

ABSTRACT

THE LATINO CHURCH PLANTING CHALLENGE: FACTORS THAT IMPACT LATINO CHURCH PLANTING IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA, WITHIN THE ENCUENTRO MINISTRIES NETWORK

by

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Sixty million Hispanics are currently living in the United States of America. Latinos from most Spanish-speaking countries arrive daily in the U.S. for many reasons. Florida is one of their chosen target states, and the city of Orlando is the destination for many of them. Since September 2017, after hurricane Maria, more than 400,000 Puerto Ricans have left the island and moved to the United States mainland. Orlando and Central Florida have been a preferred destination. Because of the national crisis in Venezuela, hundreds of Venezuelan families arrive each month in Orlando. This mention points solely at two examples of immigrants. Neither city institutions nor organizations, let alone churches, were prepared for an influx of those proportions. For many years, this phenomenon of Hispanic influx has been called “The Hispanic Challenge.”

Decades ago, Manuel Ortiz wrote a significant book titled, *The Hispanic Challenge, Opportunities Confronting the Church*, to refer specifically to the opportunities before the church in the United States of America. Now, after twenty-five years from the release of his book, Christian leaders continue evaluating the specific Latino opportunities and challenges that each American city faces. In this dissertation, I

sought to explore the current “Hispanic Challenge” through the eyes of Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida.

Based on the desire to determine the factors that impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, Florida, the following questions guided this research study: What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network? What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando Florida within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network? What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network? This work presents the responses, reactions, and insights of Hispanic church planters that are currently taking on the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando.

The reason why this project is important is too big to be dismissed. The world’s harvest is huge and according to demographic studies, the Latino harvest in Orlando and surroundings is a perfect sample of that. Simultaneously, the workers are few. There lies the importance of identifying the factors that will help to bring awareness on this issue and encourage church planters, networks, denominations, and mother churches to work with church planters and Hispanic plants, preparing and empowering all for a fruitful harvest.

The purpose of this project was to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries Network. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher invited Latino church planters, related to Encuentro Ministries Network, to help discover those factors and achieve the purpose.

Jesus was right: “*What a huge harvest! How few the workers!*” (Matt. 9:37 The Message). The results of this research are conclusive. The opportunities are beyond the understanding of most church planting networks and denominations, and the challenges are greater than the typical church planter can take on. This new awareness of opportunities and challenges affords leaders, pastors, planters, mother churches, networks, and denominations, to be empowered. As a result, we will also see the development of a more relevant, pertinent, and effective Latino church planting ministry in Orlando.

**THE LATINO CHURCH PLANTING CHALLENGE:
FACTORS THAT IMPACT LATINO CHURCH PLANTING
IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA, WITHIN
THE ENCUENTRO MINISTRIES NETWORK**

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The future of the United States of America is increasingly Latino. Almost thirty percent of the city of Orlando, Florida, is Hispanic. The current immigration wave continues to increase the numbers and accentuate the trends. The existing answers to the church planting challenge among Latinos in the U.S., and specifically in Orlando, Florida, have not even scratched the surface of this dilemma.

This reality has been largely ignored for a long time. Cultural, financial, linguistic, and even theological reasons have been presented. Nonetheless, opportunities and challenges are still present and demand real and honest answers. The “Latino Challenge” continues to be a pressing reality amid the milieu of America’s growing and demanding society.

This chapter introduces the topic of the Latino church planting challenge in the context of the city of Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network. The chapter includes an autobiographical introduction to the researcher and the theme of study. It also includes the three research questions, a statement of the problem, and a rationale to it. The chapter likewise describes the participants and presents a preliminary look at the literature consulted for the study. It further includes a review of the methodology utilized to gather and analyze the data.

Personal Introduction

I grew up in a church planter's family in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Carlos Enrique Peralta, my father, was an elder overseer and a church planter in the Plymouth Brethren (PB) movement, in a local congregation located in Villa Devoto, a suburb of the country's capital. The local church planted five other churches and he was one of the pioneers sent by the congregation to labor in those fields. Growing up, I was divided between the mother church in Villa Devoto and Villa Leoni, the latest church planting mission sponsored at that time by the congregation. While the mother church sponsored the mission, my father took the initiative to lead the effort.

Due to my parent's ministry, I had the opportunity to get involved at a very young age in various activities serving the Lord and my neighbors. The servant leadership and community life models were engraved into my heart. Our congregation was characterized by a missionary emphasis. Each congregant could participate, in one way or another, in some aspect of the mission of the church.

My mother Iris, my sister Myriam, and I were the members of my father's church planting team. Visiting homes to find children and teaching them Sunday School, acting on the Christmas drama, playing music for the services, or preaching, were our daily bread for many years. On some Sundays, my father traveled for his job while my mother took us to church taking the long trip in two *colectivos*, one of the names for public transportation in my native country. I remember one day very vividly; I lost my Bible in one of those *colectivos*. I wondered how I would teach Sunday School without my Bible. I was only eight years old and I was not yet baptized.

A year later, I was baptized by Don Carmelo Racciatti, one of the faith heroes of my beloved nation. That joyful day, my parents provided me with a new Bible that I still keep as a treasure. *“Oh, how I love your Law! It is my meditation all day long”* (Ps. 119:97 NRSV). That love for the Holy Scriptures continues today.

For years, my dad was also Dean of the Instituto Bíblico Jorge Muller, the Plymouth Brethren movement’s seminary. Three generations of my family attended classes: my grandfather, my parents, and me. In that season of my life, the Scripture that caught my heart was 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”* (NIV). I loved the Scriptures and had a deep desire to be an approved worker. Years later, pastor Rogelio Nonini from the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) Church in Liniers, Argentina, invited me to be part of his preaching team with Jorge Fernandez, Gustavo Valiño, and himself. Pastor Nonini opened the doors to my theological studies at the Buenos Aires Bible Institute of the C&MA. During that season, and as part of my leadership development, I was able to continue supporting several church plantings in Argentina and Paraguay.

In July 1988, I was invited to participate in “Los Ángeles 88,” a Latino conference for almost ten thousand itinerant evangelists and church planters. Because of that event, God continued stirring my heart with a passion for reaching the lost among my Hispanic brothers and sisters not only in Latin America, but also in the United States.

I eventually emigrated to Hialeah, Florida, the most Latino city in the USA. During the next thirteen years, I served in several roles: seminary student and chaplain at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Hispanic pastor for two congregations, assistant pastor, and adjunct professor for two seminaries, leader for a mainline denomination, an itinerant evangelist and preacher assisting churches in desperate need of renewal, and several new church planting projects in Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. In all those roles, the “Latino Challenge” for churches, Christian ministry, and church planting continued impelling me to seek God’s plan and direction regarding my role in reaching Hispanics for Christ in the USA.

With the fatal terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, I developed a greater conscience that the times were changing, and the “Latino Challenge” was knocking at my door with even more intensity. Because of several divine interventions, I felt a strong call from God to start a Latino bilingual church for immigrants in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

In January 2004, after two years with a successful bilingual church planting experience in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, my wife and I recognized that God was stirring up our hearts once again, but this time, we did not know the meaning of that call. During the following 24 months, we prayed, fasted, and sought God’s face and discernment. As a result, in January 2006, we started Encuentro Ministries responding to God’s call to provide pastoral care, training, and resources to Latino pastors, church planters, missionaries, and churches interested in Latino ministry. The ministry’s Board of Directors recommended that if we were called to serve Latinos, we must consider moving to Florida, the “Latin America entrance to the USA.”

On July 1, 2006, we moved as a family to Orlando, Florida. Our goal was to work with Latino pastors, planters, and churches and with non-Latino pastors and churches interested in Latino ministries. From the first day I moved into the yard of First Baptist Church Windermere's Lakeside campus, now rebranded "Family Church," I knew the great potential for a Latino ministry there. As I started to visit the church, that conviction continued growing until finally in 2007, I approached Rev. Mark E. Matheson, who was the pastor at that time. It was evident to me that he was not aware of the opportunities to reach Latinos in the land of Disney World, neither was he convinced that this was the time to start a new ministry for Hispanics or any non-English speaking group of people.

After ten years and many changes, the new leadership at the church, with Chuck Carter as the lead pastor and Joel Ramos as the Latino campus pastor, like the Issachar leaders who understood both the times and Israel's duties, (1 Chron. 13:32), discerned the Latino times and challenges in the Horizon West corridor, and the church's responsibility. The church took important steps to develop a Latino initiative to reach Latinos in Orange County and its surroundings.

After years of full-time ministry mentoring, coaching, and training Latino leaders and non-Latino leaders and churches interested in reaching Hispanics, I believe that the challenge and opportunities for reaching out to Spanish speakers are greater than ever before. Thirty-one years have passed since my arrival in the United States of America, and my heart is still passionate to come alongside pastors, church planters, missionaries, denominations, ministries, church planting networks, and churches to respond to the Latino church planting challenge and to see Latinos coming to Christ.

Statement of the Problem

To follow the Lord is to obey his commandments and to fulfill Christ's Great Commission. In my context, it implies reaching Latinos living in Orlando, Florida, and its surroundings with the gospel. I do that with passion, not only personally, but also encouraging and empowering individuals and churches to faithfully respond to the Latino church planting challenge. My experience confirms that a lack of awareness brings, as a result, a lack of action.

As a way to increase awareness of the urgent need for Latino church planting in Orlando, this study's purpose was to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher invited Latino church planters to help discover the answers and achieve the purpose. The participants in the research were Latino church planters related to the Encuentro Ministries network in Orlando, Florida. Their church planting work was between one to six years old. Data collection for this project took four weeks between questionnaire, interviews, and data analysis.

Multiple factors impact the Hispanic ministry in the city; those factors present challenges and opportunities to the Latino church planting endeavor in Orlando, and those challenges and opportunities are like the two faces of the same coin. The words of God to the prophet Hosea are as valid as they were centuries ago: "*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge*" (Hos. 4:6 NIV). Without proper evaluation, we will fail. To overcome the challenge, we need to know, discover, learn, and understand what those challenges, opportunities, and best practices are.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries Network. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher invited church planters within Encuentro Ministries Network to help discover those factors.

Research Questions

The following three research questions arise logically from the problem statement to determine the factors that impact Latino church planting in the city of Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries Network to bring awareness and empowerment for a more relevant and effective Latino church planting ministry.

Research Question #1

What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

Research Question #2

What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network?

Research Question #3

What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

Rationale for the Project

The Hispanic community in the U.S., what Orlando E. Costas used to call “the sleeping giant,” presents a formidable challenge to those committed to evangelism and

holistic ministries (qtd. in Ortiz 18) (Ortiz 37). According to Timothy Keller, new churches tend to reach non-Christians at a rate five to seven times the rate of older churches (*Transform*). To transform and reach Latinos in Orlando demands hundreds of new Hispanic churches spreading around the city. Those churches must reach out to first-generation, second-generation, and even third-generation Latinos.

Discovering the facts that affect Hispanic church planting in Orlando has been a pending project. This research matters because Latino church planters in Orlando are God's servants who are willing to sacrifice much. Understanding their struggles and daily challenges will allow us to come alongside them more effectively. This research is necessary because their holistic well-being, among other factors, determines the success or failure of the Latino new church starts. This research matters because being aware of the Latino church planters' struggles and challenges will allow us to pray, plan, and prioritize better our strategies as we plant more Latino churches in Orlando and its surroundings.

This research is important because it calls attention to a segment of the population that is generally neglected. Latinos and minorities, in general, are usually overlooked. Jesus Christ says that our heart follows our treasure (Matt. 6:21). The heart of most denominations is not in planting churches among minorities; just check their budgets attest to this.

This research matters because it seems that the challenges and opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando have not been extensively studied. The results of this research will help encourage a more in-depth consideration of the topic of church planting

in Orlando as denominations, church planting networks, mother churches, and church planters consider their next steps into planting churches among Latinos.

This study is necessary because it provides Hispanic church planters a strong opportunity for their voices to be heard. Someone must share their cries, their loneliness, their struggles with salaries that are considered so low that if the church planters were parents of small children the government would provide them with the benefits of the WIC program, a governmental program to assist the poor. Listening to their pressing needs will help to provide them with better support programs, resources, pastoral care, and coaching services.

This research matters because it provides key information coming not from theoreticians, but from the same people who are working in the field. The challenges and opportunities presented are not products of the imagination or dreams, but the result of serious research among the practitioners who face the Latino church planting challenge daily. It matters because it provides empowering strategies for a more pertinent and effective Hispanic church planting ministry in Orlando, Florida.

This research matters because creation, as a whole, is important to God. People and cities are important to God; thus, God cares about Orlando. If Orlando is important to God, it must also be important to God's people, the church. This project matters because answering the call of the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando is important, and it is urgent!

Definition of Key Terms

Latino/Hispanic: These terms are utilized in the United States to describe different realities. For some, means origin, i.e., they came from South America. For others, it is a reference to the language of the person; i.e., he speaks Spanish. The term *Hispanic* was originally utilized when the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 94-31 in 1976, requiring that federal government agencies categorize and collect data on Hispanics. Hispanics are categorized as an ethnic group, meaning that they share a common language, culture but not a common race (Taylor *Labels et. al.*). The term “Latino” was added to Hispanic in 1997, and both terms mean different things for different people. When it comes to identity, the majority of Latinos/Hispanics prefer their own country of origin (Taylor et. al.) For this research, I use both terms interchangeably to describe the same group of people.

First Generation. Persons born in another country who migrated to the United States of America.

Second Generation. Children of first-generation immigrants born in the United States of America.

Challenge: Invitation or call of action.

Opportunity: A set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something.

Church Planting: The process through which a new congregation, church, or mission is established.

Church Planter: A ministerial leader who devotes herself/himself to starting a new congregation, church, or mission.

Denomination: A distinct Christian body identified by traits such as name, organization, and doctrine. Sometimes self-identified as a church, assembly, convention, or fellowship.

Church Planting Movement: A rapidly multiplying indigenous church planting churches advancing across a group of people.

Church Planting Network: A distinct body within Christianity identified by their mission of starting new churches. In the United States of America, some of those networks are Acts29, Soma, Ecclesia, Vision, Voice, and Viral (V3), Association of Relational Churches (ARC), Stadia, Sojourn, Summit, Church Multiplication Network (CMN), Sovereign Grace, The Pillar, The Alliance, Vineyard, Vision 360, Converge, New Things, Verge, and City to City.

Church: Most of the time, also called, *Universal Church*, or *Church at large*, is the universal body of believers in the divine person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Local church: A group of those believers who meet in a context to celebrate God's presence between them and carry-on God's mission.

Mother church: A local church launching a new church planting project. When several churches are sponsoring or partnering with the new church project, the mother church is the one from whom the church planter is being released, commissioned, or sent.

Dechurching: A term utilized to describe the tendency of a church to lose members or attendance.

Revival: Outreach event hosted with an Evangelization purpose.

Multicultural: Of, relating to, or designed for several cultures.

Multiethnic: Of, relating to, or including several ethnic groups.

Multilingual: Of, relating to, or describing several languages.

Bilingual: Of, relating to two languages; for our purpose, it describes the church where English and Spanish are the two preferred or main languages.

Orlando: The seven counties area in Central Florida (Orange, Seminole, Volusia, Osceola, Lake, Brevard, and Polk). Culturally speaking, there appear to be at least four different Orlando's - 1. Downtown, 2. Suburban, 3. Exurban, and 4. Rural.

MTP: Ministerial Transformation Project

LCPOQ: Latino Church Planting Orlando Questionnaire

LCPOI: Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview

LCPOP: Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal

Delimitations

The researcher invited ten of the twelve church planters on the Encuentro Ministries network to participate. All the potential participants were Latino church planters in Orlando and its surroundings. Seven church planters of the ten invited to participate, responded affirmatively; one was not able to continue because of the discontinuation of the church planting endeavor, leaving the research with six male Latino church planters in Orlando, Florida, related to the Encuentro Ministries network.

Geography: Orlando, Florida, a city with Hispanic immigrants from every Latin American country.

Encuentro Ministries network: This research focused only on church planters within this network.

Audience: Latino church planters who are practitioners in the researched theme and geography.

The number of participants: The project included the participation of six Latino male church planters.

Church plant age: To be part of this project, the church plants have to be between one to six years old.

All the participants in this research were 18 years of age or older. The researcher met these leaders through Encuentro Ministries which is the pastoral care, training, mentoring, and counseling ministry he leads. The purpose was to identify some of the factors that impact the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando, Florida.

The project intentionally included participants of various denominations, theological backgrounds, and cultures, since it sought to show as much diversity as possible and pursued a broader perspective on the topic. Each of these Hispanic planters were currently planting a Latino church in Orlando and were committed to seeing the kingdom of God incarnated and demonstrated in the city. The study conducted excluded church planters from other states of the United States, or planters from Orlando not participating in the Encuentro Ministries Network to avoid the issue of “limits of generalization” (Rainer and Geiger 243).

Review of Relevant Literature

The literature consulted for this study came from the biblical, theological, social, educational, and cultural disciplines. The researcher utilized resources in print and electronic format. Some were reference works, catalogs, articles, and books. Some related to the life and context of Hispanics/Latinos in the USA, and others to church planting and Latino church planting in the USA. The researcher also consulted the very useful findings of the statistical resources of Barna Group, Acts 29, and Pew Research Center.

I started with the Biblical foundations. I analyzed different Scriptures and how they reveal God's heart and purpose in establishing his kingdom and making disciples of all nations. For the call to mission, and the biblical foundations, several versions of the Bible were utilized. Because the primary language of the researcher is Spanish, he consulted the following versions: Reina Valera 1960 (RV60), Reina Valera Contemporánea (RVC), Nueva Traducción Viviente (NTV), and Nueva Versión Internacional (NVI). The following English versions were utilized: Contemporary English Version (CEV); New International Version (NIV), and The Message.

The researcher continued with the church planting literature available going from the general, with a focus on Anglo culture and churches, to the particular, with a focus on Latino culture and churches. On the general review, authors like Ed Stetzer, Daniel Im, Thom Rainer, Eric Geiger, Dan Scott, Jimmy Dodd, Renaut van der Riet, Dave Ferguson, Alan Hirsch, Bob Logan, Darrin Patrick, George Barna, Rick Warren, Paul Tripp, Mark Dever, Wayne Cordeiro, David Platt, David Garrison, Ray Bakke, Roger McNamara, and Timothy Keller were cited or consulted.

For Latino theology and church planting, the works of Osvaldo Mottesi, Orlando Costas, Justo L. González, Manuel Ortiz, Iosmar Alvarez, Daniel Sanchez, Oscar Romo, and Rene Padilla were very useful. In general, resources related to the topic of Latino church planting are sorely lacking.

Research Methodology

In each research study, the quality of the researched bibliography, the precision of the research instruments, and the insights of the researcher are of great importance to arrive at great discoveries and conclusions. This dissertation is not an exemption to the rule. “The Holy Grail of research methods does not exist” (Sensing 50). Still, the researcher must decide on the best approach and instruments to arrive at the best results. For this study, the researcher had access to the best of the available print and digital bibliography; utilized two types of instruments, studied the available documents, compiled the information, and arrived at some conclusions regarding the factors that impact Hispanic church planting in Orlando, best practices that stand out, and the factors that present opportunities of and challenges to the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando and its surroundings within the Encuentro Ministries network.

Unlike centuries ago, the amount of information available to the researcher was simply overwhelming. A simple Google search can show millions of entries. Learning to discern between the most reliable resources becomes indispensable to the quality of the study. Gathering resources and information for the project was an arduous and very demanding experience.

Before even brainstorming about the potential candidates to participate in the project, the professional literature was carefully reviewed. In addition to the bibliographical review, the research methodology consisted of a questionnaire, interviews and analysis of documents related to the Latino church planting challenge within the Encuentro Ministries network in Orlando.

After the careful preparation of the questionnaire and interview, the online questionnaire written by the researcher was submitted to the potential participants by the researcher's assistant. The questionnaire contained an introduction of the Ministry Transformation Project (MTP), the purpose of the study, and the expectations for the participants.

The researcher, with the help of the research assistant, sent an invitation for the surveys and interviews via email; participants were contacted through phone, email, or a personal conversation to alert them to what the project entails. The researcher identified the three project participants that completed the interview with the research assistant. He also made phone calls to the participants and encouraged them to return their questionnaires and answers within two weeks after receiving them. Two weeks seemed to be a very reasonable amount of time to complete the questionnaire; even a third week was provided as cushion time. After the three weeks, the researcher processed the data submitted. The participants signed and dated the online Consent Form included in the questionnaire provided by the researcher's assistant.

All the instruments, LCPOQ questionnaires, LCPOI interviews, and LCPOP proposals provided the researcher with the necessary information to establish the factors

that impact the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando within the Encuentro Ministries network. These include patterns within the challenges, opportunities, and best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida. Once the data was gathered and carefully analyzed, I identified common patterns and some differences in the participants' perspectives on the theme of study. As a result, best practices and factors that present major challenges and great opportunities for Latino church planting within the Encuentro Ministries network in Orlando were identified; these conclusions were put together in a narrative description to bring cohesiveness to the project.

The Latino Church Planting Challenge research project within the Encuentro Ministries network in Orlando resulted in interesting and pertinent conclusions to the subject of the study. The findings were made available for church planters, mother churches, church planting networks, and denominations interested in Hispanic church planting in Orlando and its surroundings.

This Research Methodology section considers the Type of Research, Participants, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Generalizability of the Project.

Type of Research

Due to the project's pre-intervention nature, the researcher used a qualitative research methodology to discover how the participants perceive the factors that impact the Latino church planting challenge within the Encuentro Ministries network in the city of Orlando, Florida. A questionnaire, interview, and document analysis were used to obtain the most accurate information. This process sought to obtain valuable information that

could potentially open the eyes and bring awareness to all those interested in the subject of the study.

Participants

The participants in the study were male church planters, related to the Encuentro Ministries network in Orlando, Florida. Encuentro Ministries started fifteen years ago to provide pastoral care, coaching, and resources to Latino pastors, church planters, missionaries, and Hispanic churches. As the founder and director of Encuentro Ministries, the researcher has extensive knowledge of all the church planters in Orlando within the network developed by the ministry. As part of the purpose of the ministry, a deeper understanding of the factors that affect the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando will allow Encuentro Ministries to better serve planters and plants.

The sample of the participants was representative of different theological backgrounds, denominations, countries, cultures, and church planting networks represented in Encuentro Ministries and among the Hispanics in the city. All the participants were from the Encuentro Ministries network, thus colleagues in ministry to the researcher. Participants were also chosen among the potential candidates considering their experience, leadership, and impact on the current Latino church planting stage in the city.

In order to respect privacy and confidentiality, the participants were assured that none of their information was to be shared in any way apart from this study, with the following exceptions: the researcher's Project Advisor, Dr. Iosmar Alvarez Alfonso, the Doctor of Ministry Colloquium where the study would be presented to other doctoral

degree students, and Encuentro Ministries. All participants shared their perspectives on the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando and surroundings, such as challenges, opportunities, and best practices to help obtain a better understanding and more ample perspective of the topic.

