ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR BABY BOOMERS:
A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THREE
AMERICAN CHURCHES

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

William P. Donahue, M.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1994
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American churches seeking to assimilate baby boomers are struggling to meet the adult educational needs of this group. To determine what models of church-based adult education are used to meet the educational needs of this group, three large, growing American churches known for attracting boomers were identified as sites for research. A qualitative case study research design was used and results were compared using cross-case analysis.

Initial data collection included a three-day visit at each church. Data were collected in three phases: Phase One consisted of personal interviews with staff and lay leaders; Phase Two focused on observation of adult education events which took place during the visitation period; Phase Three involved gathering materials that described adult education programs.

To optimize the reliability and accuracy of the findings data were subjected to examination by peers, collection methods were applied consistently in each research phase, follow-up contacts were made with each church to verify observations and findings, and case records
were created for each site. Eleven categories were selected and the data were presented by category. Within each category, data were delineated and organized into three areas: trends among the churches, noteworthy comments about individual programs, and comparison to the literature in the adult education field.

Findings indicated that these churches focused on the transformation of learners and viewed learners in a holistic sense. For each church the target audience was understood and the mission statement was clearly articulated. Personal assessment and program evaluation strategies existed so that learners could be encouraged toward personal development based on their expressed learning needs. Facilities were adequate and optimally used for educational purposes. Conversely, these churches lacked an adult education strategy that addressed the development of members. Church leaders demonstrated a limited understanding of the field. Also lacking were comprehensive planning strategies for the design of adult education programs. Limited opportunities existed for women to exercise leadership and educational programs for older learners were lacking.
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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The American baby boomer population with its various idiosyncrasies presents a staggering ministry challenge to local churches. As this group is assimilated into America's churches, will church leaders be adequately prepared to meet the adult education needs of this population?

Baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, account for approximately 70-77 million Americans (Anderson, 1990; Barna, 1991; Murren, 1990; Sample, 1990). Mathisen (1990) cites the underlying causes of this population boom as a combination of demographic, sociocultural, economic, and psychological influences upon families in the post-Depression era (p. 19). This diverse group represents one third of all Americans--sufficient to warrant investigation and analysis on the part of church leaders.

Boomers have replaced the dominant ethic of self-denial, popular in the 1940's, with one of self-fulfillment (Sample, 1990). This change of ethic has made the baby boomer a customer in search of a product which meets, or fulfills, felt needs. Boomers exhibit a low degree of loyalty and have high expectations (Anderson, 1990). These 75 million self-oriented Americans, according to Sample,
"have affected us in so many ways. Because they are such a
large generation, everyone wants to sell them something" (1990, p. 10).

It appears that "everyone" includes churches. Churches
are beginning to understand that "though they [boomers] are
institutionally wary, they are spiritually sensitive and
still searching--hungry, in fact, for a reawakening of the
idealism of their youth" (Rinehart, 1989, p. 21). In an
attempt to attract boomers, churches have employed creative
business-like marketing approaches--methods considered
almost heretical by church leaders just 10 years ago.

George Barna (1988), a marketing consultant, received
adverse reactions when he first began speaking about
marketing to church leaders. Responses varied from
"furrowed brows" with heads "slightly cocked" to
exclamations of "It's called what?" to the direct spiritual
challenge, "Marketing, eh? Are you a Christian, Mr. Barna?"
(p. 12). But now, in an effort to meet the demands of baby
boomers, a growing number of church leaders unashamedly use
such language and methods. Barna, of the Barna Research
Group, has written three books on the subject, including
Marketing the Church, User Friendly Churches, and The Frog
in the Kettle. Other books like The Baby Boomerang:
Catching Baby Boomers as They Return to Church by Murren
help churches understand the boomer (the "customer")
in order to more effectively target their audience and
deliver ministries (the "products").

It is assumed that a need-oriented marketing approach
to church growth and new member assimilation will have a
profound impact on designs for adult education. Adult baby
boomers are returning to church after many years. In an
article in the *Tampa Tribune*, religion editor Karen Long
commented regarding this trend: "Reasons for the revival
vary: to give their children a religious foundation, to find
a decent date, to make business contacts, to fill an empty
feeling, to recapture childhood securities, to get right
with God" (p. 13A).

Referring to statistics compiled by the Center for
Social and Religious Research at Hartford Seminary in
Connecticut, Long continues,

Church attendance among the postwar baby-boom
generation has risen by 5 to 10 percent in the 1980's.
Among older boomers--those born between 1945 and 1954--
church attendance has increased by 30 percent. (p. 13A)

New ministry challenges presented by baby boomers will
force churches to design new ministry strategies. The
challenge for Christian adult educators will be to
creatively provide programming to meet felt needs while
simultaneously teaching the foundational content of the
Christian faith.
To what degree are baby boomer churches—those successful at attracting such people—providing effective adult education programs for these newly acquired attenders? The answer to this question is largely unknown for two reasons. First, such churches are a relatively recent phenomenon. And second, few researchers have attempted (or been able) to take an in-depth look at successful baby boomer churches. Therefore, it is believed that research conducted at some churches exemplary in their success at attracting baby boomers would yield valuable information regarding their adult education practices and, consequently, might generate useful data for adult educators. Such research is both necessary and timely.

Statement of the Problem

What models of church-based adult education are being used by churches successful at attracting boomers to meet the educational needs of these adults as they return to church, and how do these models compare with those presented in the broader literature of adult education?

Purpose of the Study

Over 350,000 churches exist in America (Barna, 1990). There are hundreds of denominations and countless independent churches and affiliations, Protestant and Catholic. Selecting observable models is a mighty task. One often begins by focusing on those institutions that gain notoriety and attention for creating new strategies,
products, or innovations in the field. Some churches become well known for their size, their impact, their leaders, or, unfortunately, their problems. Evangelical leaders throughout America continue to point to a handful of churches known for creating innovative strategies for reaching baby boomers. Most are large "mega-churches," products of the late 1970s and 1980s, which, primarily because of well-designed marketing strategies and an understanding of the needs of American adults, have been successful in attracting and keeping these adults in their churches. Information gained from studying such churches in depth will have profound implications for adult education strategies in years to come for several reasons:

1. These churches are large, have great resources, and draw much attention from church leaders in America and around the world. What they do (good or bad) is often copied or modified by thousands of others.

2. Churches in general have not been known for creativity, but rather for preserving traditions. Consequently, innovations spread quickly among pastors seeking fresh ideas for their congregations.

3. To the author's knowledge, only a few churches are beginning to seriously consider the unique needs of adult learners with respect to program design and overall church strategy.
4. Larger churches in particular are relying less and less upon formal educational institutions (seminaries, Bible colleges, Bible institutes) for the training and development of their leaders (paid, part-time, or volunteer). To compensate for less reliance upon seminary-trained leadership, churches have begun to create their own educational and training programs for developing and maturing members.

5. The Church in general lacks a sound theology of adult development and learning (Peterson, 1984). Since the Reformation, scholarship has stressed central doctrinal pursuits such as the person of Jesus Christ, the nature of God, doctrine of man, end times, the Trinity, function of the church, and validity of the Scripture, more than the elements of practical theology needed by church leaders to equip their congregations for life and service such as social issues, marketplace issues, decision making, leadership, adult education, roles of men and women, family issues, and character issues.

6. Larger churches are among the few that are growing in America in weekend attendance figures. Typically, and almost universally, it is these larger, suburban (and some urban) churches that are independent of denominational bureaucracies and thus able to respond quickly to needs of the ever-changing culture. Their autonomy and streamlined management structures enable a greater flexibility to create
and implement the creative methodologies that are drawing a generation of non-church-going baby boomers back to church.

This study will research the adult education programs and practices of some of the nation's key baby boomer churches (one denominational and two independent) and compare the findings with existing models presented in adult education literature. This study, therefore, touches the area of applied research and may ultimately provide valuable information for the creation of a working model that can be the subject of further experimentation. Specifically, the study is important to the field because it will:

1. Provide detailed information concerning the adult education programs of these churches;
2. Create discussion concerning alternative approaches to adult Christian education;
3. Focus on the lifelong education of adults (often subordinated to the demands to assimilate new members and maintain numerical church growth);
4. Provide a basis for comparing existing education models of these churches with models from the broader literature of adult education.

Research Questions
1. What can be learned by Christian educators from current models of adult programming for subsequent adaptation to local church ministries?
2. To what extent are these churches utilizing adult learning principles in the formation of their educational programming?

3. How do the models used by these churches compare with those proposed in the literature of adult Christian education and models from adult education in general? How unique are the approaches to adult Christian education in these churches?

4. What emphasis is placed upon adult education as compared with other programs and ministries in these churches? Is it a priority or simply one among many programs?

Definition of Terms

**Adult Christian Education**: Form or content of adult education that specifically communicates the basic doctrines and principles of the Christian faith.

**Church**: A local congregation of people who claim some affiliation with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. When used with a capital "C," this term refers broadly to "the Christian Church" as a worldwide entity.

**Church based**: Educational systems and programs designed by church leaders to develop people for ministry and service primarily in and through that particular church.

**Denomination**: A group of churches united in doctrine and government for the purpose of pooling resources, maintaining
accountability, and centralizing the training of pastoral leadership.

**Evangelical:** Persons or organizations committed to the proclamation of the gospel message concerning salvation from sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

**Fundamentalist:** A narrower term than evangelical. Broadly, it means all those who hold to the basic historic "fundamentals" of the Christian faith (authority of the Bible, virgin birth of Jesus, his literal death and resurrection, the second coming of Christ at the end of the age, creation, the sacrificial death of Christ for sin as the means of salvation, a literal heaven and hell). More narrowly, it refers to a "group" within evangelicalism which has specified the standards of Christian conduct and morality (e.g., guidelines for hair length, dress, dating, and approved versions of the Bible, to name a few). Another key distinction involves the doctrine of "separation," that is, not associating with sinful people or organizations, or even with other Christians who do not hold to their particular views.

**Faith development:** Used to describe the spiritual growth or process of one's faith experience over time.

**Independent:** A label given to evangelical churches that are not associated with a formal denominational structure.
Large church: Technically, this term is used by church growth statisticians to refer to churches with average weekend attendance (not membership) of at least 800-1000 adults. More broadly, it could be any church larger than 250, since only 5% of all churches are at least that size (Anderson, 1990). Large churches (with attendance over 1,000) represent less than 1% of all American churches.

Mega-church: An unusually large church with adult attendance figures of 3,000 or more. Relatively few such churches exist in America, the largest with just over 16,000 in weekend adult attendance.

Nonformal education: Learning that takes place intentionally through structures and processes outside formal schooling or formal institutions. Discussion groups, home study, independent projects, and other non-classroom-bound learning processes are included.

Para-church: This word is used to describe Christian organizations that are not church based. The prefix is derived from the Greek word para meaning "alongside" or "away from." Such organizations include college campus ministries, seminaries, missionary agencies, some Christian relief organizations, and many lay-led ministries.

Limitations

1. Amount of documented research in this particular area. There are many opinions and assumptions, but little
has been researched and even less has been written. Comparable studies are few, primarily because of:

a. the relatively new phenomenon of the "contemporary church" model which is designed to specifically target the baby boom culture;
b. the relative minimal understanding by church leaders of adult education principles and practices with respect to church strategy;
c. the scarcity of adult education researchers working directly in the field of adult Christian education in local churches (some are associated with seminaries and undergraduate institutions, but relatively few with churches).

2. The number of churches from which to select. Few creative models are known and even fewer are accessible. Churches typically are skeptical of "outsiders" taking an in-depth look at their programming and procedures.

3. Openness and cooperation of the church staff and members. Though the research effort has been approved by the churches selected, one can never be certain of the degree to which interviewees will cooperate.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The number of churches studied. Only three have been selected among the several that may fit the general criteria. Costs and time prohibit studying more churches in an in-depth fashion.
2. **Interviewer/researcher bias.** Though the author might consider himself objective and attempt to reduce personal bias as much as possible, it is impossible to remove oneself from the data collection procedure, particularly when utilizing qualitative methods.

3. **Subjective nature of some of the questions and responses.** The researcher will seek to gather information that is of a subjective nature, not typically verifiable empirically.

4. **Narrowness of the study.** Because only a few churches can be researched, a wider variety of denominations representing theological and organizational diversity must be excluded.

5. **Time and funding available.** The more time spent within an organization, the greater the chances for collecting accurate data. Also, churches may change programming and events in the course of a year.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Given the scope of this study, it was necessary to review the literature for information in five major areas: baby boomers, methods used by churches to reach baby boomers (i.e., church growth strategies), education models discussed in the literature of adult education, general contributions by practitioners in the field of adult Christian education, and specific education models from the field of adult Christian education. Each of these is discussed separately below.

The Baby Boomer Population

Larger, growing churches in America are able to effectively attract members of the baby boomer population who, for any number of reasons, had not been regular church attenders. That baby boomers are a recognized and accepted population among sociologists and demographers is widely attested (Bean, 1983; Lindquist, 1986; Roozen, McKinney & Thompson, 1990; Seligman, 1988). Widely understood as well is the uniqueness of their life circumstances as a population. They experienced major stress and disadvantage during the schooling years (Dentler, 1987) and have suffered the isolation associated with the breakdown of the family and neighborhood as previously recognized communities of
belonging (Edmondson, 1991). A demographic study by Leadership Network in 1993 indicated the size of this population is unprecedented in American history as the number of live births between 1946 and 1964 averaged 4 million per year. Not until 1991 did the annual numbers again approach the 4 million mark (Childress, 1993).

