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A STUDY OF HIGH LEARNERS
IN ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

by

George Brown, Jr.

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

1989

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF HIGH LEARNERS IN ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

by

George Brown, Jr.

The purpose of this study was to describe high learners in adult religious education. The focus of the study was adult participants in religious education in western Michigan Reformed Church in America congregations who had been identified by their pastors as high learners. The study was informed by the practical research paradigm and used ethnographic interviews to gather data from thirty informants comprising a convenience sample.

Patricia Cross's Chain-of-Response model (1981) was used as a frame of reference for sorting and storing data from the interviews. Self-evaluation, attitudes about education, transitions, goals and expectations for their realization, information, opportunities and barriers, and participation were the categories. Additional categories which did not fit into this model (acceptance, orientations to learning, friends to growth, attractive teachers, and leadership) were suggested by the data. The researcher concluded that the Chain-of-Response model did not adequately explain a high learner's decision to participate in adult religious

education.

The study offers a revised Chain-of-Response model. The researcher observed that Orientations to learning were a mediating factor between self-evaluation and attitudes about education. The relationship between life transitions and learner orientations was seen to be reciprocal.

Four implications of the study are that those responsible for the religious education of adults in the church should: create a climate of acceptance in their congregations; identify and use as resources those adults in the church who stimulate growth in others; recruit teachers for adult religious education program who are most likely to attract learners; and attend to the relationship between leadership and learning.

Because the high learners in this study come from a religious tradition which emphasizes education the findings may not be applicable to other adults engaged in religious education.

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Special thanks is also due the congregation and staff of Central Reformed Church, who were "stimulating enough" and supportive, providing the encouragement and means for the doctoral studies which find their culmination in this dissertation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The number of adults who participate in religious education is a small percentage of the total adult membership of a congregation. Conversations with pastors and church educators confirm this impression. Fifteen years of experience as a church educator support the observation. Professional church educators lament the low level of participation in learning opportunities by adults (Westerhoff, 1970; Nelson, 1979; Farley, 1985).

The response to this situation has been to find ways to increase attendance in Sunday school and other learning programs for adults. Typical strategies for changing this situation have ranged from designing new programs (Ernsberger, 1959, 1965; Fry, 1961) to conducting needs assessments (McKenzie, 1982). But as one adult religious educator points out, "Almost no research has been done focusing exclusively on adult religious learning" (Elias, 1982; 107).

PURPOSE

The researcher sought to respond to the current situation in adult religious education by adding through research to our knowledge base of adult learners in the

church. Foundational inquiry was proposed for a description of those adults whose participation in Christian religious education is at a very high level. "High learners" is the name Allen Tough gives to adult learners who spend about 2000 hours a year in learning and who undertake about 15 to 20 projects in the course of that learning (Tough, 1971; 28). High learners in Christian religious education were the focus of the study.

CONCEPTS

The five concepts that were central to the present study are: high learners, life transitions, Chain-of-Response model, adult religious education, and adult education.

HIGH LEARNERS

Donald Schon (1987) provided the researcher with one cue for the study. Schon, in the context of educating professionals, asserted that one learns artistry by "carefully studying the performance of unusually competent performers" (Schon, 1987; 13). It could also be said that one learns about adult participation in church education by studying the performance of the religious counterpart of Tough's "high learners." As Schon looked to "unusually competent performers" to discover an epistemology of practice, so the researcher looked to highly involved and actively engaged adult learners to discover lessons about adult participation in Christian religious education.

Another cue for this study came from an earlier study

of adult learners by Cyril O. Houle (1963). He, too, was interested in adults who engage in learning to "an outstanding degree." The focus of his study was those women and men who

are so conspicuously engaged in various forms of continuing learning that they could be readily identified for me by their personal friends or by the counselors and directors of adult educational institutions (Houle, 1963; 13).

These "continuing learners" are the equivalent of Tough's "high learners." Tough also compares his "high learner" to Maslow's "self-actualizing person" (1954), Roe's "creative scientist" (1953), and Rogers' "fully functioning person" (1961). He writes:

These populations are marked by learning, by efforts to achieve their inherent potential, and by curiosity and joie de vivre. Yet, at the same time, these people like their present job, understand and accept their own characteristics, and are not strongly dissatisfied with their present self. They have the courage and confidence to reveal their real self. They have clearly directed interests: they choose their own career and activities and are not pushed by external forces. They have a strong realistic commitment to some mission in life. They strive to achieve certain major goals and are spurred on rather than blocked by obstacles, and are productive and successful. Their relationship with at least a few people tends to be compassionate, loving, frank, and effective (Tough, 1971; 28).

"The members of this group," Tough writes of these high learners, "are especially competent, efficient, and successful at learning. They probably set clear action goals, choose appropriate knowledge and skill, plan their learning episodes fairly easily, and learn without undue effort or frustration" (Tough, 1971; 29).

Cyril Houle writes:

... some men and women seek the rewards of knowledge -- and do so to a marked degree. They read. They create or join groups in order to share their studies. They take courses. They belong to organizations whose aims are wholly or partly educational. They visit museums and exhibits, they listen to radio and watch television with discrimination, and they travel to enlarge their horizons. The desire to know seems, in fact, to pervade their existence. They approach life with an air of openness and an inquiring mind (Houle, 1963; 3).

Houle's notion of adults who engage in learning to "an outstanding degree" and Tough's concept of high learners describe the kind of adults who are the focus of this study. These women and men stand out in their engagement with learning in the religious arena of life. They are readily identified for their high degree of involvement in Christian religious education by their peers and pastors.

What can one learn about high learners in Christian religious education? What, if any, are their distinctive characteristics? What motivates them to higher levels of engagement in Christian religious education than other adults? What are some of the curricular implications of these learnings? These are some of the questions the researcher explored.

Houle held that a proper understanding of continuing education should begin with an understanding of "the nature, the beliefs, and the actions of those who take part to the highest degree" (Houle, 1963; 10). The present study of high learners in the context of church education has its secular counterpart in Houle's study of lifelong learners.

LIFE TRANSITIONS AND LEARNING

Life transitions is another major concept in this

study. Elias (1982) is among those who would structure adult religious education programs around a response to life transitions in adulthood. He writes:

Adult religious educators need to be especially attentive to change events in the lives of learners. These events affect family relations, occupation, religion, politics, and leisure activities. Though individuals are unique in their handling of these events, there are certain common features of the strategies developed by individuals that can be made the basis of learning experiences (Elias, 1982; 104-105).

Several definitions of transitions are available.

"Changes that have important consequences for human behavior are regarded as transitions," according to Howard Spierer (Spierer, 1981; 8). William Bridges, who has led seminars and taught classes on life transitions, speaks of transition as "... the natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning points in the path of growth" (Bridges, 1980; 5).

C. Murray Parkes calls "Psycho-social transitions" those "major changes in life space which are *lasting in their effects, which take place over a relatively short period of time* and which *affect large areas of the assumptive world*" (Parkes, 1971; 103). Nancy Schlossberg asserts: "A transition is not so much a matter of change as of the individual's perception of change" (Schlossberg, 1981; 7).

Following Schlossberg, the researcher understood transition to refer to change, not only as an objective phenomenon, but also as a perceptual awareness. Periods of transition are periods of instability, when previous life-structures come apart and before a replacement

structure has been constructed and put into place.

Another secular study of adult learning also served to frame the focus of this study by linking life transitions to learning. Carol B. Aslanian and Henry M. Brickell (1980) examined the relationship between learning and life transitions and found a correlation. According to their study, 83% of adult learners attributed a past, present, or future change in their lives as the motive for their participation in a learning activity (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; 49). They write, "To know an adult's life schedule is to know an adult's learning schedule" (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; 61).

While life transitions are undeniably a significant factor in adult participation in learning, Aslanian and Brickell found that 4% of those interviewed reported a religious transition as a reason for learning and only 2% could identify a specific religious experience as the reason for learning at a particular time in their life (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; 58). Aslanian and Brickell comment,

This means that life events in other areas such as family or health triggered half of all religious transitions. What usually happened in such cases was that the adult had undergone a highly significant life-changing event, which caused a re-examination of his or her relationship with God" (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; 58).

Life transitions are but one of the significant factors in explaining adult participation in Christian religious education.

While some people underwent a change in their religious life and subsequently engaged in religious education,

Aslanian and Brickell found two groups in their study engaged in some form of religious studies, but not in a religious transition: (1) those whose participation in religious education was simply the continuation of a practice begun in childhood, and (2) those who were engaged in religious education to help them with a life transition that was other than religious in character (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; 85).

CHAIN-OF-RESPONSE MODEL

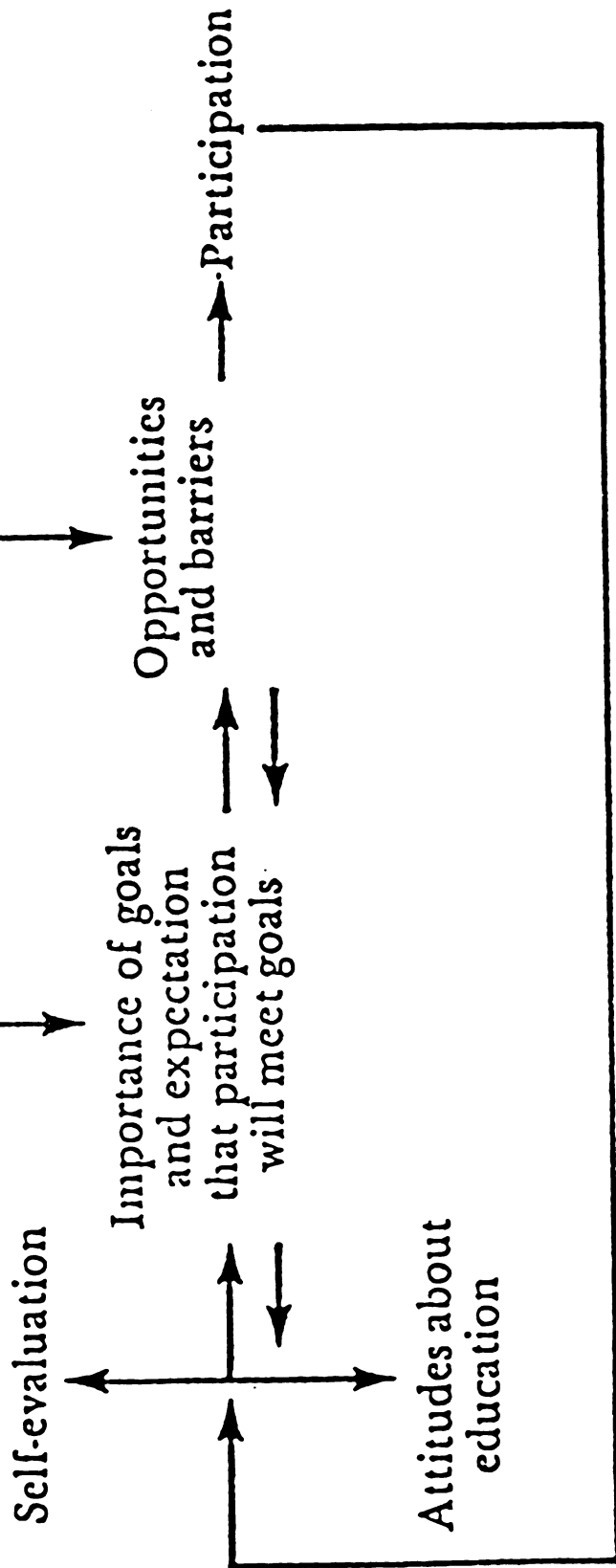
Another researcher examines life transitions in the context of a wider constellation of factors. Patricia M. Cross (1981) takes this approach in her Chain-of-Response model (See Figure 1) for understanding adult participation in learning.

Cross developed the Chain-of-Response model, a conceptual framework that identifies several variables and their relationship to one another. The model is based on an understanding of human behavior that is more like a flowing stream than a series of separate events, a conception she finds consistent with current thinking in motivational psychology. The underlying assumption is

that participation in a learning activity, whether in organized classes or self-directed, is not a single act but the result of a chain of responses, each based on an evaluation of the position of the individual in his or her environment (Cross, 1981; 125).

A continuum is implied in the diagram of the Chain-of-Response model. The variables influencing participation in learning begin within the individual and

FIGURE 1
Chain-of-Response Model



From K. Patricia Cross, Adults as Learners. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1981), p. 124.

move toward more external circumstances (Cross, 1981; 125).

"Self-evaluation" is the first variable described in the model. Informed by achievement motivation, the model holds that individuals with low self-confidence will tend to avoid learning situations that pose the threat of failure (Cross, 1981; 125).

Past educational experience directly affects the second variable, "attitudes toward education." These attitudes are also indirectly influenced by significant others and groups in which the individual holds membership or whose norms the individual values (Cross, 1981; 125-126).

Cross links the first two variables ("self evaluation" with "attitudes about education") in her model, suggesting that

there is a relatively stable and characteristic stance toward learning that makes some people eager to seek out new experiences with a potential for growth while others avoid challenges to their accustomed ways of thinking or behaving (Cross, 1981; 126).

Cross' stance reflects both Houle's learning-oriented adult and the achievement-oriented personality of Atkinson and Feather (1966) as well as Heath's reasonable adventurer. "These personalities seek challenges and new opportunities for growth through learning" (Cross, 1981; 126).

The importance of goals (valence) and the expectations an individual holds for achieving them (expectancy) constitutes the third variable in this conceptual framework. Valence-expectancy theory in motivational psychology informs Cross' goals and expectations variable. Motivation to

participate in a learning situation increases or decreases, depending on how important the goal is to the individual, and the individual's expectation that participation will result in attaining the goal (Cross, 1981; 126).

A connection exists between this variable and self-esteem. Those persons with high self-esteem are more likely to expect success in an educational experience than those with low self-esteem (Cross, 1981; 126).

Life transitions, a key factor in the present study, is a fourth variable in Cross' model. Such transitions may be gradual or sudden and dramatic. Life-span psychology provides the theoretical orientation for this variable. Cross cites Havighurst's "teachable moment" (1953) as an example of how this variable operates in an individual's decision to participate in a learning experience (Cross, 1981; 127).

Next in the model, barriers to and opportunities for adult learning play a role (Cross, 1981; 127).

"Accurate information," the sixth and final variable, is the link between motivated learners and learning opportunities (Cross, 1981; 127).

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The terminology to describe this enterprise varies. Within Protestantism, *Christian education* has been the accepted term, while those in the Roman Catholic tradition have preferred to speak of *religious education*. "Christian education" has been confusing where it is used to refer to

Christian day schools or parochial schools attached to a parish church, rather than that within the church setting. Thus, some writers prefer to speak of *church education* when talking about the education that happens on a Sunday morning as opposed to the learning that takes place in a Christian school through the week.

Thomas Groome, who writes from the Roman Catholic tradition, attempts to break the impasse between those who prefer the term, "Christian education," and those who choose to use the term, "religious education" (Moran, 1983; 190). Groome argues that the appropriate terminology is *Christian religious education*. He writes:

... religious education activity is a deliberate attending to the transcendent dimension of life by which a conscious relationship to an ultimate ground of being is promoted and enabled to come to expression (Groome, 1980; 22).

He adds, "By putting the adjective *Christian* before *religious education*, we remind ourselves we do not own the enterprise but are only one expression of it" (Groome, 1980; 25).

Thus, *religious* indicates the type of education (as opposed to, say, physical education, or education in music or art); it is education having to do with the transcendent in life. *Christian* specifies the particular religious tradition, and further defines the content of the educational activity.

Gabriel Moran, another educator within the Roman Catholic tradition, has a reservation about Groome's

terminology. Moran would make the first adjective, "Christian," an adverb, "Christianly." Thus, one could speak of a "Christianly religious education," or, perhaps, a "religiously Christian education" (Moran, 1983; 191).

While it might be more accurate to say this study had as its focus the Christianly religious education of learners who are adults, it is also more cumbersome terminology. More importantly the sectarian character of the term might be inappropriate in the context of research with its concern for objectivity.

Scope is another complicating aspect of what term to use for this particular educational enterprise. For some religious educators, Christian religious education is synonymous with Sunday school, or other schooling models and programs. It is what takes place in classrooms in a formal or instructional way (Bowman, 1980; Little, 1980).

Other religious educators hold a broader definition of scope. They would agree with Christian ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, who argues that "everything the church is and does is 'religious education'" (Hauerwas, 1985; 181). Known as the "socialization approach," this position is articulated by C. Ellis Nelson (1987) and John H. Westerhoff III (1970) among others.

Acknowledging at once that adults may learn not only in a Sunday school classroom, but also in worship, service, and fellowship settings, the teaching and learning is non-formal.

ADULT EDUCATION

Gabriel Moran brings some linguistic precision to the discussion. He insists that "adult education" is not the appropriate way to speak of this enterprise. He asks: "Does 'adult education' mean education of a certain quality or education of people who are not children?" (Moran, 1979; 18).

He continues:

Historically, the two things have been confusedly related. Clearly, "adult education" has meant the education of people who are not children. When that question is at issue, we would do better to refer to the "education of adults." Otherwise, when "adult education" is used, there is also implied in the term a meaning of adulthood that is left unquestioned (Moran, 1979; 18-19).

To avoid implying a certain quality about educational activity, the researcher followed Moran's lead and speaks of the education of adults.

"High learners," "life transitions," "Chain-of-Response model," "adult religious education," and "adult education" were central concepts in the present study.

PROCEDURE

FOCUS

Western Michigan Reformed Church in America ministers were asked to identify those in their congregation whom they felt were "high learners." Thirty of these individuals were contacted and interviewed, using ethnographic interview procedures described by James P. Spradley (1978).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study follows the basic principles of ethnographic field research and is grounded in and guided by the grounded theory approach of Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1987). The study was modelled after a similar study by Houle (1963) of twenty-two adult learners, but was more narrowly focussed in the arena of Christian religious education. As with his inquiry, the present study made use of interviews, conducted solely by the researcher with individuals identified by others as potential targets.

LIMITATIONS

Validity for all adult learners is not claimed. However, the researcher did attempt to describe the participation of adult learners within a certain geographic region and from one denominational tradition.

Another limitation may stem from the researcher's identity as an ordained minister. The high learners who were selected from among Reformed church members in western Michigan may have been influenced by this identity in their responses. In several instances, as noted in Chapter Four, the religious language of the informants may be attributed to this influence.

POTENTIAL WORTH

It is hoped that this study will add to the church's understanding of the participation of adults in Christian

religious education programs. While the researcher has taken cues from studies of adult learners (Houle, 1963; Tough, 1971) and from research on the relationship between learning and life transitions (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; Cross, 1981), the focus from education generally has been narrowed to Christian religious education specifically. As Elias observes,

Religion is usually included as an item in the general research on adult learning. However, when findings about religion are included with more extensive findings on occupational education, these findings get relatively little attention because of the relatively small percentages involved. It is clear that what adult educators need are both surveys and in-depth interviews that make adult religious education a primary concern. Only with increased findings on adult learners of religion will leaders and programmers be able to develop adult education activities that truly meet the needs of adults (Elias, 1982; 107).

The present study sought to respond to Elias' call for research in adult religious education by interviewing adults whom pastors had identified as high learners in their congregations and presenting the findings from those interviews. Examination of those adults who are engaged in Christian religious education to a high degree might result in discerning both the patterns of their participation and the factors influencing their participation in Christian religious education programs for adults. Church educators and pastors may wish to examine this study for potential curricular and program implications.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The problem which is the focus of the study has been enunciated in the first chapter. The basic concepts of high learner, life transitions, Chain-of-Response model, and adult religious education have been introduced. The methodology, limitations, and potential worth of the study have been discussed.

The second chapter consists of a review of the relevant background literature, including human development literature, transitions literature, adult education literature, and adult religious education literature.

In chapter three the methodology of the study is described. The research focus, the research paradigm, the methodology and procedures are discussed in this chapter. The relevant literature on ethnographic and grounded theory research is included in the discussion in chapter three.

The research findings and discussion of the study are reported in the fourth chapter.

The conclusions are presented in chapter five. Implications of the findings are discussed, delimitations of the study noted, and suggestions for further research identified.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature relevant to this study has been divided into four categories. The human development literature emphasizes change in adulthood; the transitions literature examines the dynamics of life transitions; the general adult education literature which explores participation; and the specifically religious education literature where the focus is the adult learner.

Chapter Two begins with the adult learner and then moves to the educational response. First, the literature on human development during adulthood will be reviewed. This literature includes both secular and religious studies. Of particular interest in this part of the literature review are the transitions between life stages in adulthood.

Next, the review shifts to life transitions. In this section, attention is given to the literature on the nature and dynamics of life transitions, and their educational implications.

General adult education is the focus of the third section of the literature review. Of special interest here are those studies which shed light on the factors in Patricia Cross' "Chain-of-Response" model. The section begins with Houle's (1963) study and Johnstone and Rivera's

(1965) research. Other relevant studies of adult participation in education are reviewed in chronological order. The section on general adult education concludes with a review of studies on learning among older adults and a summary of the findings.

The last section of the review covers the adult religious education literature. As John Elias (1982) has noted, there is little empirical research in this area. The research of Warren Hartman (1986, 1987) is particularly relevant. The literature on adult education provides the context for reading the literature on adult religious education.

ADULTHOOD IN DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

The studies of Gail Sheehy (1974, 1976), Daniel J. Levinson (1978), and Roger L. Gould (1972, 1978) created a interest in adulthood. While they offer little of direct insight into the religious development of adults, they describe the context in which the religious development of adults occurs.

Several writers have applied the insights of developmental research to the human journey of faith in adulthood. Arthur J. DeJong, a college chaplain (1972), applied Erik H. Erikson's work to early adulthood. John J. Gleason, Jr. (1975) correlated Erikson's developmental stages with basic Christian doctrines, and James D. and Evelyn E. Whitehead (1979) related the psychological issues

of Erikson's adult stages to theological issues. Donald Capps (1983) applied Erikson's developmental scheme to pastoral care.

James W. Fowler (1974, 1980, 1981, 1984) integrated the perspectives of Erik Erikson (1963), Jean Piaget (1967), Robert Selman (1980), Lawrence Kohlberg (1981, 1984) and others in delineating six "stages" of faith. Four of these stages are relevant to the study of adults. They are:

Synthetic - Conventional
Individuative - Reflexive
Conjunctive - Paradoxical
Universalizing

The Religious Education Association, prompted by developments in both the secular and religious spheres, and Fowler's work in particular, launched a research project on faith development and the adult life cycle. The project has resulted in some publications, among them Faith Development and Your Ministry (n.d.), in which is reported the research carried out by the Gallup organization.

Of interest in this study is not so much the stages of adulthood reported in the literature on adult development as is the transitions between the stages.

TRANSITIONS IN DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

While developmental perspectives on adulthood typically focus on stages, some developmental theorists (Tarule, 1980; Perry, 1981) shift the focus from stages to the transitions between stages. William G. Perry, Jr. identified nine "Positions" in the intellectual and ethical development of college students. Noting that Positions were static, while

development was movement, Perry writes, "It was therefore the Transitions that were so fresh and intriguing." He muses parenthetically, "(Perhaps development is all transition and 'stages' only resting points along the way.)" (Perry, 1981; 78).

Jill Mattuck Tarule (1980) also shifts the focus in developmental theory from stages to transitions. She writes:

Most of the work in support of structural developmental theory has focused on measurement or careful description of individual stages. In contrast, if one's focus is change, attention must be concentrated on the process of transformation, a time when the underlying structures are shifting as the individual moves from one stage to the next (Tarule, 1980; 24).

Daniel J. Levinson is in agreement with this assessment:

It is worth emphasizing that the transitions are major periods in their own right. They have the same weight in the sequence as the structure-building periods, and they occupy almost as many years of our lives. The transitional periods are essential in the shift from one life structure to another, and the process of structural change is in urgent need of study (Levinson, 1980; 280).

Roger L. Gould (1972, 1978), Carol Gilligan (1982), Daniel J. Levinson (1978, 1980), and James W. Fowler (1974, 1980, 1981; Fowler, Lovin, *et al.*, 1980a) are among those whose work in human development also underscores the importance of transformation and transition as a focus for study.

TRANSITIONS IN GOULD'S RESEARCH

The research of Roger L. Gould offers insights into developmental transitions. In "The Phases of Adult Life: A Study in Developmental Psychology," (1972), Gould reports on

two studies. The first study involved observations of psychiatric outpatients seen in homogeneous age groupings (ages 16-18; 18-22; 22-28; 29-34; 35-43; 43-50). The researchers noted substantial differences between age groups (Gould, 1972).

In the second study reported in this article, a questionnaire was given to 524 white middle-class persons (Gould, 1972; 521). The results were plotted on a graph in a way that allowed the researchers to see "unstable periods" when response scores changed. "These change periods were interpreted as transitional periods or time zone boundaries" (Gould, 1972; 529).

Gould explains:

... the 18- to 22-year-olds responded discontinuously. After 29, the rank order of selected statements began to change from the age baseline at two ages 30 and 37. Most of these late-changing curves stabilized at around age 43. A less impressive but definite series of response fluctuations occurred at the end of the fourth decade (Gould, 1972; 531).

A study that grew out of the Religious Education Association's research on faith development and the adult life cycle also sees the period between eighteen and twenty-two as a period of change. Of the 71% of the respondents who said they had experienced a change in their faith, the highest percentage was in the 18-24 age group (Faith Development and Your Ministry, n.d.; 10).

The thirties as a "time of active psychological change" is supported by the study conducted by Gould and his associates. The curves plotted for the thirties demonstrated

two "major shifts": "There is a gradual peeling away of the magical illusions of omnipotence and omnipotentiality and there is an identification of the self with the family" (Gould, 1972; 530).

But Gould and his associates also found transition in the forties.

Between 40 and 43 there is a series of temporary excursions from well-established lifelong base lines on statements dealing with personal comfort, indicating an acutely unstable period with a great deal of personal discomfort. In addition to the return to baseline on these statements at 43, there is a general stabilization and leveling off of the changes started in the early and mid-30s (Gould, 1972; 530).

Gould concludes: "The results are best thought of as a description of a sequence of process fluctuations that define the posturing of the self to its inner and outer world over time" (1972; 531). He describes these fluctuations as "time dominated" but "not necessarily" age specific. They occur in the context of a person's subculture, life style and total personality (Gould, 1972; 531).

Gould notes that Erikson does not deal with chronological change in the subjective "sense of the world." By "subjective sense of the world" Gould means "the out-of-focus, interior, gut-level organizing percepts of self and nonself, safety, time, size, etc. that make up the background tone of daily living and shape the attitudes and value base from which decisions and action emanate" (Gould, 1972; 524).

TRANSITIONS IN LEVINSON'S RESEARCH

Developmental transitions are also discussed in the research of Daniel J. Levinson and his associates. In his work, Levinson speaks of "life structures." A life structure is defined as "... the basic pattern or design of a person's life at a given time..." (Levinson, 1978; 41). The components of a life structure include "occupation, marriage-family, friendship and peer relationships, ethnicity, and religion" (Levinson, 1978; 44). Of these, Levinson and his associates found the first two to be the "most central" components (Levinson, 1978; 44f.). The evolution of these life structures "consists of a series of alternating stable (structure-building) periods and transitional (structure-changing) periods" (Levinson, 1978; 49).

Levinson and his associates (1978) identified five developmental transitions: (1) the early adult transition (ages 17-22), (2) the age thirty transition (ages 28-33), (3) the mid-life transition (ages 40-45), (4) the age fifty transition (ages 50-55), and (5) the late adult transition (ages 60-65).

The first transition of adulthood in Levinson's research is the Early Adult Transition (17-21). The "twin tasks" of the early adult transition are "to terminate pre-adulthood and to begin early adulthood" (Levinson, 1978; 56). To be in this transitional period is to be on the boundary between adolescence and adulthood (Levinson, 1978; 57).

The next transition is the Age Thirty Transition (28-33). While some men make this transition with relative ease, for most it is a stressful period, which Levinson calls the "*age thirty crisis*" Levinson writes:

A developmental crisis occurs when a man has great difficulty with the developmental tasks of a period; he finds his present life structure intolerable, yet seems unable to form a better one. In a severe crisis he experiences a threat to life itself, the danger of chaos and dissolution, the loss of hope for the future. A moderate or severe crisis is very common during this period (Levinson, 1978; 58).

Henry Simmons (1976), a religious educator, also sees age thirty as a significant transition: "The critical age, in terms of adult faith-life, is age thirty; only patient attention to a *long* process of growth genuinely fosters adult religious decision" (Simmons, 1976; 570). He writes: "We ought to expect life and faith crisis at age thirty" (Simmons, 1976; 571).

The Mid-Life Transition (40-55) serves as a kind of bridge between early adulthood and middle adulthood. It is a period for attending to the neglected parts of the self (Levinson, 1978; 60f.).

The Age Fifty Transition (50-55) of middle adulthood bears similarities to the age thirty transition of early adulthood. It is a time for additional work on the tasks of the mid-life transition or for modification of the new life structure forged in the mid-forties. For those who underwent little change in the mid-life transition and subsequently found the newly constructed life structure unsatisfactory, this may be a time of crisis (Levinson,

1978; 62).

The Late Adult Transition (60-65) completes the series of developmental transitions in Levinson's work. The tasks of the late adult transition are: "to conclude the efforts of middle adulthood and to prepare oneself for the era to come" (Levinson, 1978; 62). This transition marks the end of middle adulthood and establishes the foundation for late adulthood. "It is," writes Levinson, "a period of significant development and represents a major turning point in the life cycle" (Levinson, 1978; 62).

Transitional periods last four to five years, according to Levinson (1978; 49). These transitional periods have a common function.

A transitional period terminates the existing life structure and creates the possibility for a new one. The primary tasks of every transitional period are to question and reappraise the existing structure, to explore various possibilities for change in self and world, and to move toward commitment to the crucial choices that form the basis for a new life structure in the ensuing period (Levinson, 1980; 49).

There are some features common to all transitions -- such as the sense of crisis or inner conflict, a preoccupation with death. "Some preoccupation with death -- fearing it, being drawn to it, seeking to transcend it -- is not uncommon in all transitions, since the process of termination-initiation evokes imagery of death and rebirth." Each transition, however, has distinctive life issues and developmental tasks. These color that particular life transition (Levinson, 1978; 51).

Levinson concludes that, "We need developmental

transitions in adulthood partly because no life structure can permit the living out of all aspects of the self" (Levinson, 1978; 60-61).

TRANSITIONS IN GILLIGAN'S RESEARCH

Carol Gilligan's research in moral development addresses transitions. In her research, Gilligan employed "the magnification of crisis" to highlight developmental transition and to discern patterns of change. She made use of Piaget's insight into the role of conflict in growth and of Erikson's understanding of crisis as an opportunity for growth (Gilligan, 1982; 107-108).

Gilligan writes:

As pregnancy signifies a connection of the greatest magnitude in terms of responsibility, so abortion poses a dilemma in which there is no way of acting without consequences to other and self. In underlining the reality of interdependence and the irrevocability of choice, the abortion dilemma magnifies the issues of responsibility and care that derive from the fact of relationship (Gilligan, 1982; 108).

