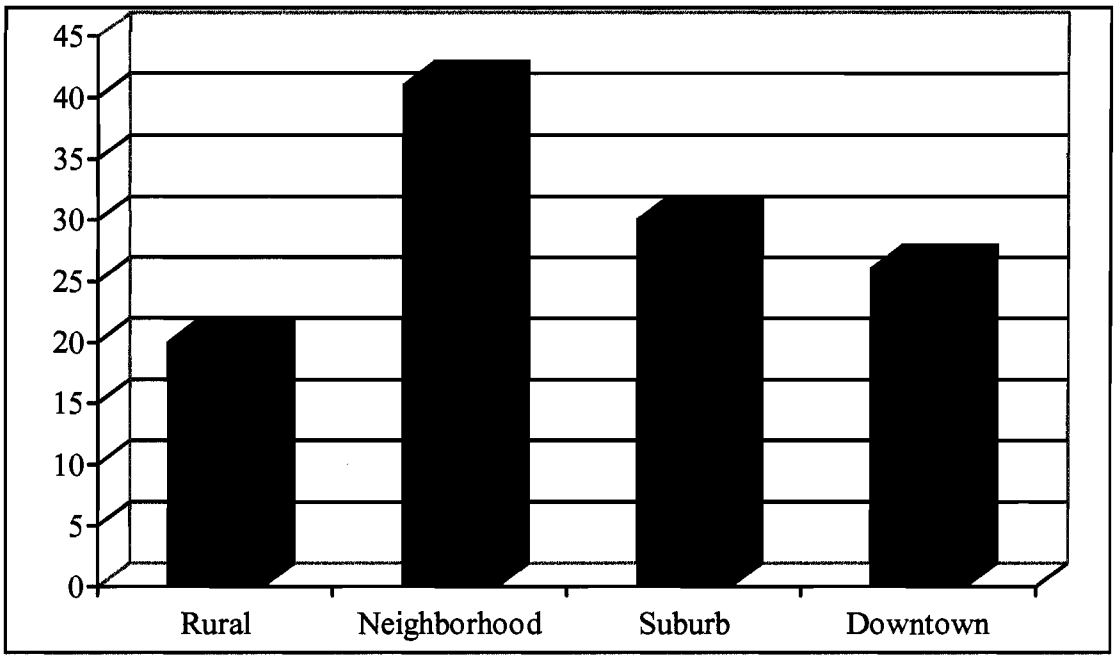

Figure 19. Mean conversion growth percentages in each geographic location occurring in the ministry based church planting model.

displaying a stronger emphasis toward the neighborhood areas, does not necessarily conflict with the literature.

Among the churches identified as employing the Relational model of church planting, the average attendance in rural areas was 39, compared with 65 in neighborhood settings, 91 in suburban settings, and 71 in downtown settings. When comparing this data with the mean number of conversions in each location, the following data is discovered.

Again it is observed in yet another church planting model that the location with the highest average attendance is not the location with the highest percentage of conversion growth. Downtown locations boasted the greatest percentage of their congregations having come into the church via conversion, with Relational models in neighborhood settings only one percentage point behind. Relational churches in

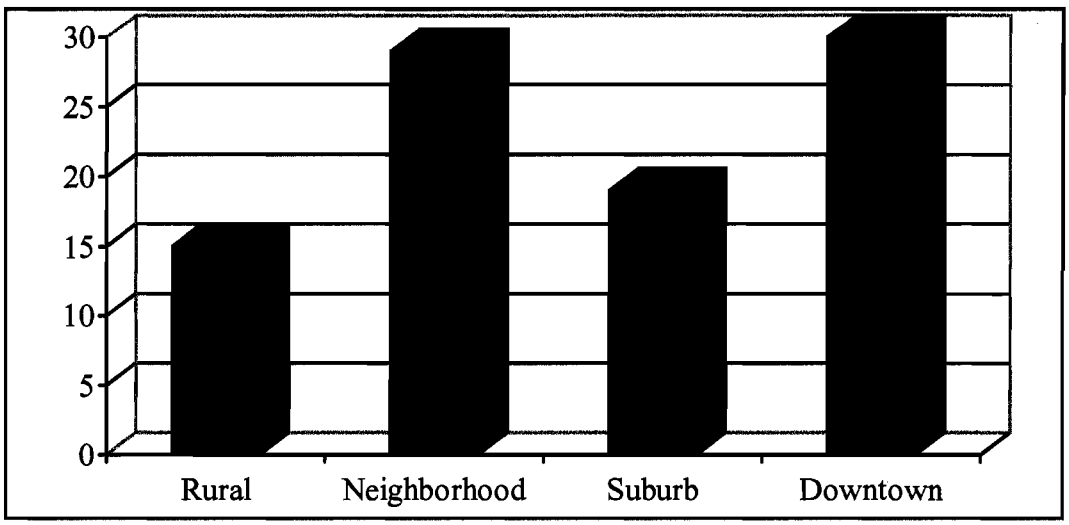

Figure 20. Mean conversion growth percentages in each geographic location occurring in the relational church planting model.

suburban and rural areas fell significantly behind the neighborhood and downtown locations in terms of their mean conversion growth percentages.

As only three house churches were involved in the current study, two in suburban areas and one in a rural area, there was not enough data to generate a sufficient comparative analysis. Where data was reported for the house church, it is generally given, but there are many areas where either there was no response, or not sufficient response to report the data for the house church. Therefore, comparative results for the three house churches included in the current study are not available as they relate to this research question.

Survey Findings Related to Generational Conversion Growth (RQ3)

Research Question 3 (RQ3) is concerned with the relationship between the church planting models employed and the conversion growth of the various generational groups. Findings which result from the exploration of this Research Question are

displayed in figures which illustrate the mean percentage of conversions among each generational group as attained in each of the church planting models employed. Churches that responded to the survey indicated the numbers, among those who were brought into their church via conversion, of converts from each of the generational groups. Because there were only 3 congregations in the current study identified as house churches, obtaining a sample sufficient for study in this area was not feasible. However, the other five church planting models included in the current study were examined in light of Research Question 3. Figure 21 illustrates the resulting data comparing the mean conversion growth of the "builder" generation as it was reported to have occurred in each church planting model.

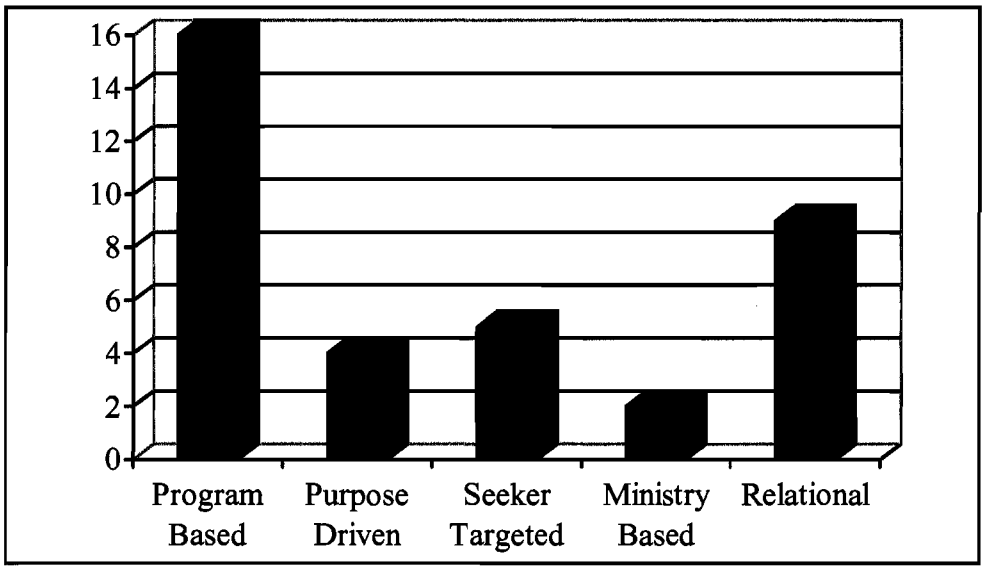

Figure 21. Mean percentage of "builder" conversion growth reported in each of the church planting models

Although none of the church planting models reported more than 20 % of their converts from this generation, those reporting who employed the Program-Based model claimed a much higher percentage of their converts from this generation than from any

other model in the current study. The Program-Based model also reported a similar percentage of its converts from the "boomer" generation, and would have reported the highest percentage of converts from this generation of all the models observed in the current study, were it not for the percentages reported by the Ministry-Based church plants. Figure 22 illustrates the data reported concerning "boomer" generation converts.

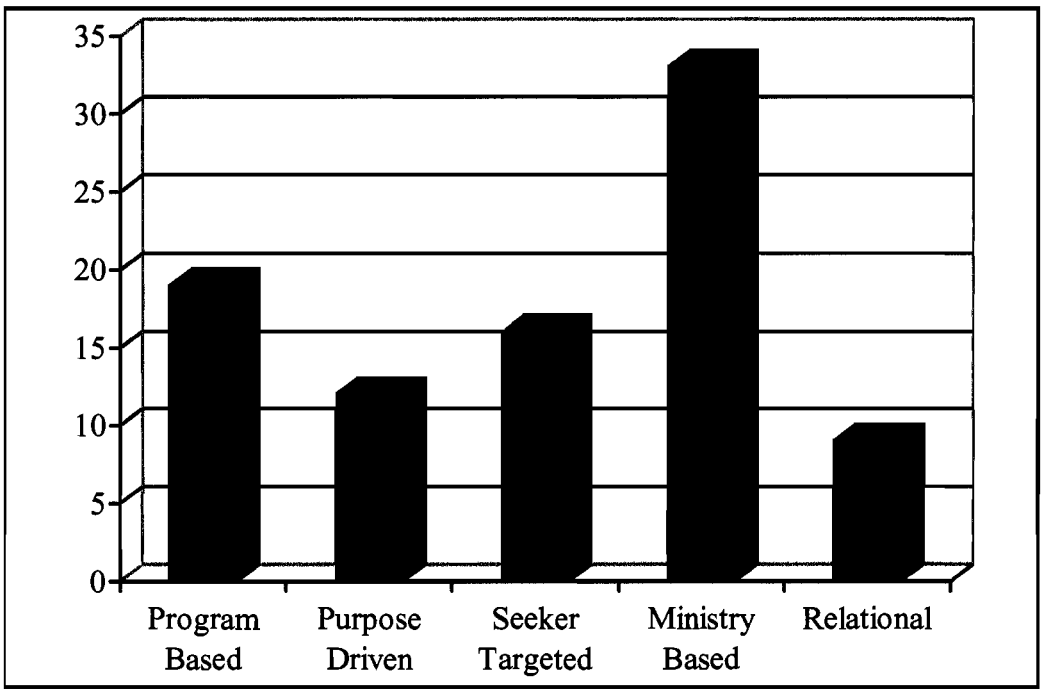

Figure 22. Mean percentage of "boomer" conversion growth reported in each of the church planting models.