According to Childress (personal communication, January 11, 1994), Manager of Information Resources at the Leadership Network Foundation, the baby boomer became increasingly disillusioned with institutions and organizations throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Combined with the social upheaval of those decades this disillusionment led many older boomers to become activists. Childress delineates between the "front" end of the baby boom (older boomers) and the "back" end (younger boomers born after 1955). Older boomers' beliefs and attitudes were shaped by the awareness of the threat posed by nuclear arms, a desire to change a floundering political "system," the anti-Vietnam war protest movements, and a reawakened social consciousness fueled by the civil rights and women's movements. It was these older boomers who constituted much of the boomer population who returned to church in the last 10 years. They were having children, still seeking answers to questions about life's meaning, and approaching midlife transitions.
Younger boomers, by contrast, experienced little of these social changes and influences. These attitudes were shaped more by the affluence and irresponsibility of the late 1970s and most of the 1980s. Thus, the baby boomer "population" now present in churches (beginning to explore church association) consists of subgroups with various values and experiences. For example, Tex Sample (1990) used the categories "cultural middle, cultural left, and cultural right" to further delineate boomers. His breakdown is based on socioeconomic data and political affiliations. Sample argues that it is primarily boomers from the cultural middle who are returning to church. The cultural left tends not to associate with institutions while the cultural right never strayed far from the churches in which they were raised.

Characteristics of Baby Boomers

Wade Clark Roof (1993), religion professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, recently conducted interviews with 1,400 randomly selected baby boomers in four states (Ohio, California, Massachusetts, and North Carolina) and discovered that two thirds dropped out of religious institutions during their teens for 2 years or more. He attributed the dropping out to the distrust of institutions in general and the social upheaval they experienced while growing up. Roof (1993) identified four
major groups or classifications of baby boomers with respect to their spirituality: loyalists, returnees, believers-but-not-belongers, and seekers.

Loyalists constitute one third of boomers and consist of those who never left religious life for any considerable period of time. These people picture God as Father, see Him involved in their lives, pray at meals, read the Bible, and attend religious services frequently.

Approximately one fourth of boomers are returning to religious organizations—the returnees. They tend to be conservative in their religious and political views but not as rigid as the loyalists. They tend to be older boomers with school-age children. Attendance at religious services is not motivated by duty (as with loyalists) but rather by the perception that a religious organization can meet their needs. Thus, they tend to return to larger churches and synagogues that are able to provide more programs and services.

A third category Roof described are believers-but-not-belongers. Approximately 28% of boomers identified themselves in this category, claiming they have a spiritual or religious belief system but choose to practice that belief apart from any religious institution. Most are former Roman Catholics or mainline Protestants who left the churches of their youth never to return. According to Roof,
this group also tends to blend traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs with other ideologies like reincarnation, astrology, popular psychology, and feminism.

The fourth category Roof described are the seekers, a term he used for boomers who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious and who are involved in a search for spiritual truth. They prefer to emphasize the unity of things like belief and practice, the inner life and outer life, and doing and being. "Faith" for the seeker is not something received from parents or the church but rather something one discovers from personal experience. Spiritual growth, healing, and personal well-being are the focus of seekers.

The remaining 5% of baby boomers who did not fit these categories identified themselves as non-religious or non-spiritual. Roof's work also concluded that:

1. Among those who "dropped out" of religious institutions in their teens, less than one fourth have returned;

2. One-third of boomers call themselves "born-again" Christians;

3. Sixty percent say it is preferable to explore the teachings of other religions than adhere to just one faith;

4. Fourteen percent practice meditation;

5. Twenty-eight percent believe in reincarnation;
6. Seventy percent believe in psychic powers;
7. Eighty percent believe you can be a good Christian without attending church;
8. Seventy-five percent favor the ordination of women;
9. Seventy-two percent say they definitely believe in God;
10. Eight percent believe in a higher power;
11. One percent do not believe in God.

Citing a lecture given by Jack Simms at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, entitled "Why Are These People Smiling? Because They Don't Have To Go To Church Anymore," Doug Murren (1990, p. 36), pastor of Eastside Foursquare Church in Kirkland, Washington, listed 10 common traits of churches that are reaching baby boomers successfully, namely;

1. They are open to [providing] spiritual experiences;
2. Their Bible teaching stresses practical living;
3. They place a healthy emphasis on relationships;
4. They have fewer titles and fewer formalities;
5. They understand the new family in America;
6. They share their faith by what they say and do;
7. They recognize the ability of women;
8. They place an emphasis on worship;
9. They have a high tolerance for diversity;
10. They are action-oriented.
Effectively reaching baby boomers so that the basic historic message of Christianity can be proclaimed to them is a worthy goal. But providing them with lifelong learning opportunities throughout their tenure at church presents educators with a formidable task. A "consumer" orientation makes the boomer a difficult customer to keep. The following characteristics of baby boomers, as observed by Murren (1990), will profoundly affect the Christian adult education task.

Baby boomers:

1. Are not belongers. Participation rates are high but joining organizations is a low priority.

2. Are not institutional. Denominational and institutional loyalty are unimportant. Allegiances are made only to ideas and values.

3. Are experience-oriented. They want to "feel something" when they participate.

4. Are extremely pragmatic concerning sermons. Pastor's messages are judged by their "take-away" value.

5. Believe women need to hold positions of leadership.

6. Expect that the contribution of singles will be celebrated and accepted.

7. Expect their high level of family dysfunction to be discussed. Ministries must be prepared to address the psychological and emotional pain experienced as a result of
family dysfunction, abuse, addictions, and other crises. Churches cannot simply target the so-called "all-American" family.

8. **Will applaud innovation.** Diversity, options, and opportunities are welcomed and celebrated.

9. **Have a sense of destiny.** Boomers possess a belief that they can make the world a better place if given the resources and opportunity to do so (Murren, 1990, pp. 36-39).

Baby boomers are said to have a three-fold quest for transcendence, significance, and community (Downs, 1990). Transcendence, explained Downs, refers to a reality beyond the self (p. 29), significance describes the desire to be valued, and community "is a search for meaningful relationships in today's fragmented society" (p. 31). Brown (1990) added that baby boomer families are relational in function; they are seeking intimacy in a chaotic and ever-changing culture. Such is the nature of this unique population, one which must be understood by educators seeking to minister to them.

**Church Growth Strategies for Reaching Adults**

In obedience to Jesus' injunction in Matthew 28:19-20 to "make disciples of all nations," churches throughout history have attempted to attract new members into the fellowship. In America, four strategies have been dominant: the adult Sunday school, the creation of small groups, the
charismatic renewal movement, and the use of large "seeker-targeted" events (e.g., special services, concerts, community-wide outreaches.) A brief explanation of each strategy follows and provides a context for understanding the purpose of the proposed research.

**Adult Sunday School Approach**

In the twentieth century many churches and denominations (e.g., Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian) addressed adult learning and socialization needs by utilizing the adult Sunday school. Classes were organized by age parameters (classes for people in their 20s, 30s, and so forth) or sometimes by marital status (singles, young marrieds, older marrieds). These parameters were, for the most part, social principles followed for organizational rather than developmental purposes. The classes were content-centered, guided by a standard curriculum. This standardization assured leaders that desired doctrines and subjects were being discussed at each church in the denomination.

Newcomers were assimilated into the Sunday school by age, sex, and marital status. Class sizes varied from a few members to several hundred, but the organizing principles remained consistent. Classes were designed for Bible instruction, recruiting new members, and meeting the needs
of class members--an effective design for a society whose primary relational needs were met by families and neighborhood friends.

One notable example of a successful Sunday school program helps illustrate their popularity, particularly in the 1950s through the 1970s. First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana, pastored by Dr. Jack Hyles, grew from an average Sunday school attendance of 3,000 to over 14,000 from 1968 to 1977 (Towns, Vaughan, & Seifert, 1985). Even as late as 1985, Towns et al. listed the church as the largest church in America in membership (77,000), worship attendance (18,700), Sunday school enrollment (18,700), Sunday school attendance (18,700), baptisms (8,060), new members (8,060), and conversions (20,721), annually. Certainly the numbers need some explanation, particularly a reconciliation of conversions with attendance figures, and the fact that Sunday school attendance remarkably matches enrollment and worship service numbers. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the church has experienced considerable growth through its evangelistic emphasis, primarily by means of the Sunday school and a large bus ministry. Hyles (1962) affirmed the evangelistic thrust of the church, stating "every service should have an evangelistic appeal" (p. 11), and the importance of the Sunday school in accomplishing the task, asserting "the biggest business in all the world is
the Sunday school . . . Perhaps no other facet of our church organization reaches more people than the Sunday school" (Hyles, 1968, p. 137).

Fundamentalist Baptists have been known for this method of promoting church growth. In fact, the fastest growing churches in America, until just the last 7 years, have been Baptist churches. In 1972, the top 10 were all Baptist (Towns, 1972), and of the top 100 listed by Towns et al. in 1985, a large portion--over one third--remained Baptist. But, in comparison to 1972 figures, 6 of the top 10 were non-Baptist. Independent non-denominational churches (mostly charismatic or Pentecostal in format) have quickly replaced a number of the Baptist churches. For these churches, the Sunday school was not the primary vehicle for growth and outreach.

A number of factors may account for this shift. Despite the influential cultural changes since the 1960s--mobilization, globalization, urbanization, and pluralism (Anderson, 1990)--it appears few Sunday school programs were modified to respond to the changes. Growing churches that were successful in reaching new members discovered that their resources--finances and facilities--were inadequate for building and maintaining large classes. These cultural and economic realities required the creation of alternatives
or supplements to adult Sunday schools. Thus began a new phenomenon among growing churches in America--the small group movement.

Small Group Approach

The use of small groups is not new to either secular or Christian cultures. Evidence for their use in church settings dates back to the first century A.D. (Acts 2, the Bible). As an American phenomenon, small groups were popularized by Wesley (Broholm, 1977) for the purpose of adult education and pastoral care. Not long after Eduard Lindeman wrote his classic work on The Meaning of Adult Education (1926), Earl Ziegler, head of the Division of Christian Education for the National Council of Churches in the 1930s, wrote "the growth of study groups will probably accompany the development of the adult education movement" (1938, p. 111). But the Sunday school movement of the late nineteenth century soon outpaced the groups. A return to small groups as a strategy for church growth became popular once again in the 1970s and has grown steadily over the last 25 years.

Using variations of a model pioneered by The Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, pastored by Dr. Paul Yonghi Cho, American churches have begun to see the value of small groups for training leaders, providing pastoral care, and assimilating newcomers. From a small tent-church in 1958, the congregation had expanded to an astounding 230,000
members by 1982 (Towns et al., 1985). Church growth consultant J. Dethmer (personal communication, May 26, 1992) estimates the current figure at approximately 750,000.

Yoido Full Gospel's success is attributed to the cell group strategy of the church. Small groups of approximately 15 people meet in homes throughout the community for Bible study, prayer, outreach to the neighborhood, and worship. The small group thus becomes "the church" and members gather for larger corporate worship experiences about twice monthly at one of several worship services, each seating thousands of persons (Towns et al., 1985). Presently small group attendance exceeds worship service attendance. This model has been reproduced by New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, with similar success, though on a reduced scale numerically. Since its inception 19 years ago, New Hope has grown to over 6,000 members, virtually all of whom belong to a small group of some kind. In an attempt to reproduce the success of churches like New Hope and Yoido Full Gospel, Carl George (1991), a consultant to churches eager to implement small groups, has provided a strategy for designing an entire church organization using small groups. This strategy is now being employed by hundreds of churches throughout North America to assimilate newcomers to their churches.

Thus, small groups have been effective assimilation vehicles. They provide an atmosphere which, for many
adults, functions much like their nuclear and extended families once did. Small groups were effectively used by para-church organizations in the 1950s and 1960s to provide Bible Study and prayer groups. Only in the last 2 decades have churches used them to any great extent.

**Charismatic Renewal Movement**

A third approach that has produced growth is more a movement than a strategy. Broadly referred to around the world as the charismatic renewal movement (Towns et al., 1985), emphasis is placed upon corporate worship and healing services. Often highly emotive and expressive, these services emphasize God's power to perform miracles today. Proponent Peter Wagner (1973) argues that divine healing is a "manifestation of the power of God that will ultimately attract unbelievers to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord" (p. 129). Most of these churches are characterized by an atmosphere of celebration in worship services and a belief in the dramatic healing power of God in response to prayer. Two of the top 10 largest churches in America in 1985, Calvary Chapel and Calvary Temple, are examples of such ministry approaches (Towns et al., 1985). The focus on God's healing power remains the unique aspect of these churches.

**Seeker-Targeted Baby Boomer Approach**

A fourth approach to attracting members has recently been popularized. According to staff members at these
churches people who sought answers to spiritual questions often felt uncomfortable about coming to a small group or a Sunday school class. Though they desired the social relationships, such an intimate atmosphere (often 6-10 people) was intimidating. Anonymity appeared to be a core value for such "seekers," and they needed a place to explore the message of Christianity while remaining anonymous.

According to interviewees, traditional church formats failed to meet boomers' needs in two areas: (a) the organization and style of the church service, and (b) the content and presentation of the message.

As to the former, most church services and classes were designed for believers or committed followers, those already convinced about Christianity and who often had been attenders since childhood. These committed followers were interested in preserving elements from the church's cultural past such as historic hymns, pews, stained glass windows, pipe organs, liturgy, choir robes, symbols, and denominational affiliation. It was felt by interviewees that such elements provided security and a connection with the historic roots of Christianity, at least back to the time of the Reformation.