This approach of magnifying crisis with women who had or were contemplating having an abortion enabled Gilligan to discern certain stable "perspectives" and alternating periods of transition or change. Contrasting her findings with the research of Lawrence Kohlberg, whose scheme of moral development reflects a "morality of rights," Gilligan labelled her understanding of moral development a "morality of responsibility," highlighting conflicting responsibilities rather than competing rights (Gilligan, 1982; 19).

Carol Gilligan's ethic of care is organized around three

perspectives: caring for oneself, caring for others, and caring as a self-chosen principle. These three "moral perspectives" constitute a "sequence" in the development of an "ethic of care." Her model of moral development has two transitions (Gilligan, 1982; 73, 74).

The first transition is from selfishness to responsibility (Gilligan, 1982; 84). It is built on "a new understanding of the connection between self and others" (Gilligan, 1982; 74). There is a shift from concern with survival to a concern with goodness (Gilligan, 1982; 112). The first perspective, that of caring for oneself, is critically appraised as "selfish," an evaluation that paves the way for the second perspective, "Caring for Others" (Gilligan, 1982; 74).

The word "selfish" reappears in the second transition. This transition involves a shift of concern from "goodness to truth" (Gilligan, 1982; 84). "What others think" is juxtaposed with one's own judgments. There is confusion between externally imposed expectations and a new inner directedness. In sorting out this confusion, the relationship between self and other is reconsidered (Gilligan, 1982; 82). In this transition, the person moves from the "conventional mode" of the second perspective to the "reflective mode" of the third perspective, "Caring as a Self-chosen Principle" (Gilligan, 1982; 123).

TRANSITIONS IN FOWLER'S RESEARCH

James W. Fowler, whose interest is in faith development,

is a fourth researcher who examines the transitions between developmental stages. Fowler and his associates interviewed more than 300 persons in their attempts to understand faith development. He describes the transitions between stages as well as the stages themselves.

Factors which may contribute to the transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 faith include:

- (1) "serious" clashes or contradictions between "valued authority sources;"
- (2) "marked changes" in policies or practices previously thought to be unchangeable (an example Fowler gives is the change from Latin to the vernacular in the Roman Catholic Mass following Vatican II);
- (3) encounters with divergent values and beliefs that prompt critical reflection on the relativity of one's values and beliefs (Fowler, 1980a; 27-28);
- (4) physically, or emotionally, leaving home (Fowler, 1981; 173).

Fowler elaborates on the experience of leaving home:

Frequently the experience of "leaving home" -- emotionally or physically, or both -- precipitates the kind of examination of self, background, and life-guiding values that gives rise to stage transition at this period (Fowler, 1981; 173).

Factors which may contribute to the transition from Stage 4 to Stage 5 include: (1) a restlessness with identity and world view; (2) the inbreaking of myths, stories, symbols; (3) disillusionment with the compromises one has made and (4) recognition of the greater complexity of life (Fowler, 1980; 72).

The minimal age for this transition appears to be about 30. "Stage 5 is most often a midlife development if it comes at all" (Fowler, 1980a; 81). Fowler finds evidence,

however, that the disadvantaged "frequently confront Stage 5 issues and construct Stage 5 perspectives earlier than do more advantaged persons" (Fowler, 1980a; 80).

For Fowler, transitions involve a certain painfulness.

He writes:

We do not make transition from one stage to another without disruption, pain, confusion, and a sense of loss. All growth involves pain. To see this does not mean that we can avoid the pain of growth. But it does suggest that we can reimage faith growth so as to embrace the necessary pain and disruption as essential elements in it, thus diminishing the anxiety and fear pain brings (Fowler, 1980; 84).

Gould, Levinson, Gilligan, and Fowler are among those whose research on adult development offers insight into the developmental transitions of adulthood. Their works have been reviewed in this section.

LIFE TRANSITIONS

In addition to the body of literature on adult development, there is the literature on life transitions. That literature is reviewed in this section.

DEFINITIONS

In observing the inability of one of his patients to "let go" of something from her past, Swiss psychiatrist Paul Tournier saw "the universal and perpetual motion of life, in which one place must always be relinquished before another is found." He wrote:

The rhythm of life goes on, carrying us along with it. It does not stop to wait for us. I thought of the trapeze artists, swinging on their trapezes high under the dome of the circus tent. They must let go of one trapeze at just the right moment, to hover for a moment in the void

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before catching hold of the other trapeze (Tournier, 1968; 162).

For Tournier, "... life is very like a trapeze artist's act" (Tournier, 1968; 164-65).

His metaphor captures the essence of transition, which William Bridges defines as "the natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning points of the path of growth" (Bridges, 1980; 5).

Daniel J. Levinson, who has studied male adult development, offers a similiar definition: "A transition is a bridge, or a boundary zone, between two states of greater stability. It involves a process of change, a shift from one structure to another" (Levinson, 1978; 49-50). A transition is a "boundary" in that a person is in both the preceding stable period and in the stable period that follows. A transition both separates and connects two eras or periods. It enables the one to end so the other may begin, and it allows the kind of interchange needed to use elements of the previous life structure in building the new one (Levinson, 1978; 50).

C. Murray Parkes writes about "psycho social transitions," those "major changes in life space which are *lasting in their effects, which take place over a relatively short period of time and which affect large areas of the assumptive world*" (Parkes, 1971; 103).

Some writers, like Jill Mattuck Tarule, prefer the term "transformation" to describe the kinds of change adults experience, as reflected in the growing literature on adult

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development. For her, transformation "signals, ultimately, a complete reshaping of the ways in which one has assigned meaning not only to the various events but to the whole sense of one's life and living" (Tarule, 1980; 23).

Alan Knox (1977) speaks of "change events" when referring to "transitions."

The relative stability of adult life is periodically punctuated by change events, such as marriage, a job change, or the death of a close friend, that alter significantly the individual's relationship with other people and disturb the routine of social participation. Such change events may influence a person's self-concept, morale, and aspiration and are often turning points that entail increased vulnerability and heightened potential (Knox, 1977; 513).

The examples in Knox's listing point up the different kinds of life transitions.

According to Howard Spierer (1981), transitions can be defined in three ways:

" 1 . By time periods in the life span."

" 2 . By role."

" 3 . By event" (Spierer, 1981; 9-10).

A transitional event is any happening of consequence --including entering school, entering the job market, getting married, becoming parents, and losing one's confidence (Spierer, 1981; 10).

Transitional events may be "vivid and dramatic," such as divorce, or "unlabeled," like a decline in a person's aspirations (Spierer, 1981; 10).

TYPES OF TRANSITIONS

There are different types of transitions. And, as Levinson notes, "It is important to distinguish between transitional periods in the evolution of the life structure

and transitions of other kinds" (Levinson, 1980; 280). The former, which Levinson calls developmental transitions, play a special part in the movement from one life structure to another.

The task of a developmental transition is to terminate a time in one's life: to accept the losses the transition entails; to review and evaluate the past; to decide which aspects of the past to keep and which to reject; and to consider one's wishes and possibilities for the future (Levinson, 1978; 51).

These developmental transitions in adulthood are needed, "partly because no life structure can permit the living out of all aspects of the self" (Levinson, 1978; 60-61).

Pastoral psychologist Wayne Oates lists ten developmental transitions:

(1) when one enters school, (2) when one reaches puberty, (3) when one completes school, (4) when one chooses a mate, (5) when one enters a full-time job, (6) when one becomes a parent, (7) when one's sons and daughters all finally leave the home, (8) when one loses someone by death, (9) when one retires, (10) when one becomes permanently disabled and/or faces a terminal illness (Oates, 1973; 40-41).

While these are rather common or typical transitions that occur during the course of the average person's life, according to a developmental schedule, there are others that occur off-schedule and do not happen to everyone.

Gail Sheehy (1981) calls these transitions "life's accidents." They are events over which the individual has no control: "... an event which we are virtually powerless to predict or prevent -- the loss of someone we love to a premature death, a forced separation, sudden divorce, illness, abandonment, the house burning down, the economy

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falling out of bed" (Sheehy, 1981; 302). Oates' list of these atypical or emergency transitions includes sudden success, military service (especially combat), imprisonment, and mental breakdown (Oates, 1973; 42-43f.).

PROCESS

William Bridges' (1980) understanding of transitions follows a three-phase process: an ending, a neutral zone, and a beginning. Every transition begins with an ending, which consists of four aspects: *Disengagement*; *Disidentification*; *Disenchantment* and *Disorientation* (Bridges, 1980; 92-104). The ending phase is followed by what Bridges calls the "Neutral Zone". The final phase is a new beginning (Bridges, 1980).

Jill Mattuck Tarule's research (1980) used case studies to identify and describe four steps of transformational change. These are:

the diffusion step, in which the previous framework is disintegrating.

the dissonance step, in which reconstruction begins.

the differentiation step, in which learning is transferred to other areas of life.

the coherence step, a quiescent period of stability (Tarule, 1980; 25).

For each step, Tarule indicates the educational implications. Her focus is on the importance of transitions between stages for learning.

Tarule describes each step in terms of three characteristic dimensions: psychic work, timing, and major issue (Tarule, 1980; 25).

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Diffusion Step

The Diffusion Step is the first step in the transformative process. The crumbling of one's world and subsequent chaos and confusion mark this step of the transformative process. Tarule captures the essence of the step with a quote from Dante, "In the middle of the journey of life, I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost" (Tarule, 1980; 26).

The *psychic work* of the Diffusion Step involves the intentional and active pursuit of growth. "Person's express an intention to strive toward a new way of being" (Tarule, 1980; 26).

In terms of *timing*, the pace is both intense and fast. The intensity is often accompanied by doubt and ambivalence. The person is simultaneously aware of change and doubtful of its extent (Tarule, 1980; 26).

The *major issue* of the Diffusion Step arises out of "an instability of meanings" (Tarule, 1980; 26). "People in the diffusion step often feel a powerful and poignant sense of pain. It is as if they mourned the loss of a past self and yearned for old comfort and familiarity" (Tarule, 1980; 26). She writes,

... there is doubt, concern, striving, and always confusion, as former meanings disintegrate and new ones, not yet fully formed, accumulate. (Tarule, 1980; 27)

Dissonance Step

The second step in the transformative process is the Dissonance Step. A "particular kind of clarity"

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c h a r a c t e r i z e s the second transformative step, according to

T a r u l e. She writes:

In this second step, the internal noise that marked the diffusion step has quieted. One is more able to listen to oneself and to hear one's own thoughts (Tarule, 1980; 27).

Tarule points to two concepts for understanding the dissonance step. The first is cognitive dissonance, which is the conflict resulting from conflicting claims or ideas; the individual strives to resolve the tension and restore equilibrium. The second is the concept of "plus-one," in which persons prefer a level of reasoning one stage above their present level; "... this preference is a motivating factor in the person's efforts to 'bootstrap' his or her thinking up to the next more differentiated and complex level" (Tarule, 1980; 27).

The *psychic work* of this step is the effort to resolve conflict and restore equilibrium (Tarule, 1980; 28).

In the diffusion step the whole orchestra seems unsynchronized and diaphonic, but in the dissonance step only one section is out of tune. All effort is now exerted toward achieving harmony in this one section" (Tarule, 1980; 28).

As for *timing*, it is now clear to the individual that the pain of the diffusion step is behind them and the task of working on a given issue is at hand (Tarule, 1980; 28).

In the Diffusion Step, there is one *major issue*. While in the previous step, all meanings were in confusion and chaos, in this step the focus is narrowed to one area, one issue. There is clarity. (Tarule, 1980; 28).

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Differentiation Step

The Differentiation Step is the third step in the transformative process. "The differentiation step has many qualities of integration," according to Tarule (1980; 29). The task seems to be to accomplish what Piaget called "horizontal decalage" (Tarule, 1980; 29). Tarule speaks of a "new self-confidence" that emerges in this step. There is confidence in the ability to bring about changes in one's life (Tarule, 1980; 30). She writes: "Differentiation is part of the process whereby a new meaning perspective is refined" (Tarule, 1980; 29).

The *psychic work* of the Differentiation Step is the nurturing into being the new person (Tarule, 1980; 29). There is no particular *major issue* in this step (Tarule, 1980; 29).

Coherence

Coherence is the fourth step in the transformative process. Stability and lessened activity characterize this fourth step in Tarule's model. "The apparent stability may also be interpreted as a defensive holding action, which functions as a guard against further disruption" (Tarule, 1980; 30).

The *psychic work* of this fourth step seems to be one of "ensuring the continuation of forward movement" (Tarule, 1980; 30-31).

According to Tarule, the sense of *timing* is "flat": "There is no urgency or immediacy" (Tarule, 1980; 31). The

emphasis is on personal history, a sense of time past or
time lived (Tarule, 1980; 31).

No single *major issue* demands attention at this step. In
fact, there is often resistance to the notion of issues
terminology in this step (Tarule, 1980; 31).

James E. Loder (1981) offers another perspective on the
transition process. Building on Harold Rugg's work in the
area of human creativity and on psychoanalytic,
philosophical and theological insights, Loder constructs a
five part process to help explain "convictional
experiences." He calls this process "transformational
logic."

Convictional knowing takes place in a supportive context
Similar to Parkes' "assumptive world." Loder writes:

A knowing event always takes place in some context.
Knowing events are situated; they depend initially on
assumptions about and within their situations for the
meaning of the knowing act (Loder, 1981; 31).

The "rupturing" of this supportive context is the first
step of transformational logic or convictional knowing.

Conflict initiates the knowing response, and the more one
cares about the conflict the more powerful will be the
knowing event. In fact, one cannot come to know what one
does not care about (Loder, 1981; 31).

Next comes an "*interlude for scanning*." Loder writes:

To be temporarily baffled over a conflict in one's
situation is to be drawn both consciously and
unconsciously into the familiar psychological process of
searching out the possible solutions, taking apart
errors, keeping parts, and discarding others. This is
indwelling the conflicted situation with empathy for the
problem and its parts" (Loder, 1981; 32).

"The third step in the knowing event is the *constructive*

act of the imagination; an insight, intuition, or vision appears on the border between the conscious and unconscious, usually with convincing force, and conveys in a form readily available to consciousness, the essence of the resolution" (Loder, 1981; 32).

A release of energy and an opening of the knower to self are two characteristics of the fourth step. There is first "a release of the energy bound up in sustaining the conflict" and then "an opening of the knower to him- or herself and the contextual situation" (Loder, 1981; 33).

The fifth step in convictional knowing or transformational logic is interpretation. Loder describes this as the

interpretation of the imaginative solution into the behavioral and/or symbolically constructed world of the original context" (Loder, 1981; 34).

Here, then, are three views of the transition process: a Personal or psychological viewpoint (Bridges), an educational perspective (Tarule), and a faith or religious view.

A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL

Nancy K. Schlossberg (1981) offers a comprehensive model for understanding life transitions. Schlossberg's contribution to the discussion of transitions is the recognition that "individuals differ in their ability to adapt to change" (Schlossberg, 1981; 2). She writes: "Moreover, the same person may react differently to different types of changes or even to the same type of

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change at different times in life" (Schlossberg, 1981; 2).

She writes,

My belief is that it is not the transition itself that is of primary importance, but rather how that transition fits with an individual's stage, situation, and style at the time of the transition (Schlossberg, 1981; 5).

Schlossberg's model calls for "the simultaneous analysis of individual characteristics and external occurrences"

(Schlossberg, 1981; 3). Her thesis is that

Adults continuously experience transitions, although these transitions do not occur in any sequential order, nor does everyone experience the various transitions in like manner. All we know for certain is that all adults experience change and that often these changes require a new network of relationships and a new way of seeing oneself (Schlossberg, 1981; 3).

Schlossberg's model includes three major sets of factors influencing an individual's response to transition: "(1) the characteristics of the particular transition, (2) the characteristics of pre- and post-transition environments, and (3) the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition" (Schlossberg, 1981; 5).

Schlossberg identifies a continuum of views: Levinson and his associates link transitions to chronological age. At the opposite end of the spectrum are Neugarten and Vaillant; Neugarten accents "variability" and "fanning out." Vaillant's report of the Grant Study supports Neugarten's assertion. He speaks more of "surprises" than of "invariant sequence" of stages and "predictable outcomes" (Schlossberg, 1981; 3, 4).

Schlossberg defines adaptation to transition as "a process during which an individual moves from being totally

preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into his or her life (Schlossberg, 1981; 7).

This research on life transitions indicates that even "positive" changes, a promotion, for example, can result in trauma and be perceived as a crisis by an individual. An illustration of the negative effect of success is found in theologian Harvey Cox's comments about the response to his book, The Secular City.

Reflecting on his early success from the vantage point of several decades, Cox says, "I don't think that it was good for me, not good for my spiritual health, and it made my relationship with my colleagues more difficult. I have very mixed feelings about it" (Wakefield, 1988; 21).

LIFE TRANSITIONS AND LEARNING

Fowler writes: "We do not make transition from one stage to another without disruption, pain, confusion, and a sense of loss. All growth involves pain" (Fowler, 1980; 84). But at the same time, "A transition is not necessarily a negative experience" (Oates, 1973; 38). Rather, a transition

has either potential, and is ordinarily an ambiguous mixture of both. Robert Havighurst called these times in life 'teachable moments' when a person is presented with the challenge of a 'developmental task'" (Oates, 1973; 38).

The notions of "teachable moment" and "developmental task" link life transitions and learning. They are found in the work of Robert Havighurst (1953). He defined a developmental task as

a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual,

disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks" (Havighurst, 1953; 2).

Thus, "A developmental task is midway between an individual need and a societal demand" (Havighurst, 1953; 332).

Havighurst traces the term "developmental task" back to Lawrence K. Frank and the work of the "Adolescent Study" of the Progressive Education Association under the direction of Caroline Zachry. He suspects that they got "the kernel of the idea" from Frankwood Williams who had written about adolescence. Zachry and her associates began to see adolescence as "a period of life when certain essential tasks must be mastered in socially acceptable ways by a boy or girl if he is to be happy and comfortable as an adolescent and later as an adult" (Havighurst, 1953; 328).

In The Adolescent Personality, Peter Blos used the term "tasks" to refer to the adjustments of adolescence. Erik Erikson, at the Yale Institute of Human Relations at the time, and a consultant to the Adolescent Study, had developed a similar concept (Havighurst, 1953; 328).

The concept of developmental task was used in workshops of the Progressive Education Association. Daniel Prescott, Director of the Division of Child Study of the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education, introduced the concept to his colleagues at the University of Chicago. Havighurst, who joined the faculty there in 1941, heard the term being used and decided to use it in his own teaching, in preference to the term "needs" which had not been well

received (Havighurst, 1953; 329-330).

From 1941 onwards, Havighurst began using the term more and more and found it was well-received. Another major step forward in the use of "developmental tasks" occurred in 1948 National Conference on Family Life. "This committee made a step forward in the use of the concept by showing how each member of the younger, middle, and older generations in the family has his own developmental tasks, and how the successful achievements of one person's tasks is dependent on and contributory to the successful achievement by others in the family of their appropriate tasks" (Havighurst, 1953; 331).

Havighurst notes two educational implications of the concept of developmental tasks. The first has to do with the purpose of schooling (i.e., education in the schools), and the second with the timing of education. Havighurst writes:

The second use of the concept is in the timing of educational efforts. When the body is ripe, and society requires, and the self is ready to achieve a certain task, the teachable moment has come. Efforts at teaching which would have been largely wasted if they had come earlier, give gratifying results when they come at the *teachable moment*, when the task should be learned (Havighurst, 1953; 5).

Sources of developmental tasks include: (1) "physical maturation," or the biological source, (2) societal pressure, or the socio-cultural source, and (3) the human self, or the personality source (Havighurst, 1953; 4).

In Part Four of the book, Havighurst surveys the developmental tasks of early, middle, and late adulthood. He

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ically states the nature of the task, describes the psychological, biological, and cultural basis for the task, outlines some educational implications.

Early Adulthood

"Of all the periods of life, early adulthood is the best of teachable moments and the emptiest of efforts to learn" (Havighurst, 1953; 257). For Havighurst, the years from 18 to 30 are a period of "special sensitivity and unusual readiness of the person to learn" (Havighurst, 1953; 257). These are years filled with "firsts" -- marriage, first child, first "serious full-time" job; "If ever people are motivated to learn and to learn quickly, it is at times such as these" (Havighurst, 1953; 257). Yet, apart from college, society expends less "educative effort" on this age group than on any other, except for the elderly (Havighurst, 1953; 257).

"Early adulthood is the most individualistic period of life and the loneliest one" (Havighurst, 1953; 258).

The reason why this is a stressful period, according to Havighurst, is that early adulthood is "a relatively unorganized period in life which marks a transition from an age-graded to a social status-graded society." Havighurst compares it with reaching the end of a ladder and "stepping onto a new, strange cloud-land with giants and witches to be circumvented and the goose that lays the golden egg to be captured if only one can discover the know-how" (Havighurst, 1953; 258).

1. SELECTING A MATE
2. LEARNING TO LIVE WITH A MARRIAGE PARTNER
3. STARTING A FAMILY
4. REARING CHILDREN
5. MANAGING A HOME
6. GETTING STARTED IN AN OCCUPATION
7. TAKING ON CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY
8. FINDING A CONGENIAL SOCIAL GROUP (Havighurst, 1953; 259-266)

The Middle Years

"In the middle years, from about thirty to fifty-five, men and women reach the peak of their influence upon society, and at the same time the society makes its maximum demands upon them for social and civic responsibility" (Havighurst, 1953; 268).

1. ACHIEVING ADULT CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
2. ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING AN ECONOMIC STANDARD OF LIVING
3. ASSISTING TEEN-AGE CHILDREN TO BECOME RESPONSIBLE AND HAPPY ADULTS
4. DEVELOPING ADULT LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES
5. RELATING ONESELF TO ONE'S SPOUSE AS A PERSON
6. ACCEPTING AND ADJUSTING TO THE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES OF MIDDLE AGE
7. ADJUSTING TO AGEING PARENTS (Havighurst, 1953; 269-74).

Later Maturity

"The developmental tasks of later maturity differ in only one fundamental respect from those of other ages. They involve more of a defensive strategy -- of holding on to life rather than of seizing more of it" (Havighurst, 1953; 277).

1. ADJUSTING TO DECREASING PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND HEALTH
2. ADJUSTMENT TO RETIREMENT AND REDUCED INCOME
3. ADJUSTING TO DEATH OF SPOUSE
4. ESTABLISHING AN EXPLICIT AFFILIATION WITH ONE'S AGE GROUP
5. MEETING SOCIAL AND CIVIC OBLIGATIONS
6. ESTABLISHING SATISFACTORY PHYSICAL LIVING ARRANGEMENTS (Havighurst, 1953; 277-281)

Tarule's explanation of the four transformative

steps offers educators a "kind of map" that synchronizes **l**earning with the steps of the transition process (1980, 33). She argues that

... describing the steps of transition may help us to better understand how individuals move from one stage to another and how we, as educators, can support this development (Tarule, 1980; 32).

She explains, "Adult students may sequence their studies, shape the content of their learning, and experience the whole educational endeavor differently, depending on the step that they are in" (Tarule, 1980; 33)

The implication for educational programmers seems clear:

Educationally, academic study can be designed to relate to the primary issue of concern that adults need to work on during each step. This focus can help orient the student and forge a powerful link between the learner's personal agenda and the more public and institutional learning agenda (Tarule, 1980; 28-29).

Tarule enumerates the educational implications for each step of the transformative process.

Serious study may be affected by the inability of the person in the *Diffusion Step* to focus on a single subject or issue (Tarule, 1980; 27).

In terms of content, study in the *Dissonance Step* tends to be more "passionate" when the content relates more directly to the individual's focal issue (Tarule, 1980; 28-29). The educational environment -- what Joyce and Weil (1972) call the "nurturant" or indirect effect of instruction -- also may relate to the focal issue for a person in the *Dissonance Step*. If the issue is relational, for example, simply being on a college campus and meeting

new people may provide the opportunity to work on the focal **issue** (Tarule, 1980; 28-29).

In the *Differentiation Step*, goals are the focus. "An **ability** to formulate goals, based on a commitment, marks the **educational** efforts of individuals in this step." (Tarule, 1980; 30) In this step, learning opportunities can support **the** individual's intention to work toward a particular goal, **both** in terms of content and process (Tarule, 1980; 30).

In the *Coherence Step*, the emphasis shifts away from **goals**. Learners may be vague about educational goals in **this** step. Learning is more likely to be something to do, **to** fill time, rather than a goal-oriented activity (Tarule, 1980; 31). Tarule writes: "The absence of poignancy or **intensity** accompanying a strongly felt process of change **seems** to lend this step its rather cool and affectively flat **characteristics**" (Tarule, 1980; 31-32).

William Bridges offers a checklist for people in **transition**. Among the ten items is the advice to "*Use this **transition** as the impetus to a new kind of learning*"

(Bridges, 1980; 81). He expands on his advice, saying:

You knew much of what you needed to know for what you were, but what you are going to become will require new understandings and new skills that you may not yet possess. ... This transition point in your life may well be the time to launch that second education -- or to begin it again, for while the first education follows a fixed curriculum to a stopping point, the second education opens out into new areas at every turning point (Bridges, 1980; 81).

The only other two references to learning cited in the **index of Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes** are

about men in transition learning from women. Bridges notes that in the Odyssey Odysseus receives insight and wisdom from women. He sees this as Odysseus's coming to grips with his own feminine side. In the second half of life, "life's honing phase," one can learn much from mentors and friends of the opposite sex (Bridges, 1980; 48, 49).

Further insight into the relationship between life transitions and participation in religious education is provided in a study by the Princeton Religion Research Center conducted for the Religious Education Association of the United States and Canada. They asked whether or not persons had received a work promotion, had a baby, gone through a divorce, suffered loss of a family member through death, had a "born again" experience, been unemployed, etc. The report indicates, "The one experience shared by the largest proportion of adults is the death of a loved one (86%) (Faith Development and Your Ministry, n.d.; 25).

When asked about the impact of these events on their thoughts about life's meaning and purpose, 80% of those who reported a "born again" experience said that event had a great impact on their thoughts about the meaning of life. Of those who reported having a baby, 71% said that it affected their thinking about the meaning of life "a great deal," while 58% of those who experienced the death of a loved one said that their thinking about the meaning and purpose of life was affected a "a great deal" (Faith Development and Your Ministry, n.d.; 26). The age at which the experience

occurred does not seem to have a bearing on the degree of impact on one's thinking about the meaning and purpose of life (27).

Neill Q. Hamilton (1984), a pastor, observes that "Growth usually does not occur during charmed stretches free of crises. When troubles mount, we grow by turning crises into occasions to plumb more deeply the resources of each phase of the Christian life" (Hamilton, 1984; 150).

In this section of chapter two the relevant literature on transitions has been reviewed. Attention has been given to definition, types of transitions, their dynamics, and their link to learning.

ADULT EDUCATION

General adult education is the focus of this third section of the literature review. Of special interest here are those studies which shed light on the variables in K. Patricia Cross' Chain-of-Response model. The section begins with Houle's study (1963) and Johnstone and Rivera's (1985) research. Other relevant studies are covered in chronological order. The section concludes with a review of studies on learning among older adults and a summary of the findings.

Alan Knox (1977, 1987), Patricia Cross (1981) and Stephen Brookfield (1986) are writers in the field of adult education who offer insights into the characteristics of adult learners and their participation in adult education.

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A number of studies deal with the participation of adults in classes and educational programs (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; Boshier, 1971, 1973; Robinson, 1972; Hooper and March, 1978; Cross, 1981; Peterson, 1983). Their findings can be grouped under several headings: access to learning opportunities; age; attitudes toward education; location of educational programs; information about classes or programs; social factors, such as influence, support, and interaction; cognitive interest or subject/content; and socioeconomic status.

K. Patricia Cross (Cross, 1981) proposed a model for understanding adult participation in learning activities. Her Chain-of-Response model takes into account several variables: self-evaluation, attitudes about education, the importance of goals and the expectation that participation will meet those goals, life transitions, opportunities and barriers, and information (Cf. Figure 1) (Cross, 1981; 124f.). Her model allows for more complexity and interaction of variables than does the research on life transitions. The model also reflects the revisionist perspective in the psychology of motivation, in which behavior is seen as a "flowing stream" rather than a series of discrete events (Cross, 1981; 125).

In the Chain-of-Response model, life transitions is but one of the interacting variables. Using the Chain-of-Response model, transitions are put into a context that takes into account more than a single factor in

explaining participation in adult learning. Such a context seems to be critical for understanding the degree of involvement of high learners.

Cyril O. Houle's The Inquiring Mind (1963) identified three kinds of learners: the goal-oriented learner, the activity-oriented learner, and learning-oriented learner. The goal-oriented learner starts with an awareness of a need or an interest. Learning is purposeful. Learning for the goal-oriented learner may be triggered by a mail circular describing an educational opportunity related to an interest or need (Houle, 1963; 18). The activity-oriented learner may engage in a learning opportunity out of a sense of loneliness, to escape boredom, for credit, or out of habit (Houle, 1963; 19-23). The learning-oriented learner is motivated by "the desire to know" or "the itch to learn." Learning is constant for this kind of learner, rather than episodic as in the case of the goal-oriented learner (Houle, 1963; 24-30).

Houle's research stimulated a number of studies which have resulted in refinement of his three-fold typology (Burgess, 1971; Boshier, 1971; Boshier and Collins, 1985; Lowe, 1987). While confirming the first and third learning orientations (the goal-oriented and the learning-oriented learners), these studies expand the second orientation (the activity-oriented learner).

Frequently cited in the research on participation in adult education (Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979; Bergsten,

1980; Brookfield, 1986; Knox, 1987) is Johnstone and Rivera's, Volunteers for Learning (1965), which Brookfield considers one of the "major national" studies of participation (Brookfield, 1986; 3). Their study reports on adult participation in educational activities between June 1961 and June 1962. The authors estimated that 25 million American adults or one person in five had been active in some form of learning during the twelve month period prior to June 1962 (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 1).

Johnstone and Rivera defined educational activities "very broadly" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 1). The focus of their study included "all activities consciously and systematically organized for purposes of acquiring new knowledge, information, or skills..." (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 1). Adults in their study were defined as "persons either twenty-one or over, married, or the head of a household" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 2).

The characteristics of adult education participants were among Johnstone and Rivera's findings. They note age, amount of formal schooling, and location of residence as three factors that "persistently distinguished participants from non-participants" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 6).

The median age of those who had engaged in educational activities in the previous 12-month period was 36.5. They note that "Over half of the participants were under forty, and nearly four in five were under fifty" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 6).

Participants had attended school for an average of 12.2 years compared with 11.5 for non-participants (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 7). Johnstone and Rivera point out that "During the previous year, these ranged from 4 per cent among persons with no formal schooling to 47 per cent among those who had attended for more than sixteen years" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 7).