Data Collection

The Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando project was designed by the researcher as a pre-intervention project. The research design consisted of data collection using a questionnaire, an interview, and analysis of documents. The questionnaire with open and closed questions was prepared using as a reference, *the Preaching Response Questionnaire* (Sensing 239-41). “Questionnaires have their place as one-method of most value when used in tandem with other methods” (Gillham 2). The interview with open questions consisted of a semi-structured instrument that follows the qualitative type of research. “Interviewing... is a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience” (Seidman 8). Two expert reviewers were asked to provide input regarding the instruments as requested by the Institutional Review Board.

Data collection for this project took four weeks between questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of documents regarding Encuentro Ministries and Latino church planting in Orlando. The researcher, with the help of the research assistant, sent an invitation for the surveys and interviews via email; participants were contacted through phone, email, or a personal conversation to alert them regarding what the project entails. The researcher called the participants and encouraged them to return their questionnaires

and answers within two weeks after receiving them. Two weeks seemed a very reasonable amount of time to complete the questionnaire. A third week was provided as a cushion time. After the three weeks, the researcher worked with the surveys submitted.

The Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ) was developed by the researcher and verified by two experts. The LCPOQ was administered by the research assistant to six church planters within the Encuentro Ministries network through the Survey Monkey platform. The online questionnaire consisted of a digital consent form and twenty-three questions. The three research questions are:

RQ1. What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

RQ2. What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network?

RQ3. What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

RQ1 was answered through the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ), the Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview (LCPOI), and the Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal (LCPOP). The questionnaire and interview were designed to obtain information related to the participants' awareness and perspectives on the factors that present challenges to Latino church planting in Orlando.

RQ2 was answered through the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ), a qualitative instrument used to gather data about the participants' awareness and perspectives on the factors that present opportunities to Latino church planting in

Orlando. Data obtained by the Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview (LCPOI) and the Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal (LCPOP) was used to answer RQ2.

RQ3 was answered through the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ), the LCPOI, and LCPOP.

Data Analysis

Accomplishing the purpose of this Ministerial Transformation Project necessitated the gathering of information; all the data for this project was collected, documented, and appropriately identified and cited. Questionnaire, interview, and document analysis were considered qualitative data; collecting it was the primary way of processing and analyzing them (Sensing 202). Adopting Moschella, a literal reading was followed for a more interpretative reading to highlight the data according to “implied meaning” and finalized with a reflexive reading to interpret the collected data (qtd. in Sensing 196-97).

Generalizability

The Latino church planting challenge is not exclusively for Orlando, Florida, and its surroundings. A researcher wishing to use this study would be able to evaluate the Latino church planting challenge in other cities. Researchers interested in studying the Latino church planting challenge in their cities could find the topics studied in this project pertinent to their contexts and could refer to it as a reliable tool.

The conclusions of this project could benefit mother churches, denominations, and church planting networks, as well as pastors, church planters, and church leaders interested in Latino church planting in general.

The recommendations stemming from this project might result in more effective outreach and discipleship of Hispanics in Orlando and any place for the Glory of God.

Project Overview

This project identifies the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network. Chapter 2 reviews the current professional literature available on the topic of Latino church planting. It also elaborates on the biblical and theological foundations of the topic. Chapter 3 presents the methods through which the researcher answered the three research questions and analyzed the data. Chapter 4 analyzes the findings of the research through the study of the collected data. Chapter 5 interprets the project's major findings and implications for the Latino church planting ministry in Orlando, Florida. It also presents some pertinent short and long-range recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In the church planting movement, few phrases are as famous as the one written by C. Peter Wagner in his 1990 book, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, where he affirms: “*The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches*” (11). While it is not the purpose of this project to validate or counter that affirmation when the Latino church planting challenge is confronted, we also need to hear what Scott McConnell, Executive Director of LifeWay Research, says about church planting and evangelism between Hispanics: “*Though new Hispanic church works start out smaller, they are more evangelistically effective per person*” (qtd. in Earls).

Iosmar Alvarez claims that explosive Hispanic growth has resulted in fields that are ripe for harvest and church planting is the most effective way to make disciples out of the fastest-growing minority in the United States. (3)

The project explores the current Hispanic challenge for church planting in Orlando, Florida. With the participation of key Latino church planters, the project sought factors that impact as challenges, opportunities, and best practices. This chapter presents the biblical, theological, geographical, ministerial, and cultural foundations of the topic through literature review of important authors and works related to the theme of the study. The researcher's literature review went from the general, with a focus on the Anglo context, to the particular, with focus on the Latino context. It also incorporates a description of Encuentro Ministries and devotes a good part of this chapter to presenting

the church of Antioch as a strong model for the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando. These preliminary steps and framework provided a solid foundation for the design of the project's research instruments.

Biblical Foundations

We are called to preach all the Gospel to all the people in all the nations. We are sent to make disciples of all nations. Making Hispanics disciples in Orlando not only makes sense; it is a question of obedience! As believers of the faith in the Messiah as the Son of God, the Holy Bible has a fundamental role in our faith and practice. If we would use the same arguments of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, without biblical foundations all our faith is in vain, including church planting. However, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Now, as we affirm that Jesus Christ is risen, we also affirm that there are plenty of biblical foundations for planting churches and making disciples from all nations.

A God of Grace and a Missionary God

Throughout the Old Testament, God expresses a divine purpose to restore creation and redeem humanity. As disciples, we need to go beyond human redemption and include the restoration of all creation (Wright 230). All the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, (Isa. 11:9) and all the earth will be full of the Glory of the Lord (Hab. 2:14; Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3).

There is only one God, who is Creator of all that exists, visible and invisible (Deut. 6:4; Gen. 1,2; Col. 1:15-20). God existed before the world was formed, exists in the world today, and will live on even when this world exists no longer. The researcher grew up with

a very Jewish concept of God, even though he is not Jewish, either by blood or faith. He appreciates the reverence and awe of the Jewish belief in God. Nonetheless, in considering our human diversity, he feels that he would like to transmit a similar concept of admiration, without diminishing the different concepts of God that other cultures and peoples of the world have experienced as long as those concepts honor and praise God, who is worthy of it.

God created man and woman in his image (Gen. 1:27). Therefore, both men and women have the same rights and responsibilities before their Creator. God considered the creation "good." (Gen. 1:31). God did not intend to be a puppet master but created free beings. Because of disobedience to God, sin entered the world which had been created sin-free. Sin caused a distancing in the communion between God and creation, including man and woman (Rom. 3:23). As a consequence, when sin entered the world, so did death and suffering (Rom. 5:12). Since then, men and women throughout the centuries have struggled between choosing to be obedient to God or straying away from God and closer to evil (John 3:19). However, in the book of Genesis, God promised Abram to bless all families of the earth, bringing the hope of redemption (Gen. 12:1-3).

Because God still loved and cared for creation, in Christ Jesus, the invisible God, made himself visible (John 1:1-14). Christ came to the world because of the grace of God, an unmerited gift of pardon (Eph. 1:7). Jesus came to save us and reconcile us with God (2 Cor. 5:18). Jesus Christ took upon him all the sin of the world to open for us the opportunity of abundant and eternal life (John 10:10 and 3:16).

In Christ's death and resurrection, he also gave us the onset of the kingdom of God. This new way of life revealed by Christ's life on earth is the first fruits of the totality of this kingdom that will come to be when Christ returns (1 Cor. 15:20-25).

In this new dynamic society of justice and reconciliation, the Church is called to share God's love as Christ shared it with us (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16). It is this call that propels me to offer the same message to all humankind (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). Once again, because of God's compassion and infinite mercy, God gives us the Holy Spirit to guide and console us through our human pilgrimage (John 14:14-16, 15:26, 16:7-15).

As servants of God, we are in partnership with our Lord and Savior who calls us to reconcile all of God's creation (Eph. 1:10). Our mission is to help build and uplift the Kingdom of God as God's ambassadors in the world (Rom. 5:20). One of the vehicles to accomplish this great mission is the local church, the body of believers which together, hand in hand, is called to proclaim the good news both in faith and life (1 Pet. 2:9). This wonderful experience of a new life and new labor can be accomplished through the presence of the Holy Spirit living in the hearts of believers. We have been given a message with missionary implications. We have been empowered, sent, and blessed to have the Spirit among us to carry out the task.

The Great Commission

Christ is in the business of church planting. *"I will build my church."* (Matt. 16:18 CEV) The biblical foundation for this research is affirmed by Jesus Christ's Great Commission. We are sent *"to go and make disciples of all nations"* (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV).

Because “*the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few;*” the Lord also commanded, “*to ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*” (Luke 10:2; Matt. 9:37 NKJV).

The Scripture passages which generally are known as the Great Commission constantly reiterate that mission should be sharing “all the Gospel” (Acts 20:27) to “all of the world” (Mark 16:15) to “all nations” (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47), from “Jerusalem ... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The four Gospels and the book of Acts contain versions of the Great Commission given by Jesus to his disciples. To take a glimpse at those instances would strengthen the biblical foundations of this work.

The Great Commission in Matthew

According to the records of Matthew, “*Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age’*” (Matt. 28:18-20 NIV).

1. The task/command is to “make disciples,” meaning learners, students, followers, not deciders. This is the only imperative in this passage.

2. Three circumstantial participles:

“Going”—could be with the force of a command: “Go!” i.e. go to them, do not wait for them to come to you. Or “as you are going”—i.e. whatever you are doing in life, this is to be on your mind and your agenda.

“Baptizing”—it is the way we identify with Christ (Rom. 6) and the church (Acts 2). It means “to identify with,” to be the doorway into the life of discipleship (1 Cor. 10).

“Teaching”—emphasizing continuous activity. The objective of teaching is neither command, content, nor doctrine, but obedience (“to obey”), which we learn over time.

3. The command is directed to disciples, who are to make more disciples, who are obedient, and accomplish what Jesus says, continue making disciples.

4. The extent of the assignment is “all nations.” So, as long as there are people who have not heard, the assignment remains.

5. The time limit emphasizes that the task will not be completed until “the end of the world.”

6. Christ’s presence and authority are with us in this task always. With the authority of heaven behind us and Christ’s presence with us, we, the believers, and followers of Jesus Christ must go and help people become public and obedient disciples of Christ.

The Great Commission in Mark

Mark presents his version of the Great Commission in chapter 16:15-16. *“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned”* (NIV).

1. The command is to take the initiative—that is, “Go” to all the world.

2. The target is every person (“all creation”).

3. Both the responses (believe and be baptized, or not believe) and results (saved or condemned) show the seriousness of what is at stake.

The believers are called to take the initiative in proclaiming the good news. They are also encouraged to be clear about what is at stake regarding the responses of those listening to the good news of the gospel of salvation.

The Great Commission in Luke

Luke, the doctor, expresses the Great Commission with these words: *“He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”* (Luke 24:46-49 NIV)

1. This is the fulfillment of a divinely orchestrated plan.
2. The message is that Christ will die and be raised.
3. The result is forgiveness of sins.
4. The response is repentance.
5. The recipient of the message is to be “all nations.”
6. The ability to accomplish this task will come from the Holy Spirit.

When we have understood the Scriptures and have received the Holy Spirit, we are to proclaim the good news to the world in fulfillment of God’s plan.

The Great Commission in John

John, the disciple martyred on Patmos' Island, expresses the Great Commission as follows: *"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that, he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'"* (NIV).

1. The missional model to follow is Jesus Christ's mission itself.
2. Jesus Christ is the one that is sending us, not any denomination or network.
3. The Great Commission is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Great Commission is an incarnational one (Phil. 2:6-11). Jesus depended on the Father's will and in the Holy Spirit's anointing. We must do likewise.

The Great Commission in the Book of Acts

Finally, Luke shares another version of the Great Commission in Acts 1:8: *"But you Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (NIV).

1. Jesus never envisioned evangelism apart from the Holy Spirit's involvement.
2. Jesus did not delegate the task but included us in the task he was continuing.
3. "You will be my witnesses" is as much a command as it is prophecy.

It defines not only what we do, but more importantly, what we are.

Evangelism requires our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and the personal experience of the life of Christ in us.

A Mission of Compassion

Some of the most powerful teachings in the Gospels are those when Jesus displayed compassion for the multitudes as he considered them as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Mark 6:34). In several instances in the Old Testament, the prophets presented this horrific and powerful image (Isa. 13:14; Num. 27:17 and 2 Chron. 18:16, Ezek. 34:8). A sheep without a shepherd is one without guidance, care, provision, and hope of a good future. Predators in the forms of lions, bears, and all kinds of beasts are looking for that kind of sheep! As followers of the compassionate Christ, as disciples, we are ministers of compassion, mercy, and justice.

The Antioch Church

Even though first-century Christians made regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem and met annually in the upper room, the city of Antioch—not Jerusalem—was the center of early Christianity. Modern churches might consider Antioch as a model for what God's people ought to be and do.

Like most cities today, Antioch was racially diverse and culturally pluralistic. As a result, when the scattered believers arrived there (Acts 11:19–20), they had to wrestle with how to make the gospel meaningful for a diversity of groups. Four factors helped to account for their success:

(1) They saw ethnic division as a barrier to overcome rather than a status quo to be maintained. Antioch walled off the four dominant ethnic groups of its population, Greek,

Syrian, African, and Jewish. The gospel however breaks down walls of separation and hostility (Eph. 2:14–22) and brings diverse peoples together in Christ.

(2) They soon had multiethnic leadership. The church employed and deployed pastors, teachers, and evangelists who reflected the composition of the community. Notice the cross-section of the city represented by the leadership team in Acts 13:1:

- Barnabas, a Hellenist from Cyprus raised in a priestly family. Appropriately, he was the first major leader of the new group (Acts 4:36, 11:22–23).

- Simeon (Niger), an African.

- Lucius of Cyrene, also of African descent.

- Manaen, a childhood companion of Herod Antipas (the ruler who killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:17–28), perhaps even a relative, and surely a privileged member of society.

- Saul, a Hellenistic Jew from Tarsus with rabbinical training who had Roman citizenship. The fact that Barnabas intentionally recruited this young, untried leader for the work is noteworthy (Acts 11:25–26).

(3) They sent out ministry teams. Just as the church at Antioch had been established by believers fleeing from Jerusalem, it too sent out ministry teams to tell the story of Jesus. Paul used Antioch as his base of operation for three successive apostolic tours (Acts 13:1–3, 15:36–41, and 18:22–23). Moreover, Antioch served as a crossroads for travelers from the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys to the east, Asia Minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. The church there fore was able to maintain an international outreach in its hometown.

(4) They joined together to accomplish projects of compassion. A famine in Judea became an opportunity for the multiethnic Christians at Antioch to serve their predominantly Jewish brothers in Judea (Acts 11:27–30). Paul recognized how powerful the “politics of compassion” could be at uniting otherwise disconnected churches. “Remember the poor” became his rallying cry to bring together believers in Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Galatia, and Rome with those at Jerusalem (Acts 20:17–18, 35; 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15; Gal. 2:10).

Overall, Antioch became the model for how the church ought to function when surrounded by diversity and cultural pluralism. What a powerful church planting reference for a diverse socio-economic-cultural-linguistic city like Orlando! The church at Antioch was the overarching model of new church planting in first-century Judea and transcends time and space as it is still a strong new church planting model in our post-modern, post-Christendom world.

The Church: Development and Growth

My ecclesiology is based on the Bible, and I have no regret. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, I believe the Church is the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:27; 1 Cor. 10:16; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 6:15; Col. 2:17; Rom. 7:4; Col. 1:24). Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 present the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the Church to edify the body. The Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, called some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints for the labor of the ministry (Eph. 4:12). Matthew D. Green, Chris A. Legebow, and Hartwell P. Davis call this the five-fold ministries or offices. As a living organism, the Church grows, expands, and multiplies. As the Church grows, it impacts neighborhoods, cities, nations, and the world.

The Great Finale

The Bible shows that the results of God's redemptive plan are multiethnic, multicultural, multinational, and multilingual celestial worship. *"After this, I saw a large crowd with more people than could be counted. They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood before the throne and before the Lamb."* *"Then they sang a new song, 'You are worthy to receive the scroll and open its seals, because you were killed. And with your own blood you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation, and race.'"* (Rev. 7:9; 5:9 CEV) While it is hard to fully understand and imagine the complete meaning and development of this celestial worship, from Orlando and to the ends of the earth, let's join the multitude and proclaim, *"You are worthy... Glory forever to the Lamb of God!"*

Theological Foundations

One Mission and Many Approaches

In refining the concept of ministry and mission, there are several aspects on which high emphasis must be placed. The unreached are a reality. Many have not heard the Good News yet (Verkuyl *Challenges* Anderson et. al. 17). They are those who are yet to believe. We must not disregard this reality as we ponder the mission in general.

Arthur F. Glasser brings out two different points of view which seem to be conflicting. He first states: "I disagree with Paul Knitters' suggestion that Christians should settle for a "unitive pluralism of all religions"" (*The Evangelicals* Anderson et. al. 6). To be a Christian is to be a representative of Christ in this world and this call requires commitment and responsibility. Conforming to some beliefs of non-Christian religions

sometimes would be going against some basic Christian beliefs. I object to the old concept or even the New Age notion of religious universality.

Glasser also mentions in referring to Christians that "they should be polite enough to regard all other religions with respectful good grace and work for tolerant coexistence" (Glasser *The Evangelicals* Anderson et. al. 6). This is a tremendous teaching that could be rescued by the Christian church. We have lost the emphasis on the fact that we are still all God's creation and that we need to respect each other as well as share the love of Jesus Christ with those whose faiths are not the same as ours. A constant dialogue with non-Christians and working on projects that we share in common is a way of maintaining fruitful relationships for the good of humankind.

As opposed to having a universal religion, we do however need to look at our mission as universal (Verkuyl *Challenges* Anderson et. al. 18; Amaladoss *The Church* Anderson et. al. 16; Winter *Fifteen Changes* Anderson et. al. 47). Because every person in Creation has a high value to God, our mission should seek to serve all of creation without making a distinction based on race or geographical location.

The Great Commission

In *How to Plant Churches in the XXI Century*, the authors Daniel R. Sanchez, Ebbie C. Smith, and Curtis E. Watke affirm, "the first and most primary reason why we need to start new churches is that this is the best way of implementing the Commission to make disciples" (19). In his book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, Thomas Rainer, shares his analysis of the deaths of fourteen churches. "I saw a common pattern. Obedience to the Great Commission faded; it usually faded gradually... the decline in the outward focus

was gradual, almost imperceptibly gradual. That is why the autopsy results concluded that the Great Commission became the great omission” (40, 41).

According to the Great Commission, we need to carry out the mission simultaneously in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the world (Acts 1:8). We cannot wait to complete the mission in our Jerusalem to start our mission in our Judea, neither can we wait to end our mission in our Judea to start our mission in our Samaria. The missions have to be carried out simultaneously. Our local communities and congregations should remember that other neighborhoods, cities, countries, and continents have communities with basic human traits, just as ours, who need Christ in their lives, just as the people in our own Jerusalem need Christ. The danger exists in centering oneself on those who are near us. Our vision should be broader minded and remind us that the world is truly a small place. Our mission should stretch beyond the boundaries of what we call "home."

We need to start in our Jerusalem, but we cannot stop there. We need to go until the ends of the earth. If we look at a map of the Americas from the United States to the south, plenty of countries speak Spanish. Many of the members of our congregations still have family in their countries of origin. The testimonies of transformed lives are a powerful message to share with them as well as the Gospel and thus make disciples there. We have several advantages in the twenty-first century. Ongoing scientific and technological advances have cut down distances as never before. A century ago, a trip that used to take three months, today may take twenty-four hours by road, and perhaps two hours by plane. With regard to communications, satellite, internet, TV, and digital telephony make sharing the Gospel much more possible. Indubitably today, more than

ever before in history, world mission is more accessible because our world is more accessible. With globalization, the people of the world are coming to us. We can, literally, make disciples of all nations without leaving Orlando. “The Lord of the harvest, moved with compassion to reach his world, began in these last days to bring those yet unevangelized within easy reach of the church... Every city has become a mission field, and every believer a missionary” (Scott 39).

One of the most powerful vehicles that God uses to carry out his mission is the church community. The Christian community is convoked by the Lord to proclaim on time and out of time, the Gospel with conviction and authority (Mottesì, *Predicaci3n* 40). As an answer to the Great Commission, the community is called to witness in word and action (Acts 1:8). It is called to proclaim and practice a faith that brings justice to the world (Amaladoss *The Church* Anderson et. al. 14-15). To witness is not only to share the gospel but to live it out not only in words but in action (I John 3:18). Many times, we fail to witness effectively because we either place an excessive amount of emphasis on one side or the other. The ideal is that both words and actions are carried out in conjunction. “The Christian church is not a group of religious people, but a community of disciples of Jesus Christ; it is the community of the Kingdom within the civil community, it is a transforming countercultural community; it is Christ taking shape in society, becoming audible, visible and accessible in the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Mottesì, *Predicaci3n* 44)

Witnessing is also a challenge to be prophetic and denounce all types of evil. In Revelation 17:6, we read about the blood of the martyrs who are the witnesses of Jesus Christ. History reveals with plenty of evidence that this kind of prophetic mission has a heavy cost in terms of persecution, martyrdom, and even the head of the witness (Mark

6:27; Acts 7:59). Ministries like Open Doors International encourage the church to pray for a list of at least fifty countries where Christians are persecuted. Sadly, many people in first world countries and cultures have lost sight of the powers of Satan in our midst where evil is an existing reality (Itioka *Recovering* Anderson et. al. 34-38).

We praise God for the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, but we must bear in mind that the fulfillment of the Kingdom in its entirety will only be accomplished later upon the return of Christ. "To speak of the Kingdom is to speak of the redeeming purpose of God for all of creation and the historical vocation that the church has with respect to this purpose here and now, and "between the times"" (Padilla, *Misión* 180). Because the Kingdom is not yet fully realized, we must deal with the realities of sin in the world in all its visible and invisible forms. The church is charged with confronting injustice and all evil.

The Great Commission is a call to work in unity. Jesus' prayer at the garden was that the disciples reflect the unity of the triune God and be one. Disciples must first be in unity with God and with one another. Jesus affirmed that, as a result, the world would believe (John 17:20-23). As God's church and as a body of believers, we must work together and put aside contention and competition. To say "Yes" to cooperating in mission and "No" to the spirit of competition could make a difference between just surviving while on the mission or thriving.

"The One that unites us is greater than all of our differences: Christ!" (Glasser *The Evangelicals* Anderson et. al. 7). "Evangelicals must work together to bring renewal to every segment of the church, or the evangelization of this generation will not be realized"

(Glasser *The Evangelicals* Anderson et. al. 8). I believe this quote from Glasser's perspective is very applicable to all Christian denominations. It is interesting to note that Christians not only practice intolerance with non-Christians, but also within the Christian family. Unfortunately, this intolerance and “competition” among Christians has superseded missionary endeavors and produced many cases of overpopulation in certain locations, while, at the same time, there are places of complete desolation. Church planters, pastors, and missionaries have stepped over each other’s toes in some areas, while there are fields where the gospel has yet to be heard.

An area that must be emphasized greatly in our mission and ministry is reminding the world that it is God's mission and not ours. “We are simply an instrument in the hands of the great Master. God is the One who sends us. It is God who sets the agenda and we must be sensitive enough to determine the agenda set by God” (Tutu *The Role* Anderson et. al. 33). Here lies the importance of living Spirit-filled lives, lives that can be led by the Holy Spirit, lives that surrender themselves to the total lordship of Jesus Christ. The community of believers must remember that Christ is the Lord of the church. No human being or ideology merits that place.