Unfortunately, this atmosphere--so comfortable to the committed follower--was alien and irrelevant to a secularized, pluralistic, unchurched baby boomer. But not only was the environment unpleasant; the content and
presentation of the message were foreign. "High church" language, Bible translations from the 1600s, and topics unrelated to everyday life often made church a predictable and uncomfortable experience. One such baby boomer explains:

Two summers ago when I returned to Virginia to visit my family, I found myself on a Sunday morning, once again, in the church of my childhood. Very little had changed in twenty years. I settled comfortably into a padded pew that held the same assortment of red hymnals and crisp pledge cards I held as a child . . . I would scarcely remember that service except for an observant question my ten-year-old asked me, somewhere between the Gloria Patri and the Responsive Reading. "Mom," she whispered, "why does everybody in Grandmommy and Granddaddy's church have gray hair?" Why indeed? I said to myself . . . Where were the people who were my age, my generation? . . . Our young and middle-aged heads were conspicuously missing from this staid Sunday morning assembly. (Rinehart, 1990, p. 19)

Rinehart's (1990) work indicates that boomers do not attend because of the perception that traditional churches provide little meaning and relevance to their contemporary lifestyles and problems. This is not to imply that traditional churches are wrong or somehow morally culpable. Rather, it illustrates the dramatic difference between the
needs of a contemporary unchurched American and the programming presented by traditional Reformation-style church organizations.

In an attempt to counteract the negative perception of "church" by unchurched persons and somehow bridge the cultural gap described above, a new model was implemented by Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC) in South Barrington, Illinois. "Seeker-targeted" services were held on weekends, and services for believers were held mid-week. Using this approach, WCCC was able to target unchurched baby boomers without neglecting mature believers. Employing drama, multi-media, contemporary music, and relevant preaching, WCCC has been quite successful in bringing the Christian message to people with little or no church background. Mellado's Harvard Business School case study (1991) quoted Program Director, Nancy Beach, who described the seeker service design:

We basically start from scratch in designing each service thinking about the effect it will have on the unchurched . . . . We are trying to identify with the unchurched . . . and reach them where they are in life . . . . We are trying to use music, drama and other forms of art and communication to illustrate the problem the service is trying to address. A focused
package is what we are after . . . something that flows and makes sense and prepares them for the message to come. (p. 9)

In just over 17 years, the church has grown from a few hundred to over 14,000 at the seeker-targeted weekend services. An average of 5,000 attend the mid-week believers' services as well. According to WCCC Teaching Pastor Jim Dethmer (personal communication, May 26, 1992), this model—the attempt to target seekers—is currently being utilized throughout the country. The Willow Creek Association, an affiliation of churches attempting to use elements of the WCCC philosophy of ministry, has over 700 member churches. Dethmer estimated that several hundred more churches share the philosophy but have not formally joined the Association (at the cost of $125 per church, annually). Many Association churches are new works that began with the model from inception; others are attempting a transition to such a model.

Thus, each of these four approaches—the adult Sunday school, small groups, the charismatic renewal movement, and seeker-targeted services—has been successful to some degree in reaching and assimilating people. Seeker-targeted services seem most effective at reaching unchurched baby boomers with the message of Christianity, but how effective seeker-targeted churches are at educating adults once they are incorporated into the church must yet be explored.
Adult Education Models

Researchers and practitioners in the field of adult education offer a number of approaches to program design and education models that have applications for adult Christian educators. Consequently, it is essential to review contributions by the field at large before discussing adult Christian education in particular.

The classroom teaching model was and is one of the most popular models of adult education. Though not limited to formal instructional settings, it has been used most in such settings and is referred to as the "institutional model" by some (Brookfield, 1986). So popular is this approach that Kidd (1973) was prompted to state with some degree of sarcasm that "a visitor to the schools of North America might soon form the opinion that the Almighty has decreed, or a law has been passed, ordering that education must be carried out in a rectangular room and that learning only happens where there are . . . students and one teacher" (p. 242). Lecturing, supervising practical work, and reviewing classroom performance are the main functions of teachers in such classroom settings. Emphasis is placed upon relationships between student and teacher and among students (Houle, 1992).

A second group of models--interactive models--provide alternatives to the classic institutional models organized primarily with the lecture as centerpiece. Interactive
models include symposiums, forums, institutes, seminars, and workshops (Bergevin & Morris, 1950). Though each of these has a distinctive function, they share characteristics that enable them to be grouped together. Each is used widely in adult education and training environments. These models allow the learner to have input in the instructional process, but usually not the instructional design.

A third format used in adult education models today is residential adult education. Arguably something that has existed for many centuries, residential education can be found in summer schools, graduate institutions, communal groups, special education programs, outward bound experiences, church retreats, and any format wherein members commit to learn and live together for some period of time, focusing their attentions on shared educative experiences (Houle, 1992). Simpson and Kasworm (cited in Houle, 1992) have emphasized the values of such education, emphasizing the residential conference center as a viable program for adult learning. Here the learner is an integral part of the process and in many cases is responsible for designing a significant portion of the education content or instructional method. Learning is cooperative and participatory and takes place in the context of community. Learners are able to share life experiences in the context of learning environments, thus heightening many learning experiences. Historically, Hull House, founded by Jane
Addams in 1889 in Chicago, became the model for social settlement houses for the poor throughout the United States (Moreland & Goldenstein, 1985).

Self-directed learning is yet another means by which adults learn and develop and is the model wherein the learner has optimal control over the learning experience and outcomes. Tough's (1979) study clearly indicated that a great deal of learning by adults is self-directed. He concluded from his data that 90% of adults participate in at least one learning project of at least 7 days duration in a given year. Candy (1991) has done extensive work in this area, arguing for a philosophical distinction between self-learning as a means or method of acquiring information and self-learning as an intentional outcome of a given instructional process. For Candy, self-directed learning that takes place outside formal institutional settings is "autodidaxy" and should be an outcome of education (p. 15). It is not enough that self-learning is promoted by an instructor or some other external motivating force. Rather, self-learning (autodidaxy) must become a skill mastered by the truly self-directed learner.

A fifth model in the literature involves distance education. This term came into popularity in the 1970s as a way of identifying instruction where teachers of any sort are not in face-to-face contact with students (Houle, 1992). Major methods for the accomplishment of distance education
include video technologies, radio, television, computers, audio recorders, satellites, and correspondence courses. The creation of Open University (OU) in Great Britain in the 1970s made distance education an internationally recognized concept. Using a variety of media, OU successfully educates thousands of students in fields of advanced study. Over 100,000 are enrolled in televised courses (Lewis, 1989). Thus the university provides a kind of tutorial assistance without the necessity of bringing student and teacher into direct contact.

Extension education is a sixth model popularized by the creation of the Cooperative Education Service (CES) in 1914. The CES is the largest adult education program in the United States and presently reaches far beyond its original purpose of agricultural education services (Forest, 1989). Using farmer institutes and Chatauquas, CES was a premier model for taking education to the people on a national level. In 1899, 500,000 farmers attended farmer institutes in 47 states (Lewis, 1989). Presently there are 15,000 CES staff and over 1 million volunteers.

A model used in many business training programs is the competency-based model of adult education. Daloisio, Firestone, and Evarts (1984) cited the Master of Management Program at the American Management Association in New York City as an example. This model is a nontraditional approach
to graduate management education. Using a competency-based approach the following process is utilized:

1. Each student's competencies are assessed using a battery of tests and evaluations, and results are compared to the model for deficiencies. (The model identifies 18 competencies resulting from research of high-performing managers).

2. Six weeks later, students receive feedback from the tests.

3. Based on test results, students are then asked to improve deficient competencies based on the following stages (Daloisio, Firestone, & Evarts, 1984):
   a. recognition of the competency;
   b. understanding of the competency;
   c. assessment of the competency;
   d. experimentation with demonstrating the competency;
   e. practice using the competency;
   f. application of the competency on the job. (p.28)

Phases a, b, and c begin during the feedback process. The remaining three phases are continued with the use of individualized learning plans that include target dates, objectives, and activities.

4. All relevant AMA resources are put at the student's disposal and students choose their own learning process.

5. Upon return to the job, competencies must be
documented as evidence that they were acquired. A portfolio is submitted as a "final exam" to demonstrate skill acquisition.

Many observable models of educational practice have attempted to utilize Knowles' (1984) concept of andragogy (the art and science of teaching and learning with adults) as a basis for the model design. One such attempt to apply Knowles' andragogical assumptions to legal education is worth mentioning. Implemented at the Vanderbilt University School of Law's Clinical Legal Education program (Bloch, 1984) these are the components central to its design:

1. Law students are viewed as adult learners, not simply students seeking degrees.

2. Mutual teacher/student inquiry and co-counseling are essential to the learning process.

3. Experiential learning is emphasized.

4. Instruction is geared toward a student's readiness to learn thereby making the process more personal and student centered.

5. Learning is problem centered (e.g., case studies are used extensively). Content and legal theory are discussed in the context of real legal problems.

6. Mutual evaluation among students is fostered. Thus the model utilizes a variety of adult learning methods as a result of Knowles' influence.
In addition to the above models, other methodologies and formats exist. Houle (1992) listed mass media, fairs, and expositions as educational processes. Mason and Kaye (cited in Houle, 1992) advocated the use of computers to various adult learning contexts. Their work focused on the impact computer-aided learning can have on the student. Heermann (1986) has helped compile a series of articles that emphasize the use of a computer in three contexts: as a teaching tool, a learning tool, and a resource to be used with computer networks. New technologies continue to develop, but the broad educational models above are representative of the field.

Contributions to Adult Christian Education

In the last 50 years educators in the field have addressed a variety of aspects of adult education in the church. Adult education and adult learning principles were used by Ziegler (1938, 1958) to influence the way Christians structured adult classes. Though primarily concerned with use of the Uniform Lesson Series, of which he was editor, Ziegler attempted to outline a philosophy of adult education for the church. Winchester (1930), a contemporary of Ziegler and educational consultant to the Federal Council of Churches, focused on the importance of adult education and made a basic attempt to outline principles for program
making. He advocated that a variety of methods and resources be used, but set forth no particular model or approach.

Further curriculum suggestions and approaches were developed by LeBar (1958), Wyckoff (1961), Little (1959), and The Cooperative Curriculum Project (1966). Such work continues today and focuses on a variety of curriculum plans, resources, content, and principles. Le Bar's work, for example, is a classic and explores in detail the teaching methodology of Jesus Christ. In 1970, Zuck and Getz, teachers at Dallas Theological Seminary, edited a comprehensive overview of adult education principles and curriculum guidelines for churches. Though no models are specifically given, this work formed a sound basis for many evangelicals who needed a framework in which to discuss the needs of adult learners in their churches (Zuck & Getz, 1970).

Apps (1972), Elias (1982), and McKenzie (1982) have made significant contributions to the field by relating adult education principles to adult Christian education. Likewise, Peterson (1984) and Stubblefield (1986)—a Southern Baptist—have written works which provide a comprehensive overview of the adult ministry function of a church. Most recently, Gangel and Wilhoit (1993) have edited a comprehensive handbook for the field of adult Christian education which breaks new ground by listing small
groups as viable adult education environments.
Collectively, the six works provide a framework for understanding the history of adult Christian education, adult learners, adult development and aging, and educational techniques for teaching adults. These works provide the adult educator with the basic principles for formulating a philosophy of adult education in the church.

Teaching techniques and personal growth are areas of adult education that have been addressed most recently in the literature. In his book *Strategies for Teaching Christian Adults*, Warren Wilbert (1984) focused on teaching methodologies and skill mastery. Methods are discussed in detail with a critique of each teaching approach (groups, demonstrations, panels, case studies, seminars, workshops, forums, lectures). Russell Robinson, a religious educator, has also offered a useful handbook entitled *Helping Adults Learn and Change* (1979), which synthesizes many of the principles for teaching adults. This handy practical reference also includes sample planning and evaluation guides, room designs, seating arrangements and teaching outlines.

Fowler (1984) and Stokes (1982) have made significant contributions in the areas of personal faith development, a growing area of research. Vogel (1991) has pioneered a work using the faith journey or pilgrimage as a metaphor for religious education. Not specifically Christian, her work
involves other religions and presents a more mystical approach for adults who desire to learn and grow in a community of faith together.

Storytelling was offered by Williams (1987) as a means of involving learners and personalizing the teaching environment. He encouraged teachers to make the Bible story "their own" and provide an atmosphere of experiential learning (p. 57), though no formal educational strategy was outlined.

Finally, Wickett (1991) has provided the field of adult religious education with a specific overview and analysis of several learner-centered models for instruction. She defines a model as something that

. . . will assist the educator to understand the nature of the learner's situation and to create a context in which the learner will be enabled to learn and grow through an appropriate process. (p. 3)

Using Houle's terminology (1972, pp. 90-130), she lists the categories of models to be considered by educators:

1. Independent Study;
2. Tutorial Teaching;
3. Learning Group;
4. Teacher-Directed Group Instruction;
5. Committee-Guided Group Learning;
6. Collaborative Group Education;
7. Creating an Educational Institution;
Wickett's overview provided the teacher with a number of useful options for a variety of learning projects. It is not an education strategy, but rather a learner-centered approach to instructional design.

Thus, Christian educators have a number of works in the field from which to glean knowledge about adult learning, program planning, philosophy of adult education, curriculum design, teaching techniques, personal faith development, and foundational principles for educational design. Christian educators have also provided the field with some specific models, though few of them have been tested or implemented.

**Adult Christian Education Models**

With few exceptions, programming models for church-based adult Christian education have centered historically and primarily on the adult Sunday school. This is understandable namely because of the great success and widespread appeal of Sunday schools, both for adults and children. In 1872 the National Sunday School Convention convened in Indianapolis, Indiana, and designed the Uniform Lesson Series. The intent of Convention leaders in designing the series, according to George Betts (1924), was:
to select a course of Bible lessons for a series of years not exceeding seven . . . , which shall, as far as they may decide possible, embrace a general study of the whole Bible, alternating between the Old and New Testaments semi-annually or quarterly, as they shall deem best. (p. 126)

After 3 years, the Lessons reached 19 nations; by 1905 there were 17 million participants (Benson, 1943). Though originally for children, the concept soon was adapted for adult classes. But, as research about adult learning became available and changes occurred in the culture, it was clear to some educators that the Uniform Lesson Series was insufficient to meet adult needs. The series assumed that all adults were the same and that age, economic status, geography, work, and family background had little bearing on curriculum design or structure.