Of education, occupation, and income (the three indicators of socio-economic position), Johnstone and Rivera report that "formal schooling was found to have by far the most powerful influence on rates of learning activity" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 7). The authors also say that when all three indicators were combined, their impact was "enormous" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 7).

Geographical location was also a factor: residents of metropolitan areas were "overrepresented" while those living in rural areas were "underrepresented" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 7).

Johnstone and Rivera also list reasons for participating in adult education. They found that people first came to engage in adult education because they were preparing for advancement in their work, or because of relationships with other adults, or because of changes in family status (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 9-10). They write,

The main things people remembered about how they first came to enroll in courses, then, were preparation for new jobs, advancement in present jobs, relationships with other people, and changes in the status or composition of their families (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 10).

The percentages for these categories were:

- 33% - preparation for new job
- 20% - further training in their work
- 30% - result of interpersonal influence
- 1 in 10 - change in family status (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 9-10).

Age also played a role. Occupational reasons were found to be more prevalent among younger adults, while older adults did not have these utilitarian goals or reasons (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 11).

The authors summarize their findings of factors related to participation:

"... the most powerful factor by far is educational attainment, and although occupation and income do count for a little, their effect is quite secondary by comparison. Taken together, of course, the effect of all three factors is enormous, and through their combined influence rates of activity emerge from levels of virtual nonexistence to levels which include close to one person in two (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 103).

They conclude: "These effects, in short, appear to be cumulative and to have a kind of spiraling effect not dissimilar to the way a capital investment accumulates with increasing magnitude under a compound interest structure" (Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; 103).

Roger Boshier's name appears in the list of references at the end of several studies (Marcus, 1978; Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985; Knox, 1987). Boshier (1971, 1973; Boshier and Riddell, 1978; Boshier and Collins, 1985) attempts to bring greater scientific objectivity and precision to the study of adult education.

Boshier's interests are expressed in his factor analysis

of Houle's typology (1971). Boshier's concern in this study is the development of an appropriate measuring instrument.

Boshier comments on Houle's typology:

These are not pure types; the best way to represent them pictorially would be by three circles which overlap at their edges. But the central emphasis of each sub-group is clearly discernible (Boshier, 1971).

In correspondence with Boshier, Houle suggested a fourth group "who have what might be called a universal approach to learning."

Learning is so interwoven in the very fabric of their being that they have never really partialled it out for conscious attention. Their life is made up of learning and they almost regard it as demeaning to think about education as something separate from the whole texture of their being (Boshier, 1971; 5).

Boshier is critical of participation research that uses social surveys to show relationship to discrete social variables. These surveys, he argues, "attempt to foist single variables explanations on a phenomenon which clearly has multi-variate origins" (Boshier, 1973; 255). He writes, "There is no satisfactory theory of social and educational participation" (Boshier, 1973; 256).

In this study, Boshier examines participation in the context of the dropout. The context of dropout, he writes, "is in some ways an extension of non-participation" (Boshier, 1973; 256). "Researchers must recognize that both participation and dropout stem from an *interaction* of internal psychological and external environmental variables" (Boshier, 1973; 256).

Boshier and John B. Collins (1985) used data from the

Educational Participation Scale involving 13,442 learners in Africa, Asia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States in conducting a cluster analysis to test Houle's (1961) typology. They were able to discern the broad outlines of Houle's typology in their results. The cluster analysis revealed the learning and goal orientations, as Houle had described them. The activity orientation, however, was more differentiated than Houle found it to be (Boshier and Collins, 1985; 126-127).

Gordon Darkenwald also is cited in the adult education literature (Cross, 1981; Peterson, 1982; Brookfield, 1986; Knox, 1987). Anderson and Darkenwald (1979) studied access to educational opportunities. They found amount of formal schooling to be the "most powerful predictor" of participation in adult education, followed by age as the "second most powerful predictor". To these, they added proximity or geographical access to those organizations that provide adult education. This was found to have "a direct positive effect" on participation (Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979; 3-4).

When they considered persistence rather than participation, they found "The most powerful predictor of persistence in adult education is satisfaction with the learning activity in terms of its 'helpfulness' in meeting one's objectives" (Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979; 4-5). Age also played a role in persistence, but differently than it did in participation. Anderson and Darkenwald write, "It

might be noted that age affects participation and persistence in opposite ways, older adults being less likely to participate, but more likely to persist once they do" (Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979; 5).

In another study, Darkenwald (1980) examines participation in the context of the "hard-to-reach" adult. Darkenwald defines "hard-to-reach" adults as those who are underrepresented in continuing education. His definition would include older persons, handicapped individuals, blue collar laborers, the disadvantaged and those who are isolated geographically (Darkenwald, 1980; 1).

In discussing factors that distinguish participants in adult education, Darkenwald highlights socioeconomic status, (SES) which is based on three factors -- educational attainment, occupational status, and income. Darkenwald writes,

SES is the single most powerful predictor of participation in continuing education. Its effects can be viewed as operating in a uniform way, much like the mercury in a thermometer. As SES drops, degree by degree, so does the likelihood of participation in continuing education (Darkenwald, 1980; 3).

Low SES adults are harder to reach than other adults.

Darkenwald, while noting that the three components of SES are interrelated, points out their effect on participation is not equal. His findings are consistent with the findings of Johnstone and Rivera (1965).

Educational attainment affects participation more than does occupational status, and these are more powerful predictors than income. Thus, an adult with the least

amount of education is less likely to participate than an adult with the lowest income (Darkenwald, 1980; 3).

Age is another factor that influences participation. Generally, the older the person, the less likely they are to participate in continuing education. The participation rate of 17- to 34-year-old adults is four times as great as the rate for 55-year-old and older adults. When high-SES older adults are compared with high-SES younger adults, the participation rate for the older group is still lower (Darkenwald, 1980; 4).

Isolation is also a factor affecting participation. The isolated adult is less likely to participate than the nonisolated adult. Isolation may be physical, owing to illness or injury, or geographical. Participation rates are lower for rural areas than for urban centers, and there are regional differences also, with participation rates being higher in the west than in other areas of the United States. Darkenwald cites California's high number of low-cost community colleges as a factor in the regional picture (Darkenwald, 1980; 4).

Darkenwald concludes:

Participation behavior is complex and our understanding of it still rudimentary. What is particularly lacking in the literature are theories or models of the participation process which can give us a deeper understanding of the factors that influence participation, how they are related to one another, and how they operate to affect actual behavior (Darkenwald, 1980; 6).

The purpose of a study by Peter Spencer and Shirley Tordoff (1983) was to determine whether or not age was a

significant determinant of self-concept (Spencer and Tordoff, 1983; 256). The researchers used a questionnaire developed by S. Coopersmith (1967) with nineteen psychology students in two classes in the department of adult and continuing education at the University of Leeds. Spencer and Tordoff note that self-concept has long been considered an important factor in education. For one thing, self-concept is viewed as having a "direct positive relationship with educational attainment" (Spencer and Tordoff, 1983; 256). The authors concluded that "there was no relationship at all between age and self-concept" (Spencer and Tordoff, 1983; 257).

The issue of non-participation and a dissatisfaction with the theoretical orientations of some of the research being done on participation led C. Norris, Vice-Principal, Winchester and District Adult Education Institute, to engage in a field study of participation in adult education. Using a participant-observer approach, Norris became a student in six adult classes for two years. He supplemented the information gained from participation in these classes with interviews and two surveys used to explore specific questions (Norris, 1985; 122).

Writing about the importance of his own thoughts and feelings in this research, Norris comments: "It is the inclusion of such material, the assurance of adequate subjectivity, which helps to ensure in the end that qualitative research has validity" (Norris, 1985; 123).

Norris constructed several "typologies" from his field notes, which produced "pointers towards hypotheses." He lists several, among them:

- vi) Students may have two independent kinds of motivation, one related to social needs and the other to serious study. A particular class may satisfy either or both of these sets of needs (Norris, 1985; 123).
- vii) Attending class may be a subsidiary aspect of a more important leisure or work activity (Norris, 1985; 123).

The students Norris met in the course of his research fell into "two distinct categories": "the regular class goer and the 'one-off' student who had a particular learning requirement" (Norris, 1985; 125). He notes:

Any theory attempting to understand participation in adult education should, therefore, be able to explain the existence of two populations of students, participating in ostensibly the same activity. The solution is to consider participation in adult education as part of the search for identity, for meaning (Norris, 1985; 125).

Norris divided his two populations into three "ideal types": "the worker," "the hobbyist," and "the student." "The Worker" is the person who finds that the world of work gives him a sense of identity." Learning is simply a part of the activity of work for this type of adult learner. Norris describes "The Hobbyist" as "someone who has invested a considerable amount of time and energy into a leisure time activity." The hobby assumes the same significance as one's occupation. The third type, "The Student," uses the class to "construct a small world, inhabited by people with shared interests and perhaps lending significance or meaning to other aspects of life and the world at large" (Norris,

1985; 125).

From Norris' perspective, adult education has a two-fold significance: "on the one hand it may be a straightforward way of acquiring knowledge or meeting other human needs, while on the other hand it can be seen as part of the enterprise of finding an identity in the world" (Norris, 1985; 125).

Norris concludes,

This perspective on participation has implications for our understanding of participation and non-participation. Participation means different things to different people; as we have seen, for some it is a major means for constructing an identity, while for others it is an adjunct to work or leisure (Norris, 1985; 126).

Alan B. Knox reviewed the major studies on adult participation in continuing education and summarized their findings (1987). He then offers four approaches to increasing participation.

Examples of "personal and situational facilitators and barriers" which combine to influence participation are: developmental tasks, change events, sense of "educational efficacy," and "optimism about advancement" (Knox, 1987; 7). Knox writes, "The high association between level of formal education and extent of participation reflects the multiple benefits of educational level such as communication skills, sense of proficiency, awareness of opportunities, encouragement and support, and multiple uses" (Knox, 1987; 7). Negatively, he notes that intent is unlikely to lead to participation among adults with low educational levels

(Knox, 1987; 7).

Knox also summarizes reasons for participation and barriers to participation. Of the reasons for participation, Knox writes:

The basic clusters of reasons are cognitive interest, social stimulation, social contact, external expectations, community service, and professional advancement (Knox, 1987; 7).

As to the barriers to participation, he writes:

The main clusters of deterrents are lack of confidence, lack of course relevance, time constraints, low personal priority, cost, and personal problems. As with reasons for participation, nonparticipation reflects the combined influence of multiple deterrents (Knox, 1987; 7).

Pamela Munn and Carolyn MacDonald (1988) studied the factors affecting adult participation in education and training in Scotland. They defined an "adult returner" as *"someone aged 20 or over, who had had a break of at least two years from their initial full-time education"* (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 220). This study was part of a three year study commissioned by the Scottish Education Department. The authors adopted a "wide definition" of an education or training course: *"any course or systematic programme of learning which lasts for a total of seven hours or more, within a three-month period"* (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 221).

Munn and MacDonald found that non-returners cited lack of interest and lack of time as the most important reasons for their non-participation (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 222-23). Usefulness of and interest in education or training were cited as the "dominant reasons" for returning to

education or training (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 223).

Munn and MacDonald speculate that:

if one had already experienced education and/or training as interesting, enjoyable and useful, then one was more likely to return to it. If on the other hand, one had experienced education and/or training as boring, unenjoyable and useless, one would need a pretty big incentive to return (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 224).

Munn and MacDonald found that "lack of knowledge about educational opportunities was not identified by our sample as an important factor affecting their participation" (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 225). They note, "... given the lack of interest in returning, better advertising is not the magic answer to increasing participation rates" (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; 226).

In recent years, attention has shifted to older adults as a significant audience for adult education (Peterson, 1982). Several studies focus on the participation of older adults (Robinson, 1972; Boshier and Riddell, 1978; Hooper and March, 1978; Marcus, 1978; Peterson, 1982).

Phileon B. Robinson, Jr., Assistant Dean in the Division of Continuing Education, Brigham Young University, reports on another study among senior citizens, in Utah County, Utah. A cluster sample method was used to select respondents for the study and interviews were conducted with 453 of the respondents. The study did not include older persons living in institutions like nursing homes or hospitals. The purpose of the study was:

to discover the important socio-cultural characteristics of this aging group and to determine what the relationships were between these characteristics and the

senior citizen's participation in educational activities" (Robinson, 1972; 234).

Robinson lists seven conclusions:

"1. A senior citizen who is active in community affairs is more likely to participate in adult education activities" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

"2. Senior citizens who participate in adult education activities consider themselves healthier than nonparticipants" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

"3. Senior citizen participants in adult education activities have a higher income than nonparticipants" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

"4. Senior citizen participants in adult education activities participated in adult education activities more ten years ago than did nonparticipants" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

"5. Senior citizen participants in adult education activities reported that their mother placed more emphasis on good grades than the mothers of nonparticipants" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

"6. Senior citizen participants in adult education activities think that education is more important to their spouses than do nonparticipants" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

"7. More senior citizen participants in adult education activities think that their most admired friends and relatives participate in such activities than do nonparticipants" (Robinson, 1972; 236).

Of interest is Robinson's findings about the participation of older persons in religious education programs:

Of the 453 senior citizens interviewed, 364 or 80 percent of them reported they had attended some kind of adult education program during the 12-month period prior to the interview. Of this number, 322 attended religious education programs, 125 attended programs in the social science area, and 48 attended programs in the area of the humanities (Robinson, 1972; 236).

Among the implications Robinson notes is the need to seek the early involvement of older adults in educational

programs and learning opportunities. There is a tendency to continue earlier patterns of educational participation, or non-participation (1972; 258).

Robinson observes, "... the general state of good health of senior citizens and their desire for activity suggest the necessity for church and civic leaders to take another look at the need to develop meaningful and challenging programs for older citizens" (Robinson, 1972; 258).

J. O. Hooper and G. B. March (1978) also have studied older adults and their patterns of participation. The purpose of their study was "... to describe the demographic characteristics and attitudes toward lifelong learning of a sample of students ages 62 or older attending university classes" (Hooper and March, 1978; 322).

Four campuses of the University of Wisconsin system were chosen because of their large guest student (those 62 or older attending classes as auditors on a space-available basis) populations. The study was a follow up to a 1977 study by March and others focusing on non-students. The earlier study was undertaken to determine why more older adults were not participating in the cost-free university audit program (Hooper and March, 1978; 321-22).

The authors write,

It was hypothesized that most older students attending university classes would have had contact with a university in their youth, either by personal experience, or through significant others. This hypothesis was strongly supported in that 92.8% of respondents either had university education in their youth, or reported that one or more of their significant others (specifically, immediate family members -- spouse, parents, siblings,

children, or grandchildren) had attended university classes (Hooper and March, 1978; 327).

Hooper and March comment: "We feel that these data strongly suggest that personal contact, at some level, with the university in youth forever renders the institution subjectively available to the individual." They add, "For them, it is a known, and therefore 'safe,' place to be" (Hooper and March, 1978; 327). This leads the authors to identify this as an area for further educational gerontology research. "Too little is known about the power of early family experiences over functioning in old age" (Hooper and March, 1978; 329).

They observe:

A much larger proportion of student elders than nonstudent elders are married, and smaller proportions are widowed or single. This fact suggests the possibility that older people who have intimate personal relationships are more likely to attend university classes, perhaps due in part to the support and encouragement of the spouse (Hooper and March, 1978; 328).

This leads the authors to suggest an area for further research in gerontological education:

... the preponderance of married people among the elder student group is suggestive of the effect of intimate relationships on self-esteem and risk taking in old age. If investigation in this area supports the suggested relationship, educational outreach to the elderly may enter a new era stressing supportiveness and intimacy for older students (Hooper and March, 1978; 329).

Another study by Boshier and Gail Riddell (1978) tested a variation of the Educational Participation Scale with older adults. This version of the Educational Participation Scale deleted job-related items. Of four factors --

Escape/Stimulation, Social Welfare, Social Contact, and Cognitive Interest -- Escape/Stimulation "shows the strongest and most consistent correlation with Adjustment to Later Life and Life Satisfaction Index scores" (Boshier and Riddell, 1978; 174).

Edward E. Marcus (1978) investigated the influence of age, sex, and socioeconomic status on the educational participation of older adults and their perception of the utility of their participation. He concludes, "The chief theoretical implication of the study was that educational participation is a very complicated type of behavior affected by a great many factors (Marcus, 1978; 316).

David A. Peterson draws on these and other studies in Facilitating Education for Older Learners (1983). One important learning about the participation of older persons has to do with their childhood educational experience. He notes, "Current older people have less formal education than younger people and tend to exhibit the traits of a less-educated group" (Peterson, 1983; 43). Why is it that the majority of older people have so little interest in education? Peterson answers,

One obvious suggestion about the cause of this disposition is that the formal schools of their childhood convinced them that education was not an activity to be undertaken without compulsion (Peterson, 1983; 40).

Peterson summarizes the characteristics that predispose older people to participate in educational courses and programs:

their educational level is higher than the median for older

adults and includes some college experience;
their admired friends have participated in adult learning opportunities;
they have participated in adult education within the last ten years;
they spend more time reading;
they are gregarious;
they are homeowners;
they perceive themselves as being in good health, and
they retired early (Peterson, 1983; 47).

Characteristics that discourage older adults from participation include "situational," "institutional," and "dispositional" barriers. Lack of time or transportation, high cost, or poor health represent situational barriers to participation. Inaccessible location, inconvenient scheduling, complex registration procedures, or lack of information about learning opportunities constitute institutional barriers. Dispositional barriers include anxiety, lack of interest, or the belief that one cannot learn (Peterson, 1983; 47).

Peterson also cites studies indicating that a person's socioeconomic condition is a "major variable in the decision process" and that social and personal change influence participation (Peterson, 1983; 48). He enumerates five "positive pushes" toward participation:

1. "First, people are likely only to attend courses in an institution or organization with which they have had previous contact; thus the institution is viewed as accessible."

2. "A second push may be a tradition of educational participation."
3. "Third, social interaction may also be a significant motivating force."
4. "A fourth factor is the need for some particular information or a general interest in a topic."
5. "A fifth factor motivating participation may be the social support and encouragement that result from membership in the sponsoring organization" (Peterson, 1983; 48).

A study was done among older adults participating in a lecture-discussion program at the Andrus Gerontology Center. Questionnaires using a 4-point Likert scale (very important 1.0 to very unimportant 4.0) were given to participants to ascertain reasons for attending the program.

Peterson summarized the results of this study:

The scores on individual questions indicated that the topic of aging and its general value for self and others was the most important reason for participation. Sponsorship and quality of the lecture-discussion series were of nearly equal importance to the content. The third most important reason for participation was social interaction (knowledge of other participants, acceptance by the group, and opportunities to make new friends). Finally, membership or close relationships with the Andrus Volunteers, the primary sponsor of the program, was of least importance to the participants (Peterson, 1983; 50).

Peterson also mentions a study by Sprouse (1981) in which it was found that "cognitive interest, a desire to know more about a particular subject, was the most powerful motivating factor..." (Peterson, 1983; 50). Sprouse's study differentiated between older adult learners who were in age-integrated classes from those in age-segregated classes (Peterson, 1983; 51).

Of particular interest to the researcher were Peterson's

findings about the participation of older adults in religious activities. He notes that community organizations provide the most education for older adults, a finding consistent with a study by Johnstone and Rivera. They found that "older people were much more likely to study religion than were other age groups and that most of this religious study took place in churches, synagogues, and other religious facilities" (Peterson, 1983; 45).

At the end of his discussion Peterson writes:

The conclusions that can be drawn from current research and practice regarding educational participation by older persons are relatively modest (Peterson, 1983; 51).

The learnings about the participation of adults in educational programs and classes can be summarized as follows:

ACCESS

There are several dimensions to access. Personal dimensions include physical abilities and limitations, as well as perceptions. The location and physical environment of learning opportunities constitute other dimensions of this category.

One aspect of access is the person's ability to get to sites or locations where adult education activities take place. Persons with physical handicaps or those who lack transportation may find it difficult to get to certain community education classes or other adult education programs. Among older adults, poor health may be an important factor in participation.

For some adults, previous contact with the educational institution or sponsoring organization encourages further participation in courses or learning activities. Those unfamiliar with a particular school may be less inclined to enroll for a class.

Location is another aspect of access. Classes held in barrier free access facilities will be an encouragement to participation for some learners. Distance may discourage other potential learners from participating in an educational program offered in another city.

Much of what comes under the heading of "access" has to do with "opportunities" or "barriers."

AGE

Age has to do with more than the limitations that come with aging. It also has to do with the period of history in which persons are born. Today's older adults grew up in a time when many dropped out without finishing high school. Their attitudes toward education are colored by their childhood experiences with school (Peterson, 1983; 43).

ATTITUDES

Historical and cultural influences shape individual attitudes toward participation in adult learning opportunities, but so do significant and respected others. These may be parents who valued education for their children, or peers who participate in adult learning. Houle wrote about "stimulators," learners who have a contagious effect on other adults (1963; 77-78).

A positive self-image also affects an individual's attitudes toward education. Those who see themselves as "good students" are more likely to take a community education class or participate in an educational program than those adults who received poor grades in school and feel they are somehow "dumb."

Another component of attitude has to do with a sense of purposefulness. Adults with clear goals, which can be met through certain educational experiences, seem more likely to sign up for a course than adults who lack such goals, or who do not view a particular class as helping them achieve their goals (Cross, 1981).

Subject or course content is a factor closely related to goals or purposiveness. An adult may participate in a class because of interest in the subject or because the content of the course is seen to be related to achievement of a goal. Sprouse (1981) found cognitive interest to be a powerful motivating force.

A TRADITION OF PARTICIPATION

Those who have participated in adult education within the last ten years are more likely to participate now (Robinson, 1972). In their study, Aslanian and Brickell found some adults engaged in religious education, not because of a life transition, but because it was the continuation of a tradition of participation begun already in childhood (Aslanian and Brickell, 1985; 85).

SOCIAL FACTORS

Interaction and support are often important influences in participation. In one study (Peterson, 1983), these ranked third and fifth as reasons for participation in a lecture discussion program at a study center for older adults.

Having surveyed the literature on adult education for insights into the participation of adult learners, the focus now shifts to the religious education literature which addresses the education of adults.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF ADULTS

The literature on the religious education of adults is not viewed in isolation from the general adult education literature. Influenced by developments in secular adult and continuing education, adult religious education literature often mirrors or popularizes what is happening in the secular field, usually at a pace that is a few steps behind pioneering work in adult education. Thus, it is read in the context of the general literature on the education of adults.

The adult religious education literature tends to be more "practical" and less dependent on empirical research and theoretical frames of reference. (Lee, 1971, 1973, 1985; McKenzie, 1982) As John Elias (1982) has noted, there is little empirical research in this field. A review of the two volumes of the Annual Review of Research: Religious

Education (1980, 1981) supports Elias' claim. Among the 130 studies reported in Volume 1, there were three studies on adulthood, only one of which was directly relevant to the participation of adults in religious education. Of the 120 abstracts reported in Volume 2, only one was on adulthood.

Peatling calls the 1979 review of research "a selective sample of work across the past decade" (Peatling, 1980; 5). He observes that "...although it is at least twenty years since adult religious education stepped front and center, surprisingly few studies include persons in middle or older adulthood" (Peatling, 1980; 6).

One example of empirical research in the area of adult religious education is Bruce Reinhart's study, The Institutional Nature of Adult Christian Education (1962). This study generated 29 findings. Serving the institutional needs of the church, adult education tends to be conservative rather than transformative in nature. Reinhart writes,

The general finding of this research is that the program of adult education in the church reflects the character of the religious institution as a whole. Adult education takes its character from the forces that impinge upon the religious institution in American society and it functions to serve the religious institution according to the needs and the problems of the hour (Reinhart, 1962; 16).

John R. Fry, once a denominational executive responsible for the Christian education of adults, wrote a critique of the practice of adult religious education and challenged churches to become a "small university" (Fry, 1961). One outcome was the launching of the *Layman's Theological*

Library, a series of 12 compact discussion books written by prominent mainstream theologians and used in adult study/discussion groups.

Edward Farley (1983, 1985, 1988) represents a more recent example of Fry's approach to the religious education of adults. Deploing the gap between the church education laity receive and the theological training clergy receive, Farley advocates making church education theological education (1985, 1988).

David J. Ernsberger (1959, 1965) introduced the emerging group dynamics approach into the education of adults in churches. Where Fry had taken a more cognitive and content-oriented approach, Ernsberger and others took a process approach that sought transformation and renewal through feelings and relationships.

Leon McKenzie (1982) represents the attempt to base adult education in the church on sound research in the social sciences. His approach, which builds curriculum on needs assessment rather than on the theological interests of the professional religious educator, involves learners in the development of Christian education programs for adults.

John Elias calls those responsible for the religious education of adults in churches to attend to transitions in the lives of learners (1982; 104-105).

Adults often respond to change events by developing strategies to deal with the events. For some adults, a strategy is to seek information or learning about how to cope with the situation (Elias, 1982; 106).

Churches, in Elias' view, should respond by providing

learning opportunities geared to helping adults cope with life transitions.

Gabriel Moran (1979) brings linguistic analysis and critique of the sharp dichotomy between childhood and adulthood to the contemporary discussion of adult learning in the church. He challenges and critiques Malcolm Knowles' (1970) concept of andragogy.

Moran forces the professional religious educator to be more careful in the use of language -- it is not "adult education," but "the education of adults" -- in his attempt to bring clarity and precision to this field (Moran, 1979; 18-19).

An abstract in the Annual Review of Research: Religious Education, Volume 1, reports on a research survey conducted by Warren J. Hartman "to discover lay adult attitudes toward local church Christian education programs" (Peatling, 1980; 46). The study involved adults who were active in the church, as well as those who had dropped out of church and church school.

active in church and church school	n=801
active in church but not church school	n=628
dropped out of church and church school	n=228

Hartman's sample is described as "a representative geographic sample, biased toward larger churches" (Peatling, 1980; 46).

Hartman reported five expectations:

fellowship	(17%)
evangelistic	(11%)
serious study	(8%)

social concern (6%)
multiple interests (58%)

Hartman (1986) reported the implications for the Sunday school of this study. In that study (1973), he identified five audiences present in any congregation. These could represent a refinement of Houle's three types of continuing learners within a specifically religious context. Hartman provides descriptions of each audience in terms of theological perceptions; personal and demographic characteristics, such as income, age, and vocation; beliefs and attitudes; and participation and attendance patterns (Hartman, 1987; 22f.). The latter category, that of participation and attendance, is especially relevant to the present study.

In 1970, while Hartman was reviewing the responses of several hundred people who were pre-testing a questionnaire, he discerned a pattern. As a result, he decided to test a hypothesis that there were distinct groups of persons in congregations and that these groups could be identified. In 1972, Hartman tested this hypothesis with fourteen hundred laypersons. Applying statistical analysis to the test results, he was able to identify five such groups or "audiences." "Each of these had a clearly different set of characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. What is more, those in each group participated in the life of the church and Sunday school in a different manner" (Hartman, 1987; 14).

The audience groups Hartman identified were: the

Fellowship Group, the Traditionalists, the Study Group, the Social Action Group, and the Multiple Interest Group.

The first audience Hartman identified was the "fellowship group." As the word "fellowship" suggests, a high value is placed on interpersonal relationships. "The level of their personal satisfaction and their church and church school participation is strongly affected by the kinds and the quality of their relationships with others in a class or other small group" (Hartman, 1987; 25). This group corresponds to Houle's "activity-oriented" learner (Houle, 1963; 20). For this adult learner, fellowship rather than course content is the reason for participation.

This group has the third highest record of Sunday school attendance and the poorest record of attendance in worship, but a high level of participation in social activities and informal gatherings (Hartman, 1987; 35).

The Traditionalists represented another audience in Hartman's study. Persons who hold more traditional views and expectations make up this second audience group. "They have a profound respect for and commitment to traditional customs, practices, values, and ways of doing things" (Hartman, 1987; 26). Hartman notes within this audience group there is also a group of young adults whom he calls "neo-traditionalists." While they have some things in common with traditionalists, they are also somewhat different from them (Hartman, 1987; 26).

The second highest record of Sunday school attendance

and highest record of worship attendance is held by this audience (Hartman, 1987; 47, 49).

Those who are interested in learning about the Christian faith through study make up the third audience, "the study group," in Hartman's study. They seek to understand their faith and to apply it to their life in the world (Hartman, 1987; 26). This group is most like Houle's "learning-oriented" learner (Houle, 1963; 24).

The members of this audience hold the highest record of attendance in Sunday school and the second highest in worship. During childhood, this group had a higher level of attendance and participation in Sunday school, youth group, and worship than any of the other audiences (Hartman, 1987; 63).

The personal demographics of this audience fit the general profile of continuing learners. A high percentage are in their thirties, forties and fifties (Hartman, 1987; 61). "They are most likely to be older young adults or middle-aged persons who are in families where one or more persons follow a professional career, or hold a management or supervisory position" (Hartman, 1986; 60). Their level of formal education is higher than those in any other audience (Hartman, 1987; 61). Hartman writes of the people in this group: "They tend to be persons whose daily occupation requires them to be mentally alert, to make decisions, and to study in order to keep abreast of changing conditions and circumstances" (Hartman, 1987; 62).

Hartman writes of this group:

Those in this study group prefer Sunday school classes that are rather loosely structured, flexible in their operation, and provide ample opportunities for discussion and dialogue. They like to study a wide range of subjects that contribute to their understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith. They tend to take such understandings seriously and will struggle with their implications for their daily lives and work (Hartman, 1986; 60).

Hartman's fourth group, "the social action group," consists of those who are committed to living out the social dimensions of Christian faith. "They want to participate in those dimensions of the church's ministry that address the problems and concerns of their community and world" (Hartman, 1987; 27).

This audience has the lowest attendance record in Sunday school and the poorest or next poorest attendance record in worship. They also had the lowest attendance record in childhood (Hartman, 1987; 75).

The "Multiple Interest Group" is the fifth audience in the study. Hartman says this audience group is a "composite which includes persons whose characteristics are different combinations of the characteristics found in two or more of the four basic audience groups mentioned above" (Hartman, 1987; 28).

Attendance in Sunday school and worship is average for this group (Hartman, 1987; 88).

Hartman draws three implications from his research:

1. congregations should provide a range of learning opportunities reflecting the diversity of theological perspectives and teaching/ learning styles.

2. classes should be grouped by subject matter, teaching style, and expectations for group life, and not just by age, sex, and marital status.
3. there should be a diversity of teacher characteristics and styles of teaching (Hartman, 1986; 64).

The literature in the religious education of adults reflects the trends and patterns in adult continuing education and general education. The influence of T-groups and group process research, felt initially in corporate training and higher education, spilled over into church education. The attempt to become more "scientific" and objective, has also made its impact in religious education.

In this chapter the researcher has reviewed the adult development literature which focusses on developmental transitions, the transitions literature with its implications for learning, the general adult education literature which examines participation, and the specifically religious education of adults.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The research focus, approach, paradigm, and steps are presented in this chapter. The issues of validity and reliability also are discussed.