The church must recover the sense of community that was characteristic of the early church of the New Testament (Acts 2:1; 42). This sense of community is particularly important as we work with Latinos. One of the most notable values of Latinos is our sense of community. For us, even the definition of family is a lot broader than the normal Anglo family. Our family includes all our extended families as well and even close friends are called family. As a community, we must rescue an integral sense of life instead of continuing to be led astray by the dualism which history entices us to. “If we would

consider life as a whole: social, physical, psychological, spiritual, all as one, we would have a different perspective on our life as well as that of others” (Amaladoss *The Church* Anderson et. al. 14).

Recovering the sense of community would also place a higher emphasis on people and not on things or numbers. So many times, we have fallen into the great blunder of thinking in terms of figures when relating to growth, without realizing that community is so much more important. This may seem like a very simple statement, but in all actuality, it is a power-packed one. Our individualism and egocentrism have placed so much emphasis on "me" and "mine" that we fail to look upon the needs of others. If we fall into the pit of never being able to satisfy ourselves, we will never consider others as important and in need. We must learn to understand the lost concept of "enough" and begin sharing all that comes after enough with those who do not have "enough" yet. Naturally, there is much subjectivity here, but we have also tended to do "what I want," more than "what God wants" once more, stressing my will over God's will.

We saw in the Great Commission according to John, that we are being sent as Christ was sent by the Father, on an incarnational mission (John 20:21). John 1:14 expresses “*the Word became a human being and lived here with us, and we saw his true glory... From him the complete gifts of underserved grace and truth have come down to us.*” The power of an incarnated church planting ministry should not be neglected. One of the errors that we have committed in the past is to impose the dominant group’s culture, readings, and hermeneutics of the Bible on the new believers. This is something that we should strive to avoid doing in our mission and ministry in general, but especially when we want to reach groups like Hispanics in the USA. For decades, preachers and teachers

used Bible commentaries written by the dominant culture. During the last four decades, we have seen a movement where Hispanic authors like Osvaldo Mottesí, Orlando Costas, Justo González, and Rene and Catherine Padilla have inspired and driven an incarnated and contextualized hermeneutic. “We believe that correct exegesis for purposeful preaching or teaching is guided for a twofold goal: (1) understand the exact meaning of the original and central message, essential and permanent of the biblical text, and (2) discern what it says to our situation (context), to apply it.” (Mottesí, *Hermenéutica* 177)

Our ministry should allow the community to appropriate Scripture and contextualize it (Bosch *Toward* Anderson et. al. 61).

The Puerto Rican theologian Orlando Costas promotes through his works an “ecclesiology based on an incarnational hermeneutic of Jesus Christ, who from the periphery of Galilee challenges the church as the visible body of Christ to obey its teacher, through a life of discipleship and suffering for the good of others, especially the poor. Biblical contextualization is rooted in the fact that the God of revelation can only be known in history. Such a revelation comes to specific peoples in concrete situations by means of particular cultural symbols and categories. It is not possible to read the Old Testament without being struck by the human character of its revelatory claims. Theology in the Old Testament appears as a culture-bound, historically situated reflection on the God who is known in human language. In the New Testament, however, this revelation reaches its peak: God is known in human flesh.” (Costas 4-5)

Daniel R. Sanchez and Ebbie C. Smith explain that the word “context” comes from the Latin *contextus*, meaning, knitting together. “Missiological contextualization makes possible the message of God's redemptive love in Jesus Christ coming to life by considering the vital issues of the sociocultural context, transforming the worldview, values, and goals” (113).

Those who share the Gospel should be careful in inflicting ideas and suggestions that may be as oppressing as the former situations in which new Christians lived before becoming Christians. Preparing the way for the "Old Story" to have a present-day effect has much value (Castro *The Old, Old Story* Anderson et. al. 56). New believers are also Spirit-filled, and it is the same Spirit that dwells in them that dwells in us. We must not hinder the movement of the Spirit. If we do, we are limiting the power of God.

Because the same Spirit dwells among believers, we must also be open to receive missionaries from missionary-sending countries (Verkuyl *Challenges* Anderson et. al. 17; Padilla *Toward* Anderson et. al. 31). The tradition has been that the economically richer and stronger have had the opportunity of sending. We should consider the privilege of having missionaries from places where God has manifested himself too, even if that manifestation is somewhat different from the traditional ways of "doing evangelism." That is particularly true in a mission field like Orlando, Florida. Many Latino pastors are from countries that received the Gospel a hundred years ago. How they do evangelism can be different from the ways of a missionary sent from the United States or Europe.

To accomplish the Great Commission there must be a true passion for mission. In carrying out God's mission, we must truly fall in love with the Creator and the creation that the same God created. We must recover the zeal that so many of us felt when we first believed and be willing to live it out in many ways. I appreciate the emphasis of David B. Barrett on the lack of and need for contact; otherwise, there is no mission. "No contact, no mission" (Barrett *The Status* Anderson et. al. 72).

We need to see the people through the eyes of Jesus. Jesus had compassion for the multitudes as he considered them as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Mark 6:34). As followers of Christ, we are ministers of compassion, mercy, and justice. Who will we go to? How do I minister to the multitudes in such need, if I do not identify with them since I do not know the depth of their pain? Compassion and incarnation are two faces of the same missional coin.

Thomas Rainer reminds us that “thriving churches have the Great Commission as the centerpiece of their vision while dying churches have forgotten the clear command of Christ. Deceased churches, somewhere in their history, forgot to act upon the Great Commission. So, they stopped going, and making disciples, and baptizing them, and teaching them” (*Autopsy* 36).

The Antioch Model

Thom Rainer describes church growth as the discipline which seeks to understand, through biblical, sociological, historical, and behavioral study, why churches grow or decline (*The Book* 21). Church growth is inherent to the Great Commission. You cannot disciple people and plant churches without growth occurring (McNamara 435). The first part of this chapter analyzed biblical foundations for the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando, Florida. The biblical foundations also studied the Antioch Church as a model for Latino church planting growth; these are some of the lessons to be learned:

- They saw ethnic division as a barrier to overcome.
- They had multiethnic and multicultural leadership.
- They sent out ministry teams.

- They joined together to accomplish projects of compassion.

However, there is a lot more that we need to learn from them. I now go deeper into analyzing what the church of Antioch means as a model for today's Latino challenge in Orlando.

1. Through the eyes of the church of Antioch, the Mission of Latino Church planting has to become a Holistic Mission.

- In Acts 13:1-3, the Antioch Church is ministering to the Lord, not to anyone else. Worship is to recognize who God is. **WORSHIP** is the first ingredient of a Holistic Mission.

- In Acts 11:19-20, the community in Antioch proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The second ingredient is **PROCLAMATION**

- In vs. 26, the church teaches: The third ingredient is **EDUCATION**

- In vs. 29-30, the Christian community serves and sends aid and help. The fourth ingredient of a Holistic Mission is **SERVICE**

- In vs. 23-24, the church shares one with the other: that is **COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP**

The Great Commission taught us to share "all the Gospel" (Acts 20:27) to "all of the world" (Mark 16:15, to "all nations" [Matt. 28:19 and Luke 24:47], from "Jerusalem ... to the ends of the earth" [Acts 1:8]). Every disciple, *living* and *sharing* all the Gospel, to all people in all the world. When most churches emphasize just one, two, or three aspects of the mission, we are called to diversify—not our stocks or a financial portfolio, but our

approach and style of ministry. *Worship, Proclamation, Education, Service, and Communion* are the five ingredients of a Holistic Mission.

The mission that we need to accomplish life is exemplified by what Jesus did. Matthew 9:35 shows Jesus preaching, teaching, healing, and caring. God loves the complete human being. The Lord challenges us to reflect all his love through a Holistic Mission.

2. Through the eyes of the church of Antioch, the Mission of Latino Church planting needs to be a Contextual Mission.

In *Starting Reproducing Congregations*, the authors state “The fact that Paul reached the various people groups throughout Euro-Asia through a contextualizing methodology is evident in Acts and the Pauline literature. As Paul traveled on his missionary journeys, he varied the way in which he shared the gospel” (Sanchez, Smith, and Watke 14). In Antioch, the believers did not emphasize the Sabbath, or their festivities, not even circumcision. Those aspects were part of the Judeo-Christian community in Jerusalem, but in Antioch, before a Gentile community, the approach was a completely different one. This new approach was part of their contextual mission.

The believers wanted to remove any and all the barriers that could become an impediment for the gospel of Christ. When we do mission, we need to ask ourselves:

What barriers need to be removed?

Which ones need to be lifted? How much of our content is Gospel and how much is our denominational or Christian tradition or even just “American” culture?

Each one of us needs to recognize that the message is the same, but the applications of the biblical principles need to be different according to the context. Doing mission at the University of Central Florida is not the same as ministering among the migrant workers in the strawberry farms of Plant City, Florida. The message of the Gospel is the same, but the applications are different.

We need to recognize the diversity of our communities. It is not the same to do mission with the African American community of Pine Hills, with migrant workers in the farms of Lakeland, among Hispanics in Kissimmee and Poinciana, or with the homeless of Winter Garden. Our strategies, programs, methods, music, and songs, even our language, and perhaps even the way we dress, may need to be contextualized according to our target community. The message of the Gospel is the same, but the applications are not!

Christians in the United States have a great heritage of doing national ministry and international mission work. We accomplished great things, but we made many errors and horrors! Many of them were because of the lack of contextualization.

When the researcher was a child, he remembers listening to his father sharing about an American missionary with a passion to spread the Gospel to every person in Jujuy, an Argentinian province in the north of the country at the frontier with Bolivia. The missionary agency that sent the missionary contracted an airplane to distribute the “folletos” or evangelistic tracts. As he returned to the States, he was making a presentation to one of the sponsoring churches that supported his ministry. One of the believers asked him if by any chance he had with him one of the tracts that he distributed in Argentina. The missionary sought in his portfolio and found one. Immediately, he presented the tract

to the brother with a great smile and happiness. “Fifty thousand of these tracts! Yes, thanks to your generous support, I evangelized fifty thousand people!” When the believer received the tract, he could not stop making strange faces. “What happened?” the missionary asked. “This tract is in English!” answered the brother. “Are you telling me that you distributed fifty thousand English tracts in Argentina?”

The researcher could not verify the legitimacy of the story, but he has too many other experiences that demonstrate that, if there is a lesson that we can learn from the Scriptures, it is that to be effective in our mission in the twenty-first century, the mission has to be a contextualized mission.

3. Through the eyes of the church of Antioch, the Mission of Latino Church planting needs to be a Prophetic Mission.

According to Ephesians 4:11, 12 “Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors and teachers so his people would learn to serve, and his body would grow strong” (CEV). Apostles, missionaries (evangelists NRSV), pastors, and teachers are some of the manifestations of the gift of leadership that Christ gives to his church.

Prophets are another one. Leaders lead, equip, and perfect the saints.

- *Agabus* is a prophet that in Acts 21:10 prophesized to the Apostle Paul.
- In Acts 11:27-28, the same prophet prophesized to the Antioch community that something bad, a great famine, was coming.

Every February in the United States of America, we celebrate African American Heritage. It was precisely Martin Luther King, talking about the role of the church, who

said: *“If the Christian Church doesn’t recuperate its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority”* (34).

As Christians, we need to recognize that with some great exceptions, we fail to accomplish our prophetic role as light and salt of the world. Accomplishing our prophetic role can cost us our heads; John the Baptist, Steven, and even Martin Luther King are good witnesses to that. It can cost us our liberty, as thousands of Christians in prison have paid for sharing their faith. Jesus reminds us: *Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.* The prophetic mission has a high cost, but we cannot be faithful without being prophetic!

4. Through the eyes of the church of Antioch, The Mission of Latino Church planting needs to be a Partnered Mission.

- In Acts 11:22, the Jerusalem church sends Barnabas to Antioch. After that, the Antioch church sends Barnabas to Tarsus. Prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch and Paul and Barnabas were sent from Antioch to Judea. Jerusalem and Antioch, both churches, were in a *cooperative effort* to reach the mission. *What is so strange about these two churches working together?*

The Jerusalem church was not like the Antioch church. They worked together despite their notable differences. Their differences were really big, not only in their liturgical content; their differences also had very serious theological implications. Nevertheless, their differences did not get in the way of working together!

As we strive for being faithful and obedient to God’s call, there are several implications for our mission.

- The Christian mission is too big for a single church, for just one denomination, church planting network, or missionary agency.
- The Christian Commission today demands more than ever removing our barriers, extending our hands in fellowship, and cooperating with all of Christ's body.

Enough with criticisms and divisions! If Jesus is your Lord and Jesus is my Lord, we are brothers and sisters; we are Christ's body, Christ's bride, his bride not ours, only one bride! Yes, in the Twenty-First Century, we are called to participate in a Partnership Mission.

5. Through the eyes of the church of Antioch, the Mission of Latino Church planting needs to be a Global Mission.

- In Acts 13:3, the Antioch community sends Paul and Barnabas. *Where?* To the world! What world? God's world! When the Antioch church opened the doors to missionary work, they opened the world's doors, not just the doors of their local community.

- The whole world is our mission field. We start right here, from Orlando, but we do not stop until we reach all the world for Christ, our Lord, and King.

6. Through the eyes of the church of Antioch, the Mission of Latino Church planting needs to be an Anointed Mission.

There are many pieces of evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit among the Antioch community. I mention here only three:

- Acts 11:24 says that Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit. This points to another important issue. *Who are we sending?*
 - Good people? Yes! Volunteers? Yes! Christians? Of course!!! Full of the Holy Spirit? Well, I am not always sure about that!
 - Barnabas was sent because he was full of the Spirit. It was not sufficient just to be a good man to be sent! There were many good men in the early community, but Barnabas was full of the Spirit and that makes the difference!
- In Acts 11:28, the prophet *Agabus* spoke *by the Spirit* about the great famine over the world.
 - The Antioch Church was very sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.
 - If we, the disciples are to be effective in our mission, we need to be more accustomed to hearing and obeying the voice of the Spirit, the voice of God.
- In Acts 13:2-3, again, the Church heard the voice of the Holy Ghost.
 - The Holy Spirit said: “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”
 - Today, the same Spirit of God is raising a nation convicted with the urgency of the mission call by the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

As we consider the mission call to make disciples through church planting, let us talk very clearly, we need the Holy Spirit. Without his work, all human labor will be in vain. Some denominations are more open to talk about the Spirit of God, but the Holy Spirit is not the sole property of Charismatics or Pentecostals. According to Romans 8:9, the question is not what movement or denomination the Spirit belongs to. The point is:

*How many of us belong to the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit dwell in me, in you, in us?
Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ! (Rom. 8:9).*

- Many times, we do not realize how much we need the Holy Spirit!

The Spirit of God convinces us of sin, justice, and judgment.

The Spirit of God cleanses our life through the blood of Jesus.

The Spirit of God consecrates and sets us apart for the ministry.

The Spirit of God baptizes us and introduces us into the body of Christ.

The Spirit of God fills us and anoints us.

Do I need Him? Do you need Him? Oh, how much we need you, Spirit of God!

- The Scripture passage tells us that as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke. Before they heard the voice of the Holy Ghost, the Antioch church prayed, worshipped, and fasted. Before sending missionaries, they looked for the face of God. It was not so much a question of praying and fasting so that God blessed their plans. The point was to pray and fast to have God's plans revealed to them.

They did not ask God to bless Barnabas and Saul. It was the Holy Spirit who gave them the instructions: "*Set apart for me to Barnabas and Saul.*" What was valid then in appointing missionaries and apostles, continues to be valid for the appointment of deacons, elders, pastors, and missionaries today. Yes, today, even today, especially today!

Some church officials, after having been appointed, do not seem to care about the ministry that was entrusted to them, because today, in many churches, prayer and fasting are being replaced with committees and meetings. Today, many churches utilize far too

many surveys, programs, commissions, boards, and marketing strategies, but forget about seeking God's face, deep communion with God, and the development of spiritual disciplines, in a personal and community environment.

Meetings, per se, are not wrong. They may be beneficial, but only when we experience the spiritual vitality that comes from fasting and praying alongside these. When we ignore or forget fasting and praying, of course, the results prove themselves! What would happen in our churches if the people appointed to positions but not appointed by the Holy Spirit, quit? Can you imagine how many official positions and pulpits would be vacant if that happened? Let us be honest,

- Was it right for the Antioch Church to pray and fast?
- Do we believe that it was important for them to fast and pray?
- If it was right for them, what makes us think that it is not necessary nor important for us?

The Theological Foundation of the Antioch church as a model for Latino church planting demonstrates that to be effective and faithful, the Mission of the Church in the new century needs to be *Holistic, Contextual, Prophetic, Partnered, Global, and Anointed*.

Cultural and Missional Foundations: The Hispanic Challenge

One of the most inquisitive books of Justo Gonzalez is *Mañana, Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, where he says, "There is a fact often forgotten: As far as time is concerned, it is not the Hispanic-American but the Anglo-American who is the newcomer to this country... Twelve years before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, the Spanish founded the city of Santa Fe, New Mexico" (31).

In *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America*, Oscar I. Romo states clearly that “Hispanics in the United States belong to several distinctive subcultural groups. Hispanics speak English and Spanish. They can relate to both English and Spanish cultures. Hispanics are creating a new lifestyle that includes the best of both cultures, yet allows them to retain their identities, cultural heritages, and linguistic tenacities” (32).

Bilingual or not, it never has been easy to be a stranger. It was difficult for the Israelites to be strangers in Egypt. It is hard for Latinos and anybody else to be treated as strangers in the USA today. In the United States of America, my country and, most probably if you are reading this dissertation in English, your country, to be a stranger, especially after September 11, 2001, means to become a special target for many forces. Many have expressed their outward resentment towards the presence of foreigners in our community, but the Lord says in Exodus 23.9, “*Don't mistreat foreigners. You were foreigners in Egypt, and you know what it is like.*” In Leviticus 19.34, the Lord says, “*the stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.*”

In Leviticus 25.23, the Word of God says that “*all belongs to God. He says--it isn't your land, and you only live there for a little while for you are but aliens and my tenants.*” God says, “*Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*” “*You shall not oppress or take advantage of a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates*” (Deut. 10:29; 24:14).

Ephesians 2.19, reminds us that *“Now, therefore, we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”*

Those members of the household of God include the Latinos who are coming to the Lord. We, Hispanics, are no strangers to the Lord and neither want to be strangers to you nor anybody else.

While Latinos represent more than twenty countries and territories, Henri Nouwen is famous for saying that “for Jesus, there are no countries to be conquered, no ideologies to be imposed, no people to be dominated. There are only children, women and men to be loved.”

The Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando demands visionary churches and ministries, committed to our Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, willing to take all the Gospel to all the people of the world. To holistically meet the varied needs of Latinos in our communities, it will take more than any one person, church planter, pastor, ministry, or church. We need to learn to work as a team—a group of people working together to obtain an outcome that is greater than the individual outcomes of each of its members. It will take all of us sacrificing to share with the Hispanic community of Orlando that there is still hope, there is still life, and this hope and life has a name. That’s the name of Jesus Christ the Lord!

You and I know well that this world desperately needs Christians who practice and preach love for God, and disciples commissioned to love our neighbors in ways that are difficult, uncomfortable, and risky. Our world needs churches willing to demonstrate in

the diversity of their makeup and worship the reality of a loving, reconciling relationship with God and one another.

Geographical Foundation: The City of Orlando, Florida

I live in Florida. I fully agree with Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger when they express, “Florida is great. The culture is rich. The food is amazing. The water is beautiful. Palm trees. Beaches. Sun. Fishing. Fresh fruit. Florida lobster. Great college football. Stone crab. Snorkeling. The weather” (29). Located in Orange County in Central Florida, one of the more important cities in *the Sunshine State*, Orlando was founded in 1856. Surrounded by lakes, it is becoming one of the most visited cities of the United States of America mostly because of its tourism, conventions, and trade shows that are the bases of the city’s economy.

For this project in Latino Church Planting in Orlando, we followed the research provided by Acts 29, and considered Orlando to be the seven-county area of Orange, Seminole, Volusia, Osceola, Lake, Brevard, and Polk. Gone is the day when Orlando was merely Orange and Seminole counties. I-4 and the 408 break Orlando up into 4 quadrants: NE, NW, SE, and SW. Culturally speaking, at least four different Orlando’s are apparent: 1. Downtown, 2. Suburban, 3. Exurban, and 4. Rural.

1. Downtown Orlando is the smallest community and people in this area tend to not leave their small radius. People in downtown Orlando are here primarily for career advancement. People in downtown Orlando tend to identify Orlando as only “downtown” and tend to be unwilling to commute much outside of downtown for work or community.

2. Suburban Orlando exists South of St. John's, North of 528, East of 429, and West of the Oviedo-Lake Nona corridor. People in suburban Orlando are here primarily for family and jobs. People in suburban Orlando tend to identify Orlando as downtown + suburbs and are willing to commute downtown or to other suburbs for work and community.

3. Exurban Orlando exists in quickly growing areas beyond suburban Orlando in the seven counties area. These areas are happening in every direction beyond the suburbs. People in exurban Orlando are here primarily for affordable housing, employment, and to raise a family. People in exurban Orlando tend to identify Orlando as downtown + suburbs + exurbs. They are very willing to commute large distances for work and community. The rise of autonomous vehicles will make this part of Orlando expand even more rapidly as how Americans view commuting will be dramatically altered over the next 5-15 years.

4. Rural Orlando exists in low population densities in the seven counties area. These areas are primarily in Osceola, Polk, Brevard, Volusia, and Lake counties. People live in these areas because they desire land, space, affordable housing, and sometimes cultural preferences (family, place of living, political leanings, etc.) These people do not consider themselves to be a part of Orlando but would consider downtown, suburbs, and exurbs to all be a part of Orlando. They have fears that the exurbs will continue to encroach on them physically, culturally, and ideologically.

Orlando is a city of contrasts, wonders, and amazing challenges and opportunities for Christian ministry and particularly for Latino Church planting. With 4.3 million people living within it, Orlando's population is expected to exceed 5.2 million by 2030.

According to VisitOrlando.com, “The City Beautiful” had more than seventy-five million annual visitors in 2018; the 4.2% increase over the prior year solidifies Orlando as the most visited destination in America. "We saw strong gains from all of our core countries, particularly from Latin America," says Visit Orlando President and CEO George Aguel. Since 2010 over 50% of new residents in Orlando are international; many have visited the city for the first time as tourists and later decided to migrate.

The University of Central Florida is the largest in Florida and one of the largest universities in the nation by enrolment with 69,525 students in 2019. According to the Census Bureau, in the Orlando metro, 31.7% are Hispanic, representing almost one hundred thousand people; Hispanics represent 41.73% of the population in Kissimmee and 53.4% in Ponciana. However, as the city is growing rapidly, it is notoriously “dechurching;” The Orlando metropolitan area is becoming the 6th fastest dechurching part of the country. According to the Greater Orlando Baptist Association, GOBA, only 14% of Orlando’s population is connected to a local church; Acts 29, a church planting network, estimates that the rate of which people consistently attend Gospel-preaching churches is currently 6% roughly on par with Seattle or Manhattan, thus becoming the most post-Christian city in the Southeast. According to Acts 29 and the Barna 2018 Metro Orlando Report, as we consider Latino Church Planting, we need to consider that:

1. Orlando is the most post-Christian city in the Southeast.
2. 94% at one point were churched in their lifetime but only 49% are today.
3. Of the 51% of the unchurched people in the city, 84.3% of them used to be churched (684k people).
4. Only 30% are actively churched.