Ministry-Based churches reporting data for the current study reported the greatest percentage of conversions in their churches among those in the "boomer" category. Although conversions among baby boomers in Program-Based church plants was 3 % higher than the conversions in that same church planting model among "builders," the percentage of their conversions among this group still did not exceed 20%. Yet the percentage of conversions begins to increase in most of the models

observed in the current study with the "busters." Churches participating in the current study from three of the five models observed in this research question reported "Generation X" among the highest percentage of those evangelized in their churches. The two models who did not report this generational group as among their highest percentage of converts were the Ministry-Based and Relational models. Figure 23 illustrates a comparison of the percentage of busters reached by the various models.

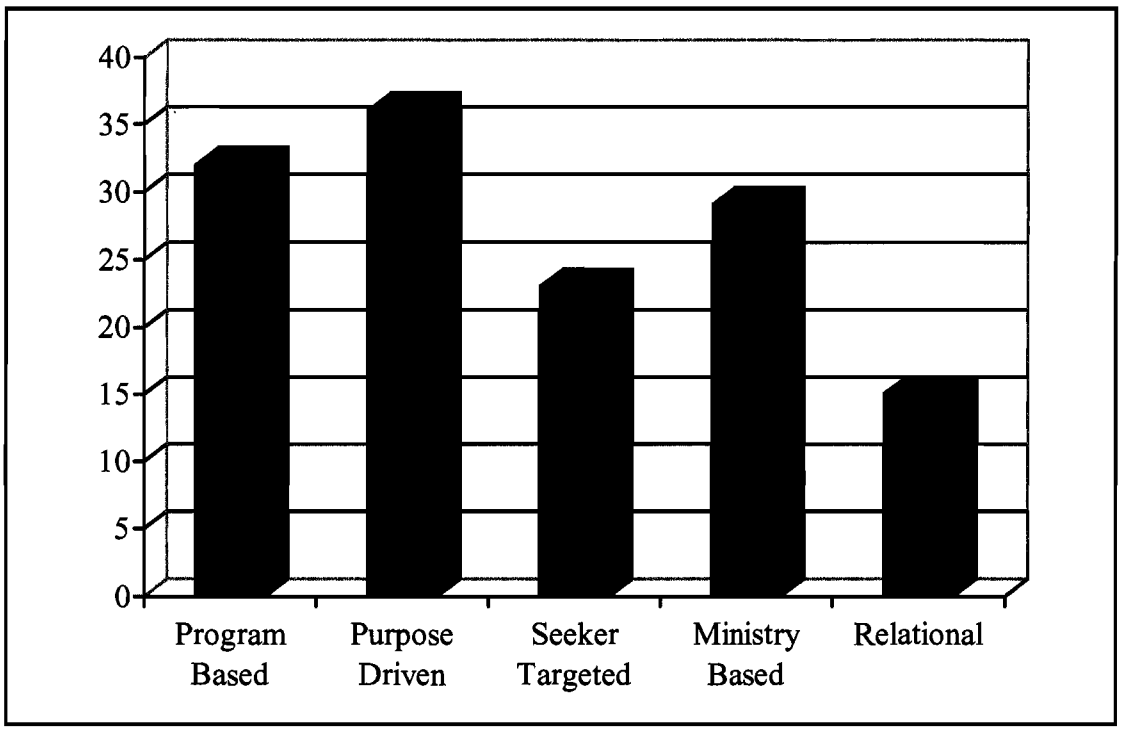

Figure 23. Mean percentage of "buster" conversion growth reported in each of the church planting models.

The data seems to indicate this to be the generation where the Purpose-Driven and Seeker-Based models begin to see a greater percentage of their converts. However, the Program based model also reports the largest percentage of their conversions from this generational category. The Relational model was the only model in which less than twenty percent of its converts were from this generation. Churches identified as

employing the Relational model reported conversions among builders, boomers, and busters as below 20 % of the conversions taking place. Yet the response of younger generations to the relational model seems to be much higher, as Figure 24 indicates.

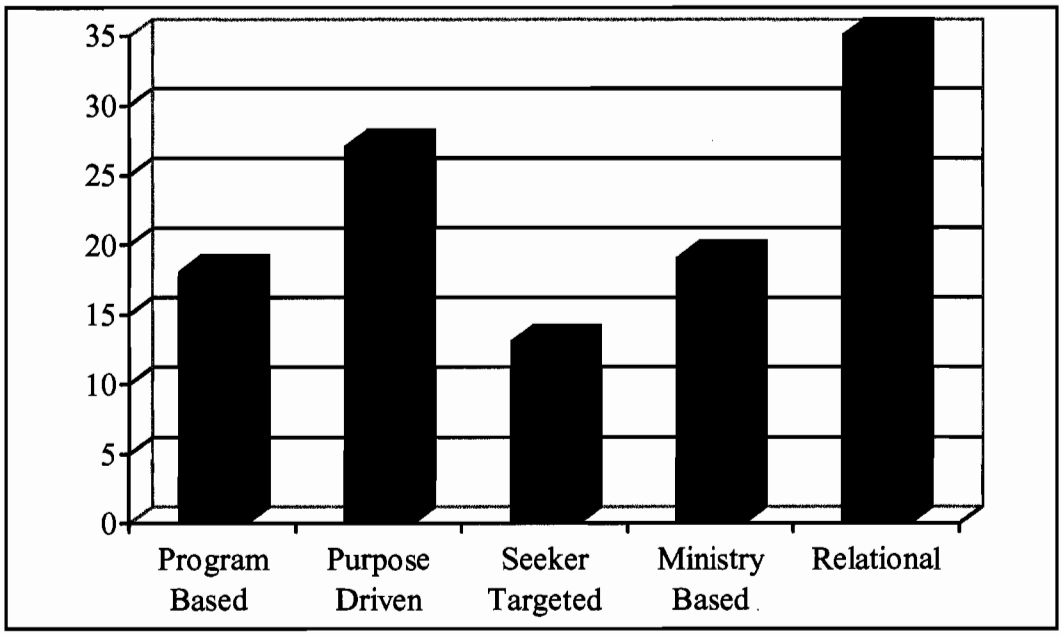

Figure 24. Mean conversion growth reported among "bridgers" in each of the church planting models.

As is clearly seen, those churches identified as employing the Relational model led the others in terms of the percentage of those from the bridger generation who came to Christ in their churches. Among the other four models examined in the current study, the Purpose-Driven model was the only other reporting more than 20 % of its converts from this generational category.

When measuring the percentage of individuals converted who were born after 1994 (children), the mean percentages in all of the models were comparable, and also seemed proportional to the number of buster and boomer converts in those same models.

Figure 25 illustrates the reported data concerning the percentage of conversions among children.

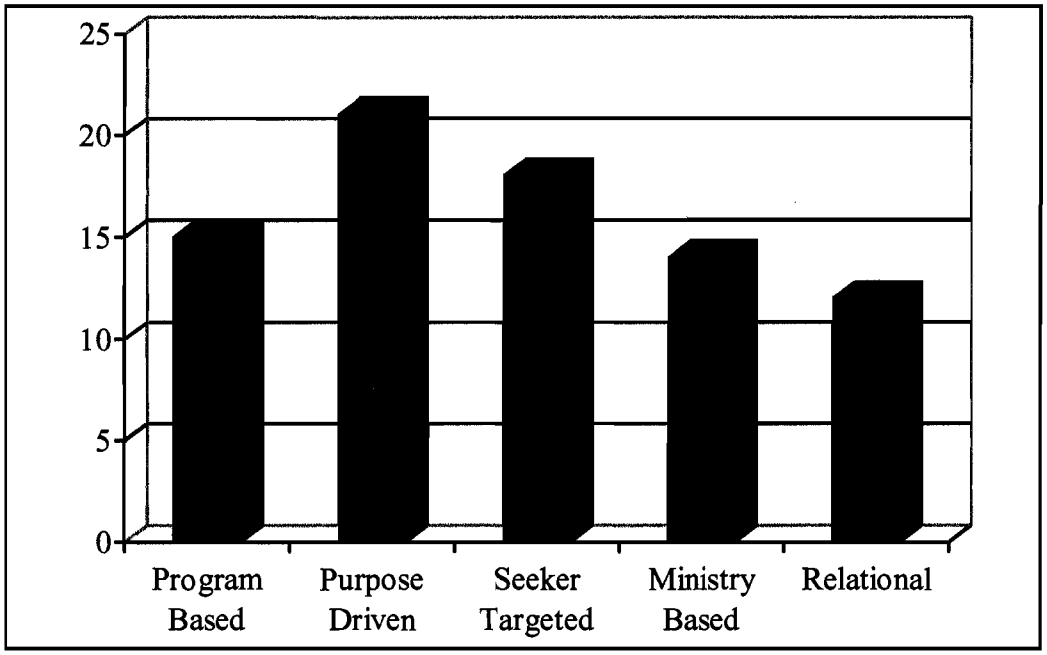

Figure 25. Mean conversion growth of children reported from each of the church planting models.

Churches identified in the current study as Purpose-Driven reported the largest percentage of children coming to Christ from all those converted in their churches. Seeker-Based and Program-Based churches reported comparable, albeit lower percentages, while the Ministry-Based and Relational churches reported the lowest percentage of children from those converted in their churches.

Survey Findings Related to the Responsiveness of Ethnic Groups (RQ4)

Research Question 4 (RQ4) is concerned with the relationship between the conversion growth rate of the various ethnic groups in North America and the church

planting model employed. Findings which resulted from the exploration of this research question are displayed in figures which compare the mean conversion growth percentages of the various ethnic groups reached by each of the church planting models examined in the current study. The five figures which appear below illustrate the mean percentages of conversions among each ethnic category for each of the five church planting models employed and observed in the current study. Again, insufficient data was returned concerning the house church model. Therefore, this model is not included in the exploration of the current research question. Also, none of the churches included in the current study indicated reaching anyone in the "Hawaiian/Pacific Islander" ethnic category. Therefore, this category has been omitted from the forthcoming figures. Figure 26 illustrates the resulting data pertinent to this research question obtained from those churches identified as Program-Based.