Though the curriculum was ultimately set aside by many churches, the Sunday school remained the primary adult education program. Robert S. Cook, consultant for adult work for the Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1966, articulated the Southern Baptist approach to adult education. The adult was viewed as a recruit to be reached by the Sunday school, "committed" in the worship service, and trained in the training union (Cook, 1966). Thus the Sunday school was viewed as the assimilation process to membership and subsequent training.
Training was always supplemental to the Sunday school and often took place on Sunday evenings. Types of training included new member training (13 sessions), regular member training (ongoing), potential leader training (26 sessions), and specialized leader training as needed (Cook, 1966). According to Cook, the content of the training included systematic theology, Christian ethics, Christian history, and Church polity and organization. But the Sunday school remained the focal point. Little had changed since Bomberger's (1911) definition of such classes:

The organized Adult Bible Class is a Sunday School Class formally organized by the election of officers and committees, and committed to systematic efforts for promoting Bible Study and personal work, and for advancing the welfare of its members, its school, its church, and the kingdom. (p. 7)

This philosophy is still evident in many denominational churches, particularly the Baptists, who have traditionally built large ministries using the Sunday School (e.g., First Baptist of Hammond, Indiana, described earlier).

Thus it appears Sunday school classes have served three main functions: (a) to reach newcomers, (b) to provide basic Bible instruction, and (c) to organize adults into social groupings. In recent years, however, the adult Sunday school has not been known to reach secularized, unchurched adult baby boomers. According to Barna's
research (1990), children's Sunday school attendance figures increased dramatically in the late 1980s, primarily because baby boomers believed that religious instruction was beneficial for their children. But the findings also indicate that adults are not as enthusiastic about religious instruction for themselves. Explains Barna:

Although what the Church has to offer is viewed by many of these parents as valuable for their children, they personally reject the notion that Sunday School classes would provide them with benefits commensurate with the effort involved in attending. (p. 133)

Though Sunday school-style classes are likely beneficial, the Sunday school as a system appears insufficient in reaching and developing unchurched adult baby boomers. As such, it is the design of this study to explore alternative models, especially since many adult Christian education models continue to be based on the adult Sunday school (Murry, 1981).

In recent decades, educators have presented various alternative approaches to the traditional Sunday school. Bergevin and McKinley (1958) set forth a comprehensive model in the late 1950s known as The Indiana Plan. The model arose from research supported by the Lilly Endowment in cooperation with Indiana and Purdue universities. More than
1,000 persons participated in the research over 4 years, and 50 persons from five churches reviewed the manuscript detailing the Indiana Plan.

Citing the need for a different approach from the Sunday school model, Bergevin and McKinley (1958) set forth the following educational idea: "that people can learn together creatively if they will accept the responsibilities of attacking their mutual learning problems cooperatively in an atmosphere of freedom and acceptance" (p. xv). The Indiana Plan, in essence, was designed to incorporate the principles and methodology of cooperative learning into a Christian education setting in a church. Learning teams were developed and trained with cooperative-learning and group-discussion techniques. Instruction and practice were given in assessing learning needs, setting educational objectives, choosing methods, and selecting materials. Church leaders were trained in a week-long institute while others could come to a weekend clinic.

The plan was the first non-Sunday school strategy utilizing adult education principles and techniques. Emphasis was placed on needs assessment, program planning, summative evaluation, and cooperative learning. The plan was then utilized by a number of churches in Indiana to develop adult education programs.

McKinley continued to refine the plan and it became "Participation Training" (PT), which offers "institutes"
sponsored by the Bureau of Adult Studies at Indiana University (cited in Harton, 1986). PT uses a planning process that helps educators to plan for the following:

1. Identification of interest/need area;
2. Selection of program content by possible topic;
3. Identification of outcomes and goals;
4. Identification of resources;
5. Selection of techniques;
6. Operation of program;
7. Evaluation and reassessment. (p.150)

Results of the plan would be judged according to whether participants developed in seven areas of personal growth: creative self-expression, acceptance of personal responsibility, cooperation in a common task, better communication, self-examination, self-guidance, and sensitivity to individual needs (Bergevin and McKinley, 1958). Thus, evaluation of the plan's effectiveness deals primarily with learning processes, not content areas.

Richards (1975) presented a plan for adult education which involved four strategies: one-to-one interaction, one-to-two hundred (larger teaching events), ten-to-ten (small group setting), and a "body-life" or worship experience involving two hundred-to-two hundred (p.252). He also has provided the field with a philosophy of Christian education rooted in theological principles, though not specifically addressing adult education. (In fact, he makes little
reference to adult education principles.) His work is primarily theological and provides a worthy starting point for developing a philosophy of ministry.

Schaefer (1972), a Catholic, set forth a guide for program planning known as GIFT (Growing in Faith Together). Though not detailed, the components of the model can be summarized into four areas: identifying the planning team, assessing needs and resources, selecting themes and topics, and devising the plan (Harton, 1986).

Harton (1986) reviewed these and other program planning models and offered a hybrid model containing 10 steps as follows:

1. Create a conducive learning climate.
2. Develop a collaborative planning group.
3. Establish purpose/philosophy.
4. Assess needs/interests.
5. Make consensus decisions on topic/content.
6. Formulate desired outcomes.
7. Select/secure resources.
8. Determine appropriate learning modes and techniques.
9. Develop activity outline/Operate the program.
10. Evaluate. (p. 155)

Such program planning models, if utilized by church leaders, could be instrumental in creating effective strategies for adult education. But these models have yet
to be tested and evaluated in the church culture. No
evidence is presented (with the exception of Bergevin and
McKinley) that supports the viability of these models.

A diagnostic model for adult education was proposed by
McBride (1980) and addressed the "what" and "why" questions
of adult Christian education in the church. It is a
theoretical design addressing the purposes and content of
adult education, but does not mention how one might apply
the theory in formulating a local church strategy.

The four most noteworthy (and recent) research efforts
related to the proposed study were conducted by Olson
(1985), Seely and Moucka (1990), Mellado (1991), and
Hendricks (1990). A study of Lutheran churches was
conducted by Olson (1985), who researched the educational
import of the Word and Witness program of the Lutheran
Church in America. Over 60,000 persons in the denomination
participated in the program. The research demonstrated that
positive results were achieved as a result of the
experiential education approach used in the program.

Seely and Moucka (1990) drew upon Hilda Taba's
curriculum model of the 1960s to design their own model at
Christ Church of Oak Brook, Illinois. After working with
single and married boomers, the following approach was used
to organize a program:

1. Diagnose Needs--Felt needs and "gap" needs are
assessed, with gap needs defined as the distance between
where baby boomers are spiritually and where they ought to be, using Christ as the standard.

2. Formulate Objectives—Participants were asked to formulate behavioral goals that could be measured.

3. Select and Organize Content—This is based on the results of steps one and two above.

4. Select and Organize Learning Activities—Criteria for selection are input (e.g., lecture, film, discussion), sharing (interaction), and self-awareness or practical application.

5. Evaluation—Formative and summative measures were used based on objectives and participant feedback.

Seely and Mouck (1990) found the model was successful with a group of young marrieds and with a group of singles. Though not a church-wide strategy, it nonetheless incorporated assumptions regarding adult learning and was used effectively with a select group.

The Harvard Business School case study of Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC) by Mellado (1990) evaluated WCCC from a marketing perspective, with little research concerning adult education. Nonetheless, the research provided an in-depth description of the fundamental principles which govern a seeker-targeted church’s philosophy of ministry, especially the strategy for reaching baby boomers. Since WCCC was one of the sites used for the
The present study, the Harvard study provided a rich source of background information regarding the church's philosophy of ministry.

The fourth significant research work was produced by Hendricks (1990) as a result of a case study conducted at 10 "Teaching Churches." His work provides insight into how such churches use conferences and seminars to provide continuing education for pastors of other churches. The study is of great import for two reasons: (a) because it provides valuable background information about the three churches which are the subject of the proposed research, and (b) because he recommends that each church give more attention to adult education. In his concluding remarks Hendricks writes,

As I visited each of the churches and considered the actual format of their efforts, I was struck with their reliance on an educational model that is content-oriented rather than process-oriented . . . . I feel there is considerable room for rethinking the educational goals and technologies with which these churches approach their instructional tasks . . . . We've known for some time what "church" can look like if designed for biblical exposition. More recently, we've seen what "church" can look like if designed for evangelism of the unchurched. But what would "church" look like if designed for adult education? (pp. 66-67)
Indeed, what would a church look like if adult education strategies and principles were placed at the core of its ministry design? It is expected that the results of this research, combined with future studies, will contribute to the answer to Hendrick's challenging question.

Other than these four recent works—Olson (1985), Seely and Moucka (1990), Mellado (1991), and Hendricks (1990)—few researchers since Bergevin and McKinley (1958) have actually conducted on-site case study (or modified case study) research at churches in order to describe existing models and compare them to models in the adult education field. Such is the intent of the present study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed; specifically a descriptive multisite case study approach for each of the three churches (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Such a study, according to Merriam (1988), is intended to provide "basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted" (p. 27). Also, since relatively new phenomena were studied, it seemed the most appropriate method. "Innovative programs and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies in education," continued Merriam. "Such studies often form a data base for future comparison and theory building" (1988, p. 27).

Yin (1984) agreed:

In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. (p. 13)

Yin also explained that three basic conditions determine the strategy to be used. These consist of: (a) the type of research question, (b) how much control an investigator has
over actual behavior events, and (c) whether emphasis is placed on contemporary versus historical events (p. 14). All three conditions were met in this research. This research was aimed at how selected churches actually accomplish adult education, required no control over the events to be observed or analyzed, and focused almost entirely on contemporary phenomena. According to Yin (1984):

a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 23)

This study used the Constant Comparative method as outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 68). The researcher began with a general framework and questions to be asked, but analyzed data throughout the research process, refining and redirecting the research along the way. The basic steps proposed by Bogdan and Biklen are taken from Glaser's work (1978) and can be summarized as follows:

1. Begin collecting data.

2. Look for key issues or recurring events that become the categories of focus.

3. Collect the data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories to be explored, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents in the data while continually searching for new incidents.

5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships. This approach enabled the exploration of the phenomena under question yet provided guidelines for collecting and organizing data. In addition, it provided data which will contribute to the generation of a model as recurring themes develop.

Selection of Churches

Many church leaders relate to the difficulty of providing adequate educational ministries for adults that attending Sunday services. It was thus necessary to perform on-site research at selected churches. The research findings were compared with the adult education literature.

From among the most prominent baby boomer churches in America this researcher selected three for analysis: Willow Creek Community Church (an independent church in South Barrington, Illinois), Saddleback Valley Community Church (a Southern Baptist Church in Mission Viejo, California), and The Wooddale Community Church (a Baptist General Conference church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.) Constraints in time and resources prevented in-depth study of additional churches. (It should be noted that the word "Community" in the names of these churches is a popular one--similar to the word
"First" in names such as First Baptist or First Methodist--and does not refer to a denomination, or to any formal connection between these churches. All three are quite independent of one another in form, structure, and philosophy of ministry.) The criterion for selecting churches for this study was their perceived ability to assimilate unchurched baby boomers.

**Procedure**

Beginning in the spring of 1993, research was performed at each of the three churches. After review of print and published sources of data, three days were spent at each location. Data were gathered by means of interviews, observations, and available literature such as brochures, philosophy statements, and program descriptions. Follow up included personal, phone, and fax communication as needed. Combining all three methods, a process that Denzin (1970) and Mathison (1988) called triangulation, ensured the highest levels of accuracy possible in this type of research. Data were analyzed using cross case analysis. Since this study focused on trends among the churches, references to specific institutions by name were avoided. Results were compared to existing data from the literature.

**Assumptions of the Study**

1. The churches studied are among the leaders in the field in providing creative or alternative approaches to ministry for adults.
2. The time spent at each church was sufficient (though not exhaustive) for gathering relevant data.

3. Large churches, because of their resources and number of specialist personnel, are better equipped than smaller churches in designing and implementing creative adult programming.

4. Researcher bias may have influenced the collection of data. However, through the use of multiple sources for gathering data (including interviews, written records and direct observation) and thorough methods for verifying the accuracy of data collected (phone conversations with interviewees to confirm their statements and subjecting the data to peer examination), the influence of researcher bias does not distort the findings.

5. It is assumed, based on limited sociological data, that the baby boomer population has a significant impact upon churches, thus warranting a study of churches that are reaching this group.

6. A multicase approach was likely to yield more significant data than a single-case approach, increasing the likelihood of transferability of results.

7. The study provides valuable information for Christian educators and for the adult education field in general. Rarely can such a study can be funded and performed within such nonaffiliated independent churches.
Data Collection

Collection of data occurred in three phases. The phases are logical (not chronological) because the scheduling of events, interviews, and unplanned observations tended to defy any linear pattern. For instance, Phase Two (outlined below) required an ongoing process because it involved not only specific observations of programming, but also general observations throughout the research process. Six sources of evidence, listed by Yin (1984, pp. 79-89), were collected at each site: documentation, archival records (as applicable), interviews, direct observation, participant-observation (taking part in the event being studied), and, as available, physical artifacts. The three phases were structured as follows:

Phase One. This phase focused on personal interviews with key leadership and staff, specifically the senior pastor, director of adult and/or Christian education, church administrator, and board member(s) responsible for oversight of the educational ministry of the church. These interviews were used to gain information about perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and understandings concerning adult education and the programming strategy of the church. Since perceptions and thoughts cannot be observed or tested empirically,
interviews provided a viable means of gaining information about the real understanding of, for example, the organizational vision.