RESEARCH FOCUS

The researcher proposed to describe adults who engage to a high degree in both formal and nonformal adult religious education. These are the adults whom pastors and peers recognize as exemplary learners. In addition to attending Sunday school classes or participating in mid-week courses in their churches, these adults also engage in a wide variety of learning activities such as: reading widely on their own; attending seminars, workshops, and lectures; participating in special opportunities like retreats, college or seminary courses in religion offered to the public; belonging to or organizing study groups; visiting museums, and traveling.

For such adult learners learning is reflected in conversation and life-style. They talk about the books they have read or the television programs they have viewed, making connections with their beliefs and values. Their calendars reveal a pattern of participation in more than one

class or study group. The books in their libraries reveal their interest in studying religious issues.

APPROACH

This study was conducted using an ethnographic approach. James P. Spradley defines ethnography as:

the work of describing a culture. The central aim of ethnography is to understand another way of life from the native point of view (Spradley, 1980; 3).

Spradley's remarks could be restated: "the aim of this study is to understand the characteristics of a high learner in Christian religious education from that person's point of view." This approach is in keeping with Cyril Houle's concern to hear the adult learner rather than a reverberation of the researcher's own conceptions (Houle, 1983; 32-34). The approach is also informed by and consistent with Barney G. Glaser's (1978) understanding of "grounded theory." According to Glaser, the researcher is to enter the research setting with an openness and as few predetermined ideas as possible. He writes:

In this posture, the analyst is able to remain sensitive to the data by being able to record events and detect happenings without first having them filtered through and squared with pre-existing hypotheses and biases (Glaser, 1978; 3).

The approach requires, in so far as is possible, taking the learner's perspective. The learner becomes the teacher, and the researcher the learner. As Spradley points out, "Rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*" (Spradley, 1979; 3). In order to achieve this,

the researcher suspends judgment, setting aside for the moment the literature in which she or he has become immersed, and listens with the ears of a novice.

"Ethnography starts with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance," writes Spradley (1979; 4). This attitude is consistent with Glaser's "theoretical sensitivity." Glaser writes:

Commitment to preconceived hypotheses may limit the kind of observations, information and insights that the researcher makes and actually may have more access to (Glaser, 1978; 38).

The kind of sensitivity about which Glaser (1978) and Spradley (1979) write, also attends to the matter of reciprocity, raised by Patti Lather (1986). She writes:

Research designs can be more or less participatory, but dialogic encounter is required to some extent if we are to invoke the reflexivity needed to protect research from the researcher's own enthusiasms. Debriefing sessions with participants provide an opportunity to look for exceptions to emerging generalizations. Submitting concepts and explanations to the scrutiny of all those involved sets up the possibility of theoretical exchange -- the collaborative theorizing at the heart of research which both advances emancipatory theory and empowers the researched (Lather, 1986; 268-69).

The role of the data from the review of adult development, transitions, adult education, and adult religious education literature is different in this approach than in educational research wherein it is attempted to test hypotheses. Lather (1986) writes,

The search is for theory which grows out of context-embedded data, not in a way that automatically rejects a priori theory, but in a way that keeps preconceptions from distorting the logic of evidence (Lather, 1986; 267).

Being "steeped" in the literature of adult development,

transitions, adult education, and adult religious education literature increases sensitivity (Glaser, 1978; 3).

This study followed the basic approach Cyril O. Houle used in his research on "...those adults who engage to an outstanding degree in activities which are commonly thought to be educational" (Houle, 1963; 4). Houle interviewed twenty-two adults identified by their friends or educational directors and counselors as "high learners." The interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed. Houle went into these interviews without conscious hypotheses, and used the interviews to generate hypotheses about this group of adult learners.

A two-stage process was suggested not only by Houle's experience in studying adult learners, but is also indicated by Philip A. Cusick's approach to field research (Cusick, 1983) and by Glaser's grounded theory research (1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Cusick points out that in his studies of high schools his initial focus shifted after he had spent some time in the field. Preliminary data often challenged the original hypothesis or modified it. The first stage of this proposed study allowed for that kind of correction. Glaser's concept of "saturation" also points in this direction. Data from the interviews are constantly analyzed as the study proceeds, and the categories are fully saturated when no new factors emerge (Glaser, 1978).

RESEARCH PARADIGM

Thomas Kuhn, in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), argued that a conceptual framework informs and shapes how science is done. He called this conceptual framework a "paradigm." W. Schubert describes this framework or paradigm as "... a loosely connected set of ideas, values and rules that governs the conduct of inquiry, the ways in which data are interpreted, and the way the world may be viewed" (Schubert, 1986; 170). In a postscript to the second edition of his book, Kuhn distinguished between two uses of the term "paradigm":

On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science (Kuhn, 1970; 175).

The first sense Kuhn calls the "sociological," while the second refers to "exemplary past achievements" (Kuhn, 1970; 175).

Schubert (1986) identifies three paradigms and their implications for educational research. They are: "... the perennial or empirical/analytic, (2) the practical or interpretive, and (3) the critical or emancipatory" (Schubert, 1986; 171). The second paradigm, the "practical" or "interpretative" has also been called "symbolic," "hermeneutic," and "microethnographic" to underline the cultural science character of this approach (Popkewitz,

1984; 41).

Schubert further describes the "practical paradigm" by drawing on Jurgen Habermas's Knowledge and Human Interests (1971), as well as the work of Bernstein (1976) and Giroux (1980), in terms of the interest it serves, its social organization, and mode of rationality (Schubert, 1986; 180-82). For Schubert, Habermas's Hermeneutic Science Paradigm corresponds to the practical paradigm and could be described as serving practical interests, and recognizing the interactive quality of social organization. In terms of rationality, interaction and communication are emphasized. Thus, reality is understood to be intersubjectively constituted and shared; human beings meaning makers. The meaning(s) underlying everyday living is discerned through attention to the use of language (Schubert, 1986; 181).

In the social and educational sciences, the practical paradigm "defines social life as created and sustained through symbolic interactions and patterns of conduct" (Popkewitz, 1984; 40). Popkewitz continues:

Through the interactions of people, it is argued, rules are made and sustained to govern social life. The ideas of "rule-making" and "rule governed" can be contrasted to the law-like generalization of the empirical-analytic sciences. In the latter, it is methodologically assumed that there is an invariant nature to human behavior which can be discovered. The idea of "rules" shifts attention from the invariant nature of behavior to the field of human action, intent and communication (Popkewitz, 1984; 40).

In The Practical: A Language for the Curriculum (1970), Joseph Schwab describes the differences between the practical and the theoretic paradigms in educational

research. In method, source, subject matter, and outcome, the practical mode is different from the theoretic. Schwab writes:

... theoretic statements are supposed to hold good for long periods of time and to apply unequivocally to each member of a large class of occurrences or recurrences. The end or outcome of the practical, on the other hand, is a *decision*, a selection and guide to possible action (Schwab, 1970; 2-3).

Theoretic subject matter is taken to be universal, as compared to the concrete and particular subject matter of the practical (Schwab, 1970; 3). Theoretic problems are "states of mind," whereas practical problems "arise from states of affairs in relation to ourselves" (Schwab, 1970; 3).

Theoretic inquiry is guided by a principle: this determines the shape of problem, the kind of data to be sought, and how the data are to be interpreted. The direction of the inquiry is dictated by a "guiding principle." Practical inquiry is not guided by that kind of guide or rule (Schwab, 1970; 4). Schwab writes, "The problem slowly emerges, then, as we search for data, and conversely, the search for data is only gradually given direction by the slow formation of the problem" (Schwab, 1970; 4).

Schwab cites three incompetences of theory: (1) failure of scope; (2) the "vice" of abstraction; and "radical plurality" (Schwab, 1970; 21f., 25f., 28f.).

The third "incompetence" of theory has to do with "radical plurality," by which Schwab means simply that, in

the behavioral sciences, for example, there are competing theories. He comments that "there is every reason to suppose that any one of the extant theories of behavior is a pale and incomplete representation of actual behavior" (Schwab, 1970; 28). Discounting the possibility that these competing theories could be brought into a single, comprehensive theory, Schwab contends that competing theories must be mediated by eclectic arts and function at the level of the concrete case, which, according to Schwab, "constitutes the heart of the practical" (Schwab, 1970; 29).

Schwab argues that the practical is neither deductive nor inductive in its method, but deliberative. The "target" of the method is not a generalization or an explanation as is the case with an inductive approach, nor does it deal with abstractions as a deductive approach does. Unlike the inductive approach, its "target" is "a decision about action in a concrete situation;" and unlike the deductive approach, it deals with the "concrete case" (Schwab, 1970; 36).

Three modes of operation identified by Schwab are: (1) the practical, (2) the quasi-practical, and (3) the eclectic.

The method of the practical (called 'deliberation' in the loose way we call theoretic methods 'induction') is, then, not at all a linear affair proceeding step-by-step, but rather a complex, fluid, transactional discipline aimed at identification of the desirable and at either attainment of the desired or at alteration of desires (Schwab, 1970; 5).

The quasi-practical is "an extension of practical

methods and purposes to subject matters of increasing internal variety" (Schwab, 1970; 5). "In formulating its decisions," writes Schwab, "the special obligation of this aspect of the quasi-practical is to certain human weaknesses" (Schwab, 1970; 7). That is, the quasi-practical is for the "cloudy problem-situation" where boundaries are clearly defined (Schwab, 1970; 8).

The eclectic takes into account the weaknesses of a theory as a ground for decision-making and compensates for them (Schwab, 1970; 10). "The weaknesses of theory arise from two sources," according to Schwab: "the inevitable incompleteness of the subject matters of theories and the partiality of the view each takes of its already incomplete subject" (Schwab, 1970; 11). He writes, "Incompleteness of subject and partiality of view together render the use of theory as a replacement for firsthand information a dangerous procedure" (Schwab, 1970; 11).

Schwab describes two ways in which eclectic operations correct the weaknesses of theory:

Eclectic operations repair these weaknesses (to some extent) in two ways. First, eclectic operations bring into clear view the particular truncation of subject characteristic of a given theory and bring to light the partiality of its view. Second, eclectic operations permit the serial utilization or even the conjoint utilization of two or more theories on practical problems (Schwab, 1970; 12).

Schubert (1986) uses Joseph Schwab's work as an example of the practical paradigm. Schwab built his practical paradigm on Aristotelian foundations. Four major elements in this paradigm correspond to Aristotle's four categories

of causation: the formal cause is reflected in the focus on the particularity of context.

Following Schwab's use of these four categories, the scope of this study is not adult learners in churches, nor even Protestant churches in general, but on Reformed churches in particular. The focus is on a particular context: Reformed churches in western Michigan.

The material cause in Aristotle's philosophy leads the educational researcher to be more interested in situationally specific problems than in the broad application of generalities. In this study, the interest is not so much in explaining why some adults in the church are more engaged in learning than others, as much as it is in attempting to understand why *these* adult learners in *this* particular church participate to such a high degree.

Immersion in the field, rather than objectivity, is a methodological value derived from Aristotle's efficient cause. The researcher's involvement in adult religious education and contact with adult learners results in "inside" knowing. Professional involvement with the religious tradition and residence in the geographical location of the study provide this kind of immersion.

While knowledge for its own sake is a reflection of the final cause in the theoretical or perennial model, in Schwab's application of the practical paradigm the researcher is interested in knowledge that is more useful or utilitarian. This study is expected to generate some

hypotheses that may ultimately help church educators more effectively recruit learners for adult religious education in Reformed churches (Schubert, 1986; 172-173).

For Glaser and Strauss, qualitative research is not merely a preliminary stage to quantitative research, but is "*a strategy concerned with the discovery of substantive theory*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1970; 289). Substantive theory, according to Glaser and Strauss, is

the formulation of concepts and their interrelation into a set of hypotheses for a given substantive area -- such as patient care, gang behavior, or education -- based on research in the area" (Glaser and Strauss, 1970; 288).

The substantive area in the present study is the high learner in adult religious education.

RESEARCH STEPS

The first step in this study was to identify the problem. The problem was framed as a question: Why do some adults participate in religious education to a higher degree than others? The question was not framed in the form of a hypothesis. Grounded theory research sets out to generate theory rather than to confirm an existing theory.

A limited literature review was carried out in order to develop the research proposal. This was the second step. Grounded theory research is generally wary of contaminating the results of the process by engaging in a full literature review (Glaser, 1978; 2-3). Rather, the goal is to begin the field research with as few preconceived ideas as possible.

The third step was to undertake theoretical sampling. This can be accomplished using field research methods, such as participant observation, field observation, and interviews, or some combination of the three. Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen define an interview as "a purposeful conversation, usually between two people (but sometimes involving more) that is directed by one in order to get information" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; 135). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. Two pilot interviews were conducted in November and December, and then a first round of interviews was done in January, and the remaining interviews conducted in February and March.

The data gathered in this way were then linked to theory by the process of coding. The data were divided into several categories and then subdivided into indicants. The categories were saturated when the interviews no longer generated new indicants. The coding process took place during the interviewing phase.

Because doing only research can "stultify" creativity, Glaser suggests building in time for the "out-of-awareness" processing of data (Glaser, 1978; 18). Anthony Storr (1988), in his exploration of the relationship between solitude and creativity, supports Glaser. The reordering process that takes place in the brain takes time (Storr, 1988; 25-26). Storr writes: "Changes of attitude take time because our ways of thinking about life and ourselves so

easily become habitual" (Storr, 1988; 32).

To allow the mind time to reorder perception and attitude, there was a period of more than a month between the two pilot interviews and the first round of ten interviews, and a shorter period of more than a week between the ten interviews and the remaining interviews. These "fallow periods" allowed the researcher time to step back from the data. Often new insights and ideas occurred when the researcher came back to write memos or journal entries following such periods.

Noting Glaser's emphasis on the value of "self-pacing" (Glaser, 1978; 23), the researcher attempted to alternate the research activities. Periods of time dedicated to interviewing were separated by time spent writing or revising the first three chapters of the dissertation or other work-related tasks, as well as recreation (Glaser, 1978; 18). This was also consistent with Storr's research on the creative process and the notion of "incubation" (Storr, 1988; 25).

SELECTION OF INFORMANTS

Letters were sent to Reformed Church pastors serving congregations in Holland, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, North Grand Rapids, South Grand Rapids, and Zeeland classes of the Reformed Church in America. An Information Sheet was included with the letter. (See Appendix A for a sample of the letter and information sheet.) The pastors were asked

to identify high learners in their congregations and to return the enclosed information sheet with names and addresses of these individuals. Twenty-eight responses were received, generating ninety names of potential informants. They represented twenty-six different western Michigan Reformed churches.

TABLE 1
Potential Informants by Age and Sex

AGE RANGE	MEN	%	WOMEN	%	TOTAL	%
18 - 21	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
22 - 27	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
28 - 33	3	3.5%	3	3.5%	6	7%
34 - 39	8	9%	15	17%	23	26%
40 - 49	16	18%	15	16%	31	34%
50 - 64	10	11%	7	8%	17	19%
65+	<u>7</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14%</u>
TOTALS	44	49.5%	46	50.5%	90	100%

A convenience sample of thirty names was taken from the list of ninety names submitted by pastors. The proportion of men and women in each age grouping, and the proportion of potential informants in each age range was taken into account in the convenience sample. Names of three potential informants were not considered for inclusion in the convenience sample because they were already known by the interviewer.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) compare theoretical sampling with statistical sampling. They write:

Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties, and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory. Statistical sampling is done to obtain accurate evidence on distributions of people among categories to be used in descriptions or verifications (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; 47)

TABLE 2
Convenience Sample by Age and Sex

AGE RANGE	MEN	%	WOMEN	%	TOTAL	%
28 - 33	1	5%	1	5%	2	10%
34 - 39	3	10%	5	17%	8	27%
40 - 49	5	15%	5	15%	10	30%
50 - 64	4	13%	2	7%	6	20%
65+	<u>1</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>13%</u>
TOTALS	14	46%	16	54%	30	100%

These individuals were then contacted by mail (Appendix B). Each letter was followed up by a phone call to secure participation in the study, answer questions, and arrange an appointment for the interview.

The actual sample finally interviewed in this study deviated from the demographics presented in Table 2. Some of the potential informants could not be reached by phone, while others were unable or unwilling to participate in the study. Alternate names were then chosen. The demographics for the actual sample appear in Appendix C.

The informants were given fictional names to preserve

anonymity, and the churches in which they are members were assigned other names. Church and age-range codes are given in Appendix D.

The terminology of this study follows the lead of James P. Spradley (1979), who speaks of "informants" rather than "respondents" or "subjects." Keying off a linguistics definition, he notes several characteristics of an informant. One of these characteristics is that informants are a source of information. They are the ethnographer's teachers (Spradley, 1979; 25).

Spradley distinguishes the role of informant from the role of "subject." He writes:

Social science research that uses subjects usually has a specific goal: to test hypotheses. Investigators are not primarily interested in discovering the cultural knowledge of the subjects; they seek to confirm or disconfirm a specific hypothesis by studying the subjects responses. Work with subjects begins with preconceived ideas; work with informants begins with a naive ignorance. Subjects do not define what it is important for the investigator to find out; informants do (Spradley, 1979; 29).

One of the distinctions between informants and respondents, according to Spradley, is the language used in asking questions.

Survey research with respondents almost always employs the language of the social scientist. The questions arise out of the social scientist's culture. Ethnographic research, on the other hand, depends more fully on the language of the informant. The questions arise out of the informant's culture (Spradley, 1979; 31).

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Each interview began with an explanation of the focus of the study and the purpose of the interview. The following statement was used as the introduction:

"Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. As the letter indicated, I am interested in learning about adult learners in religious education. I think that "high learners" like yourself can teach us something about adult religious education.

While I will take some notes while we are talking, I would also like, with your permission, to tape this interview. The tape will be a more complete record of our conversation, and will allow me to be more attentive to the things you say.

We'll begin with some general questions about your participation in the life of the church, and in adult religious education. Let me say again that I am not looking for certain "correct" answers. For the purposes of this interview, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions."

Informants were also asked for permission to record the interview (only one person objected to recording an interview) and reminded that the conversation would be treated with strict confidence. If there were no further questions, the interview proceeded in the manner described below.

James P. Spradley (1979) lists five types of descriptive questions that may be used in an ethnographic interview. They are: "Grand Tour Questions," "Mini-Tour Questions," "Example Questions," "Experience Questions," and "Native Language Questions" (Spradley, 1979; 86-89).

The "Grand Tour Question" covers many aspects of a person's experience, such as places, people, periods of time, events, activities and objects (Spradley, 1979;

86-87). This type of question encourages the informant to ramble, according to Spradley (1979; 87). In this study, interviews used the "Grand Tour" type of question to explore informants' general involvement in the church.

The difference between a "Grand Tour" and a "Mini-Tour" question has to do with the unit of experience. "Mini-Tour" type questions focus on a smaller unit of experience (Spradley, 1979; 88). In the interviews for this study, "Mini-Tour" questions were used to narrow the focus to the informants' participation in adult religious education.

An "Example Question" takes a single event and asks for an example (Spradley, 1979; 88). In the interviews conducted as part of this study, informants were asked to describe how they came to participate in a particular adult religious education class or program.

Informants were asked "Experience Questions." This type of question asks for the informant's experience in a particular setting. It follows after "Grand" and "Mini-Tour" questions (Spradley, 1979; 88-89). "Experience Questions" were used to explore the informants' participation in a particular program or class.

According to Spradley, ethnographers, no matter what approach they take in their study, have to deal with language: the language they speak and the one spoken by their informants (Spradley, 1979; 17). Thus, "Native Language Questions" are also important in interviewing informants. "Native Language questions ask informants to use the terms and phrases most commonly used in the cultural

scene" (Spradley, 1979; 89).

Jill Mattuck Tarule (1980) also sees the significance of language. For her, language is a clue to a person's place in the transformative process. She writes:

... a person's language contains clues about how that person perceives the world. Language reveals much about the quality and intensity of people's efforts to make meaning in their lives. If we are aware of these steps, we can help to see our students' language as a window into their deepest transformative processes (Tarule, 1980; 33).

Nor are "Native Language" questions restricted to use overseas. As Spradley notes, "Ethnographers at home have to learn the language no less than ethnographers overseas" (Spradley, 1979; 19).

Because the interviewer was already conversant with the language of the informants' cultural context -- i.e., Reformed Church congregations in western Michigan -- this type of question was not always necessary. Occasionally, an informant did use terminology with which the interviewer was not familiar, and then a "Native Language" question was asked.

Each interview began with a "Grand Tour" type of question such as, "What can you tell me about your participation in the life of your church?" This question enabled the informants to "ramble" about their involvement in various church activities, both educational and non-educational.

The "Grand Tour" question was followed with "Mini-Tour" questions, which focused on smaller units of experience. "What kinds of learning activities have you participated in

at the church as an adult?" "What adult religious education experiences have you participated in recently?"

If the researcher sensed the informant spoke with some enthusiasm about a particular adult religious education class or program in responding to a "Mini-Tour" question, an "Experience" type question, such as, "Tell me more about your participation in Bethel Bible," would be asked.

A "Grand Tour" question like, "What makes you want to participate in adult learning experiences at the church?" or "Why do you participate in adult religious education?", was followed by an "Example" question such as, "How did you come to sign up for the Bethel Bible class?" or "Why did you enroll for Stephen Ministry training?"

The interviews were loosely structured. The interviewer had formulated an initial set of questions as a checklist. In the first interviews, these were referred to from time to time to see if certain areas of interest had been covered during the course of the interview. As the interviewer gained experience in the process, and as new areas grew out of the previous interview(s), the initial checklist was modified accordingly and referred to less frequently.

The following questions constituted the initial checklist for the interviews:

1. Tell me about yourself as a learner in the church. Or, What would you like to tell me about yourself as a learner in the church? Or, What can you tell me about yourself as a learner in the church?

2. How would you describe yourself as an adult learner? Or, if people in your church were to describe you as an adult learner, what kinds of things would they say?
Your pastor has described you as a "high learner?" How do you feel about that?
3. How do you feel about your learning in the church? Or, what does it feel like when you're learning in the church?
4. When you reflect on your learning in the church, what seems to make you feel like participating in a class or some other program? Or, what makes you feel like participating in adult learning in your church? Or, what kinds of things seem to make you feel like learning?
5. Can you tell me about some of the kinds of things you have studied in the church? Or, what kinds of things have you studied in the church? Or, what have you learned?
6. What are some of the things that have happened in your life that you think are important? When did they happen? What did they feel like? What were some of the outcomes/results?
7. How much (formal) education have you had? How do you feel about your education? Why?
8. Is there anything about your learning as an adult in the church that we haven't touched on? Or, as you reflect on what we've talked about, is there anything we seem to have overlooked or missed? Or, As you think about this

conversation, is there anything else you would like to say? Or, Is there anything else I should ask, do you think?

The questions were open-ended, encouraging longer responses and avoiding "Yes" or "No" answers. Some questions were not asked until the informant seemed to have nothing else to say about the subject. The interviewer waited to see if any mention was made about life transitions that might be connected with subsequent learning activities before asking the question, "What are some things that happened in your life that you feel were important?" Often, the informant mentioned a significant life transition in connection with learning without the interviewer having to ask the question.

The goal was to let the informant speak without using questions to lead in a predetermined direction. The "Grand Tour" and "Mini-Tour" types of questions helped the interviewer avoid asking questions that were too specific or directive. Sometimes in responding to the "Mini-Tour" questions, informants would describe how they came to participate in some adult religious education activity. Then, if more detail or explanation were needed, the interviewer might ask an "Example" or "Experience" type of question.

The interviews were held, whenever possible, in the home of the informant. This was done intentionally, in view of the experience of Erik and Joan Erikson and Helen Kivnick,

(1986) who interviewed older persons for their research on vital involvement in old age.

"Any habitation that one enters as a visitor or an observer always has its ambience, its tone," according to Erik and Joan Erikson and Joan Kivnick (Erikson, Erikson, and Kivnick, 1986; 27). In describing their interviews with older people, the authors write about the "personal space" of those they interviewed. Their comments suggest the importance of attending to the physical environment subjects call "home" for discerning clues about their involvement as adult learners. They note that "The space inhabited by the individual is an investiture of preferences and usages" (Erikson, Erikson, and Kivnick, 1986; 27). The authors conclude:

We feel, therefore, that the arrangement of the spaces in which our people live is in many ways as much an indication of their involvement as any verbal statement they made in the course of our interviews" (Erikson, Erikson, and Kivnick, 1986; 27).

When the interviews were held in the homes of the informants, the interviewer was provided with a sense of context. In some cases, books the informant was reading were visible during the interview. Something of the individual's socio-economic status could also be inferred from the neighborhood and type of home. The researcher was attentive to the way the room arrangement might suggest values about learning that the individual held.

A few of the interviews were held at other locations, such as the informant's place of work, a restaurant, or a

room in a nearby church. In these instances, it was not possible to get other clues about an informant's involvement as a learner in adult religious education.

DATA MANAGEMENT

The data for this study include both the responses from western Michigan Reformed Church ministers who submitted names of "high learners" in their congregations used to identify potential informants and the records of interviews with the informants finally selected for the study.

The responses from the ministers were saved in a file, and entered into a computer data-base created for storing and retrieving the data. The fields created for this file allowed the researcher to draw out names based on age range, gender, and congregation of potential informants. It was used to create the mailing lists for letters to thirty potential informants selected from the ninety names submitted by the ministers.

The interviewer took notes during each interview and taped all but a few of the interviews. (In two instances, there were mechanical problems that resulted in loss of the taped data, and in another the setting did not lend itself to taping the interview. Only in one instance did an informant object to recording the interview; the objection was honored and the interview was not recorded on an audio-cassette tape.) The original handwritten notes and audio-cassette tapes were retained as part of the permanent

record. A sample interview transcript can be found in Appendix E.

Glaser encourages the jotting down of notes about ideas after leaving the field (Glaser, 1978; 52). A wide right-hand margin was left on the paper used for taking notes during the interviews. Following each interview, additional notes were made, either in this margin or in a journal used by the researcher for recording impressions, observations, and memos. These notes included observations about the informant's dress and/or physical appearance, certain features of the physical environment in which the interview was conducted, impressions, and questions for later follow up.

At the end of a day's interviews, or as soon as time permitted, the interview notes, supplemented by information from the audio-cassette tapes, were typed up on a word-processor and saved on a diskette for storage and retrieval. A hard copy of the material was printed in condensed mode, which provided the researcher with a record of the interviews and a wide margin for coding and notes.

Several audio-cassette tapes of interviews were transcribed in full to provide the researcher with a written verbatim of selected interviews. These were compared with the raw field notes from the interviews and the computer-generated printed copies.

Each informant was given an identifying alpha-numeric code, which included the sequence in the interview phase,

age group, and church. The first 2 digits of the code indicated the sequence in the interview phase, the third digit indicated the age group in which the informant belonged, and a letter identified the church in which the informant held membership. Thus, the code 054A, identifies the informant as the fifth person interviewed and places the informant in the 34 to 39 age range. The code further identifies the informant as a member of Old First Church. (See Appendix D for church and age range codes.) "AT" and "FN" were added to indicate whether the data were taken from the audio-cassette tape of an informant's interview or from the field notes taken during the interview.

Categories were developed for coding the interview data. These were written in the margins of the field notes to identify various categories, including new and emerging ones not previously identified in either the literature of adult development, transitions, adult education, and adult religious education or previous interviews. The symbols for coding the categories are listed below:

SE Self-Evaluation

AE Attitudes About Education

LT Life Transitions

GE Goals & Expectations

IN Information

OP Opportunities

BA Barriers

PT Participation

PA Perceived Accessibility
 PC Previous Contact
 TP Tradition of Participation
 SI Social Interaction
 NI Need/Interest in Topic
 SS Social Support
 MO Membership in Sponsoring Organization
 SE Socioeconomic Status
 SB Situational Barriers
 IB Institutional Barriers
 DB Dispositional Barriers
 AC Access/Mobility
 PR Access/Geographical Proximity
 AG Age/Influence of Historical Context

In addition to field notes, audio-cassette tapes, transcripts, and lists of informants according to age and church membership, the researcher kept a journal of the entire process. The journal was used to keep a record of ideas, insights, observations, questions, and reflections on the research. A section of the journal was reserved for "memo writing," which is another aspect of Glaser's grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978; 83ff.). The journal also included the researcher's subjective impressions, observations, and feelings in addition to the more "objective" entries. Norris points out that the inclusion of the researcher's subjective comments helps assure adequate subjectivity, an aspect of validity in qualitative

research (Norris, 1985; 123). This journal was also maintained as part of the permanent record.

VALIDITY

As Cusick points out, in the field methodology approach to research, such as taken by this study, "There are no specific rules of conduct by which one may assure readers that the account he presents is valid beyond his own experience" (Cusick, 1983; 132). He writes:

There is no theoretical way to assure the worth of any individual study. There are commonsense guidelines, but the worth of each result lies with the accuracy and plausibility of the description presented to critical readers who are free to reject accounts that seem laced with bias and whimsy. The obligation to present more than an idiosyncratic account lies with the researcher, but the test of whether he or she succeeded lies with the critical reader (Cusick, 1983; 132-33).

The concern for validity was addressed in this study by testing perceptions with the informants at the conclusion of the interview. Each interview closed with the interviewer summarizing key points and asking the informant whether or not their viewpoint had been accurately described. This afforded the informant an opportunity to correct or modify the interviewer's understanding(s).

The concern for validity was also addressed by going back to several informants after the interviews had been completed and sharing with them the researcher's findings and asking for their critique and comment. This follows a suggestion in Lather's summary of procedures for attaining full reciprocity in educational research. She suggests

"Sequential interviews of both individuals and small groups to facilitate collaboration and a deeper probing of research issues" (Lather, 1986; 266).

RELIABILITY

The concern in this study was with accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data. Reliability in this study is understood in the way Bogdan and Biklen have described it, as a "fit" between the researcher's recorded data and "what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; 44).

"Fit" is one of four requirements Glaser lists for grounded theory. In addition to relevance, work, and modifiability, Glaser writes that "the categories of the theory must fit the data" (Glaser, 1978; 4). In quantitative research, data that does not fit are discarded rather than used to correct a category. By contrast, in grounded theory, categories are "refit" to the data as successive data demand modification of the categories. Research in literature of adult development, transitions, adult education, and adult religious education provides knowledge of possible categories that could fit on an "emergent basis."

Thus, Glaser describes reliability as "fit" in terms of fit, refit, and emergent fit (Glaser, 1978; 4). In other approaches to educational research, there is concern for

consistency of observations made by the same or other researchers over time. While reliability is a key concept in quantitative research, in qualitative research comprehensiveness and accuracy are key concepts.

The concern for reliability in this study was addressed in several ways. First, all interviews were conducted by the same person. This meant that informants' comments passed through the same human "filter" and were processed in the same way. Second, while new questions were added as the interviews proceeded, the same kinds of "Grand Tour" and "Mini-Tour" questions framed the beginning of each interview and each interview ended with the same invitation for the informant to consider whether or not there were any other things they wanted to share. Third, careful records of each interview were kept.