5. Only 18% are actively churched in Protestant churches.
6. Only 6% are actively churched in evangelical Protestant churches.
7. Practicing Christians are overwhelmingly female in Orlando (60/40) –there are 50% more churched women in Orlando than men.
8. Marriage, children under 18, and being female were the three biggest sources of increased probability of being a practicing Christian.
9. The least de-churched ethnicity by far are black persons (equal practicing Christians and unchurched) whereas Hispanics (2.67x) and whites (3x) were overwhelmingly unchurched relative to practicing Christians.
10. Churches in Orlando tend to be much larger than the rest of the USA - most folks go to mid-sized churches (101-499). People attend large (190 index) and really large churches (156 index) at very significant rates relative to the rest of the country.
11. The mainline church is dying among young people - 13% of those over 40 vs. 7% of those under 40.
12. The non-Christian population is exploding among young people - 16% of those over 40 vs. 37% of those under 40.
13. The only religious segment growing among young people (relative to older people) are charismatics - 4% of those over 40 vs. 6% of those under 40.
14. Charismatics are overwhelmingly non-white - 2% of whites are charismatic vs. 10% of non-whites.
15. There are more practicing Christians among millennials than what you would have expected for the growing dechurched trend - it seems that millennials are either pretty either/or regarding faith or non-faith -Those 71+ are significantly above

average (31%) in terms of being practicing Christians relative to the national average (20%).

16. Baby boomers are significantly below average (25%) in terms of being practicing Christians relative to the national average (36%).

In general, some of the greatest needs are affordable housing, education, and infrastructure. As we approach Latino church planting in Orlando, we also need to recognize other needs, challenges, and opportunities like mercy and justice issues, poverty, the rapid disintegration of the family, and moral relativism. The vision of the researcher, which is shared by many Christians in the city, is to see a contemporary and contextualized version in our city of Acts 19:10 “*all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord;*” we want to see a great Gospel transformation in people and communities.

No single church, church planting network, or denomination can do it. To see that, we need a powerful renewal of existing churches, an anointed movement of church planting, and an increasing partnership between healthy leaders and churches with a common vision of seeing Jesus more famous than Mickey Mouse and become Lord of all.

Ministerial Foundation: Encuentro Ministries

Sixteen years ago, God called the researcher to start a new ministry with a three-fold purpose: to provide pastoral care, training the saints, and networking for Latino church planters, pastors, leaders, churches, and non-Latino churches with a passion for reaching Latinos in their communities. Encuentro Ministries is a 501 c3, non-profit organization. It started providing emergency pastoral care to five pastoral couples in crisis.

Today, it is serving in several Latin-American countries, Spain, and the United States.

From all the Latin-American countries, Encuentro Ministries has Argentina, the researcher's native country, Cuba, his wife's native country, Mexico, and the United States as the primary focus points of the ministry.

Pastoral Care:

The first foundation of Encuentro Ministries is to provide pastoral care for pastors, church planters, and missionaries. They provide pastoral care for their communities of faith, but who pastors the pastor, who cares for those who care?

The same leaders who are on fire during a church service cry when they are alone; marital, family, and ministry conflicts are our daily bread. In the United States, many ministries provide pastoral care to pastors, many of them are paid ministries, and almost all of them are for English-speaking ministers. Encuentro Ministries is answering God's call to serve those who serve in Spanish.

Training:

There is another foundation that we need to explore if we will be faithful to our call to make disciples and reach Latinos in Orlando through church planting. It is related to the need for developing each disciple for the work of the ministry. According to Ephesians 4:11-16, the Lord himself gave apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers, five gifts to the body to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. To make disciples of people from all nations and plant Latino churches in Orlando today, more than ever, we need to equip the saints. We need to develop men and women, disciples of Christ who are personally whole, spiritually mature, biblically grounded and theologically

competent, globally and sociologically sensitive, and who will share their faith by serving with passion in God's reconciling mission in Christ throughout the world.

Networking:

The researcher participated in another congress where he understood the importance of networking. Amsterdam 2000 was the follow-up to Amsterdam 86, the first conference that Billy Graham convoked for the same audience. Amsterdam 2000 was also the last of the conferences that the late Billy Graham convoked for itinerant evangelists, with 10,287 participants representing 209 nations and territories. The speakers and themes were great, but the most important lesson I remember is “those of us that are not networking, very soon will be non-working.” Just to listen to that phrase was worth the effort of participating in the conference. Five years later, as God was starting Encuentro Ministries, networking was the third foundation of the new ministry. Today more than ever, it is not possible to do ministry in isolation. We need each other! Despite the great technological resources that we have available today, we need leaders that catalyze, and invite to connect, share, and learn from each other. A mission group from Chicago is installing a new roof in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. A Floridian church is connecting with a sister church in Curuzu Cuatia, Argentina. A team of trainers is leading an equipping event in San Sebastian, Spain. All of this is made possible because of the power of networking.

The Urgency

With very assertive and passionate words, Manuel Ortiz exhorts us to take urgent action and respond to God's call. “We are losing our Hispanic youth to gangs, drug

addiction and systems of evil... We need churches that will not only stay in the city but will also provide programs that will be useful on the streets of our major urban communities. Who will be the models of grace and righteousness?" (13).

The Manila Manifesto, along with the Lausanne Covenant, talks about the Christian missionary enterprise:

“So, the Christian mission is an urgent task. We do not know how long we have. We certainly have no time to waste. And to get on urgently with our responsibility, other qualities will be necessary, especially unity (we must evangelize together) and sacrifice (we must count and accept the cost). Our covenant at Lausanne was ‘to pray, to plan, and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world’. Our manifesto at Manila is that the whole church is called to take the whole gospel to the whole world, proclaiming Christ until he comes, with all necessary urgency, unity, and sacrifice. (*Luke 2:1-7; Mark 13:26, 27; Mark 13:32-37; Acts 1:8; Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:20*)” (Lausanne Movement)

Foundations Conclusion

The city of Orlando is ready for the harvest. Latinos are everywhere. While searching for the promised land, we need to share with them a greater purpose and introduce them to the Kingdom of God.

The Christian Mission is an urgent one. We do not know how much time we have, but we are sure of this, we do not have time to waste!

We do not have another decade... another year to waste...

We do not have a month ... we do not have a week to waste...

We do not have a day ... we do not have an hour to waste...

We do not have time to waste!

This World is crying for hope. Today more than ever the world needs God. Our mission demands urgency... We do not have time to waste!

Research Design Literature

The Qualitative Research Design

To provide Latino church planters, mother churches, church planting networks, and denominations a useful tool as they plan their Latino church planting efforts, identification of the challenges and opportunities, that the Orlando context represents for Latino church planting and other Latino ministries, is necessary.

The research design consisted of qualitative data collection using a questionnaire, an interview, and analysis of the documents and data findings. According to Sensing, design describes how the project was accomplished and requires precision; it is essential (61). The project was designed by the researcher as a pre-intervention. The researcher in a D.Min. project is a “co-participant with the community in the process of gathering and interpreting data to enable new and transformative modes of action” (63) The goal of the project was not solely to diagnose a problem, a challenge, but to contribute transformative seeds in the form of ideas, key findings, information, and opportunities for a more relevant, pertinent, and effective Latino church planting ministry in Orlando. Considering that the possibility of damage is always latent in any research, during the entirety of the project, the identities of the participants were protected.

Summary of Literature

Postmodern America has become one of the largest mission fields in the world and Latinos represent 18% of that; nevertheless, according to Barna, in one hundred and four

U.S. counties, Hispanics made up at least 50% of the population. While in the past *missions* was a term used to describe Gospel outreach in other countries, now, there is a desperate need to do missions in our backyard.

Chapter 2 offers the biblical and theological foundations for Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando; since 2010, over 50% of new residents in Orlando have been internationals, with a great influx of Latin American families. In Orlando, the Latino percentage is greater than the national with some zip codes, like 32827 or Orlando with 48.49% of Hispanics and several others, with percentages well over 20%. Like any other geographical context, the Orlando area brings its own challenges and opportunities.

The chapter started with the biblical foundation for Latino Church Planting in Orlando, where God is presented as the great and graceful missionary; it followed the Great Commission according to the four Gospels and Acts, to ended with Acts 11 where the Antioch Church Model is explained. Based on the Great Commission, we need to carry out the mission simultaneously in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the world (Acts 1:8). The theological foundation reveals that while there is only one mission, there are many approaches to it; cultural, social, geographical, financial, and ethnic contexts. Each one makes a difference in the way that we share the Gospel. According to the Antioch Church Model, the Mission of Latino Church planting has to become a Holistic, Contextual, Prophetic, Partnered, Global, and Anointed Mission.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Reuniting all things in Christ is at the heart of God (Eph. 1:9, 10). Orlando, the land of Walt Disney, is not out of God's eternal and perfect plan. The purpose of this project was to determine some of the factors that impact the Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando, Florida. This chapter presents the research methodology utilized for this project. It includes the project's nature and purpose, the research questions, and the three instruments used to answer each of those research questions: a questionnaire, an interview, and analysis of the documents and data findings. It also describes the context of the ministry, the participants, and the criteria utilized for selecting them. The chapter further addresses the process of data collection and analysis, as well as the reliability and validity of the project design.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Orlando is becoming a more Latino city each passing day. The Great Commission and the significant Latino population increase demand strong missional answers. In this project, I address the Latino church planting challenge in the context of the city of Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network. To accomplish this purpose, I invited church planters related to Encuentro Ministries Network to help discover those factors and achieve the purpose. I believe that as result, the project will bring awareness and empowerment for a more relevant and effective Latino church planting ministry.

Basically, humans can learn in two ways, the good, and the bad. The bad way to learn is doing it on our own, without learning from the wealth of knowledge and experience of others. Honestly, we have no time to learn everything on our own, and even if we were able to live a couple of centuries, the pain and price involved in this type of learning are simply too big. Christians can also learn from the experience and lessons learned of others who happened to be on a similar journey. According to John C. Maxwell, when learning from “evaluated experience,” we learn from the best teacher.

The purpose of the project was to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within Encuentro Ministries Network. I strongly believe that in meeting its purpose, the project will help church planters, mother churches, church planting networks, and denominations as they plan to reach Hispanics in Orlando, to learn important lessons, principles, challenges, opportunities, and empowering strategies, hopefully, in a good way.

To understand the factors that impact the Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries network, three instruments were used to gather the data: a researcher-developed open-ended and closed-ended questionnaire, a researcher-developed an open-ended-questions interview, and an analysis of documents. These three instruments complete the triangulation. Judith Bell explains triangulation as “cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible” (qtd. in Sensing 72).

Research Questions

For this research to be objective, well-founded, and comprehensive, three research questions were raised.

Research Question #1

What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

Church planting among Latinos in Orlando is already happening in diverse ways and methods. The purpose was not to discover if new church planting is happening in the Hispanic community, but rather to understand the factors that impact the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries Network. This question was answered through the questionnaire designed by the researcher to obtain information related to the factors that present challenges to the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando.

Section I of the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ) responded to the context of the church planter and the congregation. Information related to being either a full-time church planter or co-vocational, the model of church being followed, or the language used, indeed impacted the results and helped us understand better the conclusions arrived for the church planter. Section II of the LCPOQ addressed the dynamics of the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando. Q18 researched the challenges involved in Hispanic church planting, specifically, in Orlando within Encuentro Ministries network.

The other instruments utilized to answer this question were the interview and document analysis. Question #1 in the interview was directly formulated to answer RQ1 of the project. One church planter that participated in the research provided a church planting proposal, a document for a better understanding of their church model and plan. Information obtained from that document also helped understand some possible challenges.

Research Question #2

What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network?

This question sought to understand the specific factors that present opportunities to the Hispanic church planting ministry in Orlando. It was answered through a questionnaire of a qualitative nature utilized to gather data about the participants' awareness and perspectives on the topic. Question 18 of the questionnaire responded to the challenges of the Latino church planting ministry in Orlando. Questions 8 to 11 addressed its opportunities.

Two other instruments were used to answer this question; an open-ended-questions interview and document analysis. Question #2 in the interview was directly formulated to answer RQ2 of the project. I analyzed documents related to church planting among Latinos in Orlando. The documents were provided by some of the leaders that participated in the research. The documents are described in Chapter 4.

Research Question #3**What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network?**

Identifying and understanding the factors that present challenges and opportunities to the Latino church planting in Orlando is important, but equally important is learning the best practices that stand out, what kind of empowering strategies are being already implemented to develop a more effective and pertinent Latino church planting ministry in this city. This question was answered through both the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire, the interview, and through documents Analysis. On the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire, questions 12 to 17, 19 to 23 responded to the best practices being implemented for Latino church planting in Orlando. Question #3 in the interview was directly formulated to answer RQ3 of the project. The documents, described in Chapter 4, provided important insights and data to address the proposed question. They were provided by some of the church planters that participated in the research for a better understanding of their church planting project, vision, and strategy.

Ministry Context for Observing the Phenomenon

Ministry does not happen in a vacuum. Context is not only important but essential. As church planting among Latinos in the USA is analyzed, we discover that one of the reasons for many failures is the lack of understanding of contexts. Latino church planting in Orlando is not an exception. We are not necessarily talking about the lack of contextualization by non-Latino leaders, but even from Hispanics.

I still remember a decade-old conversation with a pastor from Honduras. He was a well-educated and successful pastor in Tegucigalpa, the capital of his native country; he was the senior pastor of a church of more than five hundred members. A small Hispanic church in a rural area of Orlando with most of the members working in the fields as migrant workers invited him to preach in a revival. His preaching was very well received and a few months later, the church invited him to consider becoming their pastor. Coming to the U.S. was always attractive to the pastor. The dream of having a big church in the United States, like the one he had back home, was something he never fully set aside; “perhaps this is the opportunity to make my dream a reality,” he thought. As a small church with only forty-five members from four different nationalities, none of them from Honduras, the congregation was only able to offer the pastor a monthly love offering.

This pastor had to work a secular job, at least, on a part-time basis “until the church would grow”. When I met him after three years of pastoring the church, he was very discouraged. He was working part-time parking rental cars, something that was very unsatisfactory for him as he missed the years ministering all day long with people. The church was not able to provide the monthly love offering amount because of the nature of the work of the members. They were transient and moving all the time with a membership of only twenty-five. As a result, of the church not growing, reducing his pay, and perhaps not being the best match with the culture and people in the congregation, the pastor was not enjoying his pastoral ministry, and the members did not understand the pastor’s discouragement in his “secular job.”

Many members had similar jobs to the pastor’s second job, for many years, and some, for decades. The pastor also missed the opportunity to preach and minister to people

of a higher level of education, while for some of the members of the small U.S. Latino church, the pastor's vocabulary was at times over their heads. The frustrated pastor felt like a bird trying to survive in the middle of the sea, and the small congregation like an ocean trying to help a bird that did not know how to swim. Context is not only important but essential.

While Hispanics have a high commitment to family (36%) and work (24%), their faith represents only 6% (Barna Group). Dr. Esther Robles, a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary, states in her dissertation that this context reality places the Latino church at a major disadvantage in the call to make disciples ("Abstract").

Orlando is a city of contrasts. Many tourists easily spend ten thousand dollars in one week, which is the average total salary for five months of the people that work in hospitality in the places that the tourists visit. Hispanic pastors wonder how the parks enjoy so much high attendance while the Latino churches struggle to grow over fifty members.

In times when Netflix, Instagram, Zoom calls, and webinars are kings, community outreach, church growth, and discipleship are everyday challenges for most Latino ministers in the city.

Participants to be Sampled About the Phenomenon

Criteria for the selection of the participants in this research is described in this section. A participant's description, along with ethical considerations regarding the study are also included.

Criteria for Selection

In consultation with my project advisor, I chose to work with Latino church planters in Orlando, Florida. The participants were part of the Encuentro Ministries network, which is the pastoral care, training, mentoring, and counseling ministry the researcher developed in the Orlando area.

Description of Participants

The participants were six male Latino church planters developing ministry with various denominations in Orlando, Florida. All participants were residents in the Orlando area, and active in the Encuentro Ministries network. All participants were eighteen years of age or older. Their experience in Christian service ranged from ten to fifty years. In terms of educational attainment, the four had a Bachelor's degree (one), a Master's Degree (four), and a Doctoral degree (one); highly multicultural, the group represented the countries of Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and the United States. I was intentional in inviting potential participants from various religious denominations since the project sought to show diversity and pursued a broader perspective on the topic. The research participants were at the time planting Latino churches in the city and were committed to seeing the Kingdom of God incarnated and demonstrated in Orlando.

The researcher summoned ten Latino church planters within the Encuentro Ministries network to participate and seven responded to the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire; during the process, one participant was not able to continue church planting, thereby ultimately reducing the number of participants to six. Three of the six were convened to participate in an interview with the research assistant to reduce

any bias. All participants shared their perspectives on the factors that impact church planting among Latinos in Orlando, Florida. The diversity among the group and their varied and significant contributions helped obtain a rather broad perspective on the topic. It also allowed the gathering of data that imparted cohesiveness and validity to the study.

Ethical Considerations

Tim Sensing shares that the researcher, as a D.Min. student, is an *ambassador* of God and a *servant* of the Gospel of Christ (31). Two thousand years before Sensing, the Apostle Paul wrote to the faith community in Corinth something similar: “Think of us as *servants* of Christ” (1 Cor. 4:1) and “we are *ambassadors* for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). As ambassadors of God and servants of Christ and the Gospel, Christians are required to be faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). To be faithful, in an academic research context, according to Sensing, is to be ethical, and “ethical in research is an issue of accountability” (32).

In being ethical through the research process, I contacted all participants of the project in order to inform and invite them to participate. Each participant also received through e-mail the link to the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ); the platform provided by Survey Monkey made the questionnaire accessible, including a digital Consent Form (Appendix C). The researcher adapted and elaborated the Consent section using Sensing’s *Sample Consent Form for Interviews* (235-36). Each participant was asked to read and sign the Consent Form. The Consent Form introduced the researcher, the purpose of the project, the procedure, time required, benefits, risks, confidentiality, publication possibilities, and how results might be eventually shared.

In respecting privacy and confidentiality, the participants were assured that none of their information was to be shared. They were informed that I would be the sole person with access to the data. All the data related to this study, both in paper copies or in computer devices and/or programs would be appropriately disposed of and destroyed or deleted six months after the submission and approval of the project.

Instrumentation

The Latino Church Planting in Orlando project was designed by the researcher as a pre-intervention project. The research design consisted of data collection using a questionnaire, an interview, analysis of documents and data findings.

The questionnaire was prepared using, as a reference, *the Preaching Response Questionnaire* (Sensing 239-41). The questionnaire consisted of twenty-three questions elaborated to answer the three essential research questions; most of the questions were based on the Likert Scale to ensure that the participants make a choice. Question 23 was designed to obtain additional information. The main topics of the questions were factors that impact the Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando, Florida as challenges (RQ1), opportunities (RQ2), and best practices (RQ3).

The second and third instruments were the interview and analysis of documents. The interview consisted of 3 questions: (i) What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network? (ii) What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network? (iii) What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network? Each question was formulated to answer one of the research questions.

The Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal (LCPOP) is a document provided by one of the leaders that participated in the research; it was particularly useful for RQ3, as it provided important data to address the proposed question related to the empowering strategies to develop a more effective and pertinent church planting ministry among Hispanics in Orlando. The document included, among other things, statements of vision, mission, faith, demographic data, statistics, and strategies.

Expert Review

For evaluating the Latino Church Planting challenge in Orlando, I created, as research instruments for the project, a Questionnaire (LCPOQ) and an Interview (LCPOI). The Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire, the interview and the analysis of documents related to Hispanic church planting in the city were designed to accomplish the purpose of discovering facts, challenges, opportunities, and empowering strategies to develop a more effective and pertinent church planting ministry among Hispanics in Orlando.

I asked two expert reviewers to provide input regarding the instruments as requested by the Institutional Review Board. A cover letter was sent explaining the purpose statement and the project's research questions. A corresponding protocol form was also sent with instructions on what was expected from the reviewers (Appendix F). They were asked to evaluate the questionnaire, the interview, and to provide feedback about the validity of the questions. They were also expected to make suggestions on how to make the instruments more specific, clear, and relevant for the project. The experts provided great feedback and suggestions to improve the questionnaire and interview.

I readily incorporated the expert reviewers' suggestions and insights into the questionnaire and interview. Expert Reviews were instrumental in clarifying the questions. The alignment between the purpose of the project with the research questions and the created instruments supported the findings. Finally, keeping in mind the need to keep the participation to a minimum of six people, the researcher had a waiting list in case some of those originally invited considered declining the invitation. Each participant was provided with the phone number and email of the researcher in case they needed to ask questions or needed clarification on anything.

While local context conditions cannot be duplicated, there were degrees of similarity between situations (Sensing 215). If another researcher follows the same process to collect data, that study will arrive at conclusions related to the specific researched context; some of those conditions and conclusions will be similar to the ones in this project.

Data Collection

It took the researcher eighteen months and three different proposals to finally arrive at the final one. The purpose of the research was to identify the factors that impact the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network. The conclusions will bring awareness and empowerment for a more relevant and effective Latino church planting ministry.

Once the purpose of the project was defined, the researcher found that the biblical and theological foundations of Chapter 2 of the Ministry Transformation Project manual primed his thoughts to create the instruments. The Asbury D.Min. Ministry

Transformation Project Workbook, the MLA Handbook, and the Qualitative Research book written by Tim Sensing were great and useful resources. My first language is Spanish. The idea of writing a project like this in my second language was, and still is, very intimidating! I found that having access to an online translator and dictionary were time-saving tools and always had them at hand. I cannot imagine writing the MTP and creating the instruments without the biblical/theological reflection and all the aforementioned resources.

One of the priorities was to determine the kind of research to implement that would reduce the options to qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of both. The researcher found that the “in-depth, culturally specific, and contextually rich insights from the qualitative research”, provided the right research methodology for the Latino Church Planting in Orlando project imparting validity and reliability to it (Sensing 58).

According to Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse, “the goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns that emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic” (21). Qualitative research relies on models and leads to experimentation and discovery (Sensing XXVII). “What can be discovered by qualitative research are not sweeping generalizations but contextual findings” (Maykut and Morehouse 21).

Research requires tools. Qualitative research works with thoughts expressed in words, in most cases but not always, written words in documents, written books, and the written answers to the instruments. Those words are the ones that the researcher has to observe, document carefully, and analyze to discover the patterns.

Another priority was to determine the kind of approach to the project, pre-intervention, intervention, or post-intervention. The researcher decided to use the pre-intervention type. Pre-intervention means to research a theme to fully describe it, identify what contributes to the problem, or identify significant next steps (D.Min. MTP 17).

A top priority for the researcher was to make the list of the leaders to invite to participate in the research project. The researcher chose to intentionally work with Hispanic church planters with one to six years' experience planting a Latino church in Orlando, Florida. All the participants in this research participated in the Encuentro Ministries network, and were 18 years of age or older, and came from a variety of denominations, theological backgrounds, and cultures. All of them were committed to seeking the expansion of God's Kingdom among Latinos in Orlando.