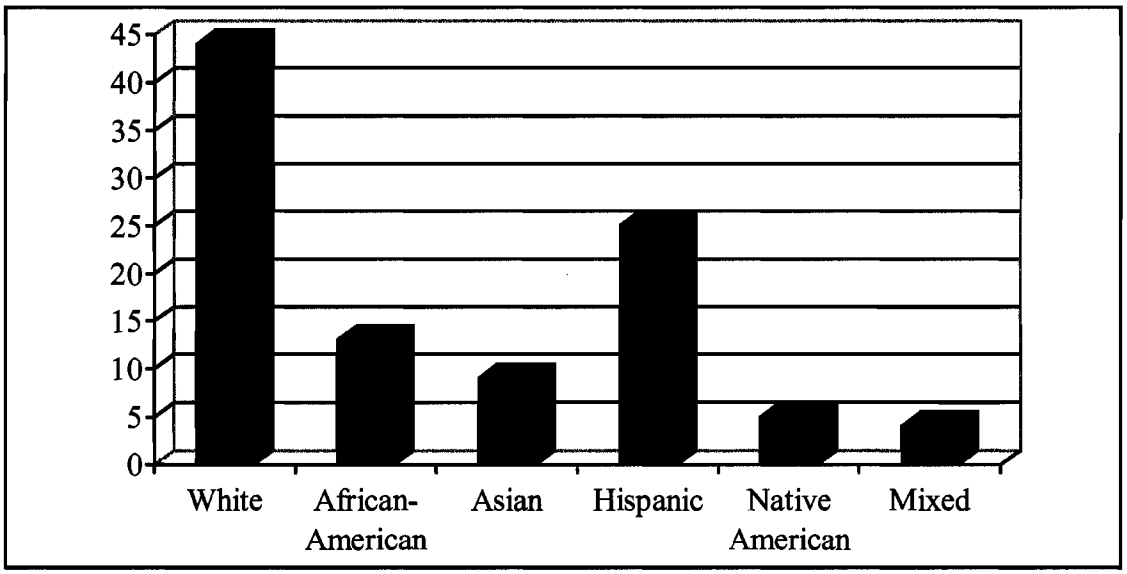

Figure 26. Mean conversion growth percentages among ethnic groups reported by churches identified as Program Based.

While the Program-Based churches reported the majority of their converts as Caucasian, there were significant percentages of other ethnic groups reported to be converted in churches identified as employing this church planting model. Figure 27 illustrates the same data for churches in the current study identified as employing the Purpose-Driven church planting model.

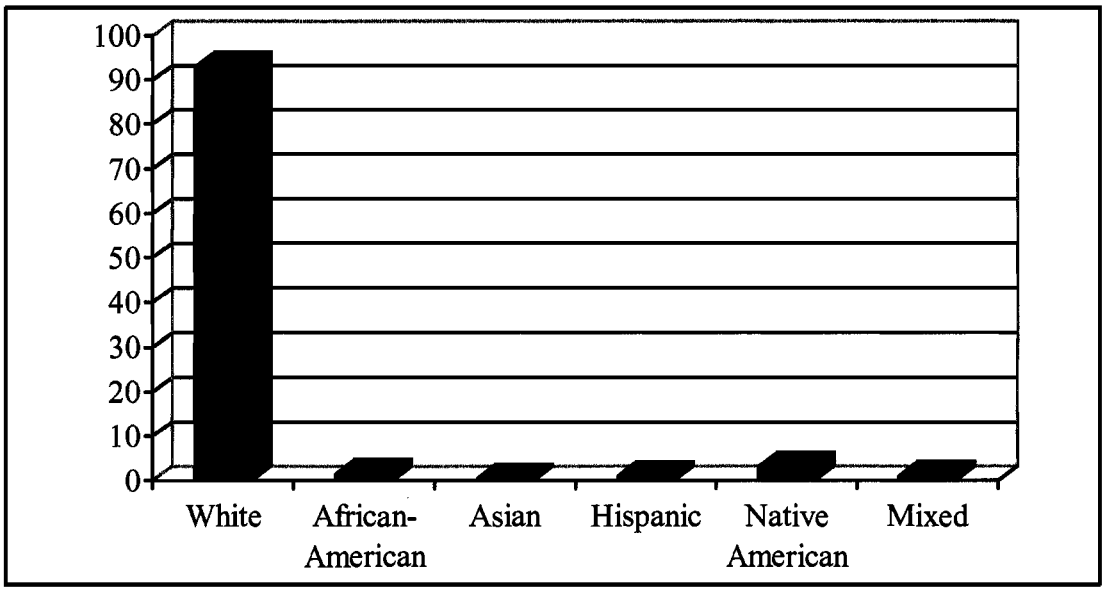

Figure 27. Mean conversion growth percentages among ethnic groups reported by churches identified as Purpose Driven.

Churches in the current study identified as Purpose-Driven reported the vast majority of their conversion growth among Caucasians. There were a few Hispanic churches which identified themselves as Purpose-Driven, and they make up the one percent of Hispanic conversions displayed. All in all, the Purpose-Driven church plants seemed to indicate the vast majority of their converts as white. Figure 28 displays the responses concerning Research Question 3 as they relate to the Seeker-Based church planting model.

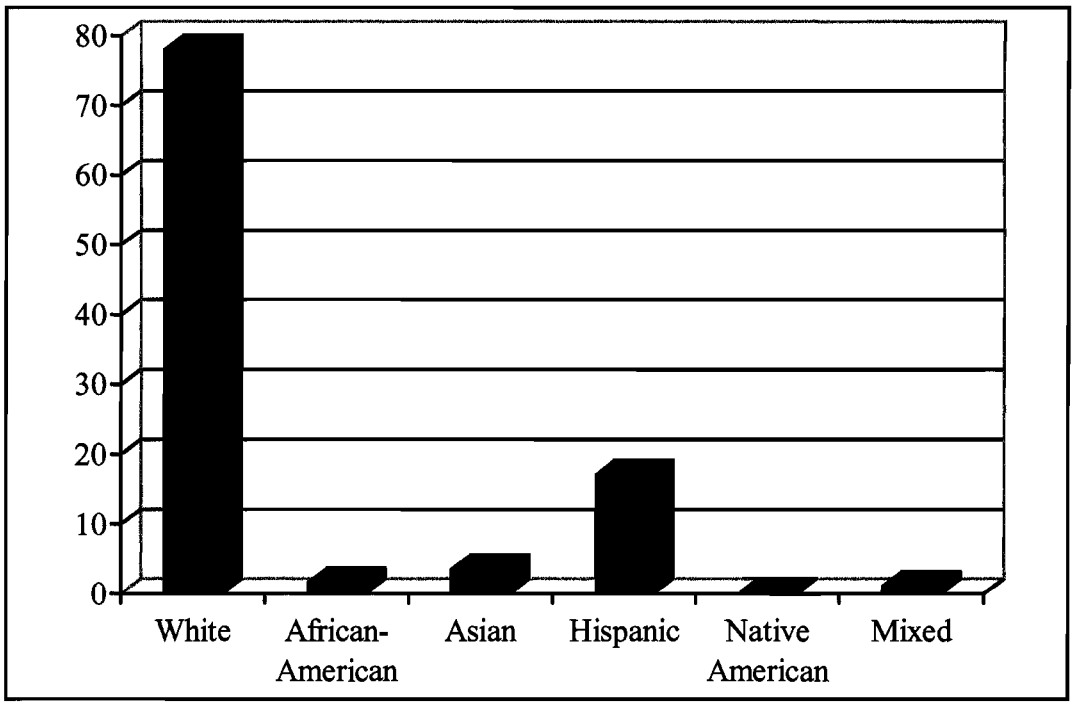

Figure 28. Mean conversion growth percentages among ethnic groups reported by churches identified as Seeker Targeted.

Seeker-Based churches participating in the current study also reported, along with the Purpose-Driven churches, a very high percentage of its converts as "white." However, those employing the Seeker-Based model seemed to have reach a notable percentage of Hispanics that is comparable to the data reported by Program-Based churches. Churches identified in the current study as employing a Ministry-Based model reported the following data, displayed in Figure 29.

While the Ministry-Based churches included in the current study reported a substantial percentage of its converts as "white," churches identified with this church planting model reported that the majority of their converts were Hispanic. These churches also reported higher percentages of African-Americans being converted in their midst. Likewise, churches included in the current study identified as "Relational" reported notable percentages of ethnic conversions, particularly among the Asian

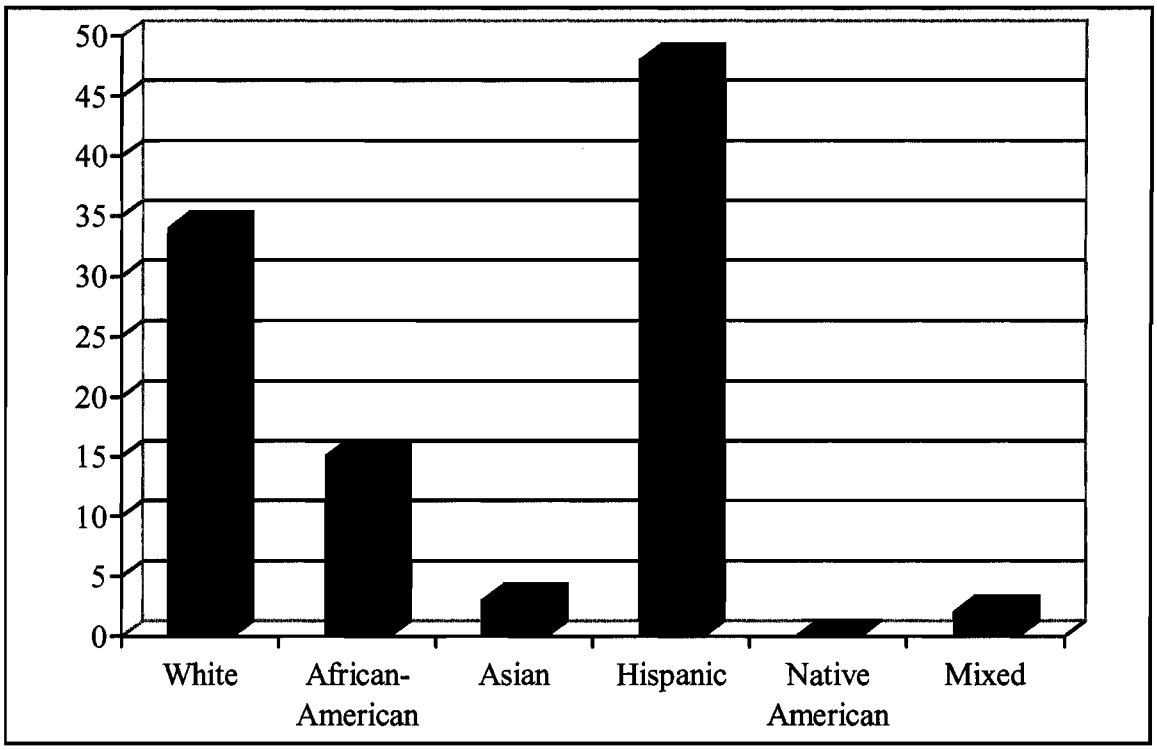

Figure 29. Mean conversion growth percentage among ethnic groups reported by churches identified as Ministry Based.

community. Figure 30 displays the data obtained from Relational churches in the current study.