Interviews were conducted on both an open-ended (unstructured) and structured basis (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). First, a standard set of questions were used for obtaining a consistent base of information (see Appendix A for a list of questions). But each interview contained an open-ended aspect so that the interviewee could discuss topics or issues not covered by the questions. Responses to both types of questions were audio taped, subject to interviewee approval, transcribed, and organized by categories.

Patton (1980) has outlined six kinds of questions to be asked in an interview to secure different types of information. These included questions about behavior, values or opinions, feelings, knowledge or facts, senses (sights, sounds, etc.), and background or demographics.

Phase Two. This phase included observations of any and all possible formal and nonformal adult education programs and events taking place during the visit. As such, the visits were scheduled to ensure optimal observation times. Adult classes, groups, seminars, and training sessions were observed. In addition, general observations were recorded whenever possible throughout the visit. These included facility and classroom design, comments from conversations,
various church materials, actions of participants or members, or any other unplanned observable phenomena that appeared to have a bearing on the study.

Drawing from Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and others, Merriam (1988) lists key elements considered during the observation process:

1. The setting—the physical environment and context.
2. The participants—the learners, members.
3. Activities and interactions—people's responses to the event.
4. Frequency and duration—how long it lasts, how often such phenomena occur.
5. Subtle factors—unplanned occurrences, nonverbal communication, physical clues, and what does not occur. (pp. 90-91)

Phase Three. This phase involved gathering data from documents which yielded information relevant to the research. These included the following:

1. Church vision statements;
2. Organizational charts;
3. Christian education (adult education) vision or purpose statements;
4. Strategy or design statements about the adult education program;
5. Church brochures and information describing the adult education ministry (or adult education events) of the church;

6. Curricula or other materials used in the teaching and training of adults;

7. Books, audio tapes, or video tapes in the church library and/or bookstore which address adult learning needs or issues;

8. Church surveys or research conducted previously at each church.

Consistency and Accuracy of Data

Because this research used a qualitative case study design, the term "truth value" is used in lieu of internal validity, "transferability" for external validity, and "consistency" for reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Truth Value. Four basic strategies taken from Merriam (1988, p. 169-170) were used to ensure the highest truth value possible in this type of research:

1. Triangulation--using multiple sources of data to confirm the emerging findings;

2. Member checks--taking data back to those from whom they were derived for verification and to check whether results were plausible;

3. Peer examination--asking colleagues to comment on the results as they emerged;
4. **Researcher's biases**—setting forth the researcher's world view, assumptions, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study.

**Consistency.** Qualitative research does not seek to isolate or preclude the laws of human behavior from the study, but rather to describe and explain such behavior in light of the data gathered (Merriam, 1988). The researcher determines the level of consistency. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest consistency can be achieved only when the researcher remains constant and the research methodologies are dependable. The major question is, considering the data collected, do the results make sense? That is, are they dependable? Three techniques suggested by Merriam (1988) were employed to maximize the collection of consistent data:

1. Explain the assumptions and the theory behind the study, the basis for selecting the cases to be studied, the context of the research, and the world view assumed;

2. Use triangulation as previously mentioned to strengthen the truth value as well as the consistency;

3. Create an audit trail by describing in detail how data were collected and categories derived, others can replicate the study using similar methodology.

**Transferability.** Case study methodologies are chosen because a researcher desires understanding and depth of a given phenomenon, not because the researcher seeks to explain many other situations. Some suggest that the
generalizability of a study be left to the user or reader, as is often done in business, law, and medicine (Merriam, 1988). Therefore, to maximize the applicability of this study for others, the following strategy was employed:

1. A clear description of the research process was provided so that others interested in applying findings have sufficient information from which to make judgments;

2. Programs and events were contrasted with the other churches in the same category;

3. Cross-case analysis and synthesis was employed as previously discussed.

Procedures for Analysis of Data

"Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research," says Merriam (1988, p. 119). It does not occur in a linear fashion because as data are being collected and analyzed the results determine the direction of the study. Merriam (1988) makes this quite clear:

Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement or reformulation of one's questions, and so on. It is an interactive process throughout which the investigator is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings. (p. 119)

Though it is essential to maintain an ongoing and adaptive approach to data analysis, it is possible to have a basic
strategy before attempting the research. Data were analyzed in this project both during and after the research was conducted. Basic strategies for each are listed below.

**During the Research**

In the process of conducting the research, data analysis included the categorization and sorting of information as it was gathered. The categories were largely determined by the participants' response to questions, and the data observed from document analyses. The following categories emerged:

1. Understanding of adult education;
2. Role of adult education;
3. Understanding of adult learners;
4. Understanding adult learning processes;
5. Adult education leadership in the churches;
6. Programming design;
7. Resources and materials used;
8. Facilities;
9. Technologies for delivering the adult education program;
10. Finances;

A case record was generated for each church and data from the three phases (described above) were recorded and organized. Adaptations of the research design, changes in
questions to be asked, or additional phenomena to be studied were determined periodically throughout the data collection process.

Following the Research

Once the on-site research was completed, data were analyzed using cross-case or multisite procedures. Since each case was "a single bounded system or an instance of a class of phenomena" (Merriam, 1988, p. 153), the comparison of several cases brought strength or clarity to the conclusions drawn. The presence of similar phenomena in multiple cases make results more transferable. Data were compared and synthesized with the ultimate purpose of model-building, though that was beyond the scope of this work. Data were reported by category for easy comparison to the literature.

Reporting Results

Though each church was analyzed as a single case, the purpose of data collection and analysis was to uncover trends and recurrent themes which would possibly form the basis for devising an adult education model in the future. Thus the report was organized according to themes rather than churches.

Ethical Considerations

Particularly with case studies one faces questions of an ethical nature that must be considered. These include interviewer influences, confidentiality, and participant
privacy. To maintain a high degree of ethical and professional accountability, the study was conducted with these guidelines:

1. The nature and extent of the study was clearly defined and explained to the participating churches and their leaders.

2. Personal comments and remarks not pertinent to the research were not recorded, repeated, or discussed.

3. Any perceived problems or inadequacies of staff members or church members were not recorded or discussed.

4. Every interviewee was assured that personal comments or criticisms would not be solicited or made available to anyone.

5. It was permissible for interviewees to refuse any or all questions without fear of consequence.

6. The permission of the senior leadership of the church was sought prior to the conducting of any interview, or prior to observing any documents.

7. Every effort was made to keep the church leadership apprised of the progress of the study throughout the visit.

8. No questions addressed improper racial, sexual, or personal issues.

9. Specific data gathered at one church were not to be made available to the other churches.

10. Results were categorized and discussed in such a manner as to maximize anonymity of participants. The
identification of the churches being studied was not revealed in the reporting of results.

11. Every effort possible was made by the researcher to remain objective, recording what was said and observed without excluding undesirable data or leading the interviewee to make desired (or expected) responses.

12. Further disclosure of specific research findings will be cleared with the respective churches.

13. For reasons of confidentiality for participants, notes and comments of the researcher were not disclosed. Only formal results and copies of the dissertation will be made available to the churches upon request.

It appears that these guidelines created an environment of trust and allowed participants to speak with freedom, clarity, and assurance.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The data collected were analyzed across the 11 categories of questions used by this researcher. The categories are as follows (see Appendix A):

1. Understanding of adult education;
2. Role of adult education;
3. Adult learners;
4. Adult learning;
5. Leadership for adult education;
6. Programming design;
7. Resources and materials;
8. Facilities for adult education;
9. Technologies used for teaching adult learners;
10. Finances for adult education;
11. Evaluation and feedback.

Written documents, observations of adult education events, and personal interviews were triangulated (Merriam, 1988) in order to assure the highest truth value (validity) of the data. To ensure clarity regarding specific comments, interviewees were contacted as needed to verify their comments. An informal written report describing the general
findings was generated and sent to each research site to determine whether the overall trends were accurately represented, and to ensure that no church's programs or persons were misrepresented. Contact persons from each church received the report and accepted the results as stated.

As Merriam (1988) and Linclon and Guba (1985) suggest, peers were asked to comment on the results as they emerged. This process enabled these commentators to critically review the material and ask clarifying questions.

Data are presented for each of the 11 categories noted earlier. Each category is further divided into three major subheadings: (a) emergent trends and commonalities among the three churches, (b) specific comments regarding programs or ministries worthy of delineation, and (c) a comparison of findings with trends reported in the adult education literature.

Category 1: Understanding of Adult Education

Trends Among the Churches

As one might expect from a group of practitioners of teaching, responses tended to focus on results, that adult education in the church should be transformational. Interviewees stated that practical lifelong learning was the main focus of adult education. Adult education should help people become learners for life and capable of self-direction. Comments such as "equip people for life,"
"quality spiritual growth," and "ability to live life as Christians" were common. Personal spiritual growth is the focus of lifelong learning. The end result should be quality "life change" in relationships, values, and knowledge. Many respondents included a relational component to their definitions. The church is intended to be a community of believers and should, consequently, approach learning in the context of relationships.

Functionally, adult education was also thought of in broad terms, namely, that any educational event with adults as an audience qualified as "adult education." But staffs and lay leaders from the churches understood adult education more specifically as the education ministry of the church consisting of classes or groups of adults gathered for a shared learning experience. Typically, weekend worship services were not included. Though such services constituted adult education in a broad sense they were not the same as focused discussion groups or classes.

**Noteworthy Comments About Definitions of Adult Education**

It appeared that the definition of adult education by the senior pastor shaped the understanding of adult education policy among the staff. As the primary leader of the organization, the pastor tended to have great influence over the direction of programming even though the responsibilities for such programming were delegated to other staff.
Though many interviewees provided a process-oriented definition of adult education, one senior pastor quickly provided a five-point definition of adult education focusing more on the objectives of education. "Adult education is knowledge, perspective, conviction, character, and skills."

Further description revealed his definitions: knowledge of what God has done, a perspective on why God did it, convictions for which you would die, character that reflects the sum total of your habits, and skills that are the "how to's" of life. Knowledge and perspective involve "knowing," conviction and character relate to "being," and skills relate to "doing," according to this pastor.

Comparison to the Literature

With the exceptions of the definition above, most definitions posed were in general agreement with definitions in the field. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) define adult education as a process whereby adults "undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills" (p. 9). Though various and broad, definitions of adult education can be grouped into five categories: (a) the work of institutions and organizations, (b) a kind of relationship between adults and learning, (c) a profession or scientific discipline, (d) a movement identified with certain social movements in history, and (e) an educational process with goals and functions distinctive from other
educational processes (Courtney, 1989). The results indicate that the definitions of adult education put forth by these churches fall into Courtney's first two categories, organizational and relational. None of the churches viewed adult education as a specific science or profession. Thus, little understanding was evidenced regarding the difference between the education of adults and adult education as a specific field of endeavor.

Category 2: Role of Adult Education

Trends Among the Churches

Adult education strategies were not purpose-driven; they were response-driven. Among these churches awareness of adult needs was generated primarily by observing members' responses to topics addressed in a given preaching series. For example, two of the three churches experienced overwhelming response and significant attendance increases after preaching a series of 12-step or "recovery" messages (similar to those used by Alcoholics Anonymous). It was necessary to create programming to meet the needs expressed by adults in response to each preaching series.

The function of adult education in these churches was central to their programming. Despite this alleged emphasis, no church spent time keeping its staff or other leaders informed about the unique needs of adult learners or even of adult education in any formal sense. One leader spoke of his emphasis on modeling adult education to other
staff by reading several books per week and keeping organizational information flowing. Pithy sayings like "leaders are learners" and "the more you learn the more you'll earn" appeared to serve the purposes of motivating rather than educating church leaders about the salient features of adult learning.

With regard to the relational nature of adult education, each church's leaders believed an emphasis on small groups was critical to the success of the adult education program. It was felt that small groups were optimal learning environments, provided accountability, enabled a deeper level of relational authenticity among members, provided opportunities to discuss personal and doctrinal issues, and were far more effective than traditional Sunday schools because of their flexibility with respect to duration, location, and curriculum selection. One pastor said, "The best teaching is that which occurs across a kitchen table." This was representative of the emphasis on relational and small group learning.

It is interesting to note, however, that though these churches desired a relational-based curriculum and educational process, none felt adequate developing such a program at this point. Time pressures and scant resources appear to force these churches, like other institutions, to
utilize classroom learning paradigms. Though not optimal, such limited approaches were required given the constraints of the situation.

Noteworthy Comments About the Role of Adult Education

One church developed an adult education task force which subsequently created a grid for defining adult education philosophy and role. Adult education was divided into three components: information, experiential learning, and reflection. Though the outcome of a given learning may stress any one of these three, all components would be integrated into the programming strategy for the church.

One church which used a class structure based on affinity (age, marital status, etc.) allowed each class to determine and assess its own educational needs. This decentralized approach allowed more ownership by volunteers in the design of learning programs but did not allow for much integration of program planning throughout the church.

Comparison to the Literature

Adult education in these churches was largely viewed as a response to the social and intellectual needs of the learners combined with the biblical directives to train and educate Christ's followers. Thus, the role of adult education was determined by doctrinal and organizational objectives in light of learners' needs. Such an approach combines several philosophical approaches to adult education. Of the six major philosophical categories
described by Elias and Merriam (1980) three can be identified as having some influence on adult Christian education in these churches: liberal, behaviorist, and humanistic. The influence of a liberal education philosophy was evident in the emphasis on Bible study and the acquisition of biblical knowledge as passed down historically by the church. The role of adult education to help "make disciples" in accordance with Matthew 28:18-20 reflected a behavioral model ensuring the ongoing survival of the church as new generations of followers are developed. And the humanistic influence was most evident in the use of small groups and creating ministries to meet needs of members.