Once the type and kind of research were determined, it was time to prepare the instruments; the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ) (Appendix A), and the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Interview (LCPOI) (Appendix B). Reviewing documents is a rich way to understand the values and beliefs of participants (Marshall and Rossman 85). Two experts reviewed the instruments and provided significant feedback to improve them. The participants were contacted in person, email or by phone; the project was orally explained. Once they confirmed their participation, they received an email with the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire which included the digital Consent Form.

The data was then collected within a time frame of two weeks, with another week of cushion time. This allowed me to send two reminders to the participants, one after the

first week, and another one after the second week. I also sent one note of gratitude. At the end of the third week, I worked with what the participants had submitted to me.

Data Analysis

This Ministerial Transformation Project utilized qualitative analysis of the data. The LCPOQ questionnaire, LCPOI interview, and the LCPOP proposal generated some general themes and categories to work on with the final purpose of determining the factors that impacted the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando, Florida. The questionnaire was sent, and the data was gathered and analyzed utilizing Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. A good advantage of using Survey Monkey is that they organize the participant's answers and provide some charts and/or tables and percentages that might prove to be very useful for the researcher. Once the questionnaire answers were received, the researcher started the hard work of analyzing and classifying them. The document analysis had been already taking place.

The LCPOI interview, administered by the research assistant, consisted of a semi-structured instrument that followed the qualitative type of research. The semi-structured interviews were neither scripted nor devoid of structure. "Specified themes, issues, and questions with a predetermined sequence are described in the protocol but you—the researcher—are free to pursue matters as situations dictate" (Sensing 107).

I transcribed the three interviews. It was easy to start connecting the discoveries of the instruments, but the specific and empowering best practices for effective new church planting took more time to be discovered. All the data was read several times as the researcher applied his analytical and integrative skills along with his personal knowledge of the context where the data was collected. Due to the potential risk of bias, the

researcher educated himself on the topic and submerged in the process of being objective and avoiding over-identification with the participants.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

According to Sensing, “D.Min. researchers should critically reflect on what they do and why they do it” (XXVI). The Ministry Transformation Project (MTP) in general and the creation of a research instrument for the MTP demonstrated how important the critical reflection was.

The reliability and validity of the project design stemmed from the integration of a set of appropriate elements that provided internal consistency to the project. The design and application of research instruments, the literature study, and the sample of participants along with the data and insights collected from them, certainly helped make this project more reliable and valid. Importantly, the assessment of reliability and validity is an ongoing process.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Thousands of people arrive daily in the United States, many of them Hispanics. Varying political and economic circumstances in Latin American countries prompt Hispanics to move to the "promised land," as many immigrants call the territory between Canada and Mexico. The current economic slump in Puerto Rico, for example, has motivated many to move to an area where they already have relatives; it is estimated that one hundred new families from this Caribbean island alone arrive weekly in Central Florida. As they start a new life, they look to connect to a new faith community; some connect with already established churches, others, to new Latino church plants that are constantly starting up within the seven counties of Central Florida called "Orlando." Nationwide, a good understanding of the factors that impact Latino church planting endeavors is missing; the specific factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando are still to be discovered.

The purpose of this project was to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida; some factors present challenges and other opportunities. Some best practices to be considered stand out as many denominations, church planting networks, mother churches, and church planters are looking to learn from others' experiences to redeem time, resources and be more effective and relevant in their church planting call. This Project focused on Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within Encuentro Ministries network.

Participants

The researcher chose to work with Latino church planters in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network, the pastoral care, training, mentoring, and counseling ministry the researcher leads.

An online questionnaire was sent to ten potential participants, all of them Latino church planters and who were part of the Encuentro Ministries Network. The project needed a minimum of six answers to be viable. Seven responded to the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ). One participant was not able to continue church planting, reducing the number of participants to six.

Three of the six participants on the LCPOQ were invited to participate in the Latino Church Planting Interview (LCPOI) with the research assistant to reduce bias. The results are presented based on the six participants that responded and were at the time planting a Latino church in Orlando within the Encuentro Ministries network. On each Research Question, the data obtained is presented in the following order: (1) from the Latino Church Planting Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ); (2) from the Latino Church Planting Interview (LCPOI); and (3) any additional information provided by the Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal (LCPOP).

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

Q18 of the LCPOQ was used to discover some factors that impact Latino church planting and present challenges; some potential challenges were presented with the opportunity to make additional comments, which was not the case in this particular question.

Q18 presents a list of potential challenges, including finances, spiritual development, administrative issues, Leadership, outreach, worship, discipleship, small groups, space, online ministry, strategic planning, sermons, theology, and cultural diversity conflicts.

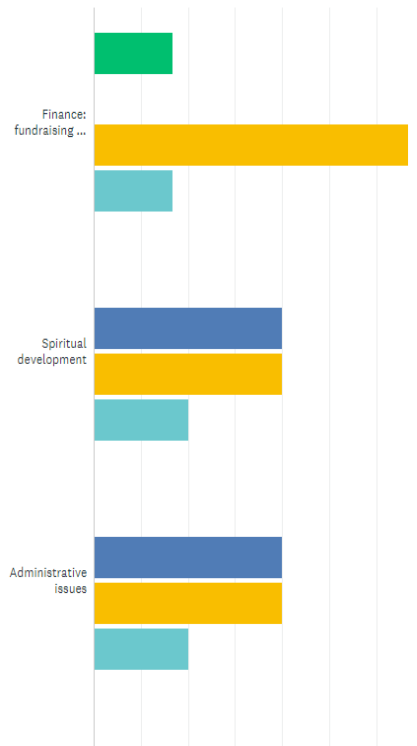
In the figures, each color represents some type of answer, as follows: Green = strongly disagree; Dark blue = disagree; Orange = agree; and Light blue = strongly agree.

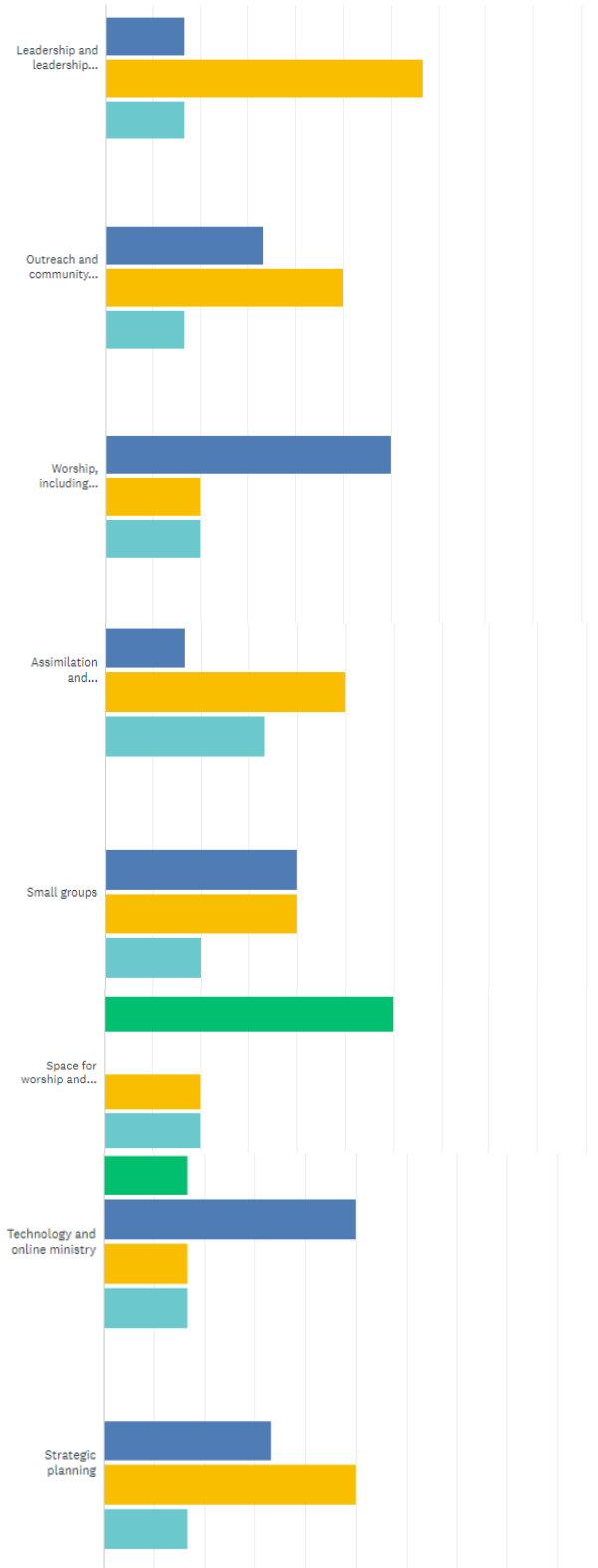
Q18

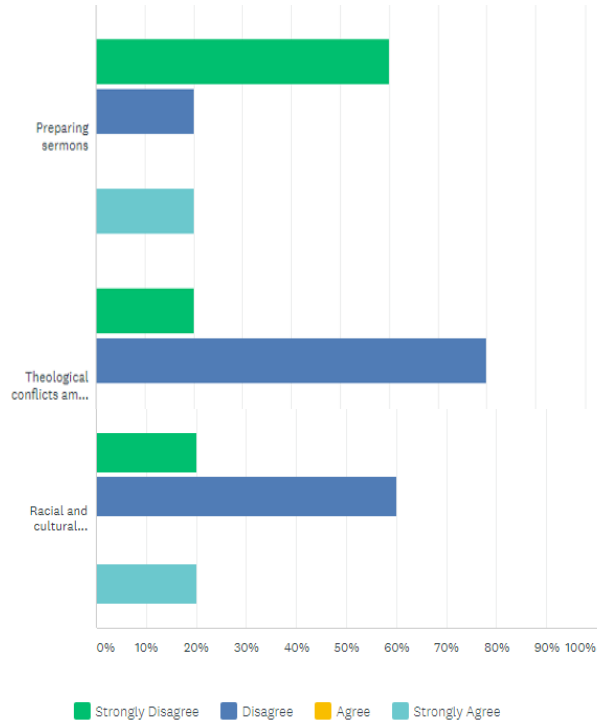
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11. Our church's primarily challenges are:

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0







	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Finance: fundraising and stewardship	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	6	2.83
Spiritual development	0.00% 0	40.00% 2	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	5	2.80
Administrative issues	0.00% 0	40.00% 2	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	5	2.80
Leadership and leadership development	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	6	3.00
Outreach and community engagement	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	50.00% 3	16.67% 1	6	2.83
Worship, including musicians and singers	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	5	2.60
Assimilation and discipleship	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	50.00% 3	33.33% 2	6	3.17
Small groups	0.00% 0	40.00% 2	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	5	2.80
Space for worship and ministry	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	5	2.00
Technology and online ministry	16.67% 1	50.00% 3	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	6	2.33
Strategic planning	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	50.00% 3	16.67% 1	6	2.83
Preparing sermons	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	5	1.80
Theological conflicts among members	20.00% 1	80.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5	1.80
Racial and cultural diversity conflicts	20.00% 1	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	5	2.20

Comments (0)

- Finance: fundraising and stewardship: Four participants (66.67%) agree, one (16.67%) strongly agrees, and one (16.67%) strongly disagrees.
- Spiritual development: Two participants (40%) agree, two (40%) disagree, and one, (20%) strongly agrees.
- Administrative issues: Two participants (40%) agree, two (40%) disagree, and one (20%) strongly agrees.
- Leadership and leadership development: Four participants (66.67%) agree, one (16.67%) strongly agrees, and one (16.67%) disagrees.
- Outreach and community engagement: Three participants (50%) agree, one (16.67%) strongly agrees, and two (33.33%) disagree.
- Worship, including musicians and singers: Three participants (50%) disagree, one, (16.67%) strongly agrees, and one (16.67%) agrees.
- Assimilation and discipleship: Three participants (50%) agree, one (16.67%) disagrees, and two (33.33%) strongly agree.
- Small groups: Two participants (40%) agree, two (40%) disagree, and one (20%) strongly agrees.
- Space for worship and ministry: Three participants (50%) strongly disagree, one (16.67%) strongly agrees, and one (16.67%) agrees.
- Technology and online ministry: Three participants (50%) disagree, one (16.67%) strongly disagrees, one (16.67%) agrees, and one (16.67%) strongly agrees.
- Strategic planning: Three participants (50%) agree, two (33.33%) disagree, and one, (16.67%) strongly agrees.

- Preparing sermons: Three participants (50%) strongly disagree, one (16.67%) disagrees, and one (16.67%) strongly agrees.
- Theology conflicts between members: Four participants (80%) disagree, one (20%) strongly agrees.
- Racial and cultural diversity conflicts: Three participants (50%) disagree, one (16.67%) strongly disagrees, and one (16.67%) strongly agrees.
- No additional comments were added to this question (Q18).

The Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview (LCPOI) provided an additional understanding of the factors that presented challenges for church planting among Orlando's Hispanics. The financial struggles of Hispanics, especially after the loss of jobs due to Covid-19, are unprecedented. During LCPOI, IN01 said: "probably the biggest challenge is the financial challenge." In the same line of thought, the Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal, that IN02 prepared before planting, expressed, "giving is not a strong suit among First-Generation Hispanic Churches. As a church with low per-capita giving, we cannot afford to rent," affirming that finances represent a great challenge for them.

Leadership is another significant challenge, including calling, recruitment, and development; it is a primary obstacle to surpass.

IN03: "I think one (of the challenges) is leadership development. Finding and training Latino leaders who want to plant churches... I think it is one challenge."

Leadership financial support is another significant challenge. If recruiting and developing Hispanic leaders is not enough of a challenge, Latino church planting in Orlando presents another big one, how to support them. Two of the participants addressed that during the interview.

IN03: "I think another (challenge) is just the financial support (of the leadership)."

Church planter IN01 indicated the difference in financial support that a Latino congregation provides compared to an Anglo, white community.

"So, we could have 120 people on Sunday and collect tithes and offering, let's say, \$2,000. In the same Church, but our English counterpart, they'll have 120 people in the congregation, and they'll collect \$30,000. I can have, you know, 200 people and collect not even a fraction of the offerings and ties that an English church in the same area would have. And that's an example that I can share because the Church that I pastor at is a multicultural church."

IN02 states that diversity is another challenge that we need to face when planting Latino churches in Orlando, referring to two tensions. "All the nations are here (Tension #1). And when it comes to church cultures, each nation has its particularities... its quirks. The (Latino) landscape is just massively Puerto Rican; I am Puerto Rican myself (Tension #2). And so, there are those two tensions that you have to acknowledge (all the nations are here, and the landscape is just massively Puerto Rican)."

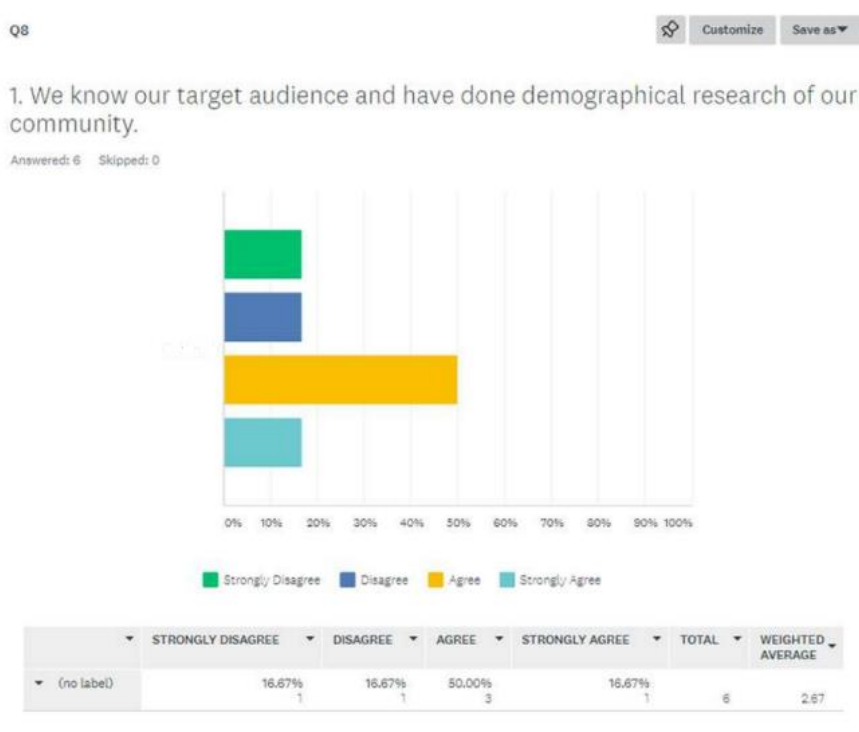
Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network?

A deep understanding of the community provides excellent opportunities for any endeavor. Like any sport, business, or political campaign, for a church planting, knowing the needs and expectations, weaknesses and strengths of the target audience leads to awareness of opportunities, opens doors, establishes relationships, and makes excellent connections that, sooner or later, will prove to be beneficial for both.

Q8 to Q12 of the Latino Church Planting Orlando Questionnaire (LCPOQ) were used to discover some factors that impact Latino church planting and present opportunities. Questions Q8 to 11 of the LCPOQ were intended to research the church planter's knowledge of the community. This knowledge revealed great opportunities waiting for those gospel laborers willing to do the work.

Q8 looks to discover the demographic knowledge of the church planter related to the target community. Relevant demographic research is the primary evidence of a well-done ministry plan. The better a planter understands the community, and demographic data is a treasure of knowledge, the better are the chances of discovering the new church plant's opportunities. I believe also that the opposite is true, the less that a planter and the leadership team know about the target community, the less understanding of the opportunities available to them.



Three participants (50%) agreed, one (16.67%) strongly agreed, one (16.67%) disagreed, and one (16.67%) strongly disagreed about how well they did a demographical survey.

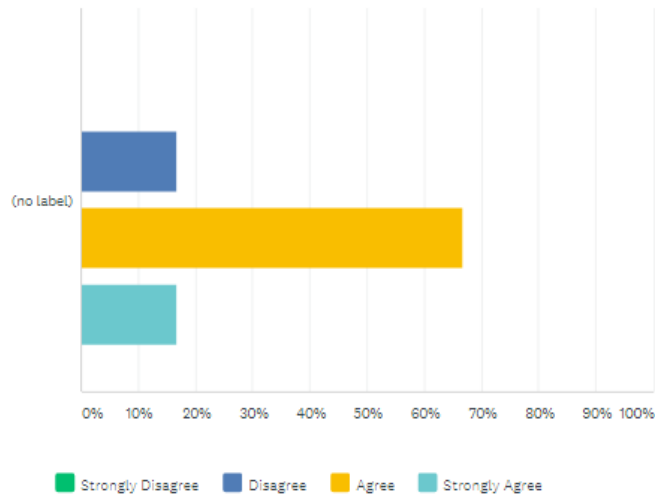
Q9 wants to continue understanding the Latino planters' knowledge of Orlando within the Encuentro Ministries Network concerning their target audience. While the previous affirmation looked at the demographic data, this and the subsequent two assertions looked to understand "the perceptions" that the Latino planters had related to their target audience. This particular one asked about the sense of community: immigrants look for community relationships and friendships.

Q9

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2. In our community, immigrants seek a sense of community relationships and friendships.

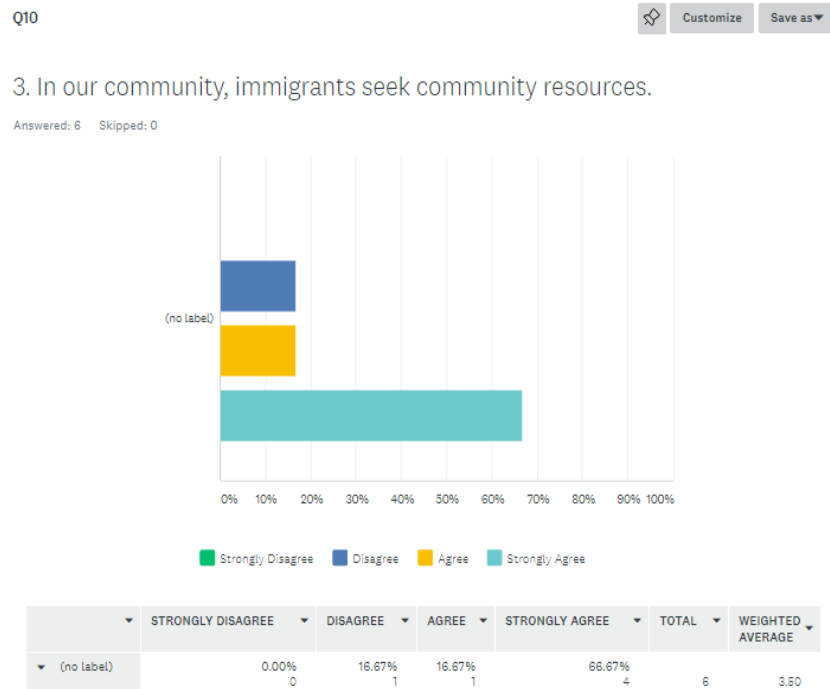
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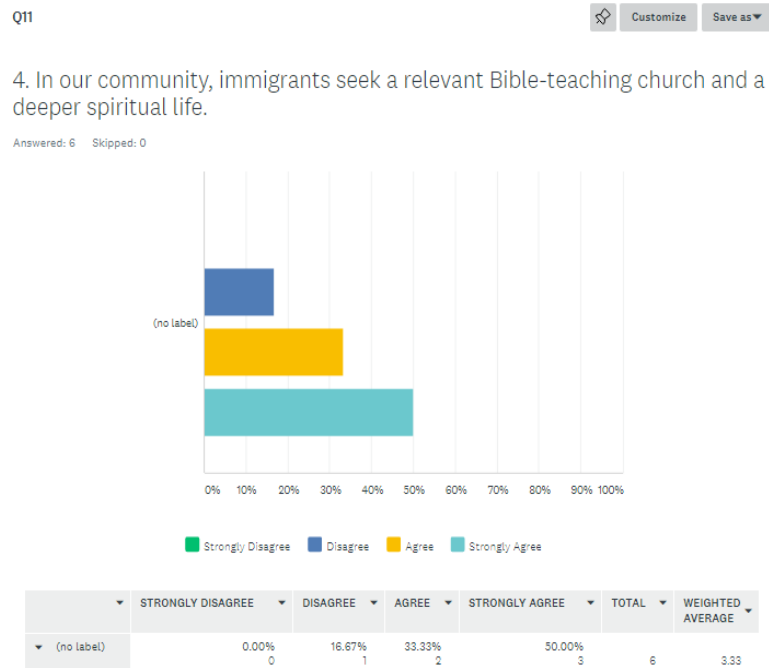
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	6	3.00

While four (66.67%) agreed that the average Latino immigrant is looking for community relationships and friends, one (16.67%) disagreed, and one (16.67%) strongly agreed.

Q10 asks if immigrants look for community resources. If we asked the same question before March 2020, before Covid 19, I am sure that the answers would have been different. This particular question probably was more affected by conditions in the city during the Covid-19 crisis. Before the Coronavirus, a smaller percentage of Latino families looked for community resources like food banks. During the Covid-19 crisis, that percentage changed drastically. Four out of six participants (66.67%) strongly agreed that the Latino community in Orlando was looking for community resources, one (16.67%) agreed with that perception and one (16.67%) disagreed.