Relational churches in the current study reported a mean of 28% of their converts as being from an Asian ethnic background, thereby demonstrating the Relational model as the model which reached the greatest percentage of Asian peoples among all the models included in the current study. Still, the percentage of converts classified as "white" exceeded 60 % in this model, while the percentage of Caucasian conversions was below sixty percent in only two models examined in the current study. The Program-Based and the Ministry-Based models were the only two to report mean conversion growth among whites as below 50 %.

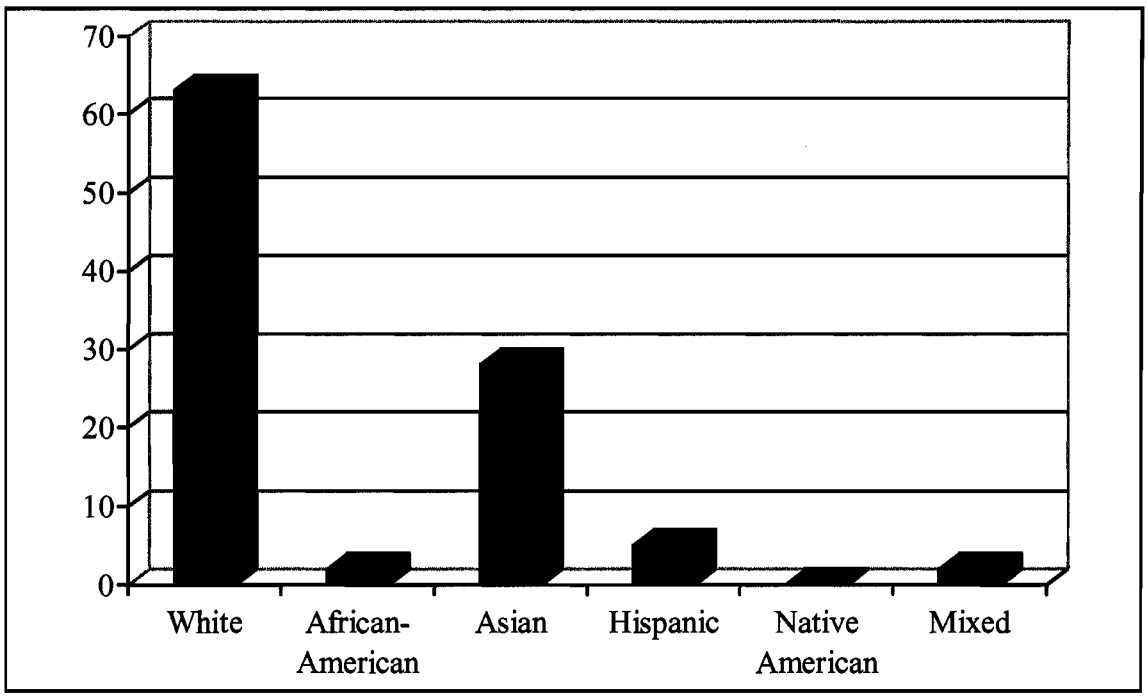

Figure 30. Mean conversion growth percentage among ethnic groups reported by churches identified as relational.

Survey Findings Related to the Frequency of New Church Starts (RQ5)

Research Question 5 (RQ5) is concerned with the relationship between the church planting model employed and the rate of new congregations sponsored by each of the investigated church planting models. The survey simply asked each respondent whether their new church had in the past, or was currently helping in the development of a new church start beyond their own. The question was specific enough as to preclude simply giving to the Cooperative Program as sufficient to claim that the individual church was involved in planting other churches. Those who answered "yes" to the church planting involvement question were helping in a "regular and tangible" way via personal involvement in planting another church. Each respondent who answered "yes" on the

survey was also asked to briefly explain the nature of their church's involvement in a new church start, so as to further substantiate the validity of this claim.

Of the 18 churches identified as Program-Based, 4 answered "yes," 12 answered "no," and 2 did not respond to the question. Of the 30 churches identified as Purpose-Driven, 13 answered "yes," 11 answered "no," and 6 did not respond to the question. Of the 10 churches identified as Seeker-Based, 2 answered "yes," 7 answered "no," and 1 did not respond to the question. Of the 13 churches identified as Ministry-Based, 3 answered "yes," 7 answered "no," and 3 did not respond to the question.

Of the 28 churches identified as Relational, 8 answered "yes," 14 answered "no," and 6 did not respond to the question. Of the three churches identified as a House Church, 2 answered "yes," and 1 answered "no" to the question. These responses were used to calculate the percentage of churches among all the models examined in the current study who were actively involved in helping start other new churches. The result of this investigation is displayed in Figure 31 below.

At first glance, it seems that the House Church enjoys a distinct advantage over the other models in terms of how many of them actually become personally involved in the planting of another church. Of the three House Churches participating in the current study, two indicated involvement in planting another church, which results in a 67% reproduction rate. Again however, it must be stated that the House Church data is given for informational purposes only, and that there were not sufficient house churches in the population which met the research criteria to make any conclusive statements or observations about the house church. The percentage reflected in Figure 31 is the result of 2 out of the 3 churches examined claiming to be involved in church planting.

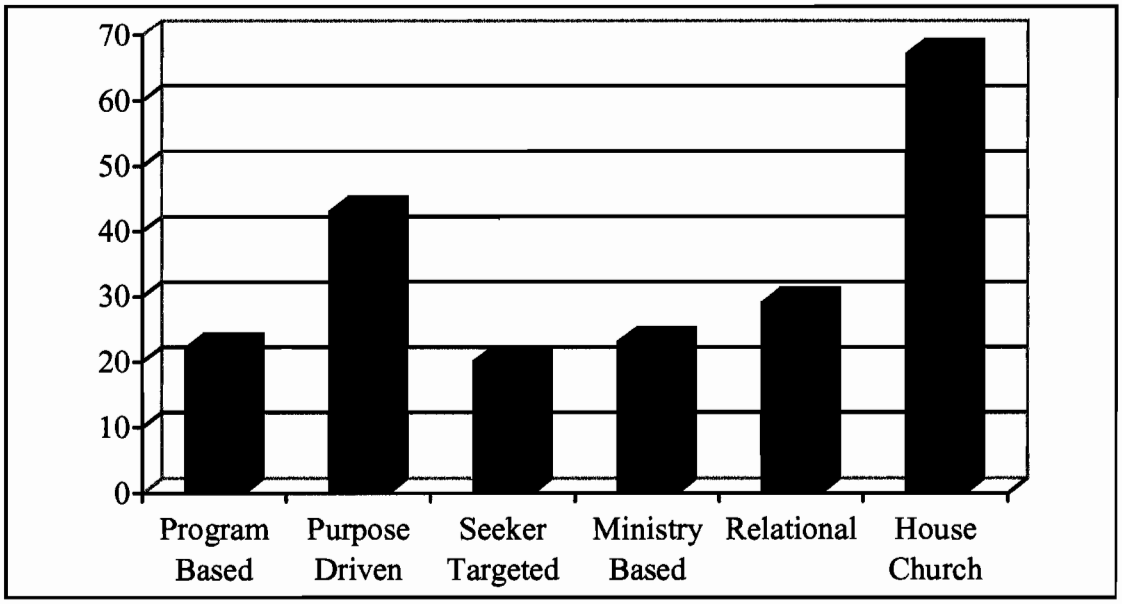

Figure 31. Percentage of churches within each church planting model who are involved in planting another church.

Excluding the house church, it appears from the data above that the Purpose-Driven churches examined in the current study had a greater percentage of their congregations personally, and legitimately involved in planting another church. Relational churches also reported that a comparatively high percentage of their congregations were involved in starting another church, with twenty-nine percent of them answering "yes" to the survey question.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The basic design of the research process is one that has been used many times before when general demographic information has been sought. The population and sample used in the current study come from previous and recent research doctoral studies in the area of church planting, and although the prior research did not focus exclusively on church planting models, the models employed by the churches in the current study

were already noted in many of the churches in the population. As for the churches in the sample that did not indicate a model employment in the previous research, obtaining this information was done with relative ease by simply contacting the church.

The instrumentation was sound, and designed around the five research questions which served as the focus of the current study. The expert panel that reviewed the survey instrument was extremely important to the entire research process. One of these individuals leads church planting research at the North American Mission Board, and evaluated each of the questions for clarity, and their connection to the research questions. He also made helpful suggestions concerning which data to ask for. The second member of the expert panel is a denominational church planting leader and strategist who viewed the entire research process from the perspective of whether the data obtained would be useful for planning the future structure and philosophy of new churches in various areas, and among various people. The third member is a church planting veteran of thirty-two years, and the retired head of the Church Extension Department of the Home Mission Board. This individual brought a deep understanding both of the processes and goals of planting a new church, and his insight into the survey design was invaluable.

Overall, the research process provided significant data that was sufficient to provide information directly related to the five research questions. The questions on the survey provided asked for data in a particular manner. For example, rather than asking for percentages outright, the survey asked for the raw numbers of individuals among the various demographic categories who had come to faith in Christ, and those numbers were transposed to percentages when all of the data was gathered. This approach was

endorsed by the expert panel, and assured more accuracy in reporting what was actually happening in terms of conversion growth in the churches.

Several weaknesses that appeared to the researcher concerning the research process should also be noted. First of all, more detail could have been provided on the survey instrument to obtain more accurate data concerning the various demographic categories of people. For example, when asking about the marital status of those converted to Christ in the churches, the survey asked for the number of "divorced" individuals. Yet the survey questions did not differentiate between divorced persons who were not re-married, and "married" individuals who had previously gone through a divorce. The end result is possibly that many individuals who remarried after a previous divorce were simply listed in the "married" category. A more meticulous approach to a few of the survey questions might have averted such issues.

