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Motivation for participation in adult religious education: An exploratory study

Conrad, Katherine Other, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1986

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MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

Katherine O. Conrad

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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Approved by

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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This exploratory study was conducted to gain insight into the motivations for participation in adult religious education.

In-depth, informal interviews were conducted with six white, Protestant women who were active participants in the religious education programs in their congregations. One informant was selected from each decade between 20 and 70. Topics covered in the interviews were as follows: (1) Background in Participation in Religious Education; (2) Areas of Participation; (3) Reasons for Participation; (4) Relationship of Religious Education to Life; (5) Participation in Other Educational Activities.

Findings and Conclusions: (1) The age variable made no difference in degree of participation or reasons for participation. (2) The most salient area of commonality among the sample was uninterrupted active participation in religious education since birth. (3) The parents of all six had been actively involved in all aspects of the church. (4) The subjects participated in religious education to assist them in becoming "grown up" in their faith. (5) The informants saw religious education as an avenue for developing skills that would aid them in serving their faith communities. (6) The subjects relied on religious education as an aid to coping with changes in

their lives. (7) The sample participated in learning activities in addition to religious education and showed a strong tendency toward Houle's learning-oriented personalities. (8) The informants were also goal-oriented, according to Houle's typology, but their goal was "how to be" rather than "how to do."

Three findings not directly related to the study were as follows: (1) All six informants had, at some time, participated in a denomination that was different from the one in which they were baptized. (2) There was almost no use of language relating to God, Christ, Holy Spirit, the sacraments, or any particular doctrines of the church. Although the informants were describing their involvement in the church, they did so without using traditional religious symbols. (3) Religious education involvement may be seen as a predictor of overall church involvement and may actually generate participation in other areas of the church.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most of the major religious denominations carry on extensive adult education programs. Materials are published and programs are planned so that most congregations may have ongoing programs. The assumption is that adults need to be as actively involved in the educational program of the denomination as children and young people. In some denominations a high degree of activity is achieved. In others, only a token number of adults continue to study on a regular basis.

Adult educational programs in churches have been in existence a very long time and are integral to the total program in most congregations. By comparison, principles and theories about adult education and adult learners are relatively new. In the last several decades, however, there has been increasing accumulation of research-based knowledge, theoretical frameworks, and techniques regarding the unique characteristics of the adult learning process (Knowles, 1982).

Just as in any area of education, the principles and theories of adult education are by no means a uniform list agreed upon by all authorities. Cross (1982) identifies humanistic, developmental, and behavioral theories as being

operative in adult education. Basic principles must include ideas about how adults learn and what adults learn. In planning education programs, the "how" is just as important as the "what." An additional component to be considered in any setting of adult education is why adults continue to study.

From the point of view of the humanist, adults continue to study because it is a natural part of their development--a continuous unfolding. Tough's research (1971) shows that approximately 90% of the adult population continues to be involved in some kind of learning project.

Behaviorists take a different position and contend that adults continue to learn as a result of the impact of the environment. Simply stated, anyone living in the environment is learning from the environment. This position is difficult to dispute, but does not answer a basic question: Why do some people actively continue to seek education, and others do not?

Another theoretical position that seems compatible within the context of adult education is developmental. Cross (1982) identified two positions among the developmentalists. One sees the various stages and phases of human development as an inevitable unfolding of predetermined patterns. The second posture of developmentalists, the interactionists' position, places

more emphasis on the role of the environment in development.

It is possible that in the area of adult religious education, no one theory is adequate to explain why a segment (relatively small, to be sure) of the adult membership of any religious community continues to engage intentionally in planned educational activities, either individually or in small groups.

Congregations as centers of worship may also become centers of inquiry, that is, communities where people seek meaning and understanding in relation to faith and life. Leaders in a congregation usually recognize that all persons are in the process of becoming. Martin Luther said, "This life, therefore, is not righteous but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise; we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam with glory, but all is being purified" (1521/1930, p. 31).

Do adults engage in education to assist them in "becoming"? The literature on adult development often contrasts the needs of adults and children. Neugarten, in particular, (1976) commented that in the first half of life subjective experience is determined by the need for the

expansion of the individual. In the second half, however, a person deals more with matters of conservation and integration of life patterns already established. While this theory needs further exploration, it does raise some interesting questions: Do adults engage in religious education in an attempt to integrate what they already believe about their faith, or are educational pursuits an attempt to further develop or expand faith? Or both?

Research on adults as learners is fairly extensive and addresses the subjects of what adults want to learn and how adults prefer to learn. Religion is usually included as an item in the general research on adult learning. However, says Elias, "When findings about religion are included within the more extensive findings on occupational education, these findings get little attention because of the relatively small percentages involved. . . . 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" (1982, p. 107).

In addition to the problem cited above, the lack of definitive terminology also poses a problem for researchers in religious education. Words like "faith" and "religion" have very different meanings to people, and the researcher has difficulty in determining how answers are to be coded

or interpreted. Terminology is particularly difficult to deal with in questionnaires and surveys where respondents cannot clarify their responses, and interviewers cannot clarify their questions.

Need for the Study

As Elias (1982) has pointed out, almost no research has been done focusing exclusively on adult religious learning. Some research has focused on specific programs (e.g. *Word and Witness*, Lutheran Church in America, and *Search*, American Lutheran Church), but the purpose of those studies usually has been to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

One major study has focused on faith in the life of adults. Since 1981 the Religious Education Association has sponsored the Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle Project. The Project has been an attempt to answer the question: "If everything else about us changes as we grow older, what *might* we expect to happen to our faith?" (Stokes, 1982, p. 9) This study gathered data on how faith was perceived by those interviewed and the place of faith in their lives. The study particularly focused on changes in faith over the life span. While several of the hypotheses tested were related to educational involvement, no attempt was made to find out the motivation for involvement in religious education.