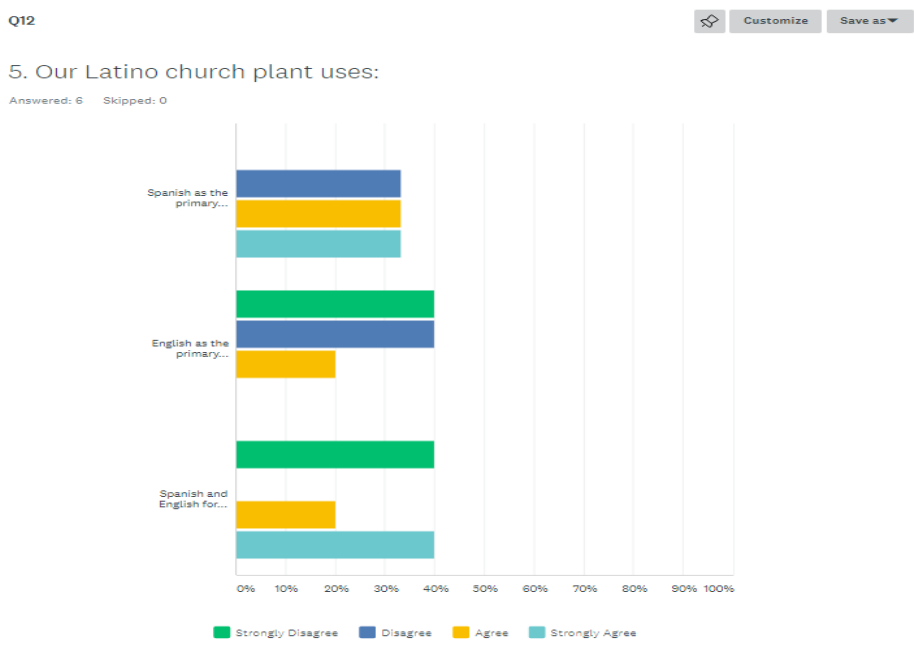
Q11 is another question related to the perception that the Latino Orlando church planters in the Encuentro Ministries Network had about a target audience; this one connected with Latino immigrants' level of interest to finding a relevant Bible-teaching church and their desire for a deeper spiritual life. Three participants (50%) strongly agreed on the audience's great interest in this type of church and spirituality. Two (33.33%) agreed and one (16.67%) disagreed.



Q12 looks to find how the Latino church plant uses language as an opportunity to reach the community more and better. It presented three alternatives or strategies:

1. Spanish is the primary language for worship services and small groups.
2. English is the primary language for worship services and small groups.
3. English and Spanish during worship services and small groups.

Regarding the use of Spanish as the primary language for worship services and small groups, two participants (33.33%) strongly agreed, two participants (33.33%) agreed, and two participants (33.33%) disagreed. Concerning the use of English as the primary language for worship services and small groups, two participants (40%) strongly disagreed, two participants (40%) disagreed, and one participant (20%) agreed. Regarding the use of English and Spanish during worship services and small groups, two participants (40%) strongly disagreed, two participants (40%) strongly agreed, and one participant (20%) agreed.



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Spanish as the primary language for worship services and small groups	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	6	3.00
English as the primary language for worship services and small groups	40.00% 2	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	5	1.80
Spanish and English for worship services and small groups	40.00% 2	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	40.00% 2	5	2.60

During the Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview (LCPOI), the participants considered several opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida. The fast growth of the Latinos is one of those golden opportunities for those looking to plant churches in Spanish and those looking to reach Brazilians in Portuguese, their native language. IN01 was very clear stating,

"So, demographics is, I would put that as an opportunity. So, if I were categorizing challenges, opportunities, and best practices, I'd put demographics as a big, big opportunity for (planting Latino churches in Orlando within) Encuentro Ministries. That's spread more than just in Windermere. There is a little bit larger area known as Horizons West, which Windermere is inside of. It's an area that's exploding with Latinos right now... There are smaller towns around this greater new area on the west side, such as Ocoee... Oakland... Clermont, so these are all little towns located in and around Horizon West, or what's known as West Orange County. All great opportunities for Latino church planting."

IN03 said,

"I think the opportunity is that they're here. There's a growing population of people coming from Central and South America to Orlando. There's always been a Hispanic Latino community in Orlando for a long time, but it just keeps growing and keeps growing. There's... a large Brazilian community, there's a large, Venezuelan and Colombian community, there's, you know, a lot of Caribbean influence as well."

IN01 mentioned,

"We see a large growth of Hispanic population. And even four years ago, but in the past four years, there has been a ton of immigration... especially from Venezuela. And we saw three years ago after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, a large, large influx of people fleeing the island. Most arrived in Orlando, Miami, and, I think, New York and Chicago. But overwhelmingly, most of those came here to Orlando."

IN02 mentions in a written proposal that the influx of Hispanic immigration is an excellent opportunity as "Central Florida has seen substantial growth in the Hispanic population who speak Spanish as a first language and in a second-generation Hispanics who are more comfortable worshipping in Spanish."

Another great opportunity is to see Latinos starting healthy Latino multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic churches. IN03 mentioned,

"I think there's an opportunity to see, you know, healthy churches planted and to see, you know, just a growing network of healthy churches. I think that opportunity is to see diverse churches, because, you know when you're... talking about Hispanic Latino ministry, it's, it's automatically going to be multicultural, because if you've got, you know, especially like, on the Spanish speaking side, and if you've got community from Mexico and Guatemala, and from Colombia and Venezuela coming together. In one church, it's already a multicultural church. Even though they share a common language, they're culturally, very different; ...the opportunity to plant multicultural and multiethnic churches among the Latino community is huge. To be an example, a model to, you know, predominantly white churches in the US to see, oh, here's how Hispanic churches have figured out how to do multiethnic, multicultural, really well, in their context. And we have a lot to learn from, you know, as a white American church, a lot to learn from Hispanic Latino communities."

As an alternative to starting a multilingual church, IN02 says, "I am also convinced that our church being multi-generational, needs to function alongside an English-speaking congregation to serve the more assimilated children of our members."

A great opportunity and one of the best ways to reach the Hispanic community is connecting Latinos with the community resources they are looking for. IN02 wrote in a ministry proposal, "we have identified a pressing need in our community, brought by an unprecedented influx of Hispanics. Many need orientations regarding housing, jobs, immigration law, and language." IN01 states,

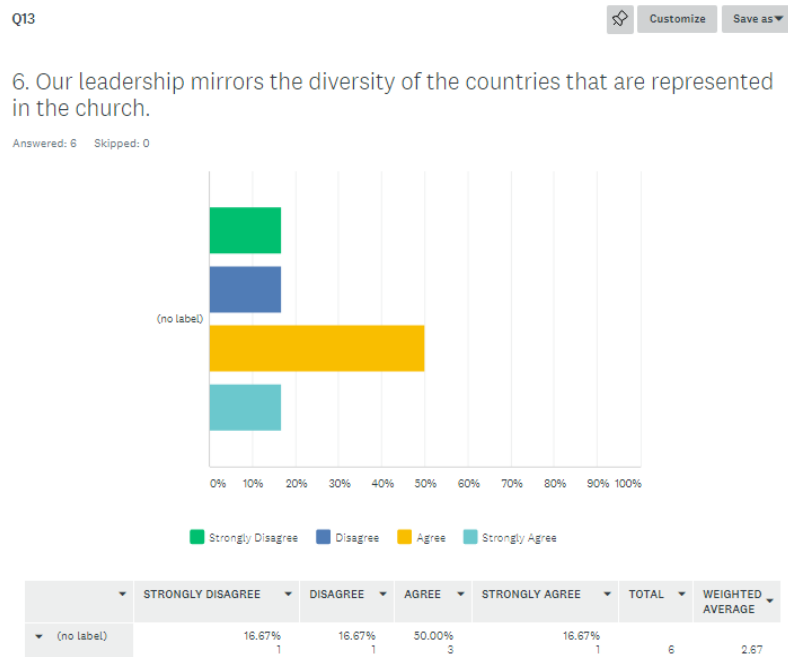
"getting better jobs, it's hard even though they have the education. It takes time. Yes. Right. And so, you know, I've heard I've had plenty of stories, even just within our congregation, where it just takes time. It might take three years. I'm thinking of a particular woman who came over from Venezuela; she is a dental hygienist in Venezuela, went to school for it, she's a professional, she landed here. And, of course, she couldn't practice. She had to learn English, and she had to get all her credentials again. And it took her years, and it took her maybe five or six years to get through that process, where she was finally able... to get a job in her field. And that's common that just happens over and over again. If you want to plant a church, you got to be ready to teach people English. Because that's what they need, you know, something that could benefit them greatly."

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?

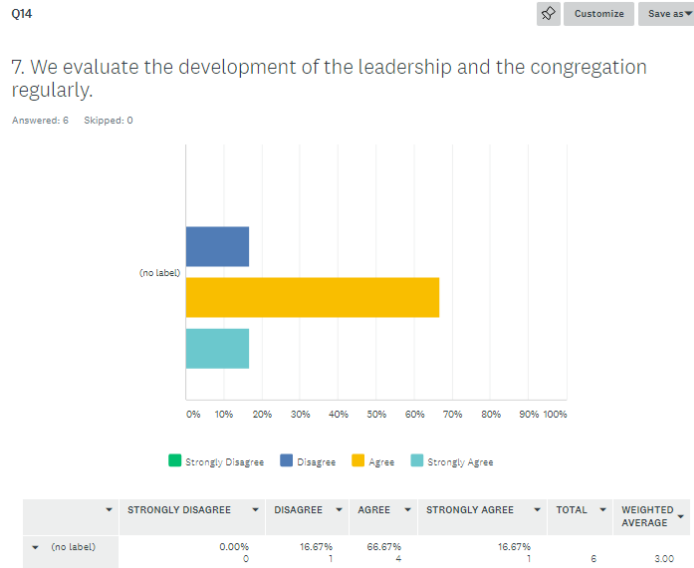
On the LCPOQ, Q13-Q17, Q19-Q23 were used to discover those best practices.

Q13. This part of the survey sought to obtain information related to the diversity of leadership: our leadership mirrors the diversity of the countries that are represented in the church. Three (50%) agreed that the diversity of the congregation is reflected in the diversity of the leadership. One (16.67%) strongly agreed, one disagreed (16.67%), and one (16.67%) strongly disagreed.

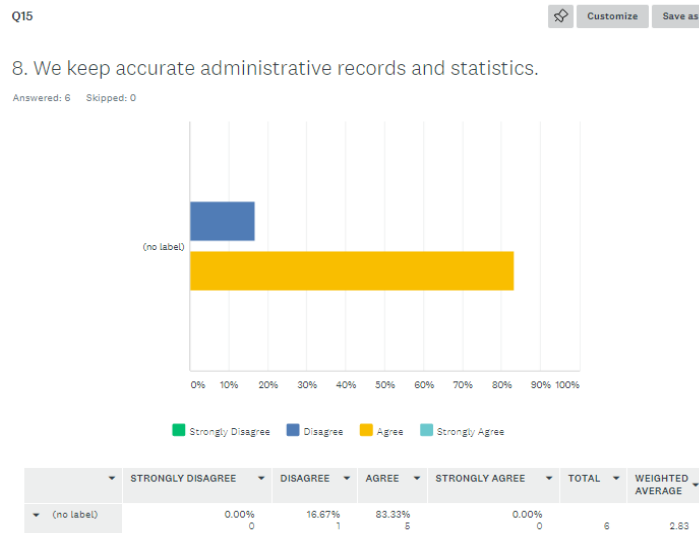


Q14. The following affirmation was on the periodical evaluation of the development of the Leadership and congregation: we evaluate the product of the leadership and the congregation regularly. Four (67.67%) agreed that they periodically

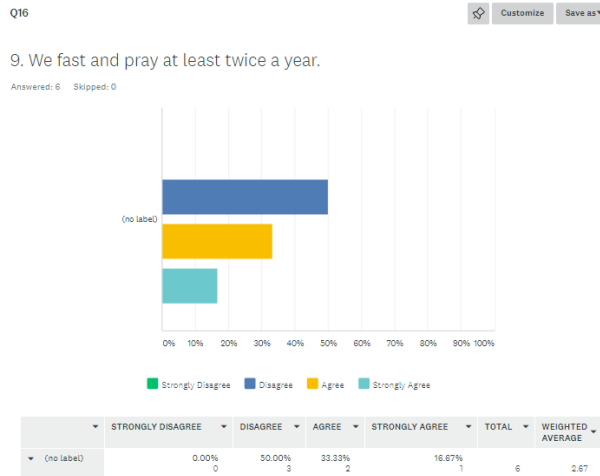
evaluate the development of the Leadership and the congregation. One (16.67%) disagreed (16.67%) and one (16.67%) strongly agreed.



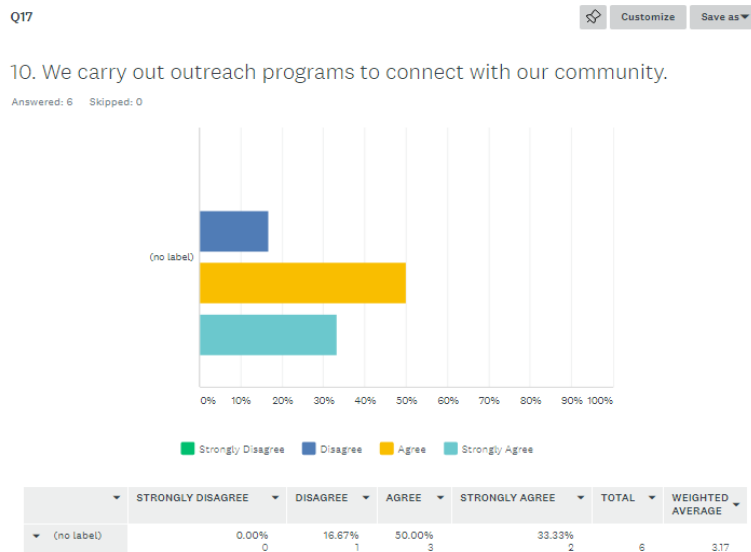
Q15. This was another way to obtain some insight into the Latino church planting in Orlando, and this was particularly interested in discovering the accuracy of the administrative records and statistics: we keep accurate administrative records and statistics. Five (83.33%), a high number for an average Latino church planting, agreed that they keep accurate administrative records and statistics. One (16.67%) disagreed.



Q16. While the question before looked for some administrative styles, this one sought to obtain some insight into the spiritual disciplines of the congregation that is being planted: we fast and pray at least twice a year. Three participants (50%) disagreed, two (33.33%) agreed, and one, (16.67%) strongly disagreed.



Q17. This question looked for some insight into outreach programs to connect with the community. We carry out outreach programs to connect with our community. Three participants (50%) agreed, two (33.33%) strongly agreed and one, (16.67%) disagreed.



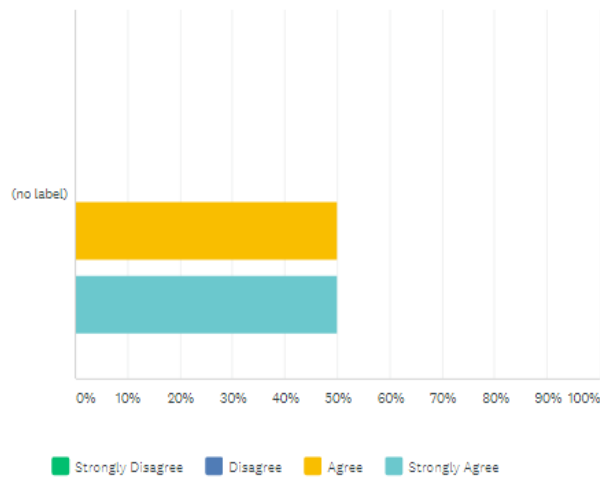
Q19. This question was about prayer. Prayer, personal and congregational, private and public stand out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando. Three participants (50%) agreed, and three (50%) strongly agreed.

Q19

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12. Prayer, personal and congregational, private and public stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 3	50.00% 3	6	3.50

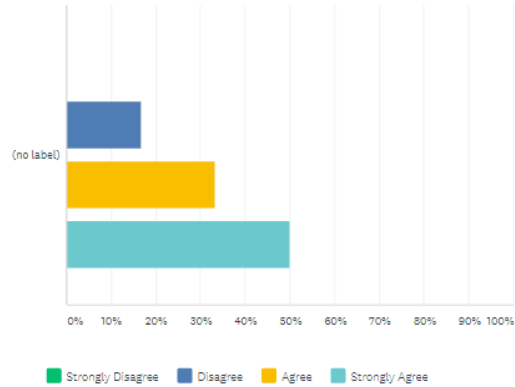
Q20. Continue discovering best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando. This question was about the role of partnership. Partnering with other churches, non-profits, networks, and the community stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando. Three participants (50%) strongly agreed, two (33.33%) agreed, and one participant (16.67%) disagreed.

Q20

Customize Save as

13. Partnering with other churches, non-profits, networks, and the community stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	33.33% 2	50.00% 3	6	3.33

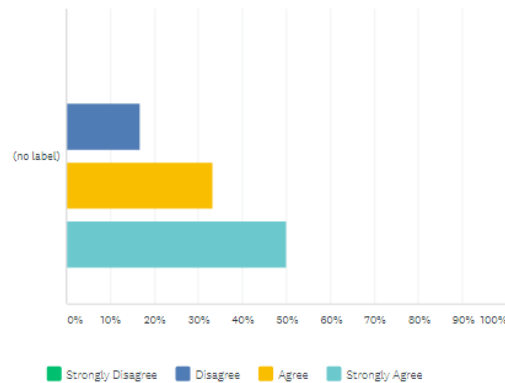
Q21. The researcher wanted to discover the importance of equipping a healthy Leadership and congregation as a best practice for Latino church planting in Orlando within the Encuentro Ministries Network.

Q21

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14. Equipping, training and developing a healthy leadership and congregation invite stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.

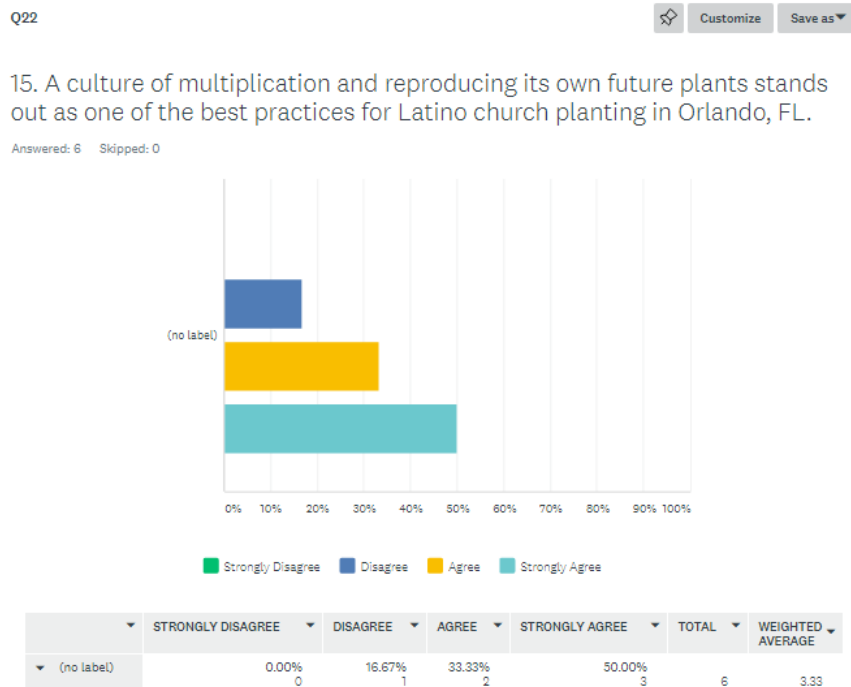
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	33.33% 2	50.00% 3	6	3.33

Equipping, training, and developing a healthy leadership and congregation stand out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando. Three (50%) strongly agreed, two (33.33%) agreed, and one (16.67%) disagreed.

Q22. This question sought to understand the role of a culture of multiplication as one of the best practices for Latino church planting. A culture of multiplication and reproduction of its future plants stand out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando. Three (50%) strongly agreed, two (33.33%) agreed, and one (16.67%) disagreed.



On a ministry proposal shared with the researcher, IN02 wrote this about a culture of multiplication as a best practice for a Latino church planting endeavor.

"The logical next step would be to deploy our members... and eventually to plan future churches... we would become a springboard to affect the Spanish-speaking nations with the Gospel." The same document reveals that "be[ing] a Church planting church (Acts 1:8; Matt. 16:15-21; Acts 13:1-3) is one of this Latino church planting's core values."

Q23. This was an open-ended question, the purpose of which was to discover any other best practices that Latino church planters were considering. The four answers were depoliticizing its culture, asking other leaders about how we can grow together in leadership, meeting practical needs like ESL, and connecting immigrants with community resources.

During the Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview (LCPOI), the participants expanded on their impressions about best practices. A clear identity was one of those best practices suggested by one church planter. In general, clear identity is critical for a healthy church planting, not only for Latinos but for all church plantings, especially among minority cultures. Sharing about the struggles of Latino ministries inside of an Anglo congregation, IN03 said, "a Hispanic church seems to be more successful when it can grow and flourish out of the community, with leaders who are Hispanic... and shape the culture appropriately... cultural relevancy." Along the same lines, IN01 expressed the need to be clear on the vision, mission, and values. "We need a balance between reaching the lost and equipping the saints... we are called to be a community of love, with a balance between truth and love, Ephesians 4:15, demonstrating love, not only preaching the truth... having a church that's truth, and love, I think is fundamental to good church planting." That love includes being careful with legalism.

The same participant continues, "what I'm talking about is a well-balanced approach, or centered preaching and teaching of the Word of God, where it is, of course, truth, but it's also hand in hand with love. Saved by grace, not by works, and when you come from a legal or legalistic background or Catholic background, works is always a sneaky enemy trying to, to infiltrate." One participant considered planting a Latino bilingual-multilingual church as another best practice. IN03 said,

"I think another best practice is what we see a lot with church plants in the USA, having to be bilingual. I think that's a best practice that seems to work well because what happens is first-generation folks, you know, want to worship... in their language, in their first language. Then their kids going to school... in a world where they're predominately speaking English, except for at home, they're kind of torn between these two worlds. And so, being able to have churches that are culturally Hispanic, Latino, but bilingual, offering services in both English and Spanish or Portuguese, is, I think, a really helpful best practice."

Participant IN02 considered lower financial expectations, regarding when a Latino church planting will be financially independent, is another best practice to consider. "To pretend that a Latino church planting will be financially independent in three years, even five is not realistic. Generosity patterns, the need to send support to their countries, etc., are just different."

Planning and balance were also suggested as best practices. IN01 said, "we did extensive research, we put together a six-month, twelve-month, and a three-year kind of planned strategy with concrete steps and moves and then, you know, some of it worked and, some of it just didn't. And, we prayed, of course. You have to plan, but you have to be flexible enough to make adjustments as they come. Pray as if everything depended on God, and then work as if everything depended on you. These are just lessons that I've learned. Document, document, document everything, plan, pray, and go to work and then adjust those sorts of things."