This chapter has described the basic orientation, methodology, research focus, and procedures of the study of adults who can be described as "high learners" in adult religious education. The assumptions underlying this approach to educational research were identified and discussed and matters of validity and reliability have been addressed.

The findings which this study generated are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this chapter came from thirty interviews with high learners in churches. The individuals chosen for the interview phase of the present study all fit the profile of a high learner.

Table 3 lists in alphabetical order the thirty high learners who participated in the study. Shown in this grid are (1) orientation to learning (using Houle's typology), (2) life transition, (3) leadership, and (4) use of religious language.

Twenty-one of the high learners in the study spoke of a significant life transition in relationship to learning. Twenty-three were serving in leadership positions, either within their own congregation or at the regional or denominational level. Fourteen mentioned the importance of a teacher in their decision to participate in an adult religious education class or program.

Because the researcher who did the interviewing is an ordained minister the grid also includes religious language. Eight of the high learners in the study used specifically Christian terms when speaking of their orientation toward or participation in adult religious education. Tim, a goal-oriented high learner, for example, said he engaged in

adult religious education in order to understand God's purpose for his life. Marie attributed her desire for learning to the Holy Spirit.

TABLE 3
A Summary of Five Categories

INFORMANT	ORIENT	TRANSITION	LEADER	TEACHER	RELIGION
Art	Activity	X	X	X	X
Bob	Activity		X		
Brad	Activity	X	X	X	
Carol	Activity	X	X	X	
Chuck	Activity		X	X	
Connie	Learning		X		
Craig	Learning	X	X	X	
Cynthia	Activity		X		
Dale	Activity	X	X		
Dan	Goal	X	X	X	X
Ed	Activity	X	X		X
Ellie	Learning	X			
Ethel	Learning	X			
Harold	Goal	X	X	X	
Jim	Activity		X	X	
John	Activity		X	X	
Juella	Activity	X	X		
Kay	Activity	X			X
Lloyd	Learning		X	X	
Marge	Activity	X	X		
Marie	Goal	X			X
Maryan	Learning	X	X	X	
Mary Ellen	Learning	X	X		X
Nancy	Goal	X	X		
Paul	Learning				X
Sally	Goal	X		X	
Scott	Activity		X	X	
Susie	Learning	X			
Tammy	Goal	X	X		
Tim	Goal	X	X	X	X

The identity of the researcher who conducted the interview seemed to influence Tim's use of religious language in answering questions about participation in and orientation toward adult religious education. Marie, on the

other hand, seemed to speak out of a conservative Christian tradition in which speaking about the Holy Spirit as the source of the desire to learn is very natural.

These thirty high learners ranged in age from thirty to eighty-six. Fifteen women and fifteen men were interviewed. No minorities are among the high learners interviewed for this study. With few exceptions, these high learners live in middle- to upper middle-level income homes in attractive neighborhoods.

The amount of formal education varied from the secondary to the graduate level. More than half of the nine high learners who had only a high school education had taken some college courses or were enrolled in a junior college course at the time of the interview. Five of the eighteen high learners with college degrees either had already earned a master's degree or were working on one at the time of the interviews. One high learner has a Ph.D. and one is a high school drop-out who later completed the graduation requirements and then went on to college. (Information about the informants is found in Appendix C. The informants' first names are arranged alphabetically for ease of reference.)

These thirty high learners are from fourteen west Michigan Reformed Church in America congregations ranging in size from over 900 members to just under 200 members, with an average membership of 482. ("Membership" in this instance refers to the number of "active communicant members," i.e.,

adults and older youth.) In all but two instances, there are at least two (one woman and one man) informants from each church; four churches each are represented by three informants. These fourteen churches are located in urban centers (4), metropolitan areas (3), suburban neighborhoods (2), small towns (2), or rural villages (3). (Information about these churches is found in Appendix D.)

The data from the thirty interviews that comprised this study of high learners in adult religious education are consistent with data from other studies of adult learners. Patricia Cross's Chain-of-Response model (1981), which contextualizes life transitions, offers categories which can serve as "bins" for sorting and storing the interview data. These categories are the major headings under which the research data are organized in the first part of this chapter.

Not all the data fit into the categories in Cross's Chain-of-Response model, however. Leadership, reading, the influence of the church as a community that stimulates learning, fellowship, creativity, and the attractiveness of certain kinds of teachers emerged as separate categories and are treated later in the chapter.

Self-evaluation, attitudes toward education, life transitions, goals and expectations for attainment, barriers and opportunities, information, and participation are the categories or "bins" used to organize the reporting and discussion of the research data in this next section.

SELF-EVALUATION

High learners in the church typically have a positive sense of the self. They view themselves as individuals open to new ideas and willing to wrestle with difficult questions, as able to contribute something worthwhile to their communities and churches, as committed people, and as growing persons. Their healthy sense of self-esteem sometimes has its roots in a religious experience of divine forgiveness and acceptance. High learners are confident persons.

The contours of their self-confidence were evident in non-verbal ways during the interviews. They were comfortable and relaxed in the interview setting, even when it was not in their home. Whether sitting in an easy chair in the family room or perched on a stool by the kitchen breakfast counter, their posture was relaxed. They spoke with confidence and self-assurance. Only one of the high learners interviewed declined having the interview taped. The others readily nodded assent when asked if the session could be taped.

OPENNESS

High learners use words like "liberal" and "progressive" to describe themselves. They find new ideas attractive and interesting rather than threatening and dangerous.

Ethel, a thirty-six-year-old teacher and wife/mother, sees herself as a "progressive" person and seeks intellectual stimulation. Brad sees himself as a very open

minded person: "I'm definitely open-minded." Scott, a forty-four-year-old school teacher, perceives himself as more liberal than other members of the congregation. "I'm a little more liberal than the ordinary member here," he says. Chuck, a fifty-seven-year-old business man, sees himself as a person who tries to be open: "I'm not very traditional in the church."

High learners are aware that not everyone shares their openness. Ethel contrasts herself with others who are afraid to question things. She reads Perspectives, a journal published by the Reformed Church to encourage discussion of unsettled questions and to stimulate the asking of unsettling questions. "I enjoy that type of thing," says Ethel.

Like Ethel, Connie is aware that she is different than other adults in her church. She says,

Your friends really don't understand. They don't read all the books you do. They don't understand your reasons. You almost have to be apologetic.

Brad, one of the younger high learners in the study (thirty-two), states the difference even more sharply: "I'm not impressed with the people in my church." He is open-minded and receptive to new ideas, but other people in his church do not want to "rock the boat." When Brad suggested a controversial topic for the adult Sunday school class, people approached him privately and told him it was not a good idea. Brad sees the other adults in his church resisting change and growth. He perceives the other

Reformed church in his community to be more "open-minded" than the church he attends. In the interview, Brad expressed the feeling that maybe it was time to move on to a different church.

Since not everyone is as open as these high learners, there can be a painful loneliness.

Openness is both a willingness to entertain new and different ideas and a recognition that one never quite finishes growing. Cynthia put it this way:

I'm certainly a struggling learner. I've never arrived. There's so much more I'd like to know.

High learners seem to understand what Peggy Lee meant in the song, "Is That All There Is?" They have a sense that there is "something more" to know and to learn.

CONTRIBUTION

High learners see themselves as being able to make a contribution. Kay says, "I want to be where I can be used." The desire to make a contribution or the sense that one has a contribution to make is part of the self-evaluation of the high learner. Brad, an achievement-oriented young adult says, "I'm always trying to contribute." He would like to become a public speaker and take his message on the road like well-known inspirational and motivational speakers. Tim says, "I'm not going to stand on the sidelines. I'm going to be a participant."

The high learners in this study do not stand on the sidelines. They participate actively as contributors. Their self-evaluation as contributors to society is matched by

their lives of active service to church and community.

COMMITMENT

A sense of commitment is often part of a high learner's self-evaluation. They are people who have made a commitment and who want to follow through with appropriate actions. Scott says, "There's a certain obligation to being a Christian." Craig feels strongly about honoring one's commitments. For him, "Being a Christian ought to translate into some behavior." Tammy echoes his feelings, seeing adult religious education as the natural outgrowth of personal religious commitment. "When you make a commitment, you need to know what that commitment means."

RELATIONSHIPS

Some high learners are aware of their need to be connected with others. They value interpersonal relationships in the educational setting and in life generally. "I'm interested in people," says Dale. This interest was reflected in the hospitality shown the interviewer at the time of the interview. The interview was more a conversation between friends than a formal research procedure. After the interview, there was an invitation to share lunch with Dale and his wife, Katherine. His interest in people is also reflected in his work visiting sick and shut-in church members. Dale sees himself as a "people person."

John helped start a new adult Sunday school class in the church. He listed three motives for organizing the class:

(1) to grow spiritually, (2) to enhance connectedness with others, and (3) to make spirituality part of the atmosphere of the church. He emphasizes the preeminence of the second motive: "The sense of belonging or being connected is very important to me." Thus, John prefers a class which devotes at least 40% of the time to discussion, so people can interact and get to know each other. The room arrangement is also important: a circle of chairs fosters the kind of interaction and connectedness John values.

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance was mentioned by several of the high learners in the study. Discovering that they were accepted, by God and/or by other people, allowed these high learners to reimage themselves and led them to see learning differently.

When Tammy realized God "could forgive everything," she began to see more value in herself. Until then, learning was a duty, and although Tammy was a good student, she viewed learning as something a person had to do. After the realization that God could forgive everything, Tammy saw purpose in life and began to view learning differently. Now she wanted to learn.

For Maryan the realization that "God accepts us as we are" came at a Winning Women retreat she attended. The message of that retreat was "a revelation" to her. Shortly after the retreat, Maryan became the spiritual life leader of her church's women's group.

The feeling of being accepted came to Cynthia as an

adolescent in the church. People in the church made her feel accepted. Acceptance enabled her to develop a positive self-image.

Acceptance is important to men as well as women. John relates that on a retreat with the church another member told him, "You're really something special." The affirmation, from a significant person in his constellation of friendships, was important to his developing sense of worth as a person.

High learners in the church see themselves as competent people who have something to offer their churches and their communities. They perceive themselves to be open to continuing growth. They sometimes recognize they are different than others in the church, and this occasionally can be a sad and painful recognition.

As a group, they appear to have a healthy sense of self-esteem. Their sense of self-esteem sometimes comes from having heard the message, "You are accepted just as you are." Acceptance, both human and divine, contributes to self-esteem and also affects the way a person feels about education. This is one way self-evaluation is linked to attitudes about education, another category in the Chain-of-Response model.

ATTITUDES ABOUT EDUCATION

High learners have positive attitudes about education and learning. In many instances, the source of their

positive perspective is to be found in the childhood experiences of home and church and school.

GROWTH

High learners in the church want to grow. Cynthia and her husband took Bethel Bible together because they felt "scripturally illiterate." It turned out to be an enjoyable learning experience. She comments, "We're always looking for things that will help us grow." Nancy echoes this attitude about growth: "We need to keep growing." For Nancy, teaching others means growth for herself. "I grow more that way," she says. For Dale, there is an inexplicable "drive" to grow. This drive or desire can be, as Kay knows, a consuming thing: "I'm consumed by that desire to learn." These high learners see adult religious education helping them to grow.

INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION

High learners in the church seek intellectual stimulation. Steve says he's not interested in "shallow" kinds of learning experiences, but wants to participate in classes where there is something of substance to the learning. Ethel finds intellectual stimulation in Perspectives, a journal published by the Reformed Church in America to encourage discussion of controversial subjects and to stimulate the asking of unsettling questions. "I enjoy that type of thing," says Ethel. It is one place she finds the intellectual stimulation she seeks.

Another place she has found intellectual stimulation is

in the adult Sunday school class at the church she and her family attend. She describes the class as "one of the strongest educational programs" in the church. Getting "good speakers" is a priority. Professors from area colleges and seminaries provide leadership, with each one teaching a subject in a kind of mini-series format. She says that adults in this class "really have to chew on what they're [the professors] saying." Being in this class, for Ethel, is "like being back in college."

Connie wants to know, "Is there any depth to what we're doing?" She participates in an adult religious education class because the subject interests her, but, more importantly, the class must have some depth to it. She has taken a Bible study known as "The Divine Drama" that did not meet her criteria for substance and depth, but has stayed with it out of a sense of obligation to the pastor who is teaching the course and to the community, in which she feels she must serve as a kind of example.

The Sunday school class Paul attends is studying the New Testament Book of Acts. When he talks about positive learning experiences as an adult, he includes this class in his list. "I thoroughly enjoy the class," he says. "It is made up of thinkers." The intellectual stimulation gives Paul a sense of enjoyment. Enjoyment is expressive of another attitude high learners have toward adult religious education.

ENJOYMENT

When in the course of the twenty-third interview, the interviewer checked his impression that there seemed to be a relationship between learning and Craig's commitment to social action, suggesting that perhaps social action was a reason for Craig's participation in adult religious education, Craig quickly corrected the interviewer's impression, "I also enjoy learning." The enjoyment of learning is a characteristic attitude of the high learners interviewed in this study.

"I enjoy it," says Marge when asked to describe how she feels about learning. "I just like to do this." Having a good time and getting to know other people better contribute to Marge's enjoyment of learning in the Sunday school class she currently attends.

Of learning, Tammy says, "I just really enjoy it." While learning was once something she felt you had to do, there came a point in her life when it seemed to "make sense." "I saw purpose in life later and I had a different attitude."

Sally echoes the others: "I enjoy study." She enjoys reading, which is one of the ways she expands herself. She reads for growth rather than recreation. Her reading includes inspirational books by Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller.

Brad "enjoyed" high school and put himself through college. Susie responds to the question about her involvement in adult religious education with the comment,

"I like to learn in general."

George B. Leonard wrote, "At its best, its most effective, its most unfettered, the moment of learning is a moment of delight" (Leonard, 1968; 20). The attitude of these high learners in the church toward adult religious education and education in general reflects the delight Leonard described in Education and Ecstasy (1968).

EXCITEMENT

Nancy describes preparing the program for youth at a summer camp and the study she did as part of her work in program preparation as one of her "most exciting" learning experiences as an adult. "I love to study. Faith is a growing experience. Preparing to teach the kids spurred additional reading. The responsiveness of the kids made it exciting."

Art names a Consistory retreat last spring as one of his best religious education experiences as an adult. The retreat made use of resource books by Lester DeKoster to orient Elders and Deacons to their duties and responsibilities as members of the Consistory or church board. "It was exciting because it gave a definite direction."

Kay speaks of the desire to learn, saying, "I am consumed by that desire to learn." Learning involves highs and lows. Kay describes certain learning "plateaus" (which sounded more like "peaks" to the interviewer) where the feeling was, "Now I've got it!", when things made sense.

"There is nothing like that feeling when the light comes on," says Kay. Hearing Kay's comment, one might be reminded of George Leonard's remark: "*Learning is sheer delight*" (Leonard, 1968; 216).

OPENNESS AND EXPECTANCY

An attitude of openness toward life and a certain expectancy characterize these adult learners. "We need to make positive rather than negative decisions toward growth," says Kay, a forty-two-year-old housewife, who has made daily study of the Bible with the aid of audiocassettes from a Houston church her "mainstay" for twenty years. This habit of daily study has stabilized and sustained her in a reoccurrence of her cancer.

Kay's positive outlook extends to her response to the cancer, which she reimages as "an exciting opportunity to apply" her learning. She tells the interviewer, "God will take me through this in order to teach me new things."

EARLY EXPERIENCES

In almost every instance, high learners spoke positively about childhood experiences of education. They were typically good students in school and enjoyed learning. Their parents valued education and encouraged them to read and to learn.

Tammy got good grades in high school -- A's and B's. She recalls her feelings about school:

School was something I had to do. I did what was required. But it came easily for me. It didn't take very much effort.

This attitude about learning shifted later, when she came to see purpose in life. Although learning always seemed "natural," Tammy came to "enjoy" it: "I can't imagine not always being challenged to learn something new."

At forty-two, Maryan is taking a junior college course in ethics. She is an office manager with a high school education who speaks admiringly of her father who was "brilliant": "He was the smartest person I know." He was always taking courses of one kind or another to improve himself. Her father's life-long involvement in learning is partly behind her own continuing learning. She is close to getting her associate's degree.

Ethel grew up in an environment where education was a way of life. Her father was the superintendent of schools and his occupation spilled over into family life. "Education ordered our lives," Ethel remembers. She says, "I've always been in school." In the summers, she took classes offered at the school for enrichment. She went to college and became a junior high English teacher. For her, education and religious education are difficult to separate.

I guess my whole life has been in education. That's why it's really hard to separate church related education from the rest.

An interview with a thirty-six year old woman took place in her lakeside home. The house had all the appearances of being home for an active family. Cynthia juggles responsibilities of wife and mother with a part-time job in community education and volunteer work in the church.

Cynthia describes her parents as "always doing something at the church." She says,

I grew up with a sense of "That's how it is supposed to be." When we're not involved in something, I feel like we're missing out.

For Cynthia, the clue to participation in adult religious education is to be found in how a person was brought up as a child.

Looking back on her childhood and adolescence, Cynthia says, "I always enjoyed school, catechism, and RCYF." The adults in the church where Barb grew up were "good, kind Christian people. They made me feel accepted. They totally accepted you no matter what you were doing as a teenager."

Not all childhood experiences around school and learning were positive. "I'm not one for being in school," says Bob. "I tried so hard to do well and ended up disappointed with the resulting grades." Bob attended a local Bible college for a year, hoping to become a missionary pilot, but dropped out of the program.

This negative attitude did not keep Bob from becoming a high learner. Early childhood experiences can contribute to positive as well as negative attitudes toward education, but negative educational experiences in themselves do not prevent people from becoming high learners.

The interaction between self-evaluation and attitudes toward learning which Cross (1981) posits in her Chain-of-Response model was evident in the interviews with high learners. The interaction suggests a mediating element, an

orientation toward learning like those identified by Cyril Houle (1963) and refined by Stephen Lowe (1987), Roger Boshier (1971) and Boshier and John Collins (1985).

LIFE TRANSITIONS

The literature review links life transitions to learning. Reflective of this connection is Tammy's remark that the death of her two-year-old son was "one of the real growth spurts" in her life. Her son's death led her to read books, seek counseling, and attend a death and dying class at church.

Life transitions involving death -- especially that of a sibling in childhood or a parent or spouse in the adult years -- were frequently mentioned in conjunction with either the decision to participate in a particular class or program of adult religious education or in conjunction with the development of a basic orientation or stance toward learning.

Marie mentions the death of her friend when she was twelve as a significant life transition. The friend's death led Marie to a personal religious commitment. Ten years later, at a Navigator's conference with a theme of goals for life, the experience of her friend's death and her personal commitment combined to "spur" her into Bible study. It was the beginning of an adult search to know more about the Bible.

Nancy was a high school student when her brother was

killed in a car accident. Her brother's death impressed Nancy with the brevity of life. His death resulted in a redirection of her life. "I wanted to make my life count. I decided I wanted to teach." Nancy mentions this as one of the events that have affected her religious commitment.

Ellie was in college studying to be a nurse when her forty-five-year-old mother was diagnosed as having cancer. She was nineteen when her mother died. She left college to care for her mother at home. Ellie says,

My mother tutored me. I learned from her that every moment should be learning. I felt I had to use time more wisely. Life needs to be challenging. I want to learn something new every day.

Women were not the only ones who mentioned loss through death as a significant life transition. Ed was eighty-two when his wife died. He remembers his wife's doctor telling him, "Now, Ed, don't you die before you're through living." The physician's words led him to pray for God's leading. He views the call by the associate pastor of the church after this as a response to his prayer. The associate pastor asked Ed to become involved in a lay program of congregational care.

Ed responded affirmatively to the invitation and went to a two week Stephen Ministry training program in St. Louis. He calls the training the "emotionally most satisfying educational experience of my life."

The death of his wife led Ed to participate in a particular adult religious education program. But all through his life Ed was oriented toward learning. Although

he dropped out of high school, he later went on to college. Participation in adult religious education as a result of a life transition is consistent with Ed's orientation to learning.

Tim also mentioned death as a significant life transition. Tim's father died when Tim was in his early twenties. Now at mid-life (forty-five) Tim is aware in a new way of a sense of mortality. This has affected his outlook on life. He speaks of the search for meaning and purpose in life. "You study to find your place in God's plan," he says.

The death of a family member or close friend brings the brevity of life to consciousness. As Anthony Storr writes, "Man is the only creature who can see his own death coming; and when he does, it concentrates his mind wonderfully" (Storr, 1988; 169). The experience of loss through death can be an important life transition in terms of adult religious education.

Apart from the death of a family member or friend, there are other transitions one experiences in the course of life that also affect attitudes toward and participation in adult religious education. These transitions include leaving the parental home, getting married, having children, and retiring from work.

Leaving the parental home is one such life transition. Craig grew up in a family that attended a Protestant Reformed Church, a rather strict conservative church within the Reformed tradition. When he left home at age 19 and

joined the Air Force, he did not stop attending church. Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship and attending a David Wilkerson Crusade influenced his religious development. He says, "This was a radical experience for me." Instead of a rational faith inherited from his parents, Craig developed a personal faith. Career plans shifted from a major in psychology at Calvin College to religious education; he enrolled at the seminary for a term.

Like Craig, Dan also left the parental home for military service. He returned from Viet Nam in 1969 with a serious alcohol problem. He started reading the Bible in order to cope with the alcoholism. But the Bible didn't come alive for him and he became discouraged. It was then the associate pastor of the church invited him to take Bethel Bible training. Reluctantly, he agreed to participate in the teacher training phase of Bethel Bible.

"That was the beginning," says Dan. "The Bible came alive. At that point I developed a hunger for God's Word." The Bethel experience turned Dan on to adult religious education and to learning in general. He recalls his school experience as a child, noting,

I was not a fantastic student. I started too early and had a problem with reading. I was always struggling. I wasn't a good student.

Now in his early forties, Dan is a high learner in the church, and taking college courses and attending occasional seminars in conjunction with his work.

Marge was raised in an unchurched home, so marriage to a

Christian husband whose family tradition was one of active church membership brought adjustment and change. She speaks of her husband's influence as being a significant factor in her participation in adult religious education.

Having children is another life transition that has influenced the participation of high learners. Ethel taught English at the junior high school. But when she and her husband had their first child, she had to leave her teaching for a while. She had neighbors who went to a weekday morning Bible study at a nearby Christian Reformed Church. These friends invited her to go. The change in her schedule brought about by having an infant to care for at home allowed her to attend the Bible study with her friends. "I really enjoyed that," she says.

As she reflects on this life transition, Ethel comments:

I think my involvement in these studies is directly influenced by what I'm doing at the time. And at that time I happened to have an infant child and I was not working.

Without the prompting of an interview question about life transitions, Susie reflected on attendance and participation in adult religious education and observed that the advent of children affects attendance and participation. When she started having children, she joined a women's circle for Bible study. The circle included other young mothers, and became a support group for them. The transition for Susie was from work to home, and from career-oriented adult education to adult religious education.

Participation in adult religious education is affected by the life transition of retirement. Connie was retiring from teaching English about the time Mark Hoffman became the pastor at Christ Reformed Church. This was a "wonderful new forward time" in the life of the church. The momentum associated with the new pastor's arrival coincided with this life transition in Connie's life to lead to continuing involvement in education in the life of the church.

Not all of life's transitions follow a developmental or social timetable. The unexpected, unplanned, and unscheduled also bring transition. World events, divorce, and illness can precipitate transitions that have an effect on participation in adult religious education.

A son's divorce and a friend's terminal illness spurred Sally to learning. When her son and his young daughter came home to live following his divorce, Sally began reading about parenting. When her friend was diagnosed with cancer, she read in order to have more empathy for cancer patients.

Wall Street's "Black Monday" in 1987 affected many of the adults in Ethel's circle of friends. Following this experience, there were adjustments in life style and critical reflections on values. Ethel and her husband formed a study group with other couples affected by the stock market plunge and read Scott Peck's The Road Less Travelled. She says, "We felt a need for people our age to do something that has substance."

Kay is a high learner who was in transition at the time

of her interview. She is in the midst of treatment for a recurrence of cancer. The presence of this disease was first detected and treated surgically in 1986. Its recurrence in the past year led Kay to take stock and drove her back into study. She wanted to know, "Where does God fit in?"

Where the diagnosis of cancer might be devastating to others, Kay comes at the disease with a positive outlook. She says,

This is an exciting opportunity to apply my faith. God will take me through this in order to teach me new things.

For Kay, "Having a big picture makes a difference in how events are perceived." Kay speaks of reimagining her illness, and pulling from her memory what God wants from believers. The important thing for her is making positive rather than negative decisions, what she calls "decisions toward growth." Her "big picture" is part of what C. Murray Parkes' (1971) calls the "assumptive world" and what Jack Mezirow (1978) calls a "meaning perspective." Life and learning have transformed Kay's meaning perspective, and now her transformed meaning perspective enables her to perceive the recurrence of cancer in a different way.

She draws on daily Bible study using audiocassette tapes from a Houston church to understand "what God wants from believers." This discipline has been her learning "habit" for twenty years and is described as her "mainstay" in the midst of weekly chemotherapy treatments for her cancer. The

one message from her years of Bible study using these audiocassette tapes is: "Learn what God wants." If you know this, says Kay, everything else in life will fall into place.

Carol says her "best learning experiences" came in connection with "hard times." For her, one of these "hard times" was when surgery to remove a tumor (which turned out to be benign) resulted in continuing chronic pain.

Two of the high learners in the present study had recently lost a spouse to Alzheimer's disease. Caring for their spouse over a long period of time meant they could not participate in adult religious education to the same degree they had previously.

Not everyone mentions a life transition as having a significant influence on learning. Dale, a retired farmer, when asked near the end of the interview whether or not there were such experiences in his life, answered, "I can't relate too well to relating life transitions and learning."

And yet, a 1950 Billy Graham Crusade at a West Michigan conference center, led to Dale's religious conversion and a conviction that he should use the gifts God had given him. Following his religious conversion, Dale says,

I couldn't read the Bible enough. I wanted to know all about those things. I had a desire to read the Bible. The Bible came alive for me. Before that, reading was out of habit.

Religious conversion represents another kind of life transition that can influence participation in adult religious education. Art describes the time he "accepted

Christ" as "the most significant event in my life." He adds, "I was very anxious to learn from then on."

The orientation mediated by the interaction of self-evaluation with attitudes toward education appears related to life transitions. Kay approaches her illness with a positive attitude grounded in her orientation as a high learner. Nancy Schlossberg's (1981) model for understanding life transitions points to the importance of perception, which includes the person's self-evaluation and previous experience.

As Kay's orientation influences the way she perceives the transition triggered by cancer, so Ellie's experience of a life transition in the illness and death of her mother contributes to her orientation toward learning. The relationship is one of mutuality.

Life transitions do affect the orientation toward and participation in adult religious education, whether or not the transitions are of a religious nature themselves. Twenty-one of the high learners interviewed mentioned a significant life transition as having a relationship to their participation in adult religious education. In nearly every instance, the high learner mentioned the transition and its significance before the interviewer had the opportunity to inquire about it.

GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTAINMENT

Some of the high learners in this study had specific goals and saw certain adult religious education programs as the way to reach their goals. Mary Ellen, a leader in the Reformed Church Women's program in the church, always went to the workshops sponsored by the classis to equip herself for the particular leadership responsibility she had accepted at the time. Whether her goal was to be an effective Guild president, or spiritual life leader, or circle Bible study leader, she saw these area workshops as ways to become a more effective leader.

As Tammy assumed greater leadership responsibilities in Young Life, a campus-based youth ministry, she recognized the need for training. She saw college courses helping her meet her leadership training goals.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

Group discussion is a barrier to participation in adult religious education for some adults. Dan remembers his own hesitance in participating in a class where people were expected to share in the discussion. His fear seemed to come from two sources. First, was his own sense of inadequacy and inferiority. He felt others had more biblical knowledge or religious faith than he did and was reluctant to expose his ignorance. The second source of his fear of participating in a group discussion was the recognition that he might have to change as a result.

Dan was able to overcome his resistance enough to join a House Fellowship Group in the church four or five years ago. It was a positive experience for him: "I experienced a lot of healing in all of that. I was enabled to share." Dan recognizes in the adults he now teaches the fear that made him a reluctant learner. He uses group discussion as a teacher and expects class members to participate actively. But Dan has found that "people are scared coming into groups. They are fearful of participating in class discussions."

Time is a barrier to participation for some adults. An accident nine years ago left Ellie unable to work. She found she had more time. There was time for reading. And two years later when there was an opportunity to take Bethel Bible, she felt she had the time for it. Ellie indicates she probably would not have taken Bethel Bible training before the accident because she wouldn't have felt she had enough time for it.

The time factor is also reflected in the experiences of Craig and Art. At the time of the interview, Craig disclosed that he was backing off from some of his participation in adult religious education because work was demanding more of his time. Art tells how his work schedule "fell apart," causing him to drop out of Bethel Bible shortly after he began the training.

For Craig and Art, however, it is a combination of lack of time and another factor. In Craig's case, something has

changed in the church to make it less "dynamic." Church activities do not have the same draw or attraction they once had for Craig. It is the combination of these two factors that is affecting his participation in adult religious education.

Art prefers authoritative teachers, teachers who know their subject and go about teaching with a sense of confidence and competence. The Bethel Bible teacher was nervous, unsure of himself and not as knowledgeable as Art would have liked. This factor combined with his changing work schedule in leading to his dropping out of the course.

Both Art and Craig expressed the feeling that time alone was not a sufficient barrier. Had the Bethel Bible teacher been more competent, Art might have tried to get his work schedule adjusted. If Faith Reformed Church were more dynamic, Craig would not let the demands of work interfere so much with his participation in church activities. It is the combination of lack of time with another factor that makes the difference.

INFORMATION

Church worship bulletins and newsletters are the most common source of information about adult religious education in the church. Pastors make announcements during worship, to promote participation in the church's education program or to encourage attendance in a particular class.

Marge read a bulletin announcement about a Bible class

the pastor was going to teach. She says she wanted to try the class because she wanted to learn more about the Bible. Marge comes from a non-church family background and feels she does not have the same level of Bible knowledge as other church members. For her, the information was relevant to a learning goal.

Connie read about a training program in an ecumenical newsletter. The announcement caught her attention because she had a particular need and the description she read seemed to match that need.

Ed and Mary Ellen were personally invited by the associate pastor to participate in Stephen Ministry training. They were able to get more detailed information in this way than they could have from reading a bulletin or newsletter announcement, or hearing an appeal from the pastor during worship. High learners who mentioned this kind of personal contact felt that it made a difference in their participation.

Information about adult religious education opportunities, in whatever form it came, seemed important only in relation to individual learning goals.