There could also have been more continuity in the survey concerning the questions on the survey that were related to the first research question. This research question dealt primarily with marital and economic status, and educational attainment. Yet these three questions were not found together on the survey. To have placed these questions together on the survey would have made the tabulation of the data relevant to research question one more streamlined.

In addition, a larger sample was desired in the beginning, in order to ensure a more accurate reflection of the conversion growth taking place among the six church planting models. The researcher set delimitations that made the research more well-defined, but at the same time kept many of the churches in the original population of six hundred from being able to be included in the current study. Also, a larger sample would

have required looking at churches much older than five years at the time of the research, thereby including many already established churches into the pool. Examining churches outside the Southern Baptist Convention would have also required a prolonged and more extensive population search, which could possibly have made the current study longitudinal.

It is also believed that it would have been helpful, both to the researcher and to those who may benefit from the current study, for the survey to have invited more elaboration on the kinds of church planting being done by the churches in the sample. In retrospect, a list could have been conceived from which the survey participants could have picked the particular things each church was doing to facilitate the multiplication of new churches. For example, did they send out a core group from their own congregation? Did they allow the daughter church to use their facilities? Do they allow full access to the church planting staff to the church office? Such elaboration would have given much greater insight into the level of involvement of churches which claimed to be helping a new church get started.

Finally, a few participating in the survey noted that while they started their church with one model of ministry, they switched models "mid-stream." In this case, the church was placed in the category of the model they used to begin the church. However, additional questions pertaining to this phenomenon would have provided more clarity as to how each of the church plants was adapting and continuing to grow. It is possible that such observations might have even led to an additional Research Question.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This study began with the goal of determining whether there is a relationship between conversion growth and the rate of new church starts in various contexts, and the church planting model employed. This conclusion of the research study includes an analysis and interpretation of findings related to the research questions. It also includes the implications generated by the research findings, as well as the application of these findings to church planting praxis, and suggestions for further research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to determine if a relationship exists between conversion growth and the rate of new church starts in churches of various cultural contexts, and the church planting model employed. Examination of the new churches in the research pool revealed much about who is being reached by the various models, and in which contexts each church planting model is most likely to succeed. Observation of the data also revealed some areas in which Southern Baptist church plants may need to improve in order to reach some segments of the population which in the current study indicated low conversion growth in all the models. The data obtained from the survey revealed much information necessary to begin answering the five Research Questions which served as the focus of the current study.

The Demographic Characteristics of The Converts in Each Model

The data returned gave much insight into the kinds of people that are being reached by the various church planting models. The demographic characteristics examined related to levels of education and affluence, as well as marital status. These items allowed the researcher to see how the various church planting models performed among the many different types of people who live in North America.

The Program-Based model. Married individuals comprised 53 % of those converted in the Program-Based churches participating in the survey. Single individuals made up 28 % of the converts, and divorced or widowed made up the remaining 19 %. This data suggests that the Program-Based model shares a certain affinity with married couples. The data is in general agreement with the literature, which suggests that "busy families can be attracted to a church that serves the whole family, offers community and demands little in return" (Bulley 2000, 3).

While the literature suggests that those among the "middle class" are more likely to be attracted to a Program-Based church, the data returned suggested that the Program-Based church plants included in the current study were equally effective in bringing people to Christ out of a variety of income levels. While the greatest percentage of the converts reported in these congregations came from households making between $25,000 and $50,000 annually (45%), there was almost equal distribution among the converts who came from upper-middle and lower class households. Twenty-one percent of those converted in a Program-Based church came from homes making less than $25,000 annually, while 31 % came from homes making between $50,000 and $75,000.

At the same time, the Program-Based churches in the current study reported a very low percentage of converts from homes making above $75,000.

In addition, those converted in these churches appeared to be less educated than those converted in other church planting models. Thirty-five percent of those converted in the Program-Based churches held only a high school diploma. Twenty-seven percent had attended college, but held no degree, and thirty-two percent held either a college or graduate degree.

When these observations are digested, the conclusion is that the Program-Based churches included in the current study reported seeing people converted from a demographic very similar to what was suggested in the literature; middle-class, lower level white collar and blue collar married couples with children.

The Purpose-Driven model. The marital status of those reported to be converted in Purpose-Driven churches was more varied than that of those converted in Program-Based congregations. The difference between single and married individuals was almost even, with married individuals making up 50 % of the converts, and singles making up 40%. Yet the percentage of converts who were divorced was essentially the same as that of the Program-Based church.

Additionally, the Purpose-Driven churches included in the current study reached a slightly lower percentage of people from homes making less than $25,000 annually, and a slightly larger percentage of those making over $75,000. All in all, those coming to Christ in Purpose-Driven churches share roughly the same general economic status as those converted in Program based congregations. In short, "middle class" would best describe converts from both of these church planting models.

The Purpose-Driven churches reported a slightly higher percentage of college graduates coming to faith than was observed to be taking place in Program-Based churches, but the educational level of those coming to Christ in these churches was also roughly the same as those converted in Program-Based churches.

In general then, those converted in Purpose-Driven churches share very similar demographic characteristics with those converted in Program-Based churches. The only significant difference is in the percentage of singles reached by the Purpose-Driven churches, suggesting that the Purpose-Driven model may be more conducive than is its Program-Based counterpart to reaching this segment of the population. Again, these observations largely coincide with the literature.

The Seeker-Based model. Churches participating in the current study who identified themselves as employing the Seeker-Based model reported similar percentages of individuals coming to Christ from all marital status categories listed. Churches employing this model also reported significantly higher percentages of divorced individuals coming to faith in their churches. Also, the Seeker-Based churches reported identical percentages of single and married individuals being converted, suggesting that the Seeker-Based model is equally effective at reaching both of these groups.

These churches also reported significantly higher percentages of converts from households making over $75,000 annually, suggesting that more affluent individuals are more likely reached through the employment of this model. These findings are in agreement with the literature, which suggests that the primary focus group of this model are those in the upper-middle class professional category who live in suburbia (McCrary and Putman, 18). It is also noted, however, that the data revealed the Seeker-Based

model to reach similar proportions of individuals from all income levels. This suggests that while the Seeker-Based model may be the most conducive in reaching the affluent, it is also very effective in bringing people to faith from all income categories.

In addition, 45 % of those converted in Seeker-Based churches held a college or graduate degree, suggesting that this model is also most conducive to reaching the more highly educated of North America. Yet again it must be noted that the seeker churches participating in the current study reported similar percentages of conversions among those with less education. This suggests that the seeker model may be utilized to reach a wide variety of people. As the literature suggests, the Seeker-Based churches which are able to contextualize to fit their surrounding areas have been very effective in reaching those areas, almost without regard to who resides there.

In comparing the data from the Seeker-Based churches with that of the other models, it seems that this model is more effective in reaching a well-educated and affluent demographic. Perhaps this is primarily due to the stress that is placed on "excellence" in the Seeker-Based model, which is appealing to the "upper-crust" of society. As McCrary and Putman note, these "church plants are similar to the Lexus commercials in their 'relentless pursuit of excellence.' The value of excellence states that Christ's followers should do their best and not present anything without excellence. This will mean at times choosing not to do certain things until they can be done right" (McCrary and Putman, 9).

The Ministry-Based model. Churches participating in the current study that identified as Ministry-Based reported significant percentages of conversions from both the single and married categories, but only one percent of their converts were divorced.

Nevertheless, the data indicates that the Ministry-Based model reaches both single and married people.

Findings related to the economic status of converts in Ministry-Based churches were somewhat surprising. The literature hints that the primary focus group for this church planting model are those with lower than average incomes. For example, Weathersby asserts that ministry based church plants will take longer to become self supporting because of the low level of income among those it reaches (Weathersby 2000, 17). Yet the data from participating ministry based churches reveals that 70% of their conversions were individuals from households earning more than $25,000 annually. Only 18 % of those converted came from homes in the lowest income category. This is less than the percentages of converts in this same category for the Program-Based, Purpose-Driven and relational churches, and suggests that perhaps the Ministry-Based model is reaching a more affluent demographic than the precedent literature suggests.

One interesting observation is that while the individuals coming to Christ in Ministry-Based churches are wealthier than one might think, they are no more educated than expected. The data indicates that sixty-nine percent of those converted in the participating Ministry-Based churches have no high school diploma, and only 10 % have attended college. Therefore, it might be inferred that the converts in these churches are working higher wage, blue-collar jobs. It is also likely that the income figures reported reflect many two-income families.

The overall picture of the individual most likely reached by this church planting model is a blue collar family, of lower-middle class income and low education. This is generally the demographic that the Ministry-Based church is alleged to most likely reach,

according to the literature. Yet the affinity the literature presupposes those in poverty share with this model was not reflected in the data received from the churches participating in the current study, as only eighteen percent of converts in this church planting model were from households earning less than $25,000 annually.

The Relational model. Churches participating in the current study who identified themselves as employing the Relational church planting model reported that a significant majority of their converts were single. Sixty-five percent of those who came to faith in churches of this genre were single, compared to 28 % among married individuals and seven percent of divorced persons. Perhaps this is due to the craving for community that the literature suggests younger, single persons possess (Hahn and Verhaagen 1998, 176).

The data also revealed that the participating churches utilizing this model reached a significant percentage of individuals making less than $25,000 annually. A greater percentage of converts were reached in this single income category than in the next three categories all combined, which suggests that the Relational model may in fact be the most conducive of all the church planting models at reaching lower income individuals. The average age of those converted in these churches, which is noted in addressing a forthcoming research question, may explain the percentage of lower income converts in these churches.

Forty-nine percent of those converted in the Relational churches held a high school diploma, and 37 % were reported as either attaining some college education, or already obtaining their college degree. One percent of the converts held a post-graduate degree. This data suggests an almost inverted relationship between the educational

attainment and economic status of those converted in these churches. Again, the age of these converts, which is discussed later, is the most probable reason for this phenomenon.

The House Church. Only three House Churches participated in the current study. From those three congregations, mean conversion growth percentages were calculated within all the demographic categories requested on the survey, with the exception of educational levels. Those responding to the survey concerning the House Church did not respond to this item.

The participating House Churches reported even percentages of converts in the various marital status categories. Thirty-six percent of their converts were single, compared with 26 % who were married, 23 % who were divorced, and 15 % who were widowed. This data suggests that the house church is successfully reaching people in all of these categories.