Summary of Major Findings

The Ministerial Transformational Project, "The Latino Church Planting Challenge: Factors that impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries Network," revealed many lessons to consider.

The results of the research presented three tiers of recognition on some of the factors that impact the Latino Church Planting in Orlando; those three tiers affect the challenges, opportunities, and best practices. The first tier of importance is revealed by the high percentage of agreement, with "strongly agree" answers and individual comments. The second tier, for the mid-percentage of agreement, with "agree" answers and some individual comments, and the third a small percentage of agreement with less "agree" answers or isolated individual comments.

The factors that impact as first-tier challenges are (1) finances and (2) leadership. The factors that impact as second-tier challenges are (1) outreach and community engagement, (2) assimilation and discipleship, and (3) strategic planning. The factors that impact as third-tier challenges, or other challenges are (1) spiritual development, (2) administrative matters, and (3) small groups.

The factors that impact as first-tier opportunities are (1) the high Latino presence and (2) comprehending (knowledge/understanding) the Latino audience and its diversity. The factor that impacts as a second-tier opportunity is starting Latino multiethnic church, multilingual, multicultural, and multigenerational churches. The factors that impact as third-tier opportunities, or other opportunities, are (1) carrying out a demographic study, (2) satisfying the need of community relationships, and (3) connecting the target audience with community resources and (4) a relevant Bible-teaching church.

The factors that impact as first-tier best practices are (1) prayer, (2) partnership, (3) equipping leadership and congregation, (4) evaluating leadership and congregational development, and (5) imparting a culture of multiplication. The factors that impact as second-tier best practices are (1) leadership representation diversity, (2) a clear identity, (3) outreach programs, and (4) accurate administrative records. The factors that impact as third-tier best practices are (1) spiritual disciplines and (2) lower financial expectations from the partners regarding financial independence of the new church plant.

Three major and significant findings in the form of principles emerged as a result of the careful research and analysis of the factors, as challenges, opportunities, and best practices, that impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando within Encuentro Ministries. These three underlying themes are listed here and will be further discussed in the next chapter:

1. A Challenge: The Leadership Principle—All rise and fall.
1. An Opportunity: The Diversity Principle—Latinos are here but are not all the same.
3. A Best Practice: The Partnership Principle—We cannot do it alone.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Maxwell, the Christian guru on Leadership who has published more than one hundred books, is known for many memorable phrases. One of my favorites says, "Experience is not the best teacher; evaluated experience is." This Project, *The Latino Church Planting Challenge: Factors that impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries Network*, recognized the need to evaluate the Latino church planting experience in Orlando Florida, to learn from the best teacher—the evaluated experience of Hispanic church planters in Orlando.

The purpose of this project was to identify the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida. Some of the identified factors present challenges and others, opportunities. We also learned some best practices that stand out to be considered, as we want and need to be better stewards of the church planting call received. This chapter contains the researcher's three significant findings: The Leadership Principle, The Diversity Principle, and The Partnership Principle. Each finding is restated and analyzed through personal observation, literature review, and a biblical/theological framework. The chapter continues with ministry implications of the results, limitations of the project, unexpected findings, recommendations, and a postscript as a conclusion.

Major Findings

In this particular research, the project's purpose was to find the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network. I read, researched, analyzed, wrote, and reported the challenges, opportunities, and best practices that arose. The day finally arrived when I needed to decide which of the factors qualified as major findings.

After a careful review of all the data provided, I concluded that in many cases some participants agreed and disagreed on the same issues. For example, while the context of diversity is an opportunity for some Latino planters, the same context is a challenge for others. In that particular example, the finding is that the participants do not always agree on how the context of diversity impacts Latino church planting in Orlando. What is crystal clear is that the context of diversity is impacting throughout all the Latino church planting challenge in Orlando. The obtained data provides similar examples of ambiguity in how different planters interpret the challenges, opportunities, and best practices of their context.

Another way exists to decide whether findings are significant and major, perhaps a more radical one. I strongly believe that, as I interpreted the data, I discovered a common vein, a more profound way to unpack the facts that are fully impacting the church planting effort amongst Hispanics in Orlando. These significant major findings, Leadership, Diversity, and Partnership are three principles that apply to all Latino church plantings in Orlando within the Encuentro Ministries network. On the other hand, I firmly believe that focusing on these principles is a more effective way to evaluate existing Latino church planting, as well as to plan or carry on a new church plant endeavor. A single focus on

these foundational principles, rather than an isolated or disconnected one, is a better practice. In summary, the underlying principles are universal, practices are not. Principles are steady, practices are not.

A Challenge: The Leadership Principle—All rise and fall.

Maxwell in his book, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, states that "everything rises and falls on leadership." Latino church planting in Orlando is not an exception to that rule; on the contrary, as the Latino church planting challenge deals with fewer resources, it needs better leaders to multiply wherever we have in our hands.

I grew up in a local church. My father was a church planter and even at a young age, I was part of his launching team. I was his replacement/alternative musician when the titular one day did not show up without any previous notification. At eight years old, I was one of his Sunday School teachers and at eleven, a street preacher. My leadership models were great Christian leaders, the same ones that my father emulated. After more than fifty years in church ministry, I too concluded that Maxwell is absolutely right; everything rises and falls on Leadership!

The Bible is a book about Leadership. From the first book of the Old Testament leaders like Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph call our attention. The history of Israel reveals the contrast between godly leaders like David and bad leaders like Saul. The people always benefit from or suffer the consequences of either one. The New Testament reflects the impact of the primitive church on culture and society. Nobody will refuse to recognize the Apostle Paul as an amazing church planter, a leader that writes "by the power of the Spirit of God so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum, I fully proclaimed the good news of Christ" (Rom. 15:19 NRSV).

The Leadership Principle for Latino church planting in Orlando seeks a leader, a church planter with a clear call from God, avid to live closer to God and the people, eager to humbly learn, quick to recognize mistakes, bold in character and convictions, a ministry entrepreneur, a disciple who discipled, and a multiplier of leaders. While plenty of challenges face a Latino church plant in Orlando, the main one is to find, recruit, develop, and support the Latino church planter to find, recruit, develop, and release the leaders that will be part of his or her core leadership team. In other words, church planting is not about having the right resources, intentions, and locations, because even having everything else resolved, the lack of this godly and influential leader will still be the greatest challenge to the church plant. The Leadership Principle is so important that even if all you have is the right leader for the right context, while lacking everything else, you still can trust that the godly leader will discover the growth factors that impact the community as challenges or opportunities. Incarnational Latino church planters, as missional leaders, will discover the best practices for their particular ministry endeavors. They will be able to partner by inviting others to be part of the vision and execute the plan.

The biblical and theological foundations found in this research affirm the importance of the Leadership Principle. The Prophet Ezekiel reveals God's search for the right leader. "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it" (Ezek. 22:30). The participants affirmed that finding, recruiting, developing, support, and releasing the right godly leaders is the greatest challenge. They are not alone in the search nor in the challenge. Even God did it, reports Ezekiel, "but I found no one." When the Jerusalem church had a conflict that resulted in the growth of the faith community, rather than

implement new programs, their first challenge was to find the right people, leaders with a great testimony, wise and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3).

We live in a new era, a different continent, and a contrasting context, but the Leadership Principle continues to be the one that we need to address if we want to fulfill our call to make disciples from all nations in Orlando, Florida. The fact that we are able to apply this principle cross-culturally undergirds my findings that The Leadership Principle transcends contexts and seasons.

An Opportunity: The Diversity Principle—Latinos are here but are not all the same.

The second main finding is the Diversity Principle. The first research question of this project is "What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?" On the Latino Church Planting in Orlando Interview (LCPOI), while talking about challenges, participant IN01 states that "all nations are coming to Orlando... diversity creates tension." In this particular case, diversity is a synonym for tension, and tension is a challenge.

The second research question of the Project was, "What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network?" On the LCPOI, church planter IN03 explains, "there's a large Brazilian, Venezuelan and Colombian community, there's a lot of Latin America Caribbean influence as well. And so, I think there's an opportunity..." For this church planter, diversity is synonymous with opportunity.

The third research question was, "What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?" On the LCPOI, IN02 expressed the importance of having diversity in the Leadership, having the nations

or generations represented in the Leadership of the church. Intentional diversity in Leadership, manifesting the church community's diversity is also a best practice for Latino church planting.

I fully understand that the diversity issue merits its own dissertation. This is not the appropriate forum to accomplish that; instead, in this final chapter, I aspire to convey three aspects of the Diversity Principle discovered in this research: the Latino community diversity, the Latino church planter diversity, and the Latino church planting diversity. I will unfold in this chapter how all of these affect the Latino church planting experience in Orlando Florida. Consequently, the reader will be exposed to the importance of how context and diversity permeate every aspect of this project as one of the greatest findings among the less significant ones.

1. The diversity of the Latino community. One thing that we can all agree on, is that Latinos are very diverse. Diversity is extensive, starting with twenty countries that use Spanish as their official language. Spanish is also commonly spoken in Belize, Gibraltar, Andorra, and the United States. Although Spanish is not the official language in the latter, it is commonly used by a significant part of their population.

Latin American countries are not a monolith of culture but a mosaic. Mexico, for example, has more than one hundred and thirty million citizens. There are notable differences between Mexicans from Chiapas (south) and Sonora (north), between Mexicans from Baja California (north-west) and the Yucatan (south-east). One difference may be language—sixty-eight national languages and 350 dialects—but the more significant difference is cultural, reflected in food, habits, preferences, style of living, clothing, etc.

Not all Mexicans are the same! Imagine that diversity multiplied by all the countries and territories where Spanish is spoken!

Another aspect of the Latino community's diversity is that in the United States, different generations use the Spanish language in different ways. Spanish has been spoken in Florida for more than four centuries; the first European settlement in the New World, St. Augustine, was founded in 1569 by Spanish colonists. While first-generation Hispanics use Spanish as their most used language, the second-generation is generally bilingual. Finally, third-generation Latinos prefer to communicate in English, and many cannot speak Spanish. They are also greatly more immersed culturally in the dominant culture of this country. Culture is more important than language and culture is more diverse than language. This finding leads us to the conclusion, that Latino Ministry is not Spanish-only anymore.

2. The diversity of the Latino church plant. The diversity of the Latino community in Orlando, Florida shows up on each pew, chair, or Zoom call of every Latino congregation. It is common to find in a church of fifty people, persons from four to six different Latino countries. In a church of one hundred, it is not uncommon to have more than ten countries represented. The diversity of the Latino community is reflected in the micro-community that represents every congregation. The great diversity in the Latino community at large is mirrored in one way or another in the small Latino community that we call *iglesia*. As the diversity among Latino communities is greater than the common perception, the diversity among Latino church plants is also greater than most of the denominations, church planting agencies, or church planters realize.

Diversity also brings the need to understand the Latinos we plan to reach. Even though some cities in the greater Orlando have some Hispanics nationalities as their major presence, that does not imply that this particular nationality is the only one in that neighborhood. The Mexican from Winter Garden, accompanied by the Colombian, the Brazilian from Windermere share their neighborhood with the Venezuelan, and the Puerto Rican from Kissimmee, with the other Caribbean peoples. Each Latino within the Latino ethnic group has unique characteristics, culture, and religious background. For example, Latinos from Mexico are mostly Catholics, while in the last three decades, Puerto Rico has experienced a very strong Protestant movement, mostly of Pentecostal influence.

The diversity among Latino church plants is demonstrated in multiple forms and is greatly affected by the diversity of the Latino community and the Latino church planters that serve them. Diversity impacts church planting in many ways and forms. One of the notable pieces of evidence of this manifestation is greatly perceived in worship and praise. First-generation Hispanics prefer not only to worship in Spanish, but they also love to sing the "old hymns" sung in their countries of origin. Second-generation Latinos prefer "contemporary music" from the nineties; sometimes, the second generation still prefer to worship in Spanish because of the importance of the Latino culture in their congregation, but not because they lack understanding of the official language of the country (English). Third-generation Hispanics consider all those styles obsolete because it does not appeal to them. Most of the time if not always, third-generation Latinos, prefer to worship in English; they are not ashamed of acknowledging that they cannot speak Spanish well.

3. The diversity of the Latino church planter. While Latino church planters in Orlando have much in common, like language and general culture, there is great diversity among them, as they also represent the more than twenty countries and territories that speak Spanish. In this project, some of the diversity was shown in the church planting mentality, theology, personal and family backgrounds, spiritual disciplines, vocational training, financial stability, church model and strategies. They follow the perceptions of the target audience—first, second or third-generation Latinos—or the challenges, opportunities, and best practices to fulfill their vocation as a full time or co-vocational church planter.

On a Latino Church Planting Orlando Proposal (LCPOP), IN02 expressed, "It has certainly been a remarkable process for Central Florida to change from a rather homogeneous population... to a very racially diverse one...." Regardless, God calls Hispanic church planters from that diverse community to make disciples for the transformation of the world beyond their context.

According to Gonzalez, the Church was born and empowered by the mission of God; the Great Commission commands Christians to go to all the world and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Those disciples are diverse as they represent people from all nations. Now, as discussed earlier, all those nations are coming to Orlando, not only to visit but to stay and start a family. Hispanics are very attracted to Orlando because of the great entertainment industry with parks, hotels, and restaurants generating work opportunities for all; here we can make disciples, from all over the world without leaving our local community, which means that the mission field is not overseas anymore, it is right in our back yard.

As seen in Chapter 2, in the New Testament, the book of Acts presents the importance of having diversity in leadership (Acts 6:5 and 13:1). Ortiz speaks clearly about the importance of recognizing the diversity manifested in the Hispanic community. Some people of the major Anglo community tend to diminish Latino diversity, like, "you eat tortillas daily" or "you are Mexican," as if all Latinos proceed from Mexico, or eat tortillas. While in Orlando and surrounding areas, some neighborhoods are becoming more and more Latino-oriented, the greater Latino community in Orlando is being transformed into smaller Latino communities where we can find that some pockets of the city are becoming more Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, Mexican, Brazilian and so forth.

While in the past only a few stores catered to Hispanics, now, in some neighborhoods, a significant Latino population has started small enterprises to target specific Latino groups. Some are open for business already, like "El Buen Pan: Argentinean Bakery," "Rokka's Brazilian Supermarket," and "El Chivito: Uruguayan Food Truck." Something similar is happening with the church planting efforts; in many cases, the nationality of the church planter attracts a good percentage of attendees also from that particular country.

Diversity is the result of God's creation; since the beginning, all his creation has been an impressive demonstration of creativity and variety (Gen. 1). Babel presented a variety (diversity) of languages (Gen. 11). In the end, The Bible presents a great and final picture of the Kingdom of God, one where diversity is highlighted to show God's heart and his intentional effort to diversify his creation:

"After this, I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb'" (Rev. 7:9-10 NIV).

A Best Practice: Partnership Principle—We cannot do it alone.

The Partnership Principle is the third major finding and a very important factor that impacts Latino church planting in Orlando Florida. The quality of partnerships and the commitment of partners make a big difference in the viability of planting a Hispanic church in one of the diverse communities in America.

The bad news is that finding and developing great partnership teams is very laborious. The good news is that once these partnerships are in place, those partnerships can launch a church planting endeavor in a way that no human being alone can ever do. For Hispanic church planting in Orlando, a partnership is not optional, it is a must: a strong partnership between the leadership team and other local ministries, agencies, and churches can be the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful church plant.

Divine Partnership.

Let's begin exploring the first and most important partnership of all, the Divine Partnership. We collaborate with Christ in the execution of the Mission Dei; therefore, before seeking to partner with a mother church, denomination, or church planting network, or even forming a core leadership team, the first and most important partner that every Latino church plant needs is God. We are his Church (Matt. 16:18), we are his workers and servants (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1), and the Latino audience for this project, is God's

mission field. (1 Cor. 3:9). As a Latino church planter, examine your call, make sure that God is on your side. The best prayer is the one that Moses prayed, "if you aren't going with us, please don't make us leave this place" (Ex. 33:15 CEV).

Internal Partnerships.

Internal Partnerships can take different formats and accomplish a variety of purposes. A Latino church plant needs an Internal Partnership, a core and first leadership team. I know from first-hand experience the need for a core church planting leadership team. As I planted a Latino bilingual church, I learned during training that a strong leadership team would buttress and empower the ministry. At that time, the phrase that captured my heart was "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things." This phrase commonly attributed to Mother Theresa of Calcutta has a contagious powerful truth. Any good leader knows the value of a good team.

While we started with only eight people, my wife and I, my two children, my parents, and one of my friends and his wife, six of the eight were the initial leadership launching team. A church of eight attendees had three pastoral couples! One of the couples was in charge of pastoral care, another of community relationships, and the third of worship. Looking back, I know well that I would not have seen all that God did in those times without the support that a great leadership team gave us.

Today, great books and resources are widely available on how to recruit and develop a great church planting team. One such resource is *"Building Effective Church Planting Teams"* by Dick Scoggins explores the foundations, formation, development, and reproduction of teams, including the formation of a network of Church Planting Teams.

External Partnership.

External partnerships allow planters to be able to invest in this great faith adventure. As we were planting the Latino bilingual church, we recognized that we would not only need to set up an internal launching core team but, also, to enroll external partners. In our case, we invited an association of churches, two denominations (as we were a dually aligned church), several other churches, and a few individuals and families. Each one of those partnerships accomplished different roles. Some provided very necessary funds, others pastoral care and networking, while others helped us by sending their members to help us on those crazy early days of the launch. I still remember that the music and Christian education program was carried out by a different local church every Sunday! Again, it may sound crazy, I know, but when you are launching, the church plant needs to use all the resources that the good Lord sends, and that was the way God provided for us. After eighteen months, our needs were different, but the same partners continued supporting the endeavor. After nineteen years of ministry, many of them are still praying for that beloved Latino bilingual church, and a few still send some financial support.

This research reveals that partnership is a salient ministry principle; while most Latino church-planting churches are not in a position to offer many programs or resources, a strong partnership—with other local ministries, mission agencies, Gospel networks, and city churches—has the potential to catapult the testimony of love to the community and help to connect the Latino target audience with the community resources that they seek.

Most church planters, regardless of their ethnic background, need to partner with denominations, church planting networks, mother churches, and private partners for financial support. Minority church planters, in our case, Latinos, need to develop very strong partnerships to have adequate financial support for ministry.

Partnership is in the DNA of the Christian Church. The book of Ephesians presents several metaphors about the Church—as a building, body, army, a family, a community, and temple—all presenting the diversity, multiplicity, and partnership role of every disciple. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul reveals that he received offerings from congregations in Macedonia for his support, like when they supported him in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16), or when they sent help to other churches in need. For centuries now, thousands of churches have joined the Philippian Church and have done the same (2 Cor. 8; 11:8-9). In the Latino Church Planting Orlando Interview (LCPOI), IN02 mentioned that it was not realistic to expect that a Hispanic church plant will be financially independent in three or five years. In the Hispanic leadership community, that is "Vox Populi;" as we say in Spanish, "todo el mundo lo sabe" or "everybody knows." That does not mean that Latinos cannot plant churches or start new ministries in this time frame; they just have to work intentionally and diligently on developing those strategic partnerships that will provide financial resources for an extended period of time.

There are many advantages to developing strong and strategic internal and external partnerships. In this Ministerial Transformation Project (MTP), I will mention a few:

1. As we partner, we serve from our strengths, not our weaknesses. When we plant as a "Lone Ranger," we choose to do everything by ourselves. Exodus 18:13-6 presents Moses' exhaustion as a result of this philosophy of leadership and ministry. Many of us

can share similar stories as a result of our *ministryholic* addiction. Christians in positions of leadership should also be prepared to entrust others with meaningful responsibilities (Carson et al. 106). Instead, as great "orchestra directors," we extract the best music from each one of the musicians, the partners, and together in harmony, we produce the best possible music for the extension of God's Kingdom and God's Glory.

2. As we partner, not only do we serve from our strengths, also become stronger.

We are better together! Gaither Vocal Band's song illustrates this great Partnership Principle. (Gaither *Better Together*)

Because we're better together, stronger each day.
 Better together, in every way.
 We're all just different people, but so much the same.
 Sisters and brothers, from every land.
 Loving each other, we reach out our hands.
 Oh, divided we fall, united we stand.
 We are better together!

3. As we partner, we become more accountable. Jimmy Dodd and Renaut van der Riet state in their book *What Great Ministry Leaders Get Right* "the devil is walking around ready to overthrow us so that we will serve his purposes instead of God's. Our missional life, our family life, our work in ministry, and the reputation of the Gospel depend on our vigilance against his attacks" (78). 1 Peter 5:8–9 says:

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

4. As we partner, we obtain better and more fruit. From a Christian perspective, to bear fruit is very important because God is glorified through it (John 15:8). We share not only the load, pressures, responsibilities, and battles, but the fruit. We work together, we

serve together, we cry together, and we celebrate together! Partnership is a testimony of love; it is also a key Gospel principle because we do not want to, nor can we do it alone!

In Chapter 2, I presented the Antioch Church as a model for Latino church planting and some of the lessons that we learned from it. As we go back to those lessons, we discover that they followed the same three main findings of our project:

- They had multiethnic and multicultural leadership: The Leadership Principle.
- They saw ethnic division as a barrier to overcome: The Diversity Principle.
- They sent out ministry teams and joined together to accomplish the mission: The Partnership Principle.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

In Chapter 1 of this project, I emphatically declared the importance of this research. A better understanding of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando will allow the Christian community to come alongside the church planters, because as the phrase says, “together we can do great things.” Christian community in the form of mother churches, church planting networks, denominations, and leaders will be able to pray better, plan better, support better, and come alongside in a more sensitive, relevant, and intentional partnership. This common effort will allow healthier and more balanced Hispanic church planters, that as a consequence, will plant healthier and more balanced church plants. Understanding the three major findings, the pressing challenges, great opportunities, and best practices will help us to provide together better support programs, resources, pastoral care, empowering strategies, and coaching services for a more pertinent Latino church planting movement in Orlando and its surroundings. The

project also provides a great guiding resource for Latino church plantings in the rest of the United States.

The project is about factors that impact the Latino church planting ministry in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries. Encuentro Ministries provides pastoral care, training, and support to Latino church planters and ministry leaders in all the U.S, Spain, and Latin American countries. Encuentro Ministries plans to bring this awareness in the form of training, workshops, webinars, coaching services to denominations, church planting networks, mother churches, and Latino church planters.

This project is also about prayer; now that we have a clear understanding of the factors that impact the church planting ministry, we can pray specifically for each one of the Latino church planters in Orlando, Florida, their families, and congregations.

Finally, the real and final impact of this project is to be known in the future. While Encuentro Ministries is ready to do its part, this project is really in God's hands, and only he knows what the extension of the impact of the project would be. I pray: May many reap the benefits of this labor of love.

Limitations of the Study

The need to focus the project, on the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network, limited the research to only those Hispanic church planters within the network.

In a way, this project was an introduction to Latino Church Planting in Orlando, but there is much more to be researched. Aspects like the role of the Hispanic planter's family, the impact of stress, best practices for well-being, best practices for partnership

with denominations, church planting networks, mother churches, and the core church planting team are yet to be explored.