PARTICIPATION

When these high learners listed the learning activities in which they participated, several things were noticeable. Stephen Ministry, Bethel Bible, and Bible Study Fellowship were frequently mentioned. Stephen Ministry is a program of

congregational care in which lay persons participate in a fifty hour training course and then follow through with supervision and continuing education sessions.

Congregational leaders attend an intensive two-week training program in St. Louis or other training centers around the country.

Bethel Bible is a similiarly structured lay education program whose focus is Bible study rather than congregational care. Church leaders attend a two-week training program in Madison, Wisconsin, and then return to lead laypersons in a two-year teacher-training program. Following the training, lay persons teach year-long congregational phase Bethel Bible courses covering the Old and New Testaments.

Bible Study Fellowship began as a Bible study program for women. The program is ecumenical rather than a program of any one church. Women meet weekly for study over a five-year period. Lay leaders for the program receive training in Texas.

Paul says, "I got involved in Bethel Bible because it offered an in-depth look at Scripture." Scott also teaches Bethel (he was in the first group of Bethel Bible teachers to be trained in his church): "I felt obligated," he says. "I am a teacher. Of course, I teach children all week long, so I didn't want to teach them again on Sundays. So I got involved teaching adults." The compelling reason he did it he says, "I felt I should do it." "I'm grateful for the

experience. I built up a good relationship with twelve people." Marie speaks of her participation in Bethel in terms of her desire to have a greater knowledge of the Bible. She describes her decision in this way:

First, I felt a need to grow. But then I was hesitant. Will John [her husband] go? We made a commitment to do things together. I wondered if we had the time for this. Then, the third thing, was that Scott [the minister] asked me to take Bethel.

Marie said "No" the first time, but later, when the timing was better, eventually did take the Bethel training.

Jim's decision to take Bethel was also a matter of timing, in part; his children were moving into elementary school and he felt he could do it. But he also speaks of a sense of gratitude and accountability. "I believe we should use our talents, so I made myself available." The minister who taught the class was also a factor: "Jeff Thomas really influenced me. Jeff's ministry was very contagious for me." Jim says: "Teaching Bethel was interesting because I was learning something myself. I enjoyed teaching that."

Maryan took the Bethel Bible congregational phase, and then was trained as a teacher and taught an adult Bethel class herself. Maryan also took Stephen Ministry Training.

Nancy participates as an adult learner in Bible Study Fellowship, and has been a leader in this program for three years. She is also a member of a circle Bible study group which is part of the women's program in the church she attends.

Ethel participates in the adult Sunday school. She

describes the class as "one of the strongest educational programs" in the church. Getting "good speakers" is a priority. Professors from area colleges and seminaries provide leadership, with each one teaching a subject in a kind of mini-series format. She says that adults in this class "really have to chew on what they're [the professors] saying." Being in this class, for Ethel, is "like being back in college."

As was noted earlier (See page 138), 1987's "Black Monday" on Wall Street affected many of the adults in Ethel's circle of friends. They formed a study group in which they found support and the opportunity to reflect critically on their values. She says, "We felt a need for people our age to do something that has substance."

In addition to these seven categories from the Chain-of-Response Model, the data suggested additional categories. These included the stimulation provided by a learning community such as the church, reading as a preferred way to learn, fellowship, the relationship between leadership and learning, creativity, and the influence of attractive teachers.

SOCIALIZATION

C. Ellis Nelson (1967), John H. Westerhoff (1970) and others have demonstrated the way a congregation socializes individuals into faith. The faith community communicates, in both direct and indirect ways, the importance or

unimportance of adult religious education. The value of adult religious education may be seen in the quantity and quality of programs offered, or heard in frequent announcements encouraging attendance at a particular program or participation in a certain class during worship, or discerned in subtle social pressures that push people into attending a class or participating in a course.

Scott expresses something of the influence the congregation exerts when he says that the church emphasizes the importance of adult religious education. "It's like a broken record," he says, "stressing over and over again what is expected of us as Christians." This message is communicated in the church's print media and from the pulpit on Sundays.

Ethel describes her church as "stimulating enough." The educational programs offered for adults meets her personal need for intellectual stimulation. The main adult Sunday school class provides a college-level adult religious education experience. The main "draw" of this class is the rotation of outstanding visiting teachers from nearby colleges and seminaries. These teachers make adult learners think, and that gives Ethel a feeling that she's back in college. She believes the adults in her age group want to do something that has "substance" and this kind of learning opportunity in the church appeals to them.

Connie, a member at the church Ethel attends, also

mentions the influence of the congregation on participation in adult religious education. She attributes part of the congregation's influence to the number of members who have college backgrounds. "Christ Church gets a lot of people with higher education, so we can do more."

Connie is herself one of the people at Christ Church who stimulates learning in others. When asked by the interviewer why she engaged in adult religious education to the degree she did, she said a younger woman in the church had asked her the same question. She could not answer her, and had the same difficulty answering the interviewer. Connie says her friends do not understand her motivation.

The church Susie attends includes a high percentage of well-educated people. She sees the level of learning in the church as "pretty sophisticated." A committee is responsible for planning adult study options. The committee meets through the summer to work on course options and then again in December to fill in any gaps that remain in the spring schedule of classes. The planning committee tries to maintain balance and variety in the courses offered to adult learners.

Variety extends to teaching and learning styles as well as subject matter. The class on prayer takes an experiential approach, while the traditional adult class has a lecture, usually by a guest teacher.

The traditional adult class is the largest class in the

Sunday school, but there are also classes on parenting, prayer, Bible study, and Christian literature (the class Susie is teaching on Mere Christianity, for example).

Susie says that in addition to brochures promoting adult religious education at Christ Reformed Church, there are frequent invitations during the worship service. The minister will mention a particular class, tell what they are studying, and encourage the adults in the congregation to attend the class.

At the time of the interview, a transition seemed to be taking place in Craig's life. Having just gone off Consistory, his level of involvement in the life of the church was decreasing. This transition from a very active to a less active church member is the result of a combination of factors. Craig's work is taking more of his time and there is less attraction to church activities. He says the church is "not quite as dynamic" as it once was, so there is less to draw him to church activities.

Craig's feelings toward Faith Reformed Church are shared by a fellow church member who was also interviewed for this study. Jim spoke highly of the previous minister, Jeff Thomas, and indicated that things were not the same since their new minister came. Like Craig, Jim also seemed to be in transition. He expresses dissatisfaction with his work as a school teacher and seems to be casting about for a sense of future direction.

Paul's experience of adult religious education in two

different congregations highlights the significance of a church as a learning community that is "stimulating enough." Prior to becoming a member at Trinity Reformed Church, Paul was a member at a Christian Reformed Church. Adults in that congregation typically went out together for coffee while children and youth went to Sunday school. It was the lack of emphasis on adult religious education that led Paul from that church to Trinity Reformed Church. At Trinity Reformed Church, adults are expected to go to class.

Through socialization as well as through more direct ways a congregation can encourage and support high learners and stimulate other adults to become more actively involved in adult religious education.

READING

Susie arrived for her interview carrying a thick novel from the college library. As the interview proceeded, it became apparent that it was not by chance that she came carrying a book. Reading is very much a part of Susie's learning style, both in and out of the church. Susie's book is an appropriate symbol of one way high learners engage adult religious education. Reading was mentioned as an important learning activity by one-third of the high learners in this study.

Susie grew up in a home where a college education was of secondary importance, but where books were always around. She says her roots are in English literature. She enjoys

the works of Madeline L'Engle and C. S. Lewis. She is currently leading a study of Lewis' Mere Christianity at the church she attends. "I enjoy Christian fantasy," she says of her reading tastes.

Susie's reading includes non-fiction and non-religious works as well. She recently spent several weeks reading books by Peter Berger as a way of getting acquainted with his work.

When high learners spoke about their reading habits, they gave different reasons for reading. For some enjoyment was the reason they gave, while for others reading provided intellectual stimulation.

Sally enjoys reading, which is one of the ways she expands herself. Her reading, which includes inspirational books by Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller, is for growth rather than recreation. "I read all the time. I love to read," reports Dan. Ethel reads for intellectual stimulation, mentioning a denominational publication read mostly by clergy and a few interested lay people as an important resource in her reading.

Craig is obviously a reader. Early in the interview he mentioned Craig Foster's Celebration of Discipline as a book he had both read and taught to a class of adults in the church. He also taught a class using C. S. Lewis's Mere Christianity. Craig had read Ronald Sider's Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger in conjunction with his interest in social issues. Later, he talked about the impact of

Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship, which he had read when he left home for military service, a rather critical transition in his life. At the end of the interview, Craig opened a door off the basement study where the interview had taken place, revealing a walk-in closet lined with bookshelves, a library of biblical commentaries, theological works, and other Christian books.

The interview with Ed took place in the family room of his home. The Parables of the Kingdom, by Robert F. Cappon, a book on the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, and Henri Nouwen's Reaching Out were stacked up on the table next to his chair. Ed says Cappon's book is a "little different;" he is now re-reading it. Since the adult Sunday school class is studying Jeremiah, he is doing a little background reading. Nouwen is a "favorite author" of those adults in the Stephen Ministry program in which Ed is a lay leader. The bookshelves on the far wall of the room contained both secular and religious works.

These high learners also make use of the other patterns of learning Cyril Houle (1984) described. Connie's home is filled with artifacts and paintings from trips to China and the Netherlands. Travel is part of her learning pattern. Susie learns by participating in workshops and enjoys experiential learning. Ethel learns by participating in small groups, such as a neighborhood women's Bible study or a couples' discussion group. Ed learned the skills of care-giving through role-play and simulation activities.

Reading, however, is one prominent way high learners engage adult religious education.

FELLOWSHIP

Susie notes that people in her church tend to be very busy. The church is in a college community, and many of the members are from the college. Couples in her age group are two-career couples. Classes with discussion allow adults the opportunity to get to know one another. Susie is taking a class at church which she likes because of its experiential approach to learning and because of the opportunity to get to know people.

LEADERSHIP

In listening to high learners talk about their involvement in the life of the church, the interviewer heard a wide range of leadership roles. Twenty-three of the high learners in this study were serving in some leadership capacity at the time of their interview. They are either currently serving, or have served in the past, as elected representatives to the Consistory or governing board of the local church. They are members of committees responsible for various programs in the church ranging from evangelism to education. High learners also hold leadership positions beyond the local church. Their leadership roles range from serving on the executive committee of the General Synod, the highest denominational judicatory or governing agency, to

membership on the Christian Action Commission of the Synod of Michigan, a regional judicatory of the Reformed Church in America.

Sometimes the whole range of leadership roles can be found in one person. Lloyd, a middle aged attorney, has been both an Elder and a Deacon on the Consistory of a local church, and has served as the Vice-President of the Consistory. He chaired the church's Christian Education Council two of the three times he was appointed to this Council. He sings with the church choir and has taught Sunday school and catechism classes. Beyond the local church in which he is a member, Lloyd has been on the General Synod Executive Committee for eight years, chaired the General Program Council of the Reformed Church in America, been President of the denomination's Extension Foundation, and had many committee and task force assignments over the years. He has been a board member of one of the Reformed Church colleges for over a decade.

Leadership positions in the church are not limited to men. Connie is a leader at the denominational and ecumenical levels, as well as at the the local church level. She represents the Reformed Church in America on the executive committee of a World Alliance of Reformed Churches commission and will be attending a church conference in Korea. Her own Consistory sent her to General Synod as a delegate a second time because of her interest in women's issues and her leadership abilities. She says attending

Synod was a "great experience." Connie has served on the Racial Justice Task Force of the General Synod and on the Christian Action Committee of the Synod of Michigan. In her own congregation, Connie serves on Consistory as an Elder. She is a member of the Care Council and a facilitator of a congregational care ministry known as "Befrienders."

Lloyd and Connie are leaders and learners in the church. Some of Connie's participation in adult religious education has been the direct result of her leadership role in the church. When she became an Elder at Christ Reformed Church, Connie discovered that many members did not have a close relationship with the church. She recognized the need for a program of congregational care. While reading an ecumenical agency's newsletter, Connie read about a training event to equip church leaders for congregational care. She inquired about the program and found it could be the answer to Christ Reformed Church's need. Connie took the Lab One and Two training for the program and introduced the care program in the church. She coordinates the program now and trains other members of the congregation to provide care.

At the time of Lloyd's interview, it seemed he was in a transition as a learner in the church. He had become more "passive" in learning activities in the church. As the interviewer explored this shift in participation, it became apparent that Lloyd is outgrowing the kinds of learning opportunities the local church offers. While the church Lloyd attends offers "stimulating" courses taught by college

and seminary professors, he is sensing the need for something more. He talks about taking some college courses. "I would be more a dabbler," he says as he muses about taking a philosophy course. He is not interested in another degree, but in the kind of rigorous intellectual discipline and academic atmosphere a college course might offer.

One might expect high learners in the church to have grown into leadership positions by their late forties or early fifties. But even the younger high learners interviewed for the present study were already well established in leadership positions in the church.

Cynthia, who was elected to the office of Deacon in the church at thirty-three, has held a variety of leadership positions, from coordinating the Wednesday night education program and directing the children's choir to serving as president of Reformed Church Women at the classical level. She has recently been appointed coordinator and trainer for the denomination's Putting People In Mission program. "I enjoy leadership," she says. "I need to have something I'm organizing or doing."

At thirty-seven, Craig has already served as a Deacon and an Elder on the Consistory. He has been church treasurer, and chaired the Assimilation Committee at the church he attends. At the Classis level, he has served on the Christian Action Committee.

Connie and Lloyd and Craig and Cynthia are leaders who are actively engaged in learning in the church. Their age

ranges and particular leadership roles are typical of the high learners in the study.

The high learners interviewed for this study did not seem especially conscious of their leadership role in the church. Nancy is the president of the women's group in the church in which she is a member. She is also a Sunday school teacher, and wrote Bible studies and trained leaders for a youth camp. She has been a leader in Bible Study Fellowship for three years. Dale, a retired farmer, chaired the church's building committee, served on several church committees, and was an Elder on Consistory. He is one of the adult class teachers and, with his wife, is one of the lay leaders for the denomination's Putting People in Mission program. Though they list their leadership roles among their activities in the life of the church, high learners like Nancy and Dale do not identify themselves as leaders in the church.

Brad, on the other hand, explicitly describes himself as a leader. "I am a leader," he says. "I am very involved in things." And he is. Brad is a Deacon serving on the Consistory's finance committee, teaching an adult Sunday school class, and leading the song service at evening worship.

Several high learners linked their participation in an adult religious education course or program with their leadership responsibilities. When Tim was elected to Consistory, he engaged in adult religious education in order

to serve in this leadership role. As Tammy became involved in Young Life, a campus-based ministry with youth, she felt she needed to develop the kind of leadership skills taught at the college level. "To be a leader, I need to know skills," she says. She is now working on a college degree that will equip her for leadership in Young Life.

The relationship between leading and learning seems to be mutual. High learners make good leaders in the church, and church leaders recognize the need for learning that equips them for their leadership roles. Learning has equipped these adults with the knowledge, ability, and skills leadership requires. Election or appointment to leadership positions in the church brings with it demands for further education that will expand knowledge, increase ability, and sharpen skills.

CREATIVITY

The high learners in this study were creative people as well as leaders. Harold, who was among those high learners with the least formal education, once devised an elaborate electronic panel to make a children's Sunday school class more interesting. The panel was part of a game in which students pressed a buzzer and answered questions about biblical material. Though based on the idea of early television game shows, Harold showed creativity in applying it to the religious education of children and designing his own electronic game board.

Juella's husband suffered from Alzheimer's disease for several years before his death. The experience led her to write a devotional booklet, Living With Alzheimers, which presents thirty reflections on their suffering with the effects of this disease. She arranged for its publication, and saw that proceeds from sale of the booklet went to the local Alzheimer's Association Chapter.

Though perhaps the most striking examples of creativity in the present study, theirs were by no means the only instances of creativity among high learners in the church.

THE TEACHER

Teachers are often a critical factor in adult religious education. Art expressed a strong preference for a certain kind of teacher, one who taught with authority. His participation in adult religious education was influenced by whether or not the teacher of a particular class met this criterion. Thirteen other high learners interviewed also identified the teacher as a critical factor in their participation.

The teacher's knowledge seems to be an attractive quality. When Scott named people who had influenced his learning in a significant way, he identified a former pastor who taught the adult Sunday school class. "I learned a lot from him. He was an excellent teacher. He knew a lot," said Scott.

Carol was a Bible study leader for one of the women's

circles in the church. Training was provided for these leaders by a pastor and a former missionary. This teaching team met with Bible study leaders like Carol on a regular basis to train them for leading the monthly circle Bible studies. Carol remembers them as good teachers, who made the lessons interesting for her.

Some of the high learners interviewed were able to identify specific characteristics that made a certain teacher attractive. Tim listed three things about the teacher who significantly influenced his participation: (1) relational -- they were friends; (2) knowledgeable -- he knew the subject he was teaching; (3) willingness to tackle any question -- no question was "off limits" or "out of bounds."

Chuck attributes his decision to take the Bethel Bible teacher training class more to the fact that Todd, his pastor, was the teacher than to his interest in the subject. "I've always had an interest in studying the Bible," he says. "That, combined with Todd's personality and ability, led to to participate. I've always enjoyed Ralph's teaching." When asked if he thought he would have taken the class if someone else had been teaching, Chuck said "No." Like Tim, who mentioned his friendship with the teacher, Chuck speaks about Todd being his friend.

Lloyd spoke enthusiastically about Velma Van Heest, who taught the adult Sunday school class for twenty years. "She was very bright, an excellent teacher," he says. Lloyd adds

to Tim's list of characteristics of the attractive teacher: (1) trust -- Velma worked at building trust by sharing her own shortcomings and accepting opinions and views different from her own without putting down those who held them; (2) challenge -- Velma had high expectations and made the class challenging for the learners; (3) Velma was always prepared and taught competently.

Phil Bast is the teacher who attracted Brad to the Barnabas Sunday school class. Brad admired his high ethical standards, and his non-judgmental approach to class members. "Phil wasn't afraid to make mistakes," says Brad. Phil's integrity, acceptance, and risk-taking were recognized when he won an award as the "most respected" Sunday school teacher.

When Jim speaks of the teacher who influenced him the most, he underlines one of the elements mentioned indirectly by the others: the humanness of the teacher. "Jeff's ministry was very contagious for me, " says Jim. One of the things that impressed him was Jeff's ability to admit his own limitations. Velma's sharing her own shortcomings fits with this, as does the relational dimension mentioned by Tim.

Several characteristics seem to contribute to a teacher's attractiveness to students: (1) humanness -- the ability to admit one's own limitations; (2) relationship -- an openness to and interest in others that contributes to friendship; (3) knowledge -- mastery of content or subject

matter; (4) competence -- a combination of skill and enthusiasm that creates interest; (5) acceptance -- a non-judgmental attitude toward learners whose ideas may be different from that of the teacher; (6) challenge -- making the class stimulating. Time may also be a factor, in that the longer one is the teacher of a class (as in the case of Velma) the more opportunity there is to build relationships and create an atmosphere of trust.

The influence of the teacher is significant enough that when the teacher is a pastor who moves on to another church the bond to a class may be broken and the pattern of participation in adult religious education diminished. Jim and Craig, who attend the same church, both felt the loss of Jeff as an attractive teacher and no longer have the same feeling toward participation as they did when he was there.

While the reasons that go into a decision to participate in a particular program or attend a certain class are usually multiple and sometimes hidden, these high learners say the teacher is often the reason they participate. The teacher may be a more important factor than the subject being taught, the opportunity for fellowship with others, or some of the other reasons given for participating in adult religious education.

SUMMARY

The data from the interviews are consistent with data from other studies of adult participation in learning. The

socio-economic status of the informants fits the general profile of participants in adult education. Their level of formal education points in the direction of participation in adult religious education. A healthy view of self and positive attitudes toward education serve to focus external factors influencing participation more as opportunities than as barriers.

Life transitions sometimes powerfully affect their decision to take a specific class or course in the church, or indirectly influence their basic orientation toward adult religious education. Other times, learning leads into a life transition or colors the person's perception of a particular life transition. The relationship between life transitions and learning is reciprocal, rather than unidirectional.

Life transitions exercise an influence on participation in adult religious education in the context of other factors. The influence of a person's leadership role in the church and the formative character of the congregation to socialize members into positive attitudes toward adult religious education both affect participation. Early childhood experiences in the family circle also shape attitudes toward education which interact with life transitions.

In the final chapter of this study, the researcher will explore the implications of these findings for adult religious education.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

High learners have much to teach those who have responsibility for the religious education of adults. Surveying the contours of their participation provides a map for understanding how some adults come to engage in religious education. A map of participation in adult religious education by high learners offers pastors and church educators a model for understanding participation, concepts for thinking about the religious education of adults, and curricular implications.

A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION

The Chain-of-Response model developed by Patricia Cross (1981) has been a reference point for this study of high learners in the church. The seven factors identified by Cross (self-evaluation, attitudes about education, goals and expectations, life transitions, information, opportunities and barriers, and participation) provided a frame of reference for the literature review and served as "bins" for sorting and storing interview data. The model has served the useful purpose of stimulating reflection on the religious education of adults. Throughout the study, a diagram of Cross's model has been posted on the wall next to

the work station where the writing was done.

A point of reference can become a boundary to thinking about a particular subject or field of inquiry. A model, such as the Chain-of-Response model proposed by Cross, can become a barrier rather than an aid to research and critical reflection. One might distort the datum by forcing it into only those "bins" which the model provides, or dismissing it altogether as irrelevant. The Chain-of-Response model can inspire or inhibit.

But a point of reference, such as Cross provided with this model, can also be corrected by research. Discrepant data can result in the construction of new "bins" that modify the model. As may be seen in the last chapter, not all the data collected from the interviews, when analyzed, fit neatly into the seven "bins" of the Chain-of-Response model. The findings of this study of high learners in adult religious education suggest a refinement of Cross' model.

Thus, one conclusion of this study is that Cross' Chain-of-Response model does not adequately explain how a high learner comes to participate in a class or program of adult religious education. This study confirms the essential elements in the Chain-of-Response model and their relationship to one another. But this study also points to additional elements not found in the Chain-of-Response model. For that reason, a revision of the Chain-of-Response model seems desirable.

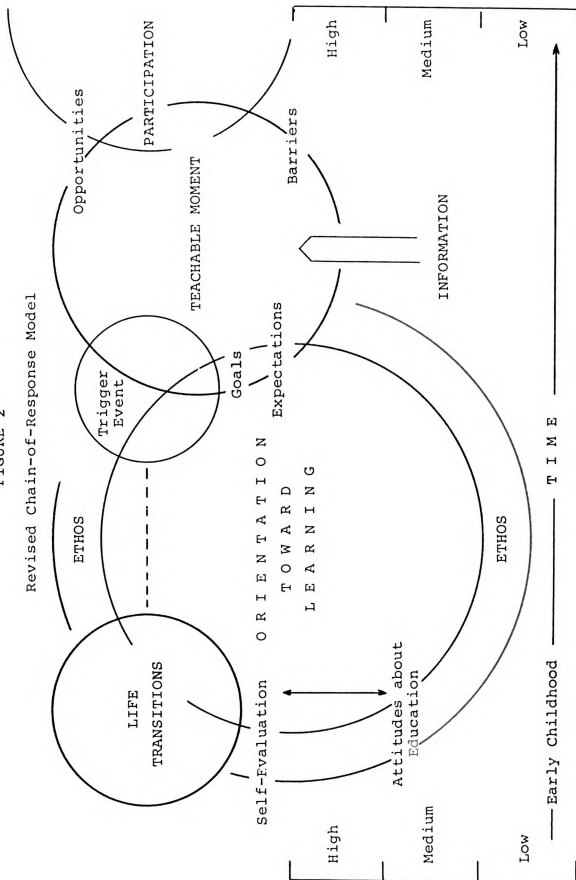
A revised model for understanding adult participation in

religious education is depicted in Figure 2 (page 164). The model is depicted as a series of overlapping circles, representing major concepts and clusters of concepts and their interaction.

Orientation Toward Learning is a central concept in the revised model. This central concept is drawn from Cyril Houle's (1963) work, which identified three basic orientations toward learning (the goal-oriented, the activity-oriented, and the learning-oriented), and subsequent refinements (Burgess, 1971; Boshier, 1971; Boshier and Collins, 1985; and Lowe, 1987), as well as Warren Hartman's research (1973, 1986, 1987). The high learners in the present study can be grouped according to Houle's three-fold typology (and its expansion and refinement) or according to Hartman's five audiences. High learners have an identifiable orientation toward learning that affects their participation in adult religious education generally and influences their decision to participate in a particular class at a given time.

One's orientation toward learning is shaped by the interaction of self-evaluation and attitudes toward education. Early in life, parents and primary care-givers provide the growing child with feedback that becomes part of the child's internal self-concept. If self-esteem or self-concept is high, one approaches new experiences, like those found in school, with a certain confidence. Confidence helps assure success. The child does well in school, and

FIGURE 2



parental affirmation of a "good" report card builds self-esteem and reinforces the child's positive feelings about schooling. Parental encouragement conveys the importance of education.

Of the thirty high learners in this study, only Bob had what would be considered a "negative" school experience in childhood, and only Brad did not receive the kind of parental affirmation and encouragement the others did. (Ed dropped out of high school, but that was due to the Depression and not to negative feelings about school.) Apart from these two exceptions, high learners have had positive early childhood experiences at home and in the school.

One cannot overlook the significance of positive early childhood experiences in the home and school in terms high self-evaluation and high positive attitudes toward education. Other studies have shown the negative effect of low self-esteem and poor attitudes toward education on participation in adult education (Boshier, 1973; Darkenwald, 1980; Cross, 1981; Peterson, 1983).

The interaction of self-evaluation and attitudes toward education is recognized by Cross in the Chain-of-Response model, but the mediating role of an orientation toward learning is missing in her model. An orientation toward learning mediates the interaction of self-evaluation and attitudes toward education, as these grow out of earlier life experiences.

Ethos -- the influence of one's cultural context -- and

specific life transitions also interact with and contribute to an orientation toward learning. When Ethel speaks of a church that is "stimulating enough," she identifies an environmental influence that affects the way persons approach learning. Christ Reformed Church, where Ethel is a member, supports and stimulates her orientation toward learning.

While in the last chapter, attention was given to the socialization that takes place in a church context, there is another level of socialization that has not been considered: that of the particular denomination and faith tradition to which these individual congregations belong.

The present study centers on the adult learner within a particular faith tradition, the Reformed tradition. The informants were selected from Reformed Church in America congregations in western Michigan. The Reformed Church in America is part of the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition in Protestantism.

It is commonly known that education is a special emphasis of the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition (Nelson, 1988; 103). Jack Stotts points out,

One -- if not *the* -- genius of the Presbyterian tradition has been its valuing of and commitment to education as an instrument of faithfulness. If you want to know who we are as Presbyterians -- or, more broadly, as members of the Reformed tradition -- we are a people committed to education as an instrument for faithfulness. That is our genius. If the Baptists have found their genius in evangelism and church growth, if Anglicans have found theirs in liturgy, then Presbyterians have found their distinctiveness in education (Stotts, 1985; 26-27).

C. Ellis Nelson (1988) notes this view is supported by

research sponsored by the American Association of Theological Schools (Cf. Ministry in America, 1980).

In reporting on this research, Arthur M. Adams writes, "First, we note a distinctive emphasis on the importance of a learned grasp and presentation of Christianity" (Adams, 1980; 459). Cluster analysis revealed a larger cluster of items reflective of how those in the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition view the minister: "The ideal of the minister as theologian and thinker lies at the center of the Presbyterian-Reformed self-image" (Adams, 1980; 459).

The Presbyterian-Reformed commitment to education is expressed in the Sunday school movement, academies and colleges, seminaries and boards of education. This commitment is reflected in what the church chooses to fight about: in the 19th century the question whether or not clergy should be educated resulted in the splitting away of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church from the Presbyterian Church (Stotts, 1985; 27). A tradition of commitment to education is part of the ethos in which these high learners find themselves.

Life Transitions represent another aspect of Cross's model that is included in the present model. While Cross depicts the effect life transitions have on a decision toward participation, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) note that a transition is not sufficient in itself for explaining participation in learning; often a "trigger" is required. This relationship between life transition and a "trigger" is

depicted by the dotted line in Figure 2.

Life transitions do not always figure prominently in a high learner's participation in adult religious education. For this reason, the addition of the "trigger" is an important refinement of the Chain-of-Response model.

The "assumptive world" (Parkes, 1971) or "meaning perspective" (Mezirow, 1978) one fashions affects how one perceives life transitions (Schlossberg, 1981). But life transitions can shatter a person's "assumptive world" or "meaning perspective." The life stories of several of the high learners in the present study illumine the interaction between life-transition and self-concept. As Kay's struggle with cancer reveals, an orientation to learning affects the way a transition is perceived. The overlapping of the two circles (Life Transition and Orientation Toward Learning) is a reminder of this reciprocal relationship.

The Teachable Moment in Figure 2 is comprised of three elements from Cross's Chain-of-Response model: goals and expectations (internal), opportunities and barriers (external), and information (external). It might be preferable to speak of "The Learnable Moment," since the learner's readiness to learn or to be taught is at the heart of this concept. The teachable moment is the link between the orientation toward learning and participation.

The trigger event in a life transition overlaps both circles, thereby linking the orientation toward learning to the teachable moment. A trigger event may be either

positive or negative in character.

High learners tend to see opportunities in a given situation more than they perceive barriers. The perception of opportunities and barriers is as important as their reality. A healthy self-concept and previous educational experiences resulting in a positive attitude toward learning contribute to the tendency to minimize the impact of barriers and maximize the attraction of opportunities.

The teachable moment comes when the available information enables the high learner to perceive a match between her or his goals and the potential for their realization through a given educational experience, when opportunities are perceived to outweigh barriers, and when the energy of a life transition is released in the direction of learning by a trigger.

Printed course descriptions in church newsletters and verbal announcements during worship provide adults in the church with information that helps them decide whether or not their learning goals can be met and whether or not the opportunities outweigh the barriers to participation.

And for some high learners the name of the teacher will be as important or, perhaps, more important than the subject being taught or the opportunity for fellowship. The person of the teacher can be a decisive factor in participation.

Participation is the next phase in the model.

Participation is the result of a chain of events, as Cross has suggested. The flow is from left to right in Figure 2.

Early childhood experiences influence attitudes toward education which interact with self-evaluation. Their interaction is mediated by the person's orientation toward learning, which, in turn, becomes the lens through which goals and expectations for meeting them are matched, and through which external circumstances are perceived as either opportunities or barriers to participation. Information helps the person determine the degree of match between goals and expectations for their realization, and the extent to which external circumstances are perceived as either opportunity or barrier.

But the model does not stop with participation. Rather, the process recycles as participation becomes part of one's experience that helps shape attitudes toward education and contributes to self-evaluation.

The scale at the bottom of Figure 2 (High - Medium - Low) reflects the weight attached to various elements of the model. For example, a low self-evaluation is less likely to result in participation in adult religious education than a high-self evaluation. Early experiences in school which are primarily negative in character result in low or negative attitudes toward education, and lessen the probability of participation.