Category 3: Adult Learners

Trends Among the Churches

Because each church was located in a relatively affluent suburb just outside a major metropolitan area (Minneapolis, Chicago, and Los Angeles) there were similarities in the demographics of the audiences. Over 98% of attenders were Caucasians, most of whom came from middle to upper middle income families. Though there were cultural differences (southern California versus the midwest) most of the attenders were adults primarily in their 30s and 40s. Leaders intimated that most new attenders were facing challenges associated with mid-life transitions, including problems at work, in marriage, in relationships, and as
parents. It appeared that the local church was one of the last places to which many people came for a sense of support and guidance.

**Noteworthy Comments About Adult Learners**

Two of the three churches had developed a specific composite of their "target" person. Despite the cultural differences between these two churches, their descriptions of this person were quite similar. They described this person as about 40 years of age, college educated with a business mindset, married with small children, absent from church for years, listens to popular music, tends to despise authority, is spiritually seeking answers to important questions, does not tolerate sloppy programming, is biblically illiterate, visually stimulated, wants straight answers as opposed to "pat" answers or theological jargon, and desires relevant messages that address today's issues in practical ways. Though there were variations of this target person, it was clearly acknowledged that reaching this person was the goal and primary challenge of these two churches. It was understood that significant numbers of people who do not fit this description must also be ministered to in the church. As a result, there is in reality no composite person. Learners came from a variety of backgrounds.

One church noted that 90% of those in the community
declared an affiliation with a church. This is in stark contrast to the other two churches whose design it is to attract persons with no church affiliation.

A major challenge facing all three churches related to the low degree of biblical knowledge of newcomers. Because these churches sought to reach people who have had little or no previous church affiliation, their newer attenders were not acquainted with even the most rudimentary Bible stories or principles. When such newcomers were in the same class with more experienced followers, teachers were faced with a great teaching challenge. At least two of the church staffs interviewed viewed this as a major obstacle to adult education programming, particularly age-graded classes. Since members of the same age category can have vastly different levels of faith development, other sub-groupings must be attempted to meet learners' needs.

Comparison to the Literature

The churches studied tended to focus on the demographic distribution of adults and their psychosocial characteristics. Virtually no attention was given to how adults learn (Kidd, 1973), learning based on developmental concepts (Knox, 1977), the facilitation of adult learning (Brookfield, 1986, 1989), or motivation and participation in learning (Atkinson, 1993; Cross, 1981). Atkinson's research identified five motivational orientations for learners: (a) spiritual growth, (b) obedience (to God and the Bible), (c)
equipping for ministry, (d) cognitive interest, and (e) social contact (p. 31). These orientations were understood by church leaders, but that understanding was largely intuitive and not the result of data collected from or about learners. The absence of attention to these areas and empirical support for assumptions regarding adult learners was an outstanding feature in all churches.

Missing was specific attention to older learners. Fisher's (1993) framework for describing developmental stages and changes among older learners would be useful for these churches as their target populations begin to age. He defines five periods of older adulthood: (a) continuity with middle age, (b) early transition, (c) revised lifestyle, (d) later transition, and (e) final period (p. 81). Understanding this framework or exposure to other works in the field (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1986; Huyck & Hoyer, 1982) would provide an understanding of older learners which could positively influence program planning.

Category 4: Adult Learning

Trends Among the Churches

Leaders interviewed at all three sites believed there were differences between adult learning styles and those of children. Adults were said to be more selective, more motivated to learn, and chose course content based on personal needs. Discovery, as opposed to indoctrination, was a better learning format.
In general, most of the adults were expected to be self-directed in their learning process. This form of self-direction is defined by Candy as "self-management" (1991, p. 101). Adults were responsible for choosing the educational programming that best met their needs. This choice was determined, for the most part, without specific direction from the staff. At times there were informal guidelines presented (such as a learning track or behaviors that growing Christians should exhibit). But there existed no formalized process whereby leadership and learner mutually determined learning goals or processes for personal development.

Noteworthy Comments About Adult Learning

One church leader who oversees the adult education program believed that much of what is identified as specific adult learning styles can also apply to children. Children like to choose their learning content, environment, and pace. Children enjoy learning about things that apply directly to their lives. Children enjoy discovery-based learning more than indoctrination. The only difference, remarked this leader, was the extensive and varied life experience which the adult brings to the learning situation.

Only one of the churches had used a consultant or trainer to train their teachers about adult education
methods and practices. None regularly promoted adult learning principles or teaching methods to their staffs or teachers.

One educator commented that adults can learn through writing and hearing more effectively than children. He believed children require participatory educational methods.

Comparison to the Literature

As with the understanding of adult learners there was a lack of information regarding adult learning processes or paradigms. Interviewees evidenced familiarity with Knowles' (1973) work in andragogy but little understanding of adult learning theory or processes. Basically, humanistic mental discipline and cognitive-field theories of learning, as described by Bigge (1982), are utilized without conscious awareness of their usage. There existed some awareness that learning occurred in a social context (Jarvis, 1987), but that context was primarily described as age-based affinities.

Church leaders tended to embrace the understanding that adults moved through cycles and change, especially in mid-life. Less understood was the need for a comprehensive adult development paradigm that might include adult transitions (Bridges, 1980) or self-renewal throughout the lifecycle with a focus on the meaning and mission in life (Hudson, 1991).
Self-direction in the literature was most comprehensively discussed by Candy (1991) who articulated four dimensions of self-direction: autonomy, self-management of learning, the independent pursuit of learning, and learner control of instruction (pp. 97-100). Churches in this study primarily focused on the self-management of learning.

Category 5: Adult Education Leadership

Trends Among the Churches

It was clearly expressed that the most strategic person in the church was the senior pastor. All agreed that regular preaching opportunities allow the senior pastor to create a dynamic environment and a following. People are drawn to their communication abilities. The energy and vision of the senior pastor were catalytic to the other ministries of the church. One pastor mentioned that he could die tomorrow and the church would be just fine. But interviews with his staff proved otherwise. Every person expressed the need for that pastor to be present, especially for the next five years.

Leadership in all three churches was delegated to some degree. A management team or executive team made up of key staff was responsible for the direction and ongoing vitality of the ministries. Each church staff was accountable to a board (elders or deacons) composed of lay leaders from those churches.
Adult education leadership was delegated to some staff member in each case. This staff member reported directly to the pastor or someone else on the management team.

The teaching "faculty" at each church was a combination of staff members (mostly ordained clergy) and qualified lay leaders. In two churches teachers received little ongoing training and were expected to have a level of competence and expertise that enabled them to teach effectively. One church, however, met quarterly with leaders and teachers from the respective classes for strategic planning, information exchange, and accountability. New teachers were trained in a workshop using the Seven Laws of the Learner by Walk Thru the Bible Ministries. A core of regular teachers existed in each church. In addition to this group, others were asked to teach from time to time depending on congregational needs and teacher availability.

Each church actively recruited and encouraged the involvement of volunteers in teaching and leadership roles. This stems from an understanding of the biblical injunction to train and equip the members of the church for ministry.

None of the churches had a formal job description for the teachers of adult classes (with the exception of staff members). Performance criteria and expectations were primarily expressed verbally or were assumed to be understood. Teachers were not formally evaluated although one church used an informal feedback form combined with
focus groups from individual classes. Another had videotaped teachers about 4 years ago but not recently.

**Noteworthy Comments About Adult Education Leadership**

The role of women was handled differently in each church. One church's philosophy stated that a woman can hold any leadership position in the church including senior pastor, elder, teacher, and any staff position. Another church allowed women into any leadership position except senior pastor. This exclusion was based on their interpretation of certain biblical texts. A third church utilized women less frequently as evidenced by the fact that only two women had ever taught adult education classes in recent years. That church did express a desire, however, to include more women in teaching roles. Only one of the three churches actively encouraged and utilized women as leaders in the most strategic leadership positions. That church is also actively seeking a woman Bible teacher to preach regularly at services.

**Comparison to the Literature**

As Beatty and Hayes attest (1989), "within Protestantism, leadership at the church level is overwhelmingly lay" and "leadership development is an ever-present challenge" (p. 402). As the research indicated, this was a common belief among all three churches. However, as in the case of adult education as a field, little formal preparation of leaders was undertaken for the express
purpose of training them as adult educators. Houle (1992) argues that "no single pathway has been devised for the initial preparation or further development of leaders" (p. 77).

In two of his works Knox (1979, 1982) has proposed a set of proficiencies for adult educators and strategies for leaders including decision making, priority setting, use of resources, marketing, coordination, staffing, and external relationships. Continuing education for leaders in adult education programs was the focus of Brockett's edited work (1991), which highlighted a self-directed learning process including writing, the preparation of presentations, graduate work, personal reading programs, and voluntary associations. Few works in the Christian education field specifically addressed such ongoing development apart from institutional learning in seminaries. Leaders of adult education programs are left to themselves to create, design, and implement a personal continuing education process.

Brookfield (1990) offered some specific aids for the training and development of teachers. These churches would benefit from becoming aware of his emphasis on facilitating discussions, utilizing role play and simulations, and providing helpful evaluations to teachers.

The management and leadership of adult education requires four specific tasks (programming, financing, staffing, and marketing) and three primary functions
(planning, organizing, and evaluating), according to Smith and Offerman (1989). If the church programs are evaluated using this framework, we find minimal programming, adequate financing, adequate but minimally equipped staff, effective marketing, general but limited planning, weak organizational structures, and inconsistent evaluation.

Category 6: Program Design

Trends Among the Churches

All three churches shared the desire to have an integrated approach to adult education that fit well with the other ministries of the church. All viewed the local church as a teaching organization responsible to impart the truths of the faith to those who attended. Central to this approach was teaching the content of the Bible on a consistent basis so that people would learn its principles and put them into practice. To this aim each church staff was fully committed.

Each of the three churches had an organizational structure or system for providing adult education. In addition, each relied on a team of staff and lay leaders to function as the planning group for course offerings and teacher selection.

In each case a series of "core" courses or programs was offered on a regular basis. Then, in addition to these core offerings, other electives were offered based on congregational needs. These electives were not based on any
specific theme nor did they relate to courses offered in the previous session. Each set of courses bore little relation to the previous set or to any overall strategy. Learners chose courses with little or no direction from leaders.

All churches apportioned programming under theme categories including the following sample of headings: biblical studies, keynote classes, advanced biblical, marriage and family, authentic living, leadership development, recovery, theological studies, and newcomers.

Each church had attractive materials combined with verbal announcements and audio or visual aides to explain and market the program.

Program planning sessions typically involved staff and lay leaders working together. Learners' needs were assessed primarily through word of mouth and intuition. Two of the three churches had utilized written surveys to gather data from their adult populations concerning educational needs.

Attempts were made to offer courses of varying degrees of difficulty or with some suggested sequencing (e.g., 101, 201, 301). Learners could then choose courses tailored to their respective learning needs.

Each church placed an emphasis on understanding one's spiritual gifts, natural abilities, personality type, experience, and "heart" (specific desires for life or ministry involvement). This assessment was often recommended prior to making a deepening commitment to the
church. Thus learners were encouraged to understand their unique God-given design as a person so that they could choose volunteer opportunities and learning options accordingly.

The need to address the aging baby boomer segment of the population appeared overwhelming to the leaders of these churches. Leaders expressed strong emotions when asked about the monumental task of ministering to an increasingly older population in the coming decade. They acknowledged that the needs of older adults will present their churches with ministry challenges as well as dilemmas. This older population will require additional care and services but most likely may have more discretionary time and income. The wisdom and experience of such people will likely be valuable to the church but will be harnessed only if the appropriate resources for this group.

A common value among the churches was a desire to "leverage" people's time, something recognized as a scarce commodity. Classes were usually combined with church services or other larger events so that participants needed only make one trip to the church. The ability to attend on multiple evenings for educational programming was viewed as limited to older adults and singles. Young families found it difficult to make repeated trips to the church.
Noteworthy Comments About Program Design

For the delivery of educational programming, each church was unique. One utilized a Sunday school model offering classes on weekends in conjunction with worship services. In addition, it offered Saturday seminars and Sunday evening courses on a less frequent basis. A third church offered short-term courses for 4 weeks at a time. The courses were advertised and heavily promoted. The faculty was composed of staff and qualified lay teachers. For some courses, guest speakers from nearby Christian colleges and seminaries were used.

At least two of the churches relied on small groups as one of the means by which adult education took place. These groups actively studied the Bible according to a set curriculum designed by the church, or the leaders of such groups were authorized to choose their curriculum from an approved list.

Comparison to the Literature

Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) listed 36 learning principles applicable to program planning situations. Of those listed, the churches in the study appeared to utilize many of the applications despite a lack of intentionality in some cases. In general, churches did well in assessing learners' needs in programming through survey and word of mouth research. In addition, they incorporated learner reflection, reduced obstacles to learning, built success
into the early sessions to raise learner confidence, and clearly articulated the course objectives. Areas that did not comply well with Brundage and Mackeracher's guidelines included little use of group activities, lack of integration of learner experiences and learning objectives into class planning, lack of clear behavioral outcomes in many of the courses offered, and few "feedback loops" for adults to influence the direction of learning activities.

To aid in comparing planning models used by organizations Sork and Caffarella (1989) recommended that each one take initiative to:

1. Analyze planning context and client system;
2. Assess needs;
3. Develop program objectives;
4. Formulate instructional plan;
5. Formulate administrative plan;
6. Design a program evaluation plan. (p. 234)

The churches in this study appeared most adept at formulating basic objectives (organizational and, at times, personal), assessing needs, and formulating an instructional plan. Other areas were weaker with the exception of program evaluation which, with respect to certain programs, was adequate.
Category 7: Resources

Trends Among the Churches

Resources and materials for learning tended to be chosen by a team responsible for the adult education ministry of the church. Little of this was delegated, reflecting a desire to maintain continuity, consistency, and quality in material selection. In most cases, the materials or general course content were approved by church leadership. Once approved, the specific course content was determined by the teacher of a given class or seminar.