Data obtained concerning the household incomes of converts revealed less economic diversity, with essentially all of those converted being found in the middle-income categories of between $25,000 and $75,000 annually. These House Churches did not report even one convert from any of the other income categories. Again, the low number of House Churches included in this sample must be considered when examining this data. Nevertheless, the House Churches participating in this study reported that virtually all of their converts are from homes with middle class incomes.

The Relationship of the Church Planting Model to Conversion Growth in Geographic Locations

Certain church planting models reflected higher conversion growth rates in geographic areas where the literature suggested these models be planted, while others seemed surprisingly successful at bringing people to Christ in areas the literature did not emphasize as most conducive to that particular model. The raw data was first categorized according to the four main geographic locations mentioned in the previous chapter, and then conversion growth percentages indicated where the various church planting models were most effective.

The Program-Based model. The literature suggests that highly urban populations are not as conducive to the successful implementation of the Program-Based paradigm. Measured in terms of the mean attendance, this assertion would coincide with the data reported in the current study. Yet although the smallest Program-Based churches in the current study were found in urban areas, it was these same areas that saw the highest percentage of conversion growth. In short, the data suggests that the Program-Based church, while not producing the largest attendance, seems very effective at reaching unbelievers in an urban setting.

The Program-Based model was also effective in neighborhood and rural settings, confirming the contention of the literature that Program-Based churches are among the most resilient and adaptable of the models utilized in North America. And although the suburban Program-Based churches boasted the largest mean attendance of all churches employing this structure, they also reported the lowest percentage of conversions. In other words, the data indicates an inversely proportional relationship

between the size of the worship attendance in the four geographic locations and the percentage of that same number who came to Christ in Program-Based churches.

The Purpose-Driven model. The Purpose-Driven church plants reported the greatest percentage of conversions as occurring in suburban settings. Again, as with the Program-Based model, the average attendance was inversely proportional to the conversion growth percentage. The geographic areas where Purpose-Driven churches grew largest were also areas where the conversion growth percentage was much smaller. Conversely, those areas where Purpose-Driven churches did not have as much success in attracting large crowds were areas where the greatest percentage of conversions were taking place. Consequently, the data suggests that neighborhood settings are ideal for growing large Purpose-Driven congregations, but suburban areas are where potential converts are most receptive.

The Seeker-Based model. The literature suggested that because of the "crowd to core" approach to planting Seeker-Based churches, "there must be a large pool of people who are disenfranchised from organized religion that can be targeted" in order to plant a successful church of this model (McCrary and Putman 2000, 18). The literature makes particular mention of Anglo suburbia as the ideal location for a Seeker-Based church. Strangely enough, however, Seeker-Based churches included in the current study and located in suburban contexts reported the lowest conversion growth percentages. Another surprising find was that the greatest conversion growth percentage among Seeker-Based churches was found among those which existed in rural areas, meaning open country settings, towns and villages.

Again, when attendance is the measured variable, the findings of the current study do coincide with the literature. Rural Seeker-Based churches, for example, are much smaller than Seeker-Based churches in other geographic contexts. Nevertheless, measurements of conversion growth in these same churches reveal data that is in conflict with previous contentions.

The Ministry-Based model. Churches participating in the current study and identified as Ministry-Based plants indicated impressive results in reaching people for Christ in all geographic locations. Yet the highest conversion growth percentages were happening in Ministry-Based churches located in neighborhood areas. Ministry-Based churches in suburban areas also demonstrated potency at reaching people for Christ.

Unlike the previous models examined, there seems to be no relationship between the size of the church and the percentage of conversions in the Ministry-Based model. For example, it seems that Ministry-Based churches in rural areas, where the smallest mean attendance was reported, also reported the least percentage of conversions in their churches. Yet Ministry-Based churches in neighborhood areas, while reporting the largest percentage of conversions, did not report the largest mean attendance at their worship services.

The Relational model. The literature holds up this church planting model as the preeminent church planting paradigm for reaching the urban postmodern, and the data returned from Relational churches participating in the current study would seem to agree with this conclusion. Relational churches in downtown contexts reported the largest conversion growth percentage. Yet Relational churches in neighborhood settings

reported a mean conversion growth percentage only one point behind those in more urban, downtown settings. In other words, it appears that while the urban downtown setting is indeed an ideal place to plant a Relational church, there are other geographic locations where this model could be just as effective in reaching individuals with the Gospel.

The three House Churches participating in the current study were not sufficient to generate data reliable enough to give an accurate picture of where these types of churches are most evangelistically effective. Two of these churches were in suburban areas and one was located in a rural area. Therefore, mean conversion growth percentages could not be tabulated for all of the geographic locations observed in the current study.

The Relationship between Church Planting Model and Generational Conversion Growth

Certain church planting models demonstrated more potency at reaching particular generational groups than did others. The data related to this research question was analyzed to determine whether the models employed would more effectively bring certain age groups to the point of conversion. The goal was to determine who might best reach, for example, the builder generation and others.

"Builder" conversion growth, or the conversion percentage of individuals born between 1925 and 1945, was highest among Program-Based church plants, who reported a mean of 16 % of their converts from this generation. Relational churches reported the second highest percentage of conversions among this age group, indicating that 8 % of their converts were from this generation. Yet none of the church planting models

reported reaching more than 20 % of their converts from this generation, suggesting that none of the churches in the current study is effectively reaching a substantial percentage of builder generation converts.

The mean conversion growth percentage begins to rise among all the church planting models when the number of "boomer" converts is examined. One surprising finding was that while Seeker-Based and Purpose-Driven churches are noted by the literature as particularly effective at reaching baby boomers, neither group of churches participating in the current study reported a significant percentage of their converts from this category. In fact, churches that reported the largest mean percentage of boomer conversions were the Ministry-Based churches. Perhaps the literature's assertion that the "graying of America" will make this church planting model ever more relevant is less prophetic and more immediate. Also, the attention given to busy, middle-class families in the Program-Based church seem to have caused this model to be more conducive to boomer conversions.

The Purpose-Driven churches in the current study reported the largest percentage of conversion growth among "busters" or "generation X." Yet the Program-Based churches also reported strong percentages of conversions among this generational category, as did the Ministry-Based churches. Surprisingly, the churches reporting the least percentage of "buster" conversion were those employing a Relational model. The literature suggests that it is this generation that hungers most for satisfying relationships with others, and with God. Yet the data indicates that Relational churches are not as effective in reaching this particular generation as those church planting models that have a less relational element to their essential makeup.

The Relational church planting model appears much more effective at reaching the "bridgers," or those born between 1977 and 1994. The Relational churches in the current study reported the highest percentage of conversions among this generational group by far. The Purpose-Driven churches in the current study also indicated an impressive percentage of their converts from this generation. Yet if the data reported is at all indicative of reality, the Relational model seems to be the most effective at reaching this generational group. Perhaps the "postmodern" mindset assumed to be so much a part of "buster" culture is, in actuality, more a part of their younger siblings lives.

Bringing children to the point of conversion seems to be best accomplished by the Purpose-Driven churches, who reported a mean of 21 % of their converts from this generational category. A question still looms as to whether this data has a correlation with the effectiveness of Purpose-Driven churches at reaching "busters." For example, one might ask if the children reported as coming to faith in Christ were actually the children of the "busters" who were themselves also converted. The question is raised because the mean percentage of children converted in each of the models coincides somewhat with the mean percentage of "busters" who are converted. Could this be reflective of a "household conversion" phenomenon? Regrettably, the research design does not allow for measuring any correlation between these variables.

The Responsiveness of Ethnic Groups To the Church Planting Models.

All of the church planting models reported very high mean conversion growth percentages of Anglos. Yet churches identified as Purpose-Driven seemed to report the conversion growth results that were the most racially monochromatic. Ninety-one percent

of all those converted in Purpose-Driven churches were white, while churches utilizing this model reported less than 2 % of their conversion growth in each of the other ethnic categories. In short, the data indicates that the Purpose-Driven church is primarily effective in an Anglo context.

African American conversions were most prevalent in both the Program-Based and Ministry-Based churches. The literature mentions the changing ethnic mix in North America, as well as the rise in the African American population as two cultural factors which will make necessary the proliferation of more Ministry-Based churches. The assumption of the literature that the Ministry-Based model will more effectively reach the African American is supported by the data.

Yet the Program-Based church also seems effective in reaching the black population. This seems to be yet another example of the resiliency and flexibility of the Program-Based church. Of all the church planting models examined, churches employing the Program-Based model were the only ones to report conversions among all ethnic groups, with the exception of the "Hawaiian/pacific islander" group.

Conversion of Asian peoples was reported by churches utilizing each of the church planting models, but those employing the Relational model reported the highest percentage of conversions among this ethnic category. Conversion growth percentage among Hispanics was notable in both the Program-Based and Seeker-Based models, but an extremely significant percentage of the conversions in the Ministry-Based church were also from among this ethnic group. Again, this coincides with the literature, which suggests a coming rise in the need for holistic ministry among these people. Regrettably, only the Program-Based church plants reported any notable percentage of conversions

among Native Americans, and even the Program-Based churches reported only 5 % of their conversions coming from this ethnic category.

Over all, the data reveals some success among the models at bringing Asian, Hispanic, and African American peoples to faith in Christ. Yet Anglo conversion growth makes up the largest percentage of all the church planting models observed in the current study. Whether this is the result of the church planting models themselves, or if it is simply due to a tendency among North American churches toward homogeneity, is yet to be determined.

Numbers of New Church Starts Occurring in Each Church Planting Model

Each church participating in the current study was asked to indicate whether they were tangibly involved in the process of helping another church get started. Overall, the percentage of Purpose-Driven churches indicating that they were personally involved in church planting was much higher than any other model represented in the current study, with the exception of the House Church, in which two of the three churches participating in the current study indicated participation in starting another congregation. The group with the lowest percentage of congregations involved in church planting was the Seeker-Based group, with only 20 % indicating personal involvement. Yet there appears to be a healthy rate of reproduction present in all of the church planting models. Bob Logan states that if 50 % of churches in a given group are "healthy," that health will be realized by a 17 % reproduction rate (Logan 2004, 10). Comparing this statement with the percentage of churches in the current study who are involved in a new church start reveals a healthy reproduction rate among all the church planting models.

At the same time, the exact level of involvement these churches have in starting new congregations is unclear. After asking whether they were personally and tangibly involved in starting a new church, each respondent was asked to briefly describe the nature of their involvement. The answers returned varied greatly. Some churches stated that they gave "monthly support," but did not stipulate how much or where the money went. Others described the amount, but not the source. Still others stated that they gave money to a church planting network which in turn funded new works, indicating less direct involvement in the new work themselves. Also, many churches indicating that they helped start a new church gave all the details, saying for example, "we financially help a new work in [city name] by sending them [amount] per month."

These varied answers leave many unanswered questions. These unanswered questions make the attempt to discern whether a particular model is more conducive to new church starts more difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, aside from the house church, which in reality did not have enough congregations represented to assume an accurate representation of the whole, churches identified as Purpose-Driven have a significantly higher percentage of new churches involved themselves in the planting of still other new churches.

Research Implications

The literature defines well the particular contours of each of the prominent ministry models utilized to plant a church in North America. The literature also is strongly suggestive of the types of areas and the types of people among which each church planting model is perceived to be the most effective. The current study measured the effectiveness of churches included in the research sample according to the church

planting model they employed, to determine if the suggestions of the literature coincided with the conversion growth percentages found in each of the models. Previous studies have been conducted that determined the effectiveness of each model according to attendance at the primary worship services of a given church. The current study measured conversion growth as the primary indicator of effectiveness, with the assumption that churches are planted primarily for the purpose of reaching those who remain unconverted. Implications drawn from the data impact several areas related to the current study. The following are observations concerning what the resulting data may mean to church planting praxis.

Program-Based church plants, as the literature suggests, reach the greatest variety of individuals, but are most effective in bringing to conversion married baby boomer couples with children, middle-class incomes and moderate education. Yet the data also implies that Program-Based church plants reach greater percentages of converts in urban settings, particularly downtown locations. These churches would also appear to best reach builder generation individuals, and the Native American population

Purpose-Driven church plants are ideal for bringing upper-middle class, suburban busters to faith in Christ. This model attracts single as well as married individuals, and shares some affinity with well-educated, upper-middle class individuals who likely either work white-collar, or high-paying blue collar jobs. Although there were some conversions reported among ethnic groups in Purpose-Driven congregations participating in the current study, the data implies that Purpose-Driven churches as a whole may not be effectively reaching any ethnic population outside Anglo culture.

Seeker-Based church plants provide a welcoming atmosphere that is attractive to many, including individuals who have experienced a divorce. Surprisingly, the data implies that this model is also effective at reaching people for Christ who are located in rural areas, and also those who are a part of the Hispanic population. All in all, this model is successful in reaching affluent individuals and families who are very well-educated.

Implications drawn from the data related to the Ministry-Based church planting model suggest that this paradigm is effective at reaching African-American and Hispanic baby boomers, as well as Anglos from this same generational group, with little formal education and lower-middle class incomes. These churches also reach the highest percentage of converts in neighborhood areas. Although these churches do not grow to be very large in these contexts, the data implies that it is under these conditions that the Ministry-Based church brings the most people to faith in Christ.

Relational church plants appear to thrive evangelistically in urban settings among young college students and recent college graduates. The bulk of converts from this church planting model are "bridgers" with low incomes, suggesting that many may still be pursuing their education and exploring career options. Yet Relational churches also appear to be successful in bringing those of the Asian population to faith in Christ.

House Churches seem to reach a broad variety of individuals. The three House Churches participating in the current study reported significant percentages of conversions from single, married, rich and poor individuals representing all age groups. House churches did not report significant conversion percentages outside Anglo culture.

The data also suggests that Purpose-Driven churches are more likely to be directly involved in church planting. The literature asserts, based on previous empirical research, that "Basic Training makes a major impact on PDC church plants" (Stetzer 2003, 3). Basic Training is the program sponsored by the North American Mission Board to train church planters in the growth and development of their congregations, and strongly advocates the multiplication of new churches from both established and newly planted congregations. One of the goals of Basic Training, and the rest of the Church Planting Process, is "to involve every existing church in supporting and planting churches, and to create a genetic code for church planting in a newly planted church" (NAMB 2003, 422). It is possible that the affinity shared between Basic Training and the Purpose-Driven model is conducive to what the current study implies; that Purpose-Driven churches are the most effective congregations at reproducing themselves.

Research Applications

There are several ways in which the research findings may be applied to church planting praxis. The forthcoming applications speak to the concern for more evangelistic and contextual churches being planted in North America. Suggestions are made concerning ways in which the data can be used in order to plant churches with greater evangelistic impact.

First of all, the data indicates that while there are pockets of conversions among the various ethnic groups, Southern Baptist church plants are, as a whole, still focused primarily on starting Anglo churches. Even though certain church planting models indicated some degree of success in bringing certain ethnic peoples to faith in Christ, the overwhelming percentage of people converted in all the church planting models were

Anglo. In addition, even churches observed in the current study that were planted to reach a particular ethnic group were almost totally homogenous in terms of who they reached. The literature asserts that while homogenous units are easier groups among whom to plant churches, North America is becoming increasingly known, not by homogeneity, but rather diversity. Southern Baptists are, on the one hand, the most diverse protestant group in the world, worshipping in over 116 different languages every week. Yet the percentage of those various languages and cultures is very small compared with that of Southern Baptists who are English speaking and Anglo. The data reveals that much work must be done to reach the various ethnic groups that, as a whole, are not being effectively evangelized in Southern Baptist church plants. Romo well notes this imperative.

> A pluralistic society is defined as an aggregation of peoples of different groups characterized by their heritages, cultures, languages, and life-styles. Ethnic America conforms to this definition. Therefore, any appropriate missions endeavor must take into account the multilingual, multicultural dimensions of the society. (Romo 1993, 18)

A second way in which the data from the current study may be applied in practice involves noting a surprising, inverted relationship that exists between the size of the churches included in the current study, and the percentage of those individuals who came to Christ in those churches. This was a surprising, and unintended find. Yet this inversely proportional relationship reflects the contention of the literature that it is taking ever longer for individuals to come to faith in Christ. If this contention is correct, then it is reasonable to believe that the more converts a church reaches as a percentage of its growth, the longer it will take for such growth to happen.

The application of this observation is two-fold. First, state conventions, associations and sponsor churches need to understand that if the churches they support financially are going to focus exclusively on unchurched people, they will grow much more slowly than has been the case in previous times. This understanding means that funding for the new church will not be cancelled after the first year simply because the size of the congregation has not grown exponentially.

Conversely, church planters who desire to focus exclusively on unbelievers must understand that denominational agencies cannot provide funding for an indefinite time. This means that the church planter will most likely need to plan on following a bi-vocational or even tent-maker model of pastoral ministry once the funding is gone. Perhaps this slow growth of converts is the reason Bergquist observes an aversion by both denominations and professional, clerical church planters toward church planting models that stress the slower, relational approach to evangelism. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon church planters and those who support them to face the reality that it takes longer than it did in the past for an unbeliever to come to faith in Christ.

A third way to apply the data from the current study is to suggest more employment of emerging models of church planting in Southern Baptist life. Without question, the Program-Based and Purpose-Driven church planting models are enormously successful in terms of the numbers of attendees they attract. These models also remain the preeminent models for reaching the demographic most like those already attending Southern Baptist churches. Married, middle-class, moderately educated baby boomers, and their buster children who were raised in church are successfully reached by both the Program-Based and Purpose-Driven church. Still, younger generations, individuals with

lower incomes and education, and higher incomes and education were more effectively reached by other models included in the current study, chief among these being the Relational model.

Principally, it must be stated that the emerging generation in particular appears from the data to be most effectively reached by the Relational model, which suggests that this model deserves more study, certainly more attention, and possibly much more implementation by Southern Baptists. The literature suggests that a shift of this nature is much easier discussed than accomplished, as there is somewhat of a "disconnect" between the Relational model and "churched people, or those with a strong preconceived mental image of church as institutional" (Bergquist 2000, 20).

Additionally, this model is not yet well-respected, "by the religious establishment. Contemporary denominations have reacted strongly against relation based churches because relation based churches do not need denominations." Bergquist adds that "even if the relationally based church is entirely compatible with the theological tradition of the denomination, it will tend to be seen as rogue and independent" (Bergquist 2000, 20).

Further impeding the wider acceptance of emerging methodologies is the tendency to confuse "emerging" models of church, primarily defined in terms of progressive methodologies, with the "emergent" church, which is defined not only in terms of method, but also in terms of its postmodern approach to doctrinal and hermeneutical issues. Mark Driscoll makes a helpful distinction between these two groups by stating that "emergent" is simply one part of a greater "emerging" movement (Driscoll 2004, 18). Southern Baptists are correct in rejecting outright any questioning

of absolute Biblical authority, such as that found within certain segments of the emergent network, as well as the emphasis placed by the leadership of this network on the "postliberal" approach to hermeneutics. Yet if Southern Baptists hope to reach a wider demographic, and thereby bring glory to God via conversions from across the demographic and psychographic spectrum, they must seek to overcome any inhibitions that may exist toward emerging church planting methodologies shown to be effective in reaching different types of people. Otherwise, Southern Baptists will continue having a significant evangelistic impact only on certain segments of the North American populace, and consequently, fail at reaching all peoples of North America with the Gospel.

A fourth application of the current study relates to the principle of contextualization. The literature suggested particular contexts in which the various church planting models might be successfully employed. The data from the current study was consistent with most of the views expressed by the literature, and reflected conclusions in some areas that conflicted with the literature. Nevertheless, the data, along with the precedent literature, emphasize the great need to consider contextual factors prior to employing a particular church planting model.

The data suggests that the church planter must know the types of individuals he or she desires to reach, and compare the demographic characteristics of those people with the church planting model shown to be most effective at reaching those within the given target group. Both the literature and the current study contend that some church planting paradigms are more successful in some areas, and among some people, than in others. Thus, the wise church planter will choose a ministry model with great care, and with concern for all the aforementioned contextual factors.

A final application of the current study pertains to the future planting of new churches by congregations that are presently being planted. The data indicates that the purpose driven church plants are currently most active in starting new churches, and the literature indicates that these churches are encouraged to be involved in church planting in the Basic Training sessions offered by the North American Mission Board. Two possible applications come from these observations. The first is to suggest the same emphasis be pressed on all church planting models. Secondly, planters who start purpose driven works should be encouraged to reproduce themselves not only in other congregations, but also other church planting models. If there is a need for more emerging models of church, as the current study suggests, and if the Purpose-Driven church plants are more likely to plant another church, as the current study suggests, then the pastors of those churches should be trained, invited and encouraged to sponsor new churches which reflect this need.

Further Research

Many additional issues and concerns are raised by the current study, and proposed to be examined in this final section. In particular, seven subsequent concerns are raised by the current study, and described below, along with suggestions on how these issues and concerns might be addressed by further research.

One concern raised by the current study was the lack of successful conversion among ethnic groups in current Southern Baptist church planting. Yet there are many Southern Baptist church plants that are very successful in reaching the various ethnic groups that exist in North America. Case studies of these individual congregations, or even a stratified random sample of churches reaching Native American, Hispanic,

African American, and Asian peoples respectively could give additional insight. This would help Southern Baptists as a whole to work toward a goal of reaching ethnic peoples with the same degree of success that they have reached the Anglo population.

Another concern raised by the current study is that there are almost certainly other factors involved in producing greater percentages of conversion growth. The current study looked at the employment of church planting models alone. A subsequent study could take from the sample those individual congregations who had high conversion growth percentages, and compare them with other factors to see if a relationship exists. For example, subsequent studies could ask whether there is a connection between high conversion growth in a church and the leadership style of the pastor, the evangelistic practice of the pastor, the theological positions of the church, the educational philosophy of the church, or other factor. Those interested in how theology or leadership style affects conversion growth could utilize such a study to discern whether any relationship exists between these two.

A third concern raised by the current study is that of churches that in turn plant other churches. Further study is suggested involving a more detailed study of congregations in the current sample who are involved in church planting. The current study contained no mechanism for determining the level of involvement, other than asking for a brief description. The answers ranged from giving unspecified amounts to mission churches, to giving regularly, monthly gifts to a daughter church, to supplying personnel to help another church get started. Further questions should be asked concerning how these churches are involved with a view toward determining if a relationship exists between the degree of their involvement and the evangelistic success

of the churches they plant. Again, measurement of conversion growth as the primary variable is preferable to merely looking at attendance alone.

A fourth issue raised by the current study concerns the commitment of emerging churches to denominations. The data notes the strong affinity between Southern Baptist denominational culture and both the Program-Based and Purpose-Driven structures. The literature in turn, notes the aversion of denominations toward the Relational model in all its forms, "because relation based churches do not need denominations" (Bergquist, 20). There is a question of whether Bergquist's assertion here is a valid one in the sense that relational churches need the denomination less than other church models and structures. A replication of the current study, replacing conversion growth as the primary variable with denominational commitment, might aid in understanding if in fact certain church planting models are more conducive to denominational loyalty.

Cooperative Program percentage giving, associational involvement, service on denominational advisory boards and committees, and other factors could be used to measure loyalty, and to ascertain whether a relationship exists between loyalty and the employment of a particular church planting model. In addition, questions could be asked of pastors in churches that indicate a low level of loyalty to the denomination to ascertain what can be done to gain more cooperation from those who choose not to participate as heavily. There is a net loss of denominationally affiliated churches in North America each year. This trend strongly suggests that the churches do not need the denomination so much as the denomination needs the churches. Therefore, the denomination has a

vested interest in determining how they can best serve the churches, and subsequently gain the support of the churches.

The current study also does not take into account churches that employ more than one model of ministry during their existence. Although there was not a great number of churches in the sample for whom this was true, there is concern that the current study does not measure the effect of switching models. In the event that a church reported utilizing more than one model, the model used to start the church was identified as the primary model employed, without concern or focus on the other. Therefore, it might be helpful to replicate the current study, adding in the factor of those who switched models "mid-stream."

Finally, the current study was produced out of a desire to measure the effectiveness of evangelism in various church plants, with a goal of discovering how more contextually appropriate evangelism might occur in the various geographic and ethnic contexts in North America. The primary way this effectiveness was measured was by using conversion growth as the primary variable, rather than attendance. Still, the data did not take into consideration that many attending services in these churches may not be either transfers from other churches or recent converts, but rather unchurched and unbelieving persons still exploring the Christian faith.

The literature makes note of the fact that it takes a longer period of exposure to gospel community in the church than it used to for an individual to come to faith in Christ. The current study, although accurately measuring the percentage of those already converted, did not take into account individuals who are currently still being reached by the churches, but have not yet made a decision to follow Jesus Christ. The current study

could be replicated, with an adjustment in the primary variable. Rather than conversion growth, the variable measured might be the percentage of unbelievers attending services.

APPENDIX

INSTRUMENTATION

This Appendix contains the instrumentation used during the research study. The instrumentation includes (1) Introductory letter to participants, and (2) Survey Instrument.

Introductory Letter to Participants

Dear Church Planter/Pastor,

It is a privilege for me to write to you! As a fellow church planter, I understand the struggles, and the celebrations, that come from seeing a new outpost of God's Kingdom planted among those who are yet to know Jesus Christ. Thank you for your service to His Kingdom!

I am conducting research in pursuit of a Doctor of Education degree at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville Kentucky. This research is being conducted in partnership with the Church Planting Institute of the North American Mission Board, and with the guidance of both Dr. Brad Waggoner, my dissertation supervisor, and Dr. Ed Stetzer of the Church Planting Institute. The Mission Board was kind enough to give me your contact information so that I might be able to utilize your experiences in church planting to complete my research. I am primarily interested in those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ through your ministry, and how that might relate to the ministry model you have employed in planting your church.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could fill out the enclosed survey, and return it to me by **October 25, 2004**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. I want to give you three weeks to complete it because some of the questions will require you to consult past attendance and baptism records at your church. Other questions will require some recall ability on your own part. I know the busyness of your schedule, and have sought to include only those questions that are pertinent to the research. With your help, we can better inform our North American missiology so that we might plant more and better churches in the future.

If you have any questions about the material, please feel free to call me at the number below, or you may call my home at (864) 268-3067. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

For His Glory,

Joel Rainey

Survey Instrument

This survey measures conversion growth and convert retention in selected North American church planting models in various cultural contexts.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to ascertain any possible correlations between the conversion growth in your church, congregational reproduction by your church, and the ministry model your church employs. This research is being conducted by Joel Owens Rainey for the purposes of completing his doctoral dissertation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will provide information concerning the demographics of the area surrounding your church, as well as detailed information regarding the people in your church who have been converted and baptized into your fellowship. 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 the survey instrument below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I. Demographics

Planter (or current Pastor) Name:_____

Church Name:_____

Contact Phone #:_____

Email Address:_____

Church Planting Model Identified: ___Program-based ___ Seeker-based
___ Purpose-driven ___ Ministry-based ___ Relational

If your church is a "house church" (i.e. it meets in a home), check here:_____

II. Which of the following location descriptions best describes your church's geographic context?

___ Open Country/Rural (away from village, town or city)
___ Village (up to 499 people with open country, away from city)
___ Town (500-2499 people with open country, away from city)
___ Small City (2500-9999 people)
___ Medium City/Downtown (10,000-49,999 people, central business area)
___ Medium City/Neighborhood (10,000-49,999 people, city residential)
___ Medium City/Suburbs (10,000-49,999 people, just outside city)
___ Large City/Downtown (50,000 or more people, central business area)
___ Large City/Neighborhood (50,000 or more people, city residential)
___ Large City/Suburbs (50,000 or more people, just outside city)

III. According to your reports from the most recent church year, what was your average attendance in worship/small groups/participation in church?

IV. Of that number, how many came into your church via coming to Christ and being baptized, as opposed to coming into your church as an unchurched believer or transfer from another church?

V. Of those who have come into your church via conversion, approximately how many were born:

_____ prior to or during 1945 (Builders)

_____ between 1946-1964 (Boomers)

_____ between 1965 and 1976 (Busters)

_____ between 1977 and 1994 (Bridgers)

_____ after 1994 (children)

VI. Of those who have come into your church via conversion, approximately how many are:

_____ single _____ married _____ divorced ____ widowed

VII. Of those who have come into your church via conversion, approximately how many are members of the following racial/ethnic groups?

_____ White _____ African-American _____ Asian _____ Hispanic
_____ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander _____ Native American _____ Mixed

VIII. Of those who came into your church via conversion, approximately how many would you say have a total household income of:

_____ less than $25,000 _____ between $25,000 and $50,000

_____ between $50,000 and $75,000 _____ between $75,000 and $100,000

_____ over $100,000

IX. Of those who came into your church via conversion, how many have attained the following educational levels?

_____ some high school _____ high school graduate _____ some college

_____ college graduate _____ graduate studies _____ graduate/post-graduate degree.

RETENTION

X. How many total baptisms has your church experienced as a result of conversion growth (as opposed to baptism of those coming from other denominations) since the beginning of your church?_____

XI. Of that number, how many of those are still actively participating in the life of your church?_____

INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH PLANTING.

XII. Other than Cooperative Program giving, have you, or are you presently helping to support a church start in a regular and tangible way? (If so, briefly explain the nature of your involvement.)

YES_____ NO_____

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ABSTRACT

A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SELECTED CHURCH PLANTING MODELS MEASURED BY CONVERSION GROWTH AND NEW CHURCH STARTS

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This dissertation examines the relationship between church planting model employment, conversion growth and the rate of new church starts, and the various contexts in which churches are planted. The desired outcome is a more thorough understanding of which church planting models are more effective in certain contexts. The dissertation opens by identifying the research concern for the need to determine which models of church ministry best fit the various cultural contexts which now exist on the North American continent.

A review of the precedent literature is also included which covers the biblical and theological foundations of church planting, as well as missiological foundations which guide church planting. A thorough description of each of the models examined in this study is also given in light of the literature base.

The precedent literature review is followed by a description of the methodological design for this study, which describes the two phases of the research. A survey instrument was developed by the researcher based on the research questions guiding the

current study. Data from the instrument obtained the necessary information to determine if relationships exist between conversion growth, convert retention, and model selection.

A description of the research findings follows. The data confirmed much of what the precedent literature had claimed. Yet the data also revealed an inverted relationship between the size of the churches and the rate of conversion growth. An evaluation of the research design described the strengths and weaknesses of the study in detail.

The study concludes by suggesting that the demographics of individuals reached by the church planting models examined largely coincide with the contentions of the precedent literature. The study also suggests that Southern Baptists are still effective at reaching the demographic typical of their present makeup. Yet much improvement is needed, most notably among ethnic groups and emerging generations. The study also applies the findings to church planting praxis, principally by suggesting that slower growth will be the norm in churches that actively seek the lost. It is also suggested that more attention should be given to emerging models of church planting.

KEY WORDS:

Church Planting
Church Planting Models
Conversion Growth
House Church
Ministry Based Church
Program Based Church
Purpose Driven Church
Relational Church
Reproduction
Relational Church

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