The model of participation in adult religious education represents a refinement of Cross's Chain-of-Response model (1981) in several ways. First, learner orientations are included, mediating the interaction between self-evaluation

and attitudes toward education. Second, trigger events are recognized as part of the role life transitions play. Cross's model is weak at this point, since not all transitions lead to participation in learning and since life transitions can also affect one's orientation toward learning. Third, the teachable moment is introduced as a way of mediating the interaction between goals and expectations and barriers and opportunities in the decision-making process. Fourth, the ethos in which participation occurs, or fails to occur, is made more explicit. These refinements provide a fuller understanding of the dynamics of participation in adult religious education.

Understanding this kind of model can aid pastors and church educators responsible for the religious education of adults in understanding the dynamics of participation in adult religious education programs. The assumption in many churches is that if information about an adult class is presented attractively, adults will attend the class, or that if a quality program is developed, the adult members of the church will participate. Such assumptions rest on a simplistic understanding of participation in adult religious education. A more complex understanding, such as reflected in this model, may lead to more productive strategies for recruiting adult learners in the church.

CONCEPTS

Several themes are discernible in the participation of high learners in adult religious education. A sense of acceptance, either divine or human, seems critical to a positive self-concept and a favorable view of education. Human relationships can be significant in stimulating participation in adult religious education. The attraction of the teacher is a special instance of the relational dimension in learning. The theme of high learners as leaders is a fourth theme that calls for attention in this study.

ACCEPTANCE

If one conclusion of this study both confirms and challenges the Chain-of-Response model, another conclusion is that acceptance affects the interaction between self-evaluation and attitudes about education in a positive way. Those high learners who reported experiencing a feeling of either human or transcendent acceptance developed a positive orientation toward learning.

Carl Rogers (1961) introduced the concept of "unconditional positive regard" as one of three requisite conditions (congruence, acceptance, and empathic understanding) for facilitating personal change (Rogers, 1961; 61-63). He describes this concept as a therapist's "warm caring" for the client,

a caring which is not possessive, which demands no personal gratification. It is an atmosphere which simply demonstrates "I care"; not "I care for you if you behave

thus and so." . . . I have often used the term "acceptance" to describe this aspect of the therapeutic climate (Rogers, 1961; 283).

According to Rogers, significant learning is likely when the safe climate of acceptance is created by the therapist and experienced by the client.

The experience of acceptance or "unconditional positive regard" was mentioned by several high learners as signaling a significant shift, in self-evaluation, in attitudes toward education, or in both.

Of all places one might expect to experience acceptance, it is hoped that it would be within religious communities such as the church. In fact, some of the high learners spoke of their experience of acceptance in religious terms, as having its source in the divine or transcendent.

Dan was particularly sensitive to the threat of participating in small groups as a barrier to participation in adult religious education at Eleventh Reformed Church. When those responsible for recruiting adult learners are insensitive to the comfort level of potential learners and insist on full participation, the message is not one of acceptance.

Sermons, pastoral conversations, articles in church newsletters, and other means can be used to communicate the church's message of acceptance. When reinforced by classes that offer adults a variety of learning styles and various degrees of challenge, from low-threat to high-risk, the feeling of acceptance will begin to take shape as part of

the congregation's social architecture.

There is one aspect of acceptance that was not touched on in the interviews, but which might be noted. Pastors and church educators responsible for adult religious education in the church may need to hear this message themselves. Too often, when participation in an adult religious education class is less than desired or expected, pastors and church educators feel guilty. They think they have not made the course interesting enough. They blame themselves for this "failure," or, maybe worse, project blame onto those adults who did not turn out for the class. The research with high learners indicates that participation is far more complex than either excellent programming or quality promotional materials take into account. Self-acceptance is the first step in accepting others.

FRIENDS TO GROWTH

Roger Gould (1980) lists ten "properties" of the "transformational processes" (1980; 222-224). One of these ten properties is what Gould refers to as "*friends to our growth*." These are persons who

respond openly to what we are becoming, those who endorse and confirm our expanded selves (Gould, 1980; 223).

Gould notes that these "friends to growth" can be family members or employers (Gould, 1980; 223).

At forty-two, Maryan is taking a junior college course in ethics. She is an office manager with a high school education who speaks admiringly of her father who was "brilliant": "He was the smartest person I know." He was

always taking courses of one kind or another to improve himself. Her father's life-long involvement in learning is partly behind her own continuing learning. She is close to getting her associate's degree.

Ellie was in college studying to be a nurse when her forty-five-year-old mother was diagnosed as having cancer. She was nineteen when her mother died. She left college to care for her mother at home. Ellie says,

My mother tutored me. I learned from her that every moment should be learning. I felt I had to use time more wisely. Life needs to be challenging. I want to learn something new every day.

High learners are fortunate to have "friends to growth" who "tutor" them.

While "friends to growth" may be one's parents, often they are outside the family circle. As Lillian Rubin points out,

Whether child or adult, it is friends who provide a reference outside the family against which to measure and judge ourselves; who help us during passages that require separation and individuation; who support us as we adapt to new roles and new rules; who heal the hurts and make good the deficits of other relationships in our lives; who offer the place and encouragement for the development of parts of self that, for whatever reasons, are inaccessible in the family context (Rubin, 1985; 13).

This was especially true for Brad, whose own drive to achieve was so markedly opposite the apathy and inertia of his parents. Already in high school, Brad moved out of his parents' home and into the home of Matt and Linda Brand. They served as the reference point for individuation and growth outside his family circle. Matt became Brad's model and mentor.

Jim's decision to take Bethel involved several factors: timing, a sense of gratitude and accountability, and the influence of his minister. Jim says of the minister, who taught the class, "Jeff Thomas really influenced me. Jeff's ministry was very contagious for me."

Connie saw herself as a "friend to growth" to at least one other member of the church. She served as a stimulator to that woman's learning in the church by her example.

The importance of these "friends to growth" is another conclusion of this study. They help stimulate and sustain an orientation toward learning as well as influence a decision to participate in a particular adult religious education program or class.

Those responsible for the religious education of adults might look around their congregations for the Connie's who stimulate other adults to engage in learning activities. Once identified, they could be helped to see their role as stimulators and perhaps enlisted in a network of those who are "friends to growth."

ATTRACTIVE TEACHERS

A factor not mentioned in the literature on adult education participation is the teacher. Some adults choose a class on the basis of *who* the teacher is. Jim mentions his minister, Jeff Thomas, as being part of his decision to take Bethel Bible training.

Teachers who attract adult learners seem to have certain characteristics. Tim saw three qualities in one of his

admired teachers: (1) he was knowledgeable, (2) he was a friend, and (3) he was willing to tackle any questions. Harold admired the ability of Jack Leonard, "an outstanding teacher," to bring out things the learners did not see.

The willingness to acknowledge limitations often is one quality that marks attractive teachers. This characteristic of Jeff Thomas impressed Jim and influenced his decision to take Bethel Bible training.

Competence is another teacher characteristic that attracts adult learners. Marie is one high learner whose participation depends on who the teacher is. For her, the teacher must be competent. A pastor and an Indian missionary trained women's Bible study leaders. Jan found they made the lessons "interesting" and went when she was a Bible study leader for women in her church because Bernie and Clara were the teachers.

Making connections between lessons and life was also mentioned as an important quality of an attractive teacher. John says of his minister, "Phil Bast's teaching in the Chapel Class was profoundly impacting. He helped us see what was possible."

A fourth conclusion to be drawn from the findings of this study is that attractive teachers influence some high learners in their decision to participate in adult religious education. The conclusion that attractive teachers are a factor in the decision to participate in an adult religious education course was part of the researcher's own tacit

knowledge. The findings of this study served to support what had been known experientially and intuitively.

Just as the high learners in this study were able to identify those characteristics that attracted them to certain teachers, so high learners in local churches could consult with the person responsible for the religious education of adults in developing a list of those qualities they feel are desirable in teachers of adult classes. The list could be then used in the recruitment of attractive teachers for the adult religious education program.

HIGH LEARNERS ARE LEADERS

The connection between being a leader in the church and being a high learner is a fifth conclusion. Over two-thirds of the high learners in the study were serving in leadership positions when they were interviewed.

"Leaders are perpetual learners," write Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; 188). In their study of leaders, these authors claim the ability to develop and improve skills is what distinguishes leaders from followers (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; 59). When they asked the ninety leaders in their study about the personal qualities they needed to run their organizations, they talked about things like

"persistence and self-knowledge; about willingness to take risks and accept losses; about commitment, consistency, and challenge. But, above all, they talked about learning" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; 187-188).

Some of the leaders Bennis and Nanus studied were "voracious readers," while other leaders learned primarily

from other people. "Nearly all leaders are highly proficient in learning from experience" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; 188). These leaders could name mentors and identify experiences that have helped shape them as leaders. "And all of them regard themselves as 'stretching,' 'growing,' and 'breaking new ground'" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; 188).

The relationship between learning and leadership seems reciprocal. Those who come into leadership positions -- a life transition -- learn in order to be effective in their new roles. Learning provides high learners with a knowledge base and repertoire of skills that others perceive as criteria for leadership, and so they elect or appoint these high learners to leadership positions in the church. Sometimes the learning is the reason a person has become a leader, and other times their election or appointment to a leadership position becomes the reason for engaging in adult religious education.

High learners hold leadership positions at the congregational and denominational levels of the church. And they seem to make a significant contribution to the life of the church through their leadership roles.

Lloyd expressed the need for more challenging classes than he now finds in the church where he is a member. Edward Farley (1983, 1985, 1988) has called for church education to be theological education. Were those responsible for the religious education of adults in churches to take this seriously they might better meet the needs of the Lloyds who

are leaders in their congregations.

CURRICULAR IMPLICATIONS

The discussion of the refined Cross model and four concepts above includes some implications for the curriculum of adult religious education. The need for courses that provide challenge for those who are outgrowing Sunday school learning opportunities and the need for recruiting attractive teachers are among these curricular implications. But this study of high learners suggests some additional implications.

High learners represent several orientations toward learning. Their learning styles also vary. Some high learners prefer a teacher who lectures with authority, while others have a preference for group discussion. While many high learners are avid readers, there was at least one high learner (Bob) who preferred to listen to audio cassettes.

The diversity of learning orientations (at least three, if one follows Houle's typology, or five if one chooses Hartman's "audiences") and learning styles suggests that courses for adults in the church should reflect a range of teaching styles and be organized around multiple assumptions about reasons for participation.

For churches like Tenth Reformed or Christ Reformed, it is relatively easy to offer adults the choice of several different classes. The task is more difficult, but not impossible, for churches like Bethlehem Reformed Church

which have smaller memberships and fewer resources. The smaller congregations can offer variety by scheduling classes with different teaching styles in sequence over the course of a year, rather than offering several classes simultaneously. Variety also can be achieved by offering classes with different teaching styles in different settings, say a class with a group discussion approach on Sunday mornings and a lecture-oriented class on Wednesday evenings.

The high number of readers among the high learners interviewed for this study suggests that more attention be given to the church library. Learning modules could be developed around popular religious authors or current religious issues. Pastors or church educators could develop brief study guides to go with these study modules for those high learners who are avid readers. Such self-directed study opportunities would help meet the needs of those high learners who have a more individual learning style or who need the stimulation of something more challenging than the traditional adult Sunday school class.

Attention needs to be given to achieving a balance between classes that challenge and classes that have a lower risk threshold for adult learners whose self-esteem is lower and whose previous educational encounters have not been as positive as for these high learners. The phrase, "a church that is stimulating enough," is richly suggestive of such a balance. Adult religious education in a "stimulating

enough" church provides the challenge that leaves high learners feeling they are "back in college" without raising barriers for adults with low-self evaluations or negative attitudes about education.

TACIT KNOWLEDGE

Michael Polanyi (1962, 1966) speaks of a knowing that is tacit. His notion of tacit knowledge was helpful in listening to high learners describe their participation in adult religious education. At one point in answering a question, a light seemed to go on as Craig discovered something of the pattern of his participation. Self-discovery was an outcome for several high learners such as Craig. This is consistent with the point Patti Lather (1986) made about "emancipatory research." Talking about their own learning gave the high learners in this study some self-awareness. Liberation was another outcome of the interviews.

The recognition of the value of the interviews in helping bring tacit knowledge to the surface suggests that those responsible for the religious education of adults might want to consider interviewing the high learners in their own churches. The process would result in collaborative research that would benefit both the interviewer and the interviewee, and contribute to a research base for adult religious education.

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

One area for further research along the lines of this study would be the identification of high learners in other geographical areas of the Reformed Church. Would interviews of high learners in the Reformed churches of New Jersey and California yield data similiar to that obtained from this study of high learners in western Michigan?

Elliot Eisner (1985) writes about the "null curriculum." Those adults under the age of thirty and those adults from minority groups such as blacks and Hispanics are absent from the high learners in the convenience sample of this study. One wonders if there are high learners under the age of thirty, or if high learners among minority groups in the Reformed church would offer insights similiar to those gained from the high learners in this study.

While some attempts have been made to share the refined model of participation with high learners, pastors, and other adults in the church, much more could be done to test the findings. Boshier's Educational Participation Scale could be administered to the high learners in this study to provide further insight into their orientation toward learning.

SUMMARY

High learners in the religious education programs of Reformed churches have been described in this study. Patricia Cross' (1981) Chain-of-Response model has been

used to explore their participation.

The study concluded that the Chain-of-Response model lacked the category of orientation toward learning as a mediating variable between self-evaluation and attitudes about education and needed refinement. The influence of ethos was found to be missing from the Chain-of-Response model.

This study of high learners has helped refine a model for understanding participation in adult religious education. Four themes (acceptance, friends to growth, attractive teachers, high learners are leaders) have been shown to have implications for the practice of adult religious education in churches. Curricular implications have been suggested and there has been some reflection on tacit knowing.

Readers should remember what was reported about the character of the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition earlier in this chapter. The educational emphasis in the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition should not be overlooked or minimized when looking at these high learners in the church. One delimitation of the present study is that the findings apply to adults in the Reformed Church in America, and may not be applicable to adults in other Protestant denominations.

A limitation of this study is that some of the high learners used religious language in describing their orientation toward and participation in adult religious education. Their use of religious language in some of their

answers may have been influenced by the interviewer's identity as an ordained minister.

High learners have much to teach pastors and church educators who are responsible for the religious education of adults. Surveying the contours of their participation provides a map for understanding how some adults come to engage in religious education. A map of participation in adult religious education by high learners offers a model for understanding participation, concepts for thinking about the religious education of adults, and curricular implications.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PASTORS AND INFORMATION SHEET

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PASTORS

August 1, 1988

Dear Rev. Robrahn,

Before coming to Western Seminary as Dean of Faculty, I served as a Minister of Christian Education for nearly fifteen years. Four years ago, I began doctoral studies at Michigan State University in order to learn more about adult education in the church. I am particularly interested in studying adult participation in Sunday school and other Christian religious education programs of the church.

I believe that those adult learners who are actively engaged and deeply involved in their church's educational program can help us better understand why adults participate in Christian education. I am asking you, and other pastors of Reformed churches in western Michigan, to help me locate adults who might be called "high learners" in hopes of talking with them and discovering something about their participation in the education programs of their congregation.

They are the adults with whom I would like to spend an hour to an hour-and-a-half talking about their participation in Christian education. While I will have a few general questions to help get us started, I essentially want to listen to their story as a learner in the church. What classes do they attend? What is there about learning opportunities in the church that makes them feel like participating? As we share these kinds of questions together, I hope to learn more about adult learners in the church.

Enclosed you will find a sheet outlining the project and a copy of the letter which will be sent to those church members whose pastors identify as "high learners." If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, or my advisor at Michigan State, Dr. Peggy Riethmiller (517) 353-6450. Any assistance you can provide will be deeply appreciated.

Shalom,

George Brown, Jr.

Encl:

INFORMATION SHEETA Study of Adult Learners in the Church

Allen Tough speaks about adults who are "high learners." That is, they are actively engaged and deeply involved in learning. You may know adults in your congregation who not only attend Sunday school regularly, but who also participate in a wide range of adult learning opportunities, such as small group Bible study, Bethel Bible or the Kerygma Series, Stephen Ministry training, retreats, conferences, and seminars. They read widely and exhibit a lively interest in learning.

If you know of one or more members of your congregation who fit this description, and would not mind my inviting them to participate in the study, I would appreciate your completing the form below. Please indicate the person's age range by checking the appropriate space.

I will not contact any of your church members without your permission, and will treat my conversations with them with strict confidence. Neither these individuals nor your church will be mentioned by name in my findings or in the resulting dissertation. Anyone I contact will have complete freedom to choose not to meet with me. Voluntary participation is essential to the success of the conversations I hope to have with adult learners.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

Age ☐ 18-21 ☐ 22-27 ☐ 28-33 ☐ 34-39 ☐ 40-49
 ☐ 50-64 ☐ 65+

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

Age ☐ 18-21 ☐ 22-27 ☐ 28-33 ☐ 34-39 ☐ 40-49
 ☐ 50-64 ☐ 65+

Submitted by _____ Phone _____

(Pastor)

(Church)

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO POTENTIAL INFORMANTS

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO POTENTIAL INFORMANTS

January 1, 1989

Dear Maryan,

Before coming to Western Seminary as Dean of Faculty, I served as a Minister of Christian Education for nearly fifteen years. Four years ago, I began doctoral studies at Michigan State University in order to learn more about adult education in the church.

I believe that adult learners who are actively engaged and deeply involved in their church's educational program can help us better understand why adults participate in Christian education. So I have asked ministers of Reformed churches in western Michigan to help me locate adults who might be called "high learners" in hopes of talking with them and discovering something about their participation in the education programs of their congregation.

Your pastor has indicated that in your church you are one of these people. I would like to spend an hour to an hour-and-a-half with you sometime in the next few weeks, to hear about your participation in Christian education. While I will have a few general questions to help get us started, I basically want to listen to your story as a learner in the church. What classes do you attend? What is there about learning opportunities in the church that makes you feel like participating? As we share these kinds of questions together, I hope to learn more about adult learners in the church.

If you decide to talk with me about your participation in Christian education programs, our conversation will be treated with strict confidence and no one who reads my dissertation will be able to identify you by name. Your participation in my study is completely voluntary, and you will have the freedom to withdraw from it at any time, either by cancelling the appointment in advance, or by simply ending our conversation at any point during my visit.

After you have had an opportunity to think about the prospect of our talking together, I will call to see if you are willing to talk with me about yourself as an adult learner in the church. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the study, please feel free to call me, or my advisor at Michigan State, Dr. Peggy Riethmiller (517) 353-6450.

Sincerely,

George Brown, Jr.

APPENDIX C

INFORMANT DEMOGRAPHICS

APPENDIX C

INFORMANT DEMOGRAPHICS

<u>INFORMANT</u>	<u>CODE</u>	<u>CHURCH</u>
Art	175J	Love Reformed Church
age:	45	732 members
occupation:	manager	
education:	college	
residence:	small town	
Bob	143A	Thirteenth Reformed Church
age:	30	972 members
occupation:	salesperson	
education:	high school	
residence:	metropolitan	
Brad	214D	Twelfth Reformed Church
age:	32	400 members
occupation:	insurance agent	
education:	college	
residence:	rural	
Carol	075L	Trinity Reformed Church
age:	48	592 members
occupation:	housewife (former secretary)	
education:	high school	
residence:	suburban	
Chuck	306N	Bayview Reformed Church
age:	57	436 members
occupation:	businessman	
education:	high school; one year of college	
residence:	metropolitan	
Connie	257S	Christ Reformed Church
age:	65+	479 members
occupation:	retired English teacher	
education:	M.A.	
residence:	urban	

INFORMANT	CODE	CHURCH
Craig	234C	Faith Reformed Church
age:	37	523 members
occupation:	banker	
education:	college	
residence:	metropolitan	
Cynthia	244J	Life Reformed Church
age:	36	202 members
occupation:	part-time community education teacher	
education:	college	
residence:	rural	
Dale	197F	Grand Reformed Church
age:	69	303 members
occupation:	retired farmer	
education:	high school	
residence:	rural	
Dan	285E	Eleventh Reformed Church
age:	41	385 members
occupation:	manager	
education:	high school	
residence:	small town	
Ed	027P	Tenth Reformed Church
age:	86	715 members
occupation:	retired butcher	
education:	college (high school dropout)	
residence:	urban	
Ellie	165D	Twelfth Reformed Church
age:	41	400 members
occupation:	nurse (disabled)	
education:	nursing school (L.P.N.)	
residence:	rural	
Ethel	274S	Christ Reformed Church
age:	38	479 members
occupation:	housewife/part-time junior high teacher	
education:	college	
residence:	urban	
Harold	047G	Bethlehem Reformed Church
age:	64	191 members
occupation:	retired electrician	
education:	high school	
residence:	urban	

INFORMANT	CODE	CHURCH
Jim	105C	Faith Reformed Church
age:	40's	523 members
occupation:	teacher	
education:	college	
residence:	metropolitan	
John	125A	Thirteenth Reformed Church
age:	44	972 members
occupation:	assistant school superintendent	
education:	Ph.D.	
residence:	metropolitan	
Juella	057L	Trinity Reformed Church
age:	65	592 members
occupation:	retired teacher	
education:	college	
residence:	suburban	
Kay	184F	Grand Reformed Church
age:	42	303 members
occupation:	housewife	
education:	college	
residence:	rural	
Lloyd	296S	Christ Reformed Church
age:	51	479 members
occupation:	attorney	
education:	college; law school	
residence:	urban	
Marge	224G	Bethlehem Reformed Church
age:	41	191 members
occupation:	office worker	
education:	high school	
residence:	urban	
Marie	115M	Village Reformed Church
age:	42	430 members
occupation:	housewife	
education:	college; working on M.S.W.	
residence:	suburban	
Maryan	095N	Bayview Reformed Church
age:	42	486 members
occupation:	office manager	
education:	high school (enrolled in junior college)	
residence:	metropolitan	

INFORMANT	CODE	CHURCH
Mary Ellen	035P	Tenth Reformed Church
age:	40's	715 members
occupation:	housewife (former social worker)	
education:	M.S.W.	
residence:	urban	
Nancy	204E	Eleventh Reformed Church
age:	43	385 members
occupation:	housewife (former elementary level teacher)	
education:	college	
residence:	small town	
Paul	155L	Trinity Reformed Church
age:	46	592 members
occupation:	businessman	
education:	college	
residence:	suburban	
Sally	066A	Thirteenth Reformed Church
age:	57	972 members
occupation:	bank teller	
education:	high school; some college courses	
residence:	metropolitan	
Scott	135M	Village Reformed Church
age:	44	430 members
occupation:	teacher, elementary level	
education:	M.A.	
residence:	suburban	
Susie	263B	Love Reformed Church
age:	33	732 members
occupation:	housewife (former teacher)	
education:	college	
residence:	small town	
Tammy	084H	Park Reformed Church
age:	36	341 members
occupation:	housewife	
education:	high school (taking college courses)	
residence:	urban	
Tim	015C	Faith Reformed Church
age:	45	523 members
occupation:	teacher, elementary level	
education:	M.A.	
residence:	metropolitan	

Note: The church membership statistics are taken from the Minutes of the General Synod, Volume LXVIII, Appendix 1, 1988 Directory and Financial Statements of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. Holland, Michigan: Reformed Church Press, 1988. Here, "church members" are understood to be those adults and youth who are considered to be "active communicant members." The total membership would include children and non-communicant and inactive youth and adults.

APPENDIX D

CHURCH AND AGE RANGE CODES

APPENDIX D

CHURCH CODES

- A Thirteenth Reformed Church
metropolitan
972 members
Bob age 30
Paul age 44
Sally age 57
- B Love Reformed Church
small town
732 members
Susie age 33
- C Faith Reformed Church
metropolitan
523 members
Craig age 37
Tim age 45
Jim age 40's
- D Twelfth Reformed Church
rural
400 members
Brad age 32
Ellie age 41
- E Eleventh Reformed Church
small town
385 members
Dan age 41
Nancy age 43
- F Grand Reformed Church
rural
303 members
Kay age 42
Dale age 69
- G Bethlehem Reformed Church
urban
191 members
Marge age 41
Harold age 64

- H Park Reformed Church
urban
341 members
Tammy age 36
- J Life Reformed Church
rural
202 members
Cynthia age 36
Art age 45
- L Trinity Reformed Church
suburban
592 members
Paul age 46
Carol age 48
Juella age 65
- M Village Reformed Church
suburban
430 members
Marie age 42
Scott age 44
- N Bayview Reformed Church
metropolitan
486 members
Maryan age 42
Chuck age 57
- P Tenth Reformed Church
urban
715 members
Mary Ellen age 40's
Ed age 86
- S Christ Reformed Church
urban
479 members
Ethel age 36
Lloyd age 51
Connie age 65+

Note: The church membership statistics are taken from the Minutes of the General Synod, Volume LXVIII, Appendix 1, 1988 Directory and Financial Statements of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. Holland, Michigan: Reformed Church Press, 1988. Here, "church members" are understood to be those adults and youth who are considered to be "active communicant members." The total membership would include children and non-communicant and inactive youth and adults.

AGE RANGE CODES

	WOMEN	MEN
1	18 - 21	
2	22 - 27	
3	28 - 33	Bob (30) Brad (32)
4	34 - 39	
	Susie (33)	
	Cynthia (36)	Craig (37)
	Ethel (36)	
	Tammy (36)	
		Craig (37)
5	40 - 49	
	Ellie (41)	Dan (41)
	Marge (41)	
	Kay (42)	
	Marie (42)	
	Maryan (42)	
	Nancy (43)	
		John (44) Scott (44) Art (45) Tim (45) Paul (46)
	Carol (48)	
	Mary Ellen (40's)	Jim (40's)
6	50 - 64	
	Sally (57)	Lloyd (51) Chuck (57)
7	65+	
	Juella (65)	Harold (64)
	Connie (65+)	
		Ed (86)

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Maryan: I'm not a Reformed church person. Maybe you should know that.

Interviewer: Tell me about your background.

M: Well, I am not from a Christian background to begin with. My parents always sought that we had the opportunity to go to church if we wanted to, but we were not from a "Christian" background. They sent us to Sunday school on the bus, and that kind of thing. We always had the opportunity.

M: And, I didn't come into contact with the Reformed Church until I was about 14 or 15 years old. There happened to be a new congregation starting in the Southfield area.

I: Oh, OK.

M: And close to where I lived, you know, their label was something about a church for all people, and I was within walking distance. And I just believe that God always had a hand on me . . . forever. So I began going to that little congregation. And I'm next to a charter member there, because I joined just shortly after they had their first charter members of that little congregation. And so I made my confession of faith and joined that church when I was about 16.

I: Um hmm

M: So again most of the people that you have been interviewing have been people who have grown up in the Reformed Church?

I: No.

M: No, not necessarily?

I: No. I just interviewed someone this past Tuesday who did not become a Christian until she was 20 or 21. And it was in the Reformed Church. And by that time they had had no experience. And so you talk about your going to Sunday school, at least, in childhood even if your parents did not go. She would have said a very

similar kind of thing, but it was much later when she made that step. So that's not a concern here. I'm really focusing on . . . might be some clues about childhood.

M: Well, I think so, because I always felt that after I became an adult and started getting into things at church that I was so far behind. Like everyone knew so much more than I did.

I: OK.

M: I am beginning to change my mind on that.

I: You see they are just as far behind as you were, maybe. Maybe someone ever farther, even though they started out at zero.

M: Because so many people just went because it was habit anyway. In that case, those of us who go because we want to go have more of a desire to learn, I believe.

I: I think that's probably right.

M: So that is kind of what happened. Anyway, that's how it all began.

G: All right. Tell me a bit that one of the things I do discover is that often a pattern of childhood attendance in Sunday school is correlated to whether or not attendance is involved in some way or other in adults. Not always, because there are a few people who didn't. But typically, a sort of majority, fall into that kind of pattern. So I am interested in knowing that even though your family was in a non-Christian context, nonetheless you could go, and wanted to go, so it was not sort of parents pushing. So it started way back, well, you don't remember when it started, but you really went because you wanted to go.

M: Right.

I: And that somehow, . . . is where the secret lies, I think. As you say, you are there, because you want to be there, not because you have to be there. You also somehow want to learn something, there is a desire there.

M: Or it becomes just habit, too.

I: That could be a habit too. Yes, it could be. Don't know. Maybe for some people it is habit, maybe for other people it is something else. I often wonder if there isn't some kind of pill or some kind of fluid

that you're injected with at the time of birth and from that time on, you're always that way. I don't know. If we did, we could find out what it is, package it, and sell it.

M: And give it to our kids!

I: Yes, and give it to our kids! I know I think sometimes that the habits become the patterns of their participation too.

M: I would hope so. At least later in life. Like my children who are college age, 18-23, and they sort of, like, slack off a little bit. But I am hoping what they have seen in their parents will come back.

I: There is usually a hiatus between high school and marriage. Marriage is usually another form of settling down. Well, there is a time when other things are more important in their lives and attendance patterns are irregular. Now, tell me about the kinds of things you do in the church presently. Maybe we can kind of work back to your past activities from there. Let's start with the present.

M: Well, this is very recent. I have just become the leader of our Stephen Ministry due to Phil's leaving.

I: Yes. He really did it to you, didn't he?

M: Yes, he really did, he really socked it to me. But he was the sole leader, the only trained leader for Stephen Ministry. And he asked me if I would take that over on his departure, so I just returned a week ago from Florida from the two weeks' training.

I: Leesburg?

M: No, I went to Orlando. I don't think they have one in Leesburg anymore. Did you go there?

I: Yes. The same time as . . .

M: That was in 1987.

I: So you went to Orlando for your training.

M: Right, so I am already a student minister.

I: Right, you were in the class originally as a trainee.

M: Yes, I was in a class as a trainee, and I have been in that since last May. And I have done other things that are similar to that outside of the church context.

- I: OK.
- M: Volunteer setting as a "parent aid" now.
- I: Oh, sure.
- M: And that is very similar to a one-on-one type of ministry to persons in need.
- I: You call it a "parent aid."
- M: Right.
- I: So that you are using all those helping skills . So they feed into each other.
- M: Oh, they do.
- I: So with the Stephen Ministry that right now is consuming a lot of your time.
- M: It will be all that I can handle in terms of what I can do in my church.
- I: Right. Sure.
- M: It involves a lot. It is supervising, right now, 12 Stephen Ministers who are presently involved in ministry, and trying to keep it in the forefront in the church, more or less, so that people know that we are there. Without a pastor, you know, that it is difficult.
- I: Sure.
- M: And publicity, and then trying to arouse people to the needs of more Stephen Ministries too. It is a two-year commitment and, of course, we don't more trainees and by next fall, we'll . . .
- I: Center is now in their second group. In fact this group may be the same size or even slightly larger. We hear good stories. So you know it does tremendous things, and it is an important work. Maybe just prior to the time when you had to cut back on other things. What other kinds of things were you doing in the church?
- M: Oh, my.
- I: You had Bethel Bible?