For adult education expertise, church leaders had no one person or set of resources to consult. All had heard of Malcolm Knowles and a few staff had read limited amounts of his material. This was surprising given the range of adult education experiences and opportunities that existed at these institutions. Though each of the church staffs was composed of active readers in the fields of theology, biblical studies, and church management, few were familiar with adult education resources common to the field. Staff members whose responsibilities included the adult education program were more familiar with the field than their staff peers.

Each church had a library or bookstore, and each readily made teaching tapes available. Primarily these tapes contained sermons by the senior pastor. In some cases other classes and teaching events were recorded for distribution.
Books and tapes were publicized by means of brochures and handouts. Book tables and book racks were prominently displayed and contained recommended books, tapes, tracts, and literature advertising upcoming ministry events or opportunities for volunteer service.

Noteworthy Comments About Resources

One church housed a bookstore as large and diverse as any Christian bookstore the author has seen. Gross revenue estimates for the audio tapes, books, drama scripts, music manuscripts, small group materials, and church resources were in excess of 2 million dollars. Profits were used for benevolence needs within the church and community. A large portion of the materials were purchased through catalogues distributed to other churches throughout the United States and Europe. The popularity of the church is a response to the leadership of its senior pastor and its innovative approaches to ministry for adults and children. The ministries and resources of this church were extended to other churches through a separate organization created in 1990 for the purpose of assisting smaller churches with similar philosophies of ministry. Thus its educational focus extended far beyond the congregation it served.

Comparison to the Literature

Though little data was gathered for comparison to the literature, it is profitable to acknowledge that certain resources from the field of adult education would serve to
broaden a church leader's knowledge base. The *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989) would serve to provide an overview of the field and provide insights into adult learning and adult learners. Houle's bibliographic work (1992) in adult education would expose leaders to providers of adult education services, formats, and settings for adult learning, and provide one of the most comprehensive bibliographies of the field to date. Reading of Candy (1991) and Knowles (1984) would enable churches to understand the nature and extent of self-direction in learning and familiarize them with andragogical concepts and applications. These works, combined with field journals such as *Religious Education, Christian Education Journal*, and *Adult Learning* would begin to provide a wealth of information for leaders responsible for adult learning programs.

Category 8: Facilities

*Trends Among Churches*

Classrooms for adult education (not including the main auditorium or worship center) ranged from 12 to 26. Several rooms in two of the churches could be subdivided into smaller classes as needed. In general, facilities were well equipped and contained a variety of teaching aids (see "technologies" discussion below).

Each of the three churches appeared ready to use additional facilities if such were made available. In two
cases this was the result of overcrowding combined with growing numbers of children who required more space of their own. Allocation of finances and facilities between adult education ministries and other ministry needs was determined by a management team or senior staff. All agreed that facilities utilized for adult education must serve other purposes as well. Since many classrooms were used only 6 to 10 hours per week for adult learning, it was essential that facilities be easily adapted for other functions.

**Noteworthy Comments About Facilities**

One church had recently dedicated a new addition for educational and fellowship needs. The 3-story addition of approximately 300,000 square feet contained offices, adult classrooms, children's classrooms, nursery rooms, breakout rooms, a bookstore, an audio tape reproduction and distribution center, a lay study center, a food court with seating for 500 members, a fitness center, and a multipurpose activity center for seminars, concerts, video, adult education, recreation, and youth ministry. Such a facility has great potential as an adult learning center.

**Comparison to the Literature**

According to Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) approximately half of all adult learning activities (with the exception of self-education) "take place in school or college classrooms" (p. 126). Adults are likely to learn wherever they congregate including trains, hotels, museums,
libraries, factories, churches and synagogues, community centers, office buildings and a variety of other settings (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). They also note that as age increases adults are less likely to attend formal educational institutions for learning experiences, choosing rather to meet in social centers, use tutors, or go to other less formal institutions (p. 127).

The willingness of adults to participate in adult education programs at these churches was apparently motivated by factors other than facilities as evidenced by one church's use of a local high school for education programs on Sunday. These churches appeared to be "facilities dependent" (i.e., facilities of some type were required) but not facilities "centered." When adequate facilities were available on site, however, the church was able to offer more consistent educational programming.

Churches did well, as mentioned, to provide programming at optimal times for learners (usually in conjunction with other large meetings). Since they own the facilities, scheduling is simply determined by the leadership. Sork and Caffarella (1989) simply remind planners that facilities scheduling and management are part of the programming responsibilities not to be overlooked.
Category 9: Technologies Used

Trends Among the Churches

Apart from common educational aids and resources, there were no advanced technologies or methodologies used. Flip charts, overhead projectors, marker boards, slide projectors, video monitors, and the like were readily available in some quantity at all churches. Computer-assisted learning, distance learning, satellite technology and other forms of advanced methods using state-of-the-art techniques were absent. Audio or video taped learning experiences represented the most advanced forms of learning with the assistance of technology. Thus, even larger churches with greater resources were not utilizing new technologies. This was almost entirely the result of two factors: lack of sufficient funds and the ability to justify the need for such technologies (even if the funds were made available).

Comparison to the Literature

Adult educators are beginning to utilize advanced technologies for learning as funds for such technologies become available. These include advanced computer learning processes, high technology peripherals (local area networks), video, optical data storage, telecomputing, and teleconferencing (Lewis, 1989). At the time of this study, the prospects for using such technologies (with the exception of some computer and video applications) were
minimal. Nonprofit organizations such as churches are usually pressed to find donors willing to fund such projects. Rather, it is often more feasible for a church to use or rent a facility that offers such technologies.

Category 10: Finances

Trends Among the Churches

It was very difficult to estimate the amount of funds targeted toward adult education. Since facilities and resources were often shared among ministries, it was difficult to identify specific amounts actually spent for adult education. Certainly adult education staff salaries, specific curriculum costs, training costs associated with training teachers and lay leaders, and specific budget categories associated with adult education expenses would be included. One estimate was $500,000 including prorated facilities costs. Others had no hard figures, and estimates ranged from 15% to 25% of the church budget.

Noteworthy Comments About Finances

In light of the lack of information available in this area, no specific examples of finance allocation can be discussed that would enhance this report.

Comparison to the Literature

Matkin (1985) provided a comprehensive work outlining the budgetary process for a continuing education organization. Though this was helpful to churches, most adult education units in churches were funded under the
general budget. Expenses associated with adult education were often included in other accounts. Only specific supplies or materials were delineated. Staff salaries, unless specifically for adult education, were part of the overall budget. Comparison with the literature in this case proves futile.

Category 11: Evaluation and Feedback

Trends Among the Churches

Management teams and other church leaders regularly evaluated programs and ministry efforts at all churches. Large events including seminars, worship services, and special adult education activities were evaluated within days of conclusion. In addition, each ministry within the church was responsible for setting and achieving certain goals and objectives. As a result, evaluation of programs and events was a regular occurrence.

Programs were evaluated based on stated goals prior to initiation. Evaluation methods included focus groups of participants, written reaction forms, verbal feedback, and consensus of management teams. With the exceptions of worship services at two of the churches, all evaluation was summative. Staff and volunteers participated in the evaluation process. Written forms for evaluation varied. Some included the categories for evaluation such as lighting, temperature, prayer, sermon, and music, but did not include a response grid such as a Likert scale or
terminology like "good" or "poor." Other forms simply asked three to five basic questions about an event such as "What did you like best/least about this class?" Formative evaluations were not used.

Leaders at the highest level in these organizations received the feedback. Teachers were chosen and evaluated by these groups to ensure a level of doctrinal quality and consistency, as well as effectiveness in teaching.

Staffs and key volunteers interviewed were certain that the regular attenders were aware of the opportunities for adult education. However, it was felt that these attenders did not necessarily understand the significance or benefits of participation. It was expected that those who attended once per month or less were likely to be far less informed about learning opportunities and the value of those opportunities.

Staff members tended to be more concerned with evaluating their own programs whereas senior pastors tended to focus more on the larger gatherings (like worship services). Without exception, senior pastors viewed attendance as the primary indicator of program success. As two mentioned, "People vote with their feet."

All churches had difficulty evaluating spiritual or emotional growth and maturity. Granted, such evaluations are subjective. A few programs and curricula included a process of introspection and self-evaluation based on
materials covered. Overall, however, no guiding paradigm or understanding of specific indicators was available for determining spiritual growth or progress for church members.

Much variety was observed in the level and method of evaluation utilized. The larger the organization, the more decentralized the evaluation process. It was the responsibilities of various ministries to effectively determine the success of programs. Supervisors evaluated specific events and programs only as necessary.

**Noteworthy Comments About Evaluation and Feedback**

One church staff placed great emphasis and expended significant energy in evaluating the weekend services. The entire service was videotaped and a team evaluated every component of the Sunday service, usually by Tuesday. The team was composed of those who planned and participated in the service, including staff and volunteers. Since this church had three weekend services, a mini-evaluation was completed after the first service on Saturday evening. As a result, changes and minor improvements were made before the two services on Sunday morning. Since the church utilized drama, vocal groups, instrumental music, and a variety of multimedia presentations, there was much to discuss. A group of four individuals focused entirely on the message and provided the pastor with feedback after Saturday night and after the entire weekend. Areas of evaluation included clarity of the message, applicability to the audience, and
specific comments about illustrations and style. Upon completion of the evaluation of the service, comments were filed so that points of improvement could be noted in the case of repetition at future services.

Two of the churches had recently taken surveys of their congregations. A large portion of each survey was devoted to demographic information and needs assessment. This information was then compiled and used for program improvement, generation, or, in some cases, discontinuation. If a program could not be improved or designed to meet needs that were central to the church's mission, decisions were made to eliminate it.

One church designated a task force to evaluate the adult education program which was delivered through "congregations." These congregations were, in effect, adult Sunday school classes organized by life stage or age affinities. At any time throughout the year approximately 20 such congregations were meeting. They were designed to assimilate newcomers, provide fellowship and social events, and provide a modest level of pastoral care.

The results were tabulated and disseminated to church leaders and members. The evaluation was designed to determine the effectiveness of each congregation with respect to its stated purpose and to ascertain whether the congregation structure served the church as a whole with respect to the overall mission and strategy. As a result of
the evaluation four recommendations were made: (a) congregations need to remain a vital part of the church but must become more accessible to newcomers, (b) alternatives to congregations must be explored because many people will never join a congregation for any number of reasons, (c) programs must be reorganized based on attender needs, and (d) a Futures Task Force (just begun at the time of this report) must include this information as it determines the overall direction of church ministries for the coming era.

Comparison to the Literature

Most church programs were evaluated at the reaction level as defined by Kirkpatrick (cited in Phillips, 1983). Of the four levels of evaluation (reaction, learning, behavior, and results) the reaction level dominated, followed by the learning level. Changes in behavior were not measured empirically but rather intuitively by pastoral staff members. Most of the evaluation conducted by the churches was summative and informal. As Steele (1989) articulated, such evaluation is preferred over formative evaluation because it includes more accountability for performance of objectives. Over 50 evaluation models have gained some level of acceptance (Steele, 1989), so it is beyond the scope of this work to compare all 50 models to the methods observed. However, as Steele notes, "evaluation includes four major kinds of activities: (a) program reviews, (b) evaluative studies, (c) continuous monitoring,
and (d) reflection on experience" (p. 267). It was apparent from observations of the churches in the study that primary emphasis was placed on program reviews, continuous monitoring (using reaction instruments and observation) and reflection on experience (through the use of focus groups and staff meetings). Measurements of performance were primarily based on numerics, specifically attendance figures. Reaction instruments, focus groups, unsolicited verbal feedback, and occasional staff surveys accounted for the balance of evaluation methods. No other documented evaluation methods or results were present for comparison with the literature.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Major Findings

Now that the results have been compared to the literature in the field, specific findings from the research can be discussed. These findings provide insight into the future educational needs for these churches and possibly for others seeking to emulate them. The conclusions below specifically address these future needs.

Findings indicate churches were highly "results oriented" and sought, at least philosophically, to maintain equal emphases for quantitative and qualitative results. Organizationally they were well acquainted with principles of management and organizational change. This may account for a preoccupation with achieving results. It must be quickly added that the achievement of goals was always discussed in the context of effectiveness with respect to the mission of each church. There was an indication, primarily from senior pastors, that attendance increases or financial gains served as significant measures of success. Personal and group transformation or growth remained the stated goals for all programs, but programs with declining numbers were deemed unsuccessful.
It was clear a strong relationship existed between the preaching of the senior pastor and the momentum of the adult education program. In other words, a strong pulpit ministry appeared to function as an organizational catalyst which energized staff and volunteers in the adult education ministries. Effective preaching translated into better attendance and a perception that the church was strong, stable, and interested in helping learners mature.

With the exception of a few leaders, the results indicated a minimal understanding of the adult education field at large. Surprisingly, a knowledge of trends, issues, developments, popular literature, studies, and resources was all but absent. Given the large numbers of adults who attend these churches weekly (ranging from 3,000 to 15,000), the researcher expected a greater knowledge of the field. It appears that the desire to understand adult education as a formal discipline exists, but that few of the leaders had made it a priority to develop a level of understanding or expertise in the field. Most staff had multiple responsibilities in addition to the education ministries of the church and were required to spend significant amounts of time on matters not concerned with adult learning.

Churches tended to understand adult learners in a holistic sense, seeking to provide opportunities for growth in all areas of life. Course offerings included Bible
content, personal financial management, and parenting skills. A strong emphasis was placed on "servanthood," that is, using one's talents to serve the church and the local community. Learners were encouraged to participate in a "biblical community" (usually defined as a "small group") and to apply their learning to life situations at home and at work.