Statement of Problem

As previously noted, the body of knowledge concerning adult religious learning is scant. The purpose of this study was to investigate why adults are involved in religious education. If motivation for participation in religious education can be clarified, then it is hoped that such information will be useful to teachers and curriculum designers as they seek to help people, in Luther's words, who are in the process of "not being but becoming."

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on why adults involve themselves in religious education. The study did not investigate involvement in formal religious education classes taken in parochial schools, colleges, or divinity schools, but on voluntary, noncredit gatherings such as Sunday school classes, Bible study groups, reading groups, or individual study. While the term "religious education" was generally used (see Definition of Terms, Chapter I, and Chapter IV), the research was done in the context of the Christian faith.

The study was exploratory in nature and attempted to define common areas of motivation for adult participation in religious education. Six interviews were conducted with people who are actively involved in some area of religious education. All of the informants were white, female,

Protestant, and middle class. The age range was from 25 to 70 years. All six were residents of Forsyth County in North Carolina.

Definition of Terms

Active involvement. Weekly attendance and participation in at least one religious education activity.

Adult. The social definition: People become adult socially when they start performing the roles their culture assigns to the adult years, which in the United States include the roles of full-time worker, spouse, parent, voting citizen, and the like (Knowles, 1982).

Adult life cycle. The patterns of physical, psychological, and social change which occur in adulthood from the transition out of adolescence through midlife and older adulthood to death (Bents, 1983).

Adult education. All experiences of men and women that result in gaining new knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, values, and interests (Knowles, 1982).

Beliefs. "Ways by which faith expresses itself" (Bruning & Stokes, 1982, p. 47).

Faith. "A dynamic element in an individual's total being which addresses issues of ultimate concern" (Bruning & Stokes, 1982, p. 47).

Faith development. "Reflects the changing nature of a person's faith perceptions and understandings through the

developmental journey of her or his life" (Bruning & Stokes, 1982, p. 39).

Religion. "Cumulative traditions of the faith of a people in history" (Bruning & Stokes, p. 46).

Religious education. " . . . An intentional study of teaching-learning and the educative process as it relates to the faith and practices of a religious community" (Moore, 1984, p. 91).

Outline of the Dissertation

Although the aim of this particular study was to explore why adults continue to involve themselves in religious education, the "how" and the "what" were kept in tension because the context and the content of any educational experience are always key components. The purpose of Chapter I has been to identify the key factors in the study. In Chapter II the literature in the fields of motivation for adult learning, adult education, and adult religious education was reviewed. In reviewing the theories of adult education in Chapter III, the groundwork was laid for how adults learn and, to some extent, why they continue to learn throughout the life cycle.

In Chapter IV, particular attention was given to theories of religious education as outlined by Burgess (1975) and Elias (1982). Emphasis was on the teaching-learning experience in religious education and

involvement in the faith community.

In Chapter V purpose and motivation were examined from the standpoint of the participant, and the reasons given by six adults for their participation in religious education were explored. In Chapter VI conclusions were drawn based on areas of commonality which the interviewer identified from analysis of the interviews.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the review of the literature on motivation for adult participation in religious education, selections were made from three different areas. The first area examined the research and literature which concentrates on motivation for adult learning. The second body of literature focused specifically on adult participation in education in general, and the third area reviewed literature which centered on adult participation in religious education. It is often difficult to delineate who learns from why they learn, and what they learn is also, at times, inseparable from the "who" and the "why." There are times, therefore, when there is some overlapping in the material reviewed in each section. Because this dissertation was concerned with motivation for adult participation in religious education, only the literature on motivation which seemed most relevant to adult learning was reviewed. The research on motivation for participation in religious education is covered in the section labeled "Adult Participation in Religious Education."

Motivation for Adult Learning

Kidd (1973) defined motivation as "the general term to designate the active kinds of relationships that an

organism has with its environment" and motives as "a state or set of the individual which disposes him for certain behavior and for seeking certain goals" (p. 102). Atkinson (1966) in delineating an area which is usually termed "achievement motivation," identified three variables which require explicit definition: motives, expectancy, and incentives. According to Atkinson, an expectancy "is a cognitive anticipation, usually aroused by cues in a situation, that performance of some act will be followed by a particular consequence" (p. 12). The incentive variable "represents the relative attractiveness of a specific goal that is offered in a situation, or the relative unattractiveness of an event that might occur as a consequence of some acts" (p. 12). A motive is defined by Atkinson as "a disposition to strive for a certain kind of satisfaction, as a capacity for satisfaction in the attainment of a certain class of incentives" (p. 13). Motivation, then, is formulated by Atkinson in this way: Motivation = f (Motive x Expectancy x Incentive).

In language that is in no way scientific but easily understood, human motivation boils down to why humans do what they do or think what they think. Motivation may come from within an individual or from the environment in which he or she lives, and motivation, according to Kidd (1973), may have two different but related effects: directing and

selecting, and reinforcing.

Motivation is a key factor in adult education because adults have a great deal of choice in selecting and directing their own activities. Kidd (1973) observed that many writers have stated that motivation will determine whether learning will happen at all