M: I have had Bethel Bible. I have taken it twice, and taught it once. I took it on a congregational level, then I took the teacher training, and then I taught it. So actually I have been through six years of Bethel Bible.

I: We have had Bethel at Center too and, I know what that needs.

M: I am disappointed, but its really losing ground at our church. They have had one person come and say they wanted to take this year. They had a teacher available.

I: But no class to teach?

M: Right.

I: We found the same thing. I think two things happened. I think one thing especially you do what what I'm studying and you have kind of used up the audience of high learners and the people who are left are low learners. And they really do not help. Not because of anything other than the fact that learning is not part of their lives, as it is for these other people. You have probably used up the potential audience for Bethel. That's one part of it. You have saturated that.

M: You are going to do the same for the Stephen Ministry too?

I: Eventually, but that has a little different character to it, depending on the growth of the church as people keep coming in. That, too, may lead to the second part of my observation, and that is that programs have a certain time.

M: Yes.

I: And then, they kind of wind down. And, I think, that Bethel's lifetime is part of it.

M: Yes.

I: And it has a certain duration. And it dies when it has used up all those potential learners. We have just started this year a program called Kerygma, which is a Bible study, sort of like the Bethel program, but is, in fact, a lot cheaper.

M: I am not aware of that.

I: There is an advantage in that you don't have to go away to some place for two weeks for one thing. The congregational fee is about half of what it is for Bethel, and the materials, about comparable, so it is a cheaper investment to begin with and the training is not as expensive and not as far away.

M: Is it Presbyterian material?

I: It comes out of Pittsburgh and I believe it is Presbyterian. Bethel may be more Lutheran, while Kerygma is more Presbyterian when it got started. It tends to take certain themes all the way through the Bible, and then go back and pick another theme and go through that again. And takes it bit by bit. This focuses on themes that overarch all those different books and my sense is that that creates a new excitement in the church. It kind of gives people a new shot of enthusiasm when you start a new program, so that may happen to students.

M: And you did have Bible Bethel at Center?

I: Yes we did from 1976 until about 1982 and then we were really starting to hit bottom. Attendance dropped off.

We started a couple's group and we tried different formats because attendance was slipping off. I taught a class of couples and we went from home to home which was like a Bible study. But it was a blend of teacher training and congregational phase. We spent about two hours, an hour and a half to two hours, every Sunday night for two years. So we did more than a congregational phase, but we didn't do it to train teachers, but it was an in-depth Bible study.

M: So you tried to get closer to the people with whom you worked.

I: It was a good experience. And that kept it going for a little while longer. We just started the Kerygma this year. We should have started about two years ago. In 1986 we were really seeing the decline of Bible Bethel.

M: From what I understand Bethel Bethel is more of an overview of the Bible.

I: Yes.

M: And that is what I felt I needed, certainly.

I: Yes.

M: Because not having the background as a child, even all the stories that a lot of people are being fed with all the time, I didn't know. And I never really read the Bible from one place through to the end. So that was a real neat experience the first time I went through that. Where as I could see the Kerygma maybe would be a good thing, too.

I: It is a nice sequel to Bethel.

M: Right. And also for someone who maybe knows a little bit more about the Bible than I did to begin with. And when I came into it, I was pretty dull.

I: Real modest. Well, it does help when you can start Bethel before Kerygma, but I like it in terms of a follow-up to Bethel. Maybe another 5 or 6 years, there will be people who want to take Bethel. And then we can recyle Bethel, alternating between the two. We'll see. It is surprising how many people have never heard of Bethel Bible.

M: That's right.

I: So the Stephen Ministry, Bethel Bible, . . . what other kinds of things you have done in the church?

M: I have served on a lot of committees, I taught Sunday school for years.

I: On what grade level?

M: Every grade level, but ended up feeling more comfortable with senior high. More or less discontinued that because of my own children being in that.

I: Oh, yes. I am sure you cannot teach your own family, especially not in senior high.

M: And then I got involved in Bethel, so I was teaching adults.

I: Sure.

M: And then I, or with my husband's help, we led lots of Bible studies, and we got involved with "Edge of Adventure."

I: Small group?

M: Small group settings.

I: Yes.

- M: Lots of those. Women's organizations, but not so much in the last 10 to 12 years. Since we have been at Bayview, I have not been real involved in women groups. I was more in our previous church, but not here, and that probably corresponds with the fact that my husband really started growing spiritually here, so we get more involved as a couple.
- I: Sure, as a couple. All right. That makes some sense.
- M: So. And I had to draw the line as far as to how much time I had.
- I: Yes.
- M: I guess that is one area that I did not get a whole lot out of. So that was one I dropped.
- I: All right. So that was about a decade or so ago? So your focus really shifted from sort of from gender segregated learning to more just as a couple or just mixed group kind of learning experience.
- M: Not bad when in the earlier days. When I was in the women's group, I was real involved, either as president or secretary of spiritual life or something. I didn't just go; I was always in a leadership position. Probably just because there wasn't anyone else who would say, "yes."
- I: I don't know. Many people are reluctant to give their time and energy and I suspect there is also here, at least as I see it, a kind of pattern of leadership and leadership abilities and gifts to lead.
- M: That's true. That's God given, and I accept that.
- I: That's a healthy response. Some people can't quite accept that.
- M: Last week was the first meeting with my supervisory group with the Stephen Ministry as their leader. We had met one time since Phil left, and then the holidays, and then I was gone. So last Thursday was the first time. And I was kind of apprehensive about it, because Phil was so pastoral and am not him, and he is not me. We could sort of sit at feet and take everything in. And that was very comfortable for us.
- I: Yes, he has a very comfortable style.
- M: Very comfortable, and also has a perception about this. He could perceive how people were feeling.

I: Very sensitive.

M: Very, very much so. And that is what I was concerned about, but it went very, very well. Even the changes I made. I said, "this is the way I was taught." "This is the way I feel comfortable about doing it, therefore, I would like to try some different things."

I: Sure.

M: Just to see how it works. And it was great! They were very open to it! And I was concerned. In fact, we never met in small groups; we kept together as an entire group. And they stressed in our training that we meet in small groups for supervision. And they said, "why haven't we been doing this? This is great." So that was the response.

I: Sure.

M: And that was good. And I said I was rather apprehensive about this.

I: And a change of style. So there were two things. As you look back beyond what you have done say at Bayview. Now, let me ask you another question about Bayview. Choir, or or anything like that?

M: No. Last year, I led a Lenten study.

I: Um hmm

M: The year before an Advent study. And this year we were involved in an Advent study too, so . . . that must have been in 1986 and in the spring of 1987, we led an lenten study, and in 1988 again an Advent study.

I: What was that like?

M: It was very good. We met in our home. I have learned that it seems to work out better if you are in the same place all the time. I think people feel more comfortable with that.

I: Yes.

M: So we met at our house on Sunday evenings. Sam had some material made up for each Sunday and we met and we shared the Bible lesson and got into more of a conversation of "what does Lent mean?" and "How can that make us any difference in celebrating Lent?" And trying to put Christ back into these seasons that so often time get sort of commercialized. We don't hear

much about Lent anymore. So this got us back into talking about it again. What was Jesus doing during that time? And how can we follow in those steps? And how can we truly carry our cross.

I: Discipleship concerns?

M: Right. And everybody came. . . .

I: Couples, then?

M: We had had a real mixture! We had a couple of widows, one single woman, and two couples, one single man in his mid-twenties and was married afterwards, and my husband and I, and about 10 people all together, I guess.

I: A very diverse group.

M: Yes, a very diverse group!! And that was a really good experience. Everybody came with really different kinds of feelings. And the one who was widowed was recently widowed.

I: So probably there was some need for a support group.

M: Right. And to talk about resurrection. It was a wonderful experience. And she really needed it. And resurrection was being a process, not just a one-time thing.

I: What a hope-full experience for a Christian to have, after an experience of death. What about before Bayview? Are these different kinds of things that would not be typical of this or maybe things in addition to that? Retreats? Conferences? Have you ever gone to events outside of your particular congregation like a Lutheran retreat some place or program.

M: I went to several women retreats. I haven't been to one for a couple of years, but I think that was probably when I was in my young twenties, when I attended my first one-going to those retreats was one of the things that really turned on my spiritual growth.

I: OK.

M: It wasn't just going to church.

I: No! Say more about that.

M: One thing I can remember. Like I related this story before is very similar to what someone told me once

that God accepted me however I was. I never felt like I was quite good enough.

I: OK.

M: That's right. And I always had to say "yes" to everything because first it was expected.

I: Um hmm.

M: And sometimes I even wonder now why I do this stuff now, and am I still trying to earn it? And maybe there is some of that somewhere back in there too.

I: Or it may be, "This is my grateful response," but knowing that is good.

M: That, and now the kind of things that I'm in, I am a lot more selective about. This one thing is learning where my gifts are. And I don't have to just be on this committee or that committee. What ends up happening. I am embarrassed, because I am doing too much talking anyway. I'm not supposed to be doing this, some one else is. I don't have to do that." What I want to do is do one thing and do it right. Not necessarily the best I could, because that puts a little too much pressure on me.

I: Um hmm

M: And I have learned that. Yes, that I can lead. So that is what I am doing. And I think that maybe 20 years ago I wasn't sure where I was, I wasn't sure where I fit in everything so I was just doing this, and this, and I was gone every night and I was think what is this all about, "do I have to do this because now I am a Christian?" Do I have take away all this time from my family? And then I remember hearing a speaker once say, "God accepts you right where you are at." And it was like a revelation to me. And I am sure that I had heard it before. I am sure I heard those same words before.

I: But it just hit you in a fresh way.

M: Yes, it just hit me really fresh. And then that was kind of a start of being able to prioritize.

I: Yes. It sounds like that about 20 years ago life was sort of busy with many things.

M: Yes, it sure was.

- I: Did it just happen? Or was it at a specific age? Was this about when your children began to come, or did you already have children?
- M: No, they would have been young children. I had my children between 19 and 24. So I was quite young.
- I: OK. Sure. So you're children were about pre-school?
- M: Yes, toddlers.
- I: OK, then one of these retreats and focusing so that the idea that "you are accepted as you are," and all this wild activity. It sounds like you had a lot of activity and needed to focus on the most relevant using your gifts.
- M: That's right. I can remember coming back and taking over the spiritual life part of our women's group. And I felt real comfortable in that role. And that was good.
- I: Good.
- M: I don't think I taught Sunday school. I think I just decided that my place at that time was the children and I was going to give what I could and do it well, but that I didn't have to do it all. We were there at that church for a number of years and then we went to a large church for a couple of years. First Church, you might be familiar with that. It had about 2,000 members and 5,000 more now.
- I: I was there in the late 70's for a meeting. I was into intergenerational education and our conference meetings was held there.
- M: Our little Reformed Church had gone through a lot of problems during that time. There was the charismatic movement that split the church. It was little enough as it was. It had about 40 families, but everybody was going to First Church, so we decided to give it a shot one week and just see what it's like. And we went there, and we could not believe that that afternoon the pastor called on us. And he said that he just wondered why we came, or something to that effect. Well, my husband said, "to be honest with you, we were just curious. So many of our friends were going and saying how great it was, and we were just curious." Well, he said, he was glad we were there. He asked something about our coming back and my husband said, "I want to tell you that I have no intentions of coming back. You

are 12 miles from us and that is way too far to go to church, but we were glad we went today, it was a good experience." The following Sunday, I said, we better go to church. Well, let's go to First. That week he called us again. We couldn't believe it. This is Dr. Tess, your pastor calling. He was very assertive, almost aggressive. It was almost a directive at that point. I would like to come over and talk to you folks. He came over that week and we ended up going there for about two years and gas was short then.

I: Oh, yes. Twelve miles was a long way to go in that fuel shortage.

M: And right about that time we were praying we would find a new home church and then my husband got a job in Walker. That is how we got here and went to Bayview, and we have been here ever since. And at First's our involvement was a little bit different. We never became members there, because we were so uncertain if we would be able to get back and forth, but we became involved. We got involved in that we became involved in a small group situation, because we were told, "don't expect to come here and get anywhere unless you . . . said, "we are not a church, we are a church of many churches."

I: The size is not the issue, it was the clusters that made up that size.

M: So that was kind of nice in a way. It was almost a retreat for me. You can understand that, because I had been quite busy and there I could go and just be a part of something without having to maybe give of myself so much, so that I could just sort of take in for awhile.

I: Time to be renewed.

M: Renewed and relaxed and able to grow more myself, and I think that was a really good preparation time for me coming here. We just got real involved right from the start, and we came here, and it was like we needed that again. And that was when I my husband really got involved. So that was really a great thing.

I: Sure. Because you were off to women's meetings, and he was staying home.

M: He was a deacon in our former church, but he said that until he came here, he never prayed out loud in a group. He said he never felt anything. So I was really excited when that began to happen.

- I: I am sitting here, kind of thinking about a question, I am not quite sure how to get hold of it. But there is a pattern which makes some sense to me. There is a significant event around age 16 in terms of confession of faith.
- M: I have to tell you that I became a Christian a few years before that, and I really believe that. I believe it with all my heart.
- I: A public acknowledgement of the private fact?
- M: I remember asking Christ into my life, and I can remember that it being very, very real. I was going to a baptist church. I was afraid of the water. This is the truth. I could not become baptized for that reason, because that was immersion.
- I: Um, hmm.
- M: That was frightening for me.
- I: I understand.
- M: And not having parents that could help me understand.
- I: You had to do it on your own, with no support.
- M: Yes, I had to do it on my own. So then when I started going with my neighbors to First Church, and this little church--the Good Shepherd Reformed Church--and they opened their doors to me, and I became very close to the pastor. And he was able to explain some of these things.
- I: And that makes all the difference.
- M: And that is what I did. I was baptized and made my confession of faith. But I had been a Christian already for a few years, but I was asking myself, "what do you do now as a Christian"?
- I: How do you acknowledge or confirm and make that real? OK? So that church experience, the Good Shepherd where you were involved in a lot of activity and then a kind of retreat, . . . backing off, shedding some of those things, getting fed and nurtured yourself. And now at Bayview, a kind of launching into involvement, but very focused, and not simply all over the map. But here are very specific things I am hearing. So there is a kind of progression.
- M: And some of that may have happened too because I did not work until 10 years ago. I was home, and I had a

little more time and could do different kind of things. And now, because of my job, I have to make sure that this is going to be meaningful, not only for me, but for those other people who are in that experience with me. So I have to choose. I don't have the time to just go do something that isn't going to mean anything.

I: Right. So you become much more selective about the things you do. So it's not that it might not have been good, but what's not important goes, and what's important goes as well. The absolutely essential stays and maybe even some of the important things.

M: Before that, Phil said to me, "but I don't know how you do what you do, and I said to him, "I don't know how I do it either, except that we all have 24 hours a day, and we all have priorities, and I just try to prioritize, so that I can do the things that I feel are important."

I: Sounds like a very deliberate and intentional person.

M: Pretty organized, that helps.

I: Sure.

M: I write notes. I don't take a trip to the store unless I know exactly what I need, and I don't just aimlessly walk around.

I: There is a sort of purposefulness and goal orientation. I'm curious about the relationship of life experiences, in learning; for instance, the women's retreat, where you say you it sort of turned on your spiritual growth, you began to grow in a whole different way. It was a revelation, this notion we don't have to prove ourselves, we take it easier. We are accepted as we are. That's the key. And "now I can relax." And that was a significant kind of event. And then it seems that learning focuses more narrowly. I would kind of draw a time line like this. One time I'd put on that time line is when you knew you were a Christian, that would be one; and later when you made public confession of that commitment, that would be another, and then maybe the time when you were having children, is another time--that's when you were turning more to family and narrowing focus and when this retreat happens. Then there's that retreat. And, I am not sure, how the retreats come in terms of time. Was that about the same time you were having toddlers at home?

M: Yes. Yes.

- I: And shortly after that came the family experience. And that is when you were presbyterians. Right?
- M: Yes. That's right, because our last daughter was about a-year-and-half old when we went there. So it was around . . . (thinking). . . We probably went there from about 1972 to 1974.
- I: So then there were about three things that were sort of clustered together, beginning with family.
- M: Yes. About five years.
- I: I am aware that sometimes in life we have a lot of developmental psychologists talk about stages, say, we have the young adult stage, the middle adult stage, the older adult stage. And sometimes between stages there are transitional times. And it sounds like that is what probably happened in this five-year span, or from five to seven years.
- M: That could be. I never thought of it in that way.
- I: This just clicked with me now as we are talking. That's one of the neat things about having conversations like this; things like this you can't read in a book and you can't really ask a question, because you don't know what the question is yet, but as you talk, the question more or less presents itself and you begin to see something.
- M: And I thought, here I had these young children, maybe because of the background that I had, I wanted to have something different for them. You know, maybe I was just more ripe and more open at that point because of wanting to have a different kind of family experience with my own children. That may have precipitated where I was, where I was coming from, and it could have been just the age. I mean, there was a lot of spiritual awareness going on during that time in the early seventies.
- I: 1972
- M: Yes.
- I: And then you moved here in 1974.
- M: Right.
- I: So it has been since about 1980, 1979, or late 70's and early 80's that you started working.
- M: Right. 1979. Full time, that is.

- I: Yes. OK. And not that you weren't working at all these other things, because those are work too. I can remember how my wife talks about all the things she does, that is work. Being gone all day, that is work. It's just that you have a pay check at the end of the week now and you didn't then.
- M: That is right.
- I: That's kind of unfortunate, but you have the PTA, the church involvement, and all the rest of those volunteer activities. I know it is difficult how to say these things, but I realize that there is more to it than just full-time versus part-time.
- M: That is for sure.
- I: Are there any other life events that you can think of that happened, maybe, since Brighton, that were sort of turning points for you?
- M: Well, working here, certainly. There was another time of direction, I think, and finding out who we really were as persons individually, as a couple, and as a family. Sometimes, you know, we get into patterns and habits. When we came here we didn't know a soul, and we could have done anything we wanted to, really. So if we decided we didn't want to get up for church on Sunday morning, we could easily have slept in. No one would have been the wiser.
- I: Sure.
- M: And, yet, it was just the opposite way for us. Then after we came here, I think the church became, definitely, our community. There is no doubt about it. Our closest friends are from church. I would almost dare to say, our only friends. And I don't mean just from Bayview, I mean church people. Some people have been very significant to us. Tim Martin and his wife were very significant. We met them right after they started at Bayview and Tim, of course, is a Christian educator. I used to think as Christian education being more for children and Tim really helped me see through that. Christian education is really formative. If we can educate the adults, we don't have to worry about the children. This is kind of his philosophy. I don't think that I would say it works too well, and my own bias is that people are just too busy. Our lives are too fragmented. Everyone is gone. You have piano lessons one night, flute lessons, another, and swim practice, hockey, everything. Unfortunately, the family is not close.

- I: The adults are the models?
- M: Yes, so that the adults are the models?
- I: Even in that fragmentation they are.
- M: That's right. They are the models, but not necessarily the teachers!
- I: They're the ones who should be the teacher. But other groupings may be the place where that community happens for them. As you were saying, the church was your community. Your base of operation. Were there other significant persons like Tim? I guess at some place whoever said, "God accepts you as are," that person was somehow an influence in your life?
- M: Yes, that was. I can't remember who she was. There were a lot of significant people. I don't know given names--pastors, friends, and teachers--that I have had along the way have been significant, but probably no one anymore significant than what Tim and Sally have been in my life and I would have to say, not only because of what I learned, maybe, from Tim but who Tim and Sally are as people.
- I: Sure, probably more the relationship rather than just the content.
- M: Yes, to me they are the examples when I needed them. So now when we see them on Saturday nights, it is more because he was a pastor and friend. And I knew them in that relationship and that context. When I saw them, I saw them as being deeply committed in all their ways, in their family, their relationships with people, and in their integrity.
- I: Those values were the key, weren't they?
- M: Yes.
- I: Why, do you suppose it is, that you are into so much learning. You seem to like that.
- M: Yes, I do.
- I: That equips you and enables you, it focuses Do you have any idea how all that started and keeps you going?
- M: I think I feel if I don't, my brain is just going to

stop working. I really feel that we have a capacity of learning so much. So why not set it up with good stuff. That's my own philosophy.

I: That attitude--that basic appreciation that if you do something--fill your mind with good things, your mind won't shrink, shrivel and stagnate. That doesn't seem to bother some other folk, but it does bother other folk. So if you do engage in all these good things that are so rewarding and so filled with blessings, that's a curious thing.

M: I don't know why some people do and some people don't. We are made so different, I guess.

I: Yes. I think that is part of it.

M: And we sit and wonder why we have all these good things going, why isn't Johnny and Sally, and Evie, and Nancy going to these things? Why don't they want to know more, not only, to me it's just not my spiritual life, but in everything. I want to know a lot of stuff.

I: And you are involved in more than just the specifically church things, because the child guidance programs, and I would assume there would be some kind of preparation and training involved in that as there is in Stephen Ministry. So isn't not just learning in a church.

M: Yes, that is right.

I: My hunch is that you have learned in a lot of different arenas.

M: Going to school, too.

I: Now?

M: Yes.

I: What are you taking?

M: Ethics, a philosophy course.

I: Great! Where are you taking it.

M: At a Junior College. I have been attending there for two or three years now.

I: Neat!

M: And I have been taking two courses each semester, but because of my involvement now in Stephen Ministries, I

have cut it down. So I am pretty close to my associate's degree.

I: OK.

M: See, I felt like I missed so much as a kid. I got married right out of high school. We had children right away, and I felt like I missed that, so now I am catching up on all these things.

I: Isn't it wonderful to know that it is never too late.

M: Oh, it is. There are some people in my classes that are in their seventies. I think that is wonderful. I am trying to get my dad to go back to school.

I: Those are high learners. Those are people who do that. In fact people in your parents' generation probably.... Let me say it differently. People who are in their late 60's and up are less likely to be involved in some learning than people who would be in their 60's in the next ten years. Because back when these people were in their childhood, some of them didn't finish high school. Because that was just like college.

M: My mother did not finish high school, but my father did and had some college. My father is a very brilliant man. Ask him anything, and he will tell you what it is. Any kind of a trivia type of thing. He has a mind that amazes me. Anything that has to do with history. He laughs at me because I tell him that I think he is the smartest person that I know of. He laughs, because he thinks that is silly.

I: So you really mean that?

M: Well, I mean it, because he is brilliant. I admire him for his intelligence.

I: Were you aware of that as a child and adolescence?

M: I don't think so.

I: Was he the kind of parent who was always reading, or thinking, or talking about learning. I guess I am kind of wondering if part of the clue may not be back with your father?

M: He was always reading. But we didn't communicate a whole lot. He was from that generation that believed children should be seen and not heard. So there wasn't a whole lot of communication until really after I was married, and he could see me as an adult and not as a child.

- I: But you watched him maybe as a child reading and knowing that he was doing some other kinds of things, not necessarily going to school, but his openness to life, his hunger for growth.
- M: He was still going to school too. He is always taking one thing or another. So that may have something to do with it. I could see that you can still learn even after being an adult.
- I: But going to school, like how?
- M: Like taking technical courses and things like that. He always wanted to improve in his job. So he was always taking courses to improve. My mom was in a business, she was very independent. Although she never finished high school, she was an extremely intelligent person.
- I: It is not just the formal education that makes for learning. Some people learn in school, in formal classes, and some people learn in nonformal ways.
- M: And I have an older brother who is a brain. I admired him, and I still do, because he is very intelligent. And I think that I always felt a little bit, well, not quite as good as him, because he was so smart.
- I: Yes.
- M: So now I am catching up.
- I: I wonder what affect our family experiences have on some of us at a very young age, like when we were children, or toddlers? When we can hardly remember what that was like? Can you remember one incident or one place or one face, or something?
- M: But some of that worries me. It concerns me, because maybe I didn't spend as much time as I should have with my children, because I was busy making myself good.
- I: But you made the adjustment yet just at the edge of it.
- M: Yes, that's true.
- I: My guess would be what the children would remember, consciously or unconsciously, will be the service, the involvement, that some of that will be there. There may be a feeling of absence, but I suspect the example of community service, church work involvement, that a person should be active, and shouldn't sit on the side lines and be passive about life. That may be the lesson that your children learn from that. More than

- you thought they did at the time. Sometimes the things we want them to learn, we work very hard to make them learn, and then they learn something quite the opposite of what we intended. I don't always think of those things as negative. It's hard to know until it's all wrapped up at the end And then we stil don't know.
- M: No, I don't know either.
- I: But I suspect, I have kind of gut feeling that somehow our parents' attitude to life whether they were sort of resistant to new things or whether they were open to new ideas, many predispose us to being somewhat the same. You sound a little bit like your father and mother. Your father took classes to improve himself, took a couple of classes wanting to get ahead in his job and then took classes to help him do that.
- M: Mine has been more focused in the Christian arena.
- I: That's right.
- M: Because that is where I am.
- I: Sure, that would be the difference. Sure that would.
- M: But the openness to expand, the knowledge.
- I: Can you tell me roughly your age range?
- M: What I am right now?
- I: Yes.
- M: 42.
- I: You have had a high school education, you are going to a class at a junior college, and all the rest. This is really a picture of a high learner. From the people I have talked to, and I am about a third of the way through with the number of interviews I need to do, there is a pattern that is emerging. And I had to get about a third of the way through before I could begin to see it, because at first each one is so different. But after a while a pattern begins to emerge.
- M: So that's a pattern of a high learner. But then again, why are we high learners? That's a puzzle.
- I: I am not entirely sure. I think some of it has to do with Tim Martins, I think some of it has to do with a brilliant father, and I think something has to do with the pastor in a church who says we have small groups here and that is where the action is in this church and

that becomes a retreat. Sometimes they are things that we fall into by accident, that we don't intend, but they sort of intend us. I think that is God's hand shaking and preparing. I think your being a Stephen Ministry leader is the fruit of a lot of things that other people would have said was sort of an accident that happened by chance. It was luck? Christians might say it was providence, God's choosing. But it finally comes together, that a ministry is born, and is carried on and sustained because these other events have all happened. What would have happened if you hadn't backed off during that period in Brighton and found renewal and focused on the family and the kind of resting up after activity and you hadn't heard the message and felt accepted? The many people that I have talked with have had both Stephen Ministry and Bethel Bible.

M: Is that right?

I: Yes, there is a connection.

M: It is Bethel Bible that teaches you the overview of the Bible, and you can get a handle inside here of where you fit into God's story, man's story. It is so important to ground yourself into that.

I: And ground you in an ethic that says - this isn't just for you, it's for others, too.

M: That's right. And then you can use it as in the Stephen Ministry.

I: That has been the sequence with many of the people I've spoken with.

M: Is that right?

I: Bethel first, and then Stephen's.

M: Um hmm.

I: I think there are some connections there. I don't know what to make of it yet. But I do know there are some valuable insights here.

M: Do you know Winston Lee by any chance? He is pastor of Fellowship Christian Church at Morris?

I: No.

M: It is a ministry sponsored by two denominational churches. His father used to be a pastor at Bayview Reformed Church. Well, we were there right at the end

of his ministry, and then he left. And we became really good friends with Winston. Winston felt very comfortable with us. We were from Detroit, and not "Reformed."

- I: You were much more ecumenically broadly Christian than if you had grown up, got married, and lived in Walker.
- M: That's right. He used to just stop by at our house a lot of times. We just lived a couple of blocks from where they did when we lived to Walker. He would just stop by to talk, and we went through the whole process with him trying to find a wife. Finally he went to the seminary. We talked to him on the phone last week end, and I talked to him for about an hour about the Stephen's Ministry, because he has been one too and then he said, "I think you have found your nich."
- I: Confirmation of a gift.
- M: Yes, he said, "it sounds as if you have really found your nich." "Yes," I said, "I think I have."
- I: That's great.
- M: He is another one of those people that is very perceptive. He, along with Tim and his wife, are the type of people who really care about you as a person. And that's when I see that in an individual
- I: It makes a big difference.
- M: Yes, it makes a big difference. And then you try to model yourself after that when you see someone like that.
- I: I sometimes wonder if it isn't a combination of things. The Bible talks about that "cloud of witnesses"--and you had Tim and Sally, your mother and father. There are people who touch our lives, and I am sure they are in the grandstand watching us, both past and present, and maybe even in the future, kind of cheering us on, encouraging us, that's you, that's really where you belong. I think that may be part of it, significantly. I think another part of it is events, both the ones that we intend, you chose to go to that women's retreat, that experience would not have happened if you had not made that choice. It is intention, but another speaker may have had a different message or they may have said it in a way that turned you off, or you might have been preoccupied with something else and not have heard it. So it is the unintentional part of the events too that we don't desire and which we don't even invite, but still coming crashing into our life. I

think that may be part of it. I suspect that all of this gets wrapped somehow in God's plan. This is still a mystery, there is still a plain "X", and unknown quantity. Other people may have similar kinds of experiences, other people have had children, other people who have moved from one city to another.

M: Another part is my personality. I am the type of person who needs to be needed. I know that. I recognize that in myself. Therefore, I think that I am doing something selfishly. And yet hopefully they are being blessed by God because we are being able to help other people. When I got involved with the child guidance clinic, and shortly before Stephen Ministries, I was kind of going through the empty-nest syndrome--all the boys were gone, my daughter doesn't think she needs me. She's 18, and I was going through that, and feeling like, well, if the kids don't need me, then somebody's got to need me.

I: OK.

M: So some of it is a little selfish. Hopefully, like I said, that God will bless that and will use that in someone else's life.

I: Let me frame that for you in a couple of ways where it might be helpful. One is that of Andrew Greeley, a Catholic priest who has written some awful books that sell like hot cakes, says that God draws straight with crooked lines. I think that this is his way of saying that God takes all of our motives, even the ones we consider selfish, and God sort of takes those crooked lines and draws straight lines with those crooked lines--makes straight lines with them. I don't know how he does that, but I think he does. The second thing is that I am very much aware that in the studies that have been done of people who learn is what often triggers a learning experience is a life transition--such as the empty nest, for instance, leaving parents alone. Children don't need them. Who needs them? I think that the Stephen Ministry became part of that for you. That may be God's way of nudging us on in life and pushing us out the nest ourselves, saying that you need a new chapter, you need a new life. Yes.

Thank you very much for this time together.

APPENDIX F

APPROVAL TO DO RESEARCH

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APPROVAL TO DO RESEARCH

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS (UCRIHS)
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July 22, 1988

IRB# 88-235

George Brown, Jr.
920 Keynard, S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Dear Mr. Brown:

Subject: "ADULT LEARNERS IN THE CHURCH: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN LIFE TRANSITIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN
CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IRB# 88-235"

The above project is exempt from full UCRIHS review. I have reviewed the proposed research protocol and find that the rights and welfare of human subjects appear to be protected. You have approval to conduct the research.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval one month prior to July 22, 1989.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,


Daniel A. Bronstein, S.J.D.
Vice Chair, UCRIHS

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