No church had a fully developed strategy for the integration of the adult education ministry into the overall church strategy. For example, each of these churches desired to use small group processes for adult education purposes, but articulated no concrete ideas for accomplishing this aim. No formal strategies existed for incorporating small group learning specifically into the adult education function. To clarify, it was firmly stated that groups provided the optimal environment for adult learning. It was also acknowledged that existing groups were successful at helping people mature. Absent, however, was an element of integration of these groups with the overall education strategy of the church. Groups were primarily used for assimilation, care, and fellowship.

Churches were quite focused and clear regarding the profile of the "target" person they sought to attract to the church. This person, however, clearly represented an unprecedented educational challenge to church leaders. Baby boomer newcomers tended to have very little Bible
understanding and church background. In addition, they came
to the church with very demanding needs (social, financial,
psychological, spiritual, etc.). Increases in counseling,
support, and recovery services provided by the churches
placed strains upon already limited resources. And it was
understood from experience that these persons of great need
often were unable to contribute financially to the church
for some years. As a result, an overwhelming pastoral care
and education challenge existed that adversely impacted the
financial and personnel resources of the institution.

Training provided to teachers and trainers of adults
was minimal. The low frequency and intensity of training
coupled with the lack of formal education in the adult
education field could adversely affect the quality of adult
learning.

Women's roles in the leadership of adult education were
minimal but increasing. In one case this was the result of
some doctrinal beliefs. In others it was primarily a result
of having enough women on staff who were equipped to lead
educational ministries.

Attention given to older learners was minimal yet it
was acknowledged that their needs will be significant by the
year 2000. Two of these churches were founded by younger
pastors and, consequently, attracted a larger portion of
younger attenders. The third church, whose senior pastor
was middle-aged, primarily targeted and attracted newer
members in their 30s and 40s. But all three churches acknowledged two things: their existing membership was aging and, given the demographic projections for the coming 20 years, their "customer" would likely be an older adult. Each church was in the process of providing services at some level to older attenders. But, at the time of this study, little evidence was found to indicate the allocation of substantial resources for this age group.

Program planning was nominal and lacked comprehension and consistency. Adult development and learner outcomes were not incorporated, in general, into the design of learning experiences. Courses were often offered based on a combination of teacher availability and learner interest. Spiritual development was often considered in the planning process. Churches were fully aware of processes leading to spiritual maturity and determined to offer courses that would promote this process. Other aspects of adult development (with the exception of age) were rarely incorporated into the planning process.

For most programs effective strategies of assessment and program evaluation were present. For example, assessment processes for identifying and deploying members' spiritual gifts and talents were formally in place, enabling people to actively engage in meaningful and fulfilling ministry. The intensity with which weekend services were evaluated surpassed other educational programming
evaluation. In some cases, assessment of adult learners' needs and consistent evaluation of all programs in line with educational objectives was weak.

Facilities were adequate and tended to be used optimally for adult education and other purposes. Church leaders felt responsible for honorable management of all church resources, particularly money and facilities.

Conclusions

Need for a Comprehensive Adult Education Strategy

These churches, and possibly many others seeking to emulate their style and approach to ministry, are in need of a comprehensive strategy of adult education that is integrated with the larger mission and programming of the organization. The senior pastor, the person with the greatest influence in these churches, is central to the development and promotion of the adult education mission. In large churches with multiple programs and ministries, the senior pastors could play a strategic role by helping adult learners focus on programs that are central to faith development and growth. Simply hiring an adult education pastor or creating a specific program will not be sufficient unless the senior leadership embraces and promotes the adult development vision for the church.

Without a fuller understanding of the adult education field and the resources available outside the specific discipline of Christian education, it is unlikely that these
churches will advance the understanding of adult learning. Information regarding trends, issues, needs, and learning styles among adult learners would provide a wealth of data foundational to the development of a more integrated and comprehensive adult program. These churches already maintained sufficient assessment processes for adults, helping them to identify their strengths, personality types, talents, spiritual gifts, and motivation. If such assessment processes could be broadened to include learning styles and learner needs, adults could begin to develop a plan for personal growth. A church could provide the learning programs and then assist learners in choosing the program that best fits their learning style, needs, and objectives.

Once the assessment processes are improved and the learning programs are designed, the training of facilitators or teachers could be more effectively designed. It is likely that training for teachers and other key adult leaders was minimal because learning objectives and processes were not clear. In other words, the motivation to train teachers was relatively low because there was no explicit purpose for which to train them. If, however, a strategy existed that incorporated the learners' needs with the organizational objectives for adult education, it would be logical and essential to create a specific training program for teachers and leaders.
These churches have much to learn from developments and practices in the field of adult education. Specifically, the following areas for growth and improvement are indicated:

1. Periodic training for staff members emphasizing a general understanding of the adult education field, adult learners, adult development and aging, the facilitation of adult education, the motivation and participation of learners, and resources available.

2. Greater understanding of the outcomes of the adult education program from the perspective of adult learners who participated. Church leaders would benefit from asking learners which programs helped them most, rather than relying on intuitive or casual approaches to determine whether programs actually benefit learners. Neither would they benefit from simply measuring success by counting the number of attendees at a given program because a variety of factors including weather, learner perceptions of course content, marketing efforts, and schedule conflicts could affect attendance.

3. Routine and formalized training for teachers and leaders (paid and volunteer) responsible for the adult education ministry at the church.

4. Program planning designed to incorporate the adult education ministry with the overall church strategy and with other teaching or preaching functions.
5. A comprehensive evaluation strategy that includes opportunities for learners to provide feedback and is applied consistently to all programs.

Impact of Religious Education on Adult Education

Conversely, the adult education practices and values of these churches can positively impact the greater field of adult education as evidenced by:

1. A desire for people to learn relationally or in community together. Shared learning experiences have great value and help balance any potential overemphasis on independent study and self-directed learning programs.

2. Marketing for persons "outside" the typical clientele. It appears that these churches have done an excellent job attracting their respective "target person" and assimilating that person into the church. Though this practice can be observed most vividly in the business community, much can be learned from a non-profit, volunteer organization about the attraction and motivation of adult learners.

3. An emphasis on holistic learning and, in particular, spiritual growth. These churches attempted to provide programming for all aspects of adult responsibility and development including finances, home, marriage, family, parenting, spirituality, work, fitness, volunteerism, and education (biblical and non-biblical). Secular adult
educators are only beginning to broadly address issues of spirituality and their relationship to adult development (Merriam and Clark, 1991).

4. The willingness to delegate significant responsibility to volunteers. Churches, particularly these churches, thrive on volunteer mobilization and training. Formal educational institutions, for example, typically allow few "lay" teachers to teach.

5. An emphasis on a person's latent talents, desires, personality type, and abilities as part of the assessment process. Though these churches failed to include learning style and personal educational objectives in the assessment process, they did well to focus on these aspects of the person often overlooked by educators of adults.

6. Maximum usage of education facilities. From what was discovered during the study, these churches used adult education facilities in an optimal manner. There appeared to be an unwritten but well-understood maxim adhered to by church leaders stating, "people donated hard-earned money for these facilities so we must use them fully before considering another building program." One wonders whether institutions of higher learning might create more multi-purpose buildings rather than structures devoted specifically to biology, chemistry, or mathematics.

Adult Education Needs of Older Learners and Women
Whatever programs and strategies are chosen for the future of adult Christian education, it is clear that they would be enhanced by considering the needs of two neglected groups—older learners and women. With the aging of the baby boomer population, it will be necessary to prepare for the needs of older learners. Some of those needs are physical and social, and churches have historically provided some level of programming in areas such as home and hospital visitation, nursing home ministries, meals, pastoral care, and support groups. But less emphasis has been placed on the design for specific educational opportunities and services for this age group (large print curricula, classes for coping with the effects of aging, teacher training that addresses the physical limitations of older learners, classes that help the elderly face death with dignity, classes on grandparenting, and classes that help adults deal with their aging parents). These additional services and programs may place stress on financial and personnel resources. Churches that have invested funds to reach the baby boomer must prepare for the financial implications resulting from the aging of this population.

Finally, opportunities exist for considering the role of women as leaders in adult education ministries. Even in cases where doctrinal beliefs require males in the highest levels of church leadership (boards, elders, and senior pastor being the most common), churches would benefit from
providing training and leadership opportunities for women. In those cases where doctrinal beliefs are not prohibitive, training and support might allow more women to lead effectively and participate fully. With the rise in enrollment of women in most seminaries, this may be simply a matter of time and logistics. Nonetheless, any program must include men and women as mutual partners seeking to serve their adult congregations with quality education services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following topics for further research are recommended.

1. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the efforts of churches to meet the educational needs of the baby boomer, more research is required. For example, a more comprehensive study of churches seeking to reach baby boomers is essential. Thirty to 50 sites surveyed over a 2-year period would allow researchers to observe a greater number of churches and provide a longitudinal perspective. Thus a single "case" could be developed over several months and include quarterly or semi-annual visits to the site.

2. To provide greater accuracy and meaning to the results of this present study, a follow-up visitation could be conducted to survey adult attenders of educational programs at each of the three churches. Thus the perceptions and understanding of the program providers (the church staff and leaders) could be correlated with the
experiences of the learners to determine whether the benefits received by the learners match the outcomes expected by the providers. It would be enlightening and productive to survey adult learners at these churches to determine their needs and expectations.

3. Another interesting study might compare the adult religious learning experiences of baby boomers in churches with those of baby boomers who do not belong to any church. Are the needs and desires similar? Can other institutions or organizations provide meaningful religious education in lieu of churches or synagogues?

4. A related study might survey the religious learning experiences of Roof's (1993) four groups—loyalists, returnees, believers-but-not-belongers, and seekers—over the last 2 years and compare them to one another. The results might inform churches and other religious institutions of the needs of each group. Consequently, churches could provide attractive and meaningful programs that meet the needs of learners outside their normal sphere of influence.

5. Finally, it is evident that these churches would benefit from more intentional integration of adult education principles and practices into their overall strategy for developing adults. Assumptions about how adults learn in religious settings must be examined in light of the changing culture and the needs of aging baby boomers. Since these
churches believed that small groups provided a desirable environment for growth, the use of small groups as an integral component of the adult education process might be in order. The learning needs of some adults, it appears, are best met in smaller group environments, whereas other needs are met in larger settings or individual interactions. The integration of self-directed learning, small group learning, and large group proclamation bears experimentation in these churches.
APPENDIX
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

An attempt has been made to create questions that (a) address the desired categories for this research and (b) use Patton's guidelines for information about behavior, opinions, feelings, facts, senses, and background.

Understanding of adult education

What images come to your mind when you here the term "adult education?"
How do you define adult education?
What is your philosophy of adult education?
What specific programs or ministries would you say contribute to adult education (as you define it) here?

Role of adult education

What role does adult education play in the overall ministry of the church? How has this changed in recent years?
Do small groups play a role in adult education? Or are they separate? How?
How do you feel about the emphasis placed on adult education here?
How much time and energy is spent making church leaders aware of adult needs?
How is the adult education program different from when the church was smaller?

Adult learners

What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of an adult learner?
Could you give me a profile of the adult population at the church? How many adults in each age range (20s, 30s etc.)?
Describe the "typical" or "target" adult whom you are specifically trying to reach.
How does it make you feel when you hear that older adults will soon be the largest group in society?
What future impact do you anticipate from this older group?
To what degree does your understanding of baby boomers shape the ministry strategy of the church? How are adult needs assessed?

**Adult learning**

In what ways do adults learn differently than children in your church? To what extent do you have discussions about the particular ways adults learn? How does the church program account for differences in adult learning styles?

**Leadership for adult education**

Who is in charge of the adult ministries here? How long have you (someone) been head of adult ministries? What experience do you have in working with adults here? At other churches? What have you learned from that experience? Who teaches adults? Describe the training, if any, they receive. What are the qualifications or job descriptions for teachers? To what degree are "outside" teachers or speakers used? To what extent are men and women involved? Are there role distinctions? What input does the church's governing board(s) have in adult education?

**Program design**

Describe a typical adult class or event at the church. What are the most creative programs you offer? In your opinion, why are they creative? How are class topics chosen? To what extent are lay adults involved in the program design? When are programs offered? What percentage of programming is devoted to Bible knowledge? Social issues? Family? Spiritual growth? Relationships? Church orientation? In what locations are adult education opportunities held? Please give a brief history of the evolution of the adult education program. Describe a program planning session. What subjects or topic areas would you include in the program?
What is your definition of a successful program?
How would you like to see the adult education ministry look by the year 2000?

Resources and materials

What materials are used?
How are materials chosen?
What role does the Bible play?
Who are major resources for you in adult education?
What books do you read which address adult education issues?
Do you have a church library? A bookstore? To what degree are these resources utilized by the church members?
Is there an audio tape ministry? Describe it.
How are resources publicized?
Have you ever used an adult education consultant to evaluate your adult education ministry? Describe the result.

Facilities for adult education

What emphasis is given to room structures and designs that would enhance adult learning?
What facilities are reserved for adults?
When are rooms used?
Would you be inclined to build new facilities for adult education if needed? Or would you locate off-campus?
How many rooms are available for adult education events or classes?
Approximately what percentage of facility space is allocated for adults? For children?

Technologies available for teaching adult learners

What technological resources are available for teachers of adults? (video tapes, computers, projectors, marker boards, sound systems, etc.)?
Who is responsible for keeping up with current resources?

Finances for adult education

What percentage of the budget is used for adult ministries?
How does this compare with children's ministries?
What percentage of the adult education budget is for materials? Personnel? Technology?
Evaluation and feedback

How often are programs evaluated? How? Who receives the evaluation?
In your opinion, are members satisfied with the level of adult education events and activities?
What are the first things you notice about your church?
What are adults saying to you about their needs?
If you could change one thing today to improve your adult education efforts at the church, what would it be?
How do you think the average adult member understands the adult education opportunities provided here?

Other

What other comments would you like to make about adult education that we have not discussed?
Are there any questions you would like to have clarified?
Are there any feelings or general comments about this interview?
REFERENCES