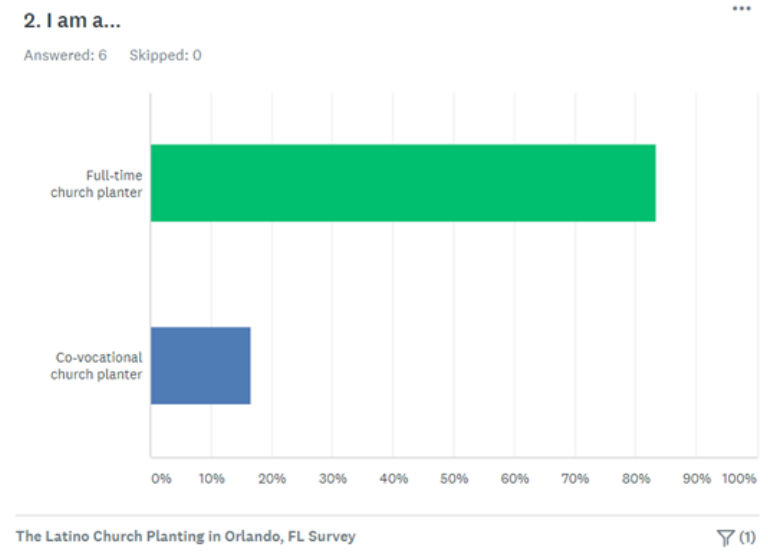
Three Latino church planters in Orlando within the Encuentro Ministries network were invited but did not return the LCPOQ; one completed it but, during the process, the church planting endeavor came to an end. Latino church planting, in general, is not a well-researched subject matter, much less in a particular setting as Orlando, Florida. While there are some good resources on particular conditions, there are much more to explore, lessons to learn, mistakes to commit, and souls to win.

In spite all these limitations, as the major findings demonstrated, I have no doubt that the contribution of the project brings much awareness, not only for Latino church planting in Orlando but also in all the United States.

Unexpected Observations

The purpose of the project was to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida. Learning about the challenges, opportunities, and best practices were expected and we discovered many of them. What was not expected was learning something deeper, more profound, and those insights were the three main principles that I shared at the beginning of this final chapter. The implications of those three principles, the Leadership Principle, the Diversity Principle, and the Partnership Principle are more impactful than all the challenges, opportunities, and best practices together!

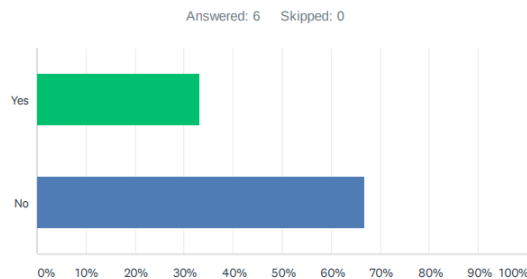
Perhaps the condition of full-time or part-time employment affected some answers, particularly, to question Q18 on the section related to finances.



According to Q3, five participants (83.33%) confirmed that they were full-time church planters, while one was co-vocational (16.67%).

The Latino Church Planting in Orlando, FL Survey SurveyMonkey

Q4 3. I receive a “salary package” that includes medical insurance, retirement contribution, and professional expenses.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	33.33%	2
No	66.67%	4
Total Respondents: 6		

Two participants (33.33%) received a salary package, including salary, medical insurance, retirement, and professional expenses. Four participants (66.66%) did not. The collected data shows that the sole Latino part-time church planter answered in the same line as the full-time church planters.

In general, and to the disappointment of the author of the project, although it was mentioned in different ways in the three research instruments, spiritual vitality and discipleship did not emerge as one of the topics that demanded the most and urgent attention. Forty percent of the participants of the LCPOQ questionnaire disagreed with the Spiritual development, discipleship, and assimilation affirmation as one of the most important challenges that they had to confront. Indeed, I have to recognize that in a questionnaire like this, there is always a possibility of some misunderstanding or lack of attention when doing the survey.

God's mission to the Church continues to be to present every creature perfect in Christ Jesus from the proclamation, admonition, and teaching (Col. 1: 26-29) to gather all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The mission we have received from God is not negotiable. Just as the author of the Project was initially more focused on discovering practical factors, and was surprised by underlying, profound foundational principles, it is to be hoped that those of us who dedicate ourselves to the great work of carrying out the mission of God among Latinos, will understand that the principles are more important than practices; while practices primarily affect activities, programs, and ministries, principles affect the essence of the Church's being and mission from which the most pressing ministries, for the community to be reached and developed in the image of Jesus, must emerge (Rom. 8:29).

On the LCPOQ, Q18 reveals that the scores gathered from this question show that participants were not consistent in their understanding of the factors that present challenges to Latino church planting in the city. I was expecting to see on some of the affirmations, like, the one on fundraising and stewardship, some minimal variables, with

some participants agreeing and others, strongly agreeing; the answer revealed that the contrast went from one extreme, where one participant (16.67%) strongly agreed, and another participant (16.67%) strongly disagreed.

One more unexpected observation. I was greatly surprised by the number of persons that supported me during all these lengthy times of research. Many prayed, some wrote or call to ask how I was doing in the process of my writing. What a blessing to have prayer partners! I never felt alone!

Recommendations

The project demonstrated that the primary factors that impact as challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando within Encuentro Ministries network are leadership and finances. The project demonstrated that the two primary factors that impact as great opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando within the first and second-generation Latinos are (1) the high Latino presence and (2) comprehension of the Latino audience and its diversity. The project demonstrated that the factors that impact as some of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando are (1) prayer, (2) partnership, and (3) equipping of leadership and congregation, (4) evaluation of leadership and congregational development, and (5) impartation of a culture of multiplication.

The project demonstrated three major foundations and underlying principles to follow, the Leadership Principle, the Diversity Principle, and the Partnering Principle. Each one of them would catapult the outreach of the church planting endeavor in a very significant way.

Because of diversity, I suggest not settling for just the demographic study of the area where one plans to plant. I strongly suggest studying some history, culture, and

geography of the three to five countries most represented in your planting community. When a planter and people start to connect with people from other countries, consider doing the same. Remember, a first impression makes a deep impact, and we only have one opportunity to make that first impression. I would go even further and suggest that one should consider training plant leaders in this type of knowledge; perhaps one leader, especially if a teacher, can train the planter and leadership team.

Regarding the use of Spanish as the "official language of the Latino church," I am very aware of some pastors who want to force the use of the Spanish language in all and each one of the church activities and programs. As a first-generation Hispanic, Spanish is my primary language. I think and I dream in Spanish because it's the language of my heart. I also prefer reading the Bible in Spanish and pray and worship in the "language del cielo" (the language of heaven) as we love to call the language of Cervantes. My tendency would be not to force Spanish as "the exclusive language of the Latino church." The question, however, arises as to whether or not it is truly a priority of the planter or the church to preserve a language, even if the language is as beautiful as Spanish.

I do not believe that preserving the language is the role of the church planter, pastor, or congregation, but to share the Gospel in the language that is closest to the heart of the audience. Latinos are multilingual and a relevant Latino church plant will seriously consider using more than one language to reach out to the community. I can see Latino church plants reaching out in Spanish, Portuguese, and English in Orlando, Florida.

Postscript

The story behind this project: I still remember that day six years ago when I received a call from one of my best friends, Rev. Rubén Ortiz, the Latino Field Ministries

Coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. When Rubén calls, you want to answer. It is generally important and was that ever a crucial call! Rev. Ortiz received a visit from his friend, Rev. Dr. José Hernandez who was seeking candidates to enroll in the brand-new Latino D. Min. program at Asbury. The rest is history. I am grateful to both of them.

Much water has passed under the bridge. Many books have been read. Many deep conversations have taken place. Many new lifetime relationships have been established, and many prayers have been prayed. My parents and my wife have been behind every step. My beloved mother suffered from Alzheimer's disease. Like Dr. Esther Robles, my colleague in the doctoral program, I said "goodbye" and still grieve my mother daily. She dedicated my life to the Lord. She prayed for me in her womb and every day of her life. She probably never understood the meaning of a D. Min. program, but she clearly understood that I needed a lot of prayers, and she prayed!

On March 2, 2021, her light went out on planet Earth to shine as the sun on the Kingdom of her Father (Matt. 13:43) I could not have existed without her unconditional love, or without my dear father who is still fighting the good fight of faith. Nor could I have graduated without their prayers, encouragement, support, and legacy.

My beloved wife, Miriam, has undergirded me the most, every day since we were married three decades ago. This and many other far-fetched projects of my life would never have been realized without her.

As we live in a constantly spinning world, many Latino church planters forget that one day, they prepared a ministry plan. They are so busy with their one hundred and fifty daily tasks, emails, phone calls, Zoom video calls, countless coffee meetings, text

messages, WhatsApp audios, Bible studies, and sick visits, that they forget about the MAIN thing. Latino church planters from Orlando need to discover or recapture the main three foundational principles behind all the practices: the irreplaceable value of being a student of diversity, strengthening relationships with main partners (God, the leadership team, and external partners), and recognizing the supremacy of the leader's character and development over charisma. The best church planters, the best leaders know and live always having the MAIN thing in front of them. May God use this Project to help us, and many Latino church planters keep the main thing the main thing.

APPENDIXES

- A. The Latino Church Planting in Orlando, FL Survey
- B. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
- C. Informed Consent Letter for Survey
- D. Informed Consent Letter for Interview
- E. Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement
- F. Expert Review

APPENDIX A

The Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando, FL Questionnaire

Section I - Personal and Church Plant Questionnaire

1. Age
 - Under 18 years of age
 - Over 18 years of age
2. I am a...
 - Full-time church planter
 - Co-vocational church planter
3. I receive a salary package that includes medical insurance, retirement contribution, and professional expenses.
 - Yes
 - No
4. Our church model is:
 - Traditional
 - Multi-campus
 - Cell-home Church
 - Purpose Driven
 - Multi-ethnic
 - Other (please specify)
5. Our church's theology is:
 - Charismatic
 - Prosperity Gospel
 - Anabaptist
 - Pentecostal
 - Reformed
 - Conservative
 - Liberal
 - Other (Please specify)

6. Church members/attendees are primarily...
- First Generation Latino
 - Second Generation
 - Third Generation

Section II - Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather participants' information on the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, FL within the Encuentro Ministries Network.

The following statements address Research Questions #1, # 2, and Research Question # 3. They are measured with a four-point interval scale:

1 – Strongly Disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Agree

4 – Strongly Agree

1. We know our target audience and have done demographical research of our community.
2. In our community, immigrants seek a sense of community relationships and friendships.
3. In our community, immigrants seek community resources.
4. In our community, immigrants seek a relevant Bible-teaching church and a deeper spiritual life.
5. Our Latino church plant uses:
 - Spanish as the primary language for worship services and small groups.
 - English as the primary language for worship services and small groups.
 - Spanish and English for worship services and small groups.
6. Our leadership mirrors the diversity of the countries that are represented in the church.
7. We evaluate the development of the leadership and the congregation regularly.
8. We keep accurate administrative records and statistics.
9. We fast and pray at least twice a year.
10. We carry out outreach programs to connect with our community.
11. Our church's primary challenges are:

Financial: fundraising and stewardship

Spiritual development

Administrative issues

Leadership and leadership development

Outreach and community engagement

Worship, including musicians and singers

Assimilation and discipleship

Small groups

Space for worship and ministry

Technology and online ministry

Strategic planning

Preparing sermons

Theological conflicts among members

Racial and cultural diversity conflicts

Other (please specify)

12. Prayer, personal and congregational, private and public stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
13. Partnering with other churches, non-profits, networks, and the community stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
14. Equipping, training, and developing a healthy leadership and congregation invite stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
15. A culture of multiplication and reproduction of its own future plants stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
16. Other best practices that stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL are...

APPENDIX B
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

	Introduction
Welcome	Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. You are one of three leaders being interviewed.
	I'd like to verify that you received the information, I sent you through email regarding this project. Do you need a couple of minutes to do it now? Please indicate that you read the email.
	Questions
SI1.	What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network? Why do you consider these as challenges?
SI2.	What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network? Why do you consider these as opportunities?
SI3.	What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network? Why do you consider these as best practices?
SI4.	Would you like to add something else about the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network?
	Conclusion
Gratitude	Thank you for participating in this project. Without a doubt, your input will be of great benefit for church planters, pastors, denominations, networks, and churches passionate for reaching Latinos and planting new Latino churches in Orlando, Florida.

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Letter for Questionnaire

Dear Christian Leader:

My name is Carlos Darío Peralta. I am an ordained minister and a Doctoral student at Asbury Theological Seminary conducting a Dissertation project on “The Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando, FL: Factors that Impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, FL within Encuentro Ministries Network” as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Ministry degree. I am writing to invite you to participate in my Project. The purpose of the research is to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, FL within the Encuentro Ministries network. Your insights might help other church planters, mother churches, church planting networks, and denominations as they consider empowering strategies to reach Latinos in Orlando, FL.

You are invited to participate in the following:

1. Complete an online survey of approximately 20 minutes via Survey Monkey.
2. Participate in an interview of approximately forty minutes conducted by the research assistant. You will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place either via Zoom, in a mutually agreed location and time.

Your identity as a participant will be kept confidential in all the reporting and/or writing related to this Project.

Your participation in this Project is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from this Project at any time.

There is minimal risk associated with the completion of the survey and the interview. While there are no guaranteed benefits, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the exercise meaningful. As an active participant in this Project, you might benefit from the opportunity to make your voice heard through the completion of this survey and interview. There exists also the possibility that you might feel distressed during the conversation. If this happens, please let me know immediately.

A written account of the research will be submitted to my Coach. I will also be sharing what I learn from this Project with other doctoral degree students at a Doctor of Ministry Colloquium. Additionally, I will be sharing this Project with the Board of Encuentro Ministries. There is the possibility that I may publish this Project or refer to it in published writings in the future. In this event, I will continue to protect your identity by using only your numerical code. I may alter some identifying details to further protect your identity. There is also the possibility that Encuentro Ministries will choose to publish portions of this Project in their newsletters.

I appreciate your participation, time, and consideration for this project. If you have any questions about this Project, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks for your participation!

By clicking “Yes” I agree, fully and voluntarily, to participate in this Project. I retain the right to withdraw my consent, without having to give a reason for doing so. I am aware that I may halt my participation at any time. If my research results are used in other publications or are made public in another way, this will be done in such a way that my anonymity is completely safeguarded. My personal data will not be provided to third parties without my expressed permission.

Researcher contact information:

Carlos Darío Peralta

6526 Old Brick Rd

Ste. 120-331

Windermere FL 34786

Ph: 321-323-9161

Email: carlos.peralta@asburyseminary.edu

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Letter for Interview

Dear Christian Leader:

My name is Carlos Darío Peralta. I am an ordained minister and a Doctoral student at Asbury Theological Seminary, conducting a Dissertation project on “The Latino Church Planting Challenge in Orlando: Factors that Impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network,” as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Ministry degree. I am writing to invite you to participate in my Project. The purpose of the research is to identify some of the factors that present challenges and opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network. Your insights might help other church planters, mother churches, church planting networks, and denominations as they consider empowering strategies to reach Latinos in Orlando.

The following criteria were used for this Project: (1) Participants are Christian leaders committed to Latino church planting in Orlando and committed to seeing the Kingdom of God incarnated and demonstrated in the city; (2) Hispanic/Latino descent, residing in the seven counties area in Central Florida that conform to Orlando (Orange, Seminole, Volusia, Osceola, Lake, Brevard, and Polk); (3) Between the ages of 18 and 70+; (4) are in good physical and mental health; and (5) related to Encuentro Ministries.

You are being invited to participate in the following:

1. Completing an online survey of approximately 20 minutes via Survey Monkey.
2. Participating in an interview of approximately forty minutes conducted by the research assistant. You will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place either via Zoom, in a mutually agreed location and time.

Your identity as a participant will be kept confidential in all the reporting and/or writing related to this Project.

Your participation in this Project is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from this Project at any time.

There is minimal risk associated with the completion of the survey and the interview. While there are no guaranteed benefits, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the exercise meaningful. As an active participant in this Project, you might benefit from the opportunity to make your voice heard through the completion of this survey and interview. There exists also the possibility that you might feel distressed during the conversation. If this happens, please let me know immediately.

A written account of the research will be submitted to my Coach. I will also be sharing what I learn from this Project with other doctoral degree students at a Doctor of Ministry Colloquium. Additionally, I will be sharing this Project with the Board of Encuentro Ministries.

There is the possibility that I may publish this Project or refer to it in published writings in the future. In this event, I will continue to protect your identity by using only your numerical code. I may alter some identifying details to further protect your identity. There is also the possibility that the Encuentro Ministries will choose to publish portions of this Project in their newsletters.

I appreciate your participation, time, and consideration for this project. If you have any questions about this Project, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks for your participation!

Sincerely,

By clicking “Yes” I agree, fully and voluntarily, to participate in this Project. I retain the right to withdraw my consent, without having to give a reason for doing so. I am aware that I may halt my participation at any time. If my research results are used in other publications or are made public in another way, this will be done in such a way that my anonymity is completely safeguarded. My personal data will not be provided to third parties without my expressed permission.

Carlos Darío Peralta

6526 Old Brick Rd

Ste. 120-331

Windermere FL 34786

Ph: 321-323-9161

Email: carlos.peralta@asburyseminary.edu

APPENDIX E

Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

The Latino Church Planting Challenge: Factors that Impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries Network

I, _____, agree to assist the primary investigator with this Project. I agree to maintain full confidentiality when performing these tasks.

Specifically, I agree to:

1. keep all Project information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the primary investigator.
2. hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be revealed during performing the research tasks.
3. not make copies of any raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts), unless specifically requested to do so by the primary investigator.
4. keep all raw data that contains identifying information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession. This includes:
 - a. keeping all digitized raw data in computer password-protected files and other raw data in a locked file.
 - b. closing any computer programs and documents of the raw data when temporarily away from the computer.
 - c. permanently deleting any e-mail communication containing the data, and
 - d. using closed headphones if transcribing recordings.
5. give, all raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the primary investigator when I have completed the research tasks.
6. destroy all Project information in any form or format that is not returnable to the researcher (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

Provide the following contact information for the research assistant:

Printed name: Verónica Elizabeth Aguilar

Address: Rua K 285, Jardim Primavera, Iguape-SP (CEP 11920-000), Brazil

Telephone number: (55) 13 997472592

Signature of research assistant _____ Date _____

Printed name of researcher: Carlos Darío Peralta

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F

Expert Review

Expert Reviewer Letter

Dear Pastor,

As a recognized, both nationally and internationally, Leader and Preacher, you are invited to be in this D.Min. Project being done by Carlos Darío Peralta from Asbury Theological Seminary. The chosen topic is: “The Latino Church Planting Challenge: Factors that impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, Florida, within Encuentro Ministries Network.”

If you agree to be in this Project, you will be asked to participate as an expert reviewer to share any comments that you believe would help improve the data collection.

Attached, you will find the following information:

- Project Title
- Nature and Purpose of the Project
- Research Questions
- Researcher-designed Instruments
- Evaluation forms for Expert Review

Given your academic and ministerial expertise, your participation as an expert reviewer is essential for validity and reliability purposes. I deeply appreciate it.

Please, feel free to share your observations and return the evaluation forms via email to carlos.peralta@asburyseminary.edu by October 30, 2020.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Carlos D. Peralta

Information for Expert Reviewer

Project Title: “The Latino Church Planting Challenge: Factors that impact Latino Church Planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network.”

Nature and Purpose of the Project: The purpose of this project is to identify some of the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher has invited church planters, pastors, and leaders related to Encuentro Ministries to help us discover the answers to the research questions and achieve the purpose. The study will help to encourage a more in-depth consideration of the topic of church planting in Orlando as denominations, church planting networks, mother churches, and church planters consider their next steps into planting churches among Latinos.

Research Questions:

1. What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando Florida, within the Encuentro Ministries network?
2. What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando Florida within the context of the Encuentro Ministries network?
3. What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando Florida within the Encuentro Ministries network?

Instruments and evaluation forms for Expert Review

The Latino Church Planting in Orlando, FL Questionnaire

Section I - Personal and Church Plant Questionnaire

1. Age
 - Under 18 years of age
 - Over 18 years of age
2. I am a...
 - Full-time church planter
 - Co-vocational church planter
3. I receive a salary package that includes medical insurance, retirement contribution, and professional expenses.
 - Yes
 - No
4. Our church model is:
 - Traditional
 - Multi-campus
 - Cell-home Church
 - Purpose Driven
 - Multi-ethnic
 - Other (please specify)
5. Our church's theology is:
 - Charismatic

- Prosperity Gospel
- Anabaptist
- Pentecostal
- Reformed
- Conservative
- Liberal
- Other (Please specify)

6. Church members/attendees are primarily...
- First Generation Latino
 - Second Generation
 - Third Generation

Section II - Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather participants' information on the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, FL within the Encuentro Ministries Network.

The following statements address Research Questions #1, # 2, and Research Question # 3. They are measured by a four-point interval scale:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Agree
- 4 – Strongly Agree

1. We know our target audience and have done demographical research of our community.
2. In our community, immigrants seek a sense of community relationships and friendships.
3. In our community, immigrants seek community resources.
4. In our community, immigrants seek a relevant Bible-teaching church and a deeper spiritual life.
5. Our Latino church plant uses:
 - Spanish as the primary language for worship services and small groups.
 - English as the primary language for worship services and small groups.
 - Spanish and English for worship services and small groups.

6. Our leadership mirrors the diversity of the countries that are represented in the church.
7. We evaluate the development of the leadership and the congregation regularly.
8. We keep accurate administrative records and statistics.
9. We fast and pray at least twice a year.
10. We carry out outreach programs to connect with our community.
11. Our church's primary challenges are:

Financial: fundraising and stewardship

Spiritual development

Administrative issues

Leadership and leadership development

Outreach and community engagement

Worship, including musicians and singers

Assimilation and discipleship

Small groups

Space for worship and ministry

Technology and online ministry

Strategic planning

Preparing sermons

Theological conflicts among members

Racial and cultural diversity conflicts

Other (please specify)

12. Prayer, personal and congregational, private and public stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
13. Partnering with other churches, non-profits, networks, and the community stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
14. Equipping, training, and developing a healthy leadership and congregation invite stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
15. A culture of multiplication and reproduction of its own future plants stands out as one of the best practices for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL.
16. Other best practices that stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, FL are...

**Expert Review Evaluation Form: The Latino Church Planting in Orlando, FL
Questionnaire**

Section I - Personal and Church Plant Questionnaire

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
Any question(s) that were not asked that should be asked?					

Section II - Survey

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					

10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
Any question(s) that were not asked that should be asked?					

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction	
Welcome	Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. You are one of the three leaders interviewed.
	Before we start, I'd like to check if you received the information, I sent you through email regarding this Project. Do you want a couple of minutes to do it now?
Questions	
SI1.	What factors present challenges for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network? Why do you consider these as challenges?
SI2.	What factors present opportunities for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network? Why do you consider these as opportunities?
SI3.	What best practices stand out for Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network? Why do you consider these as best practices?
SI4.	Would you like to add something else about the factors that impact Latino church planting in Orlando, Florida within Encuentro Ministries Network?

Expert Review Evaluation Form: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Question #	Needed	Not Needed	Clear	Unclear	Suggestions
SI1.					
SI2.					
SI3.					
SI4.					
Any question(s) that were not asked that should be asked?					

Review completed by: _____

Signature: _____

Date completed: _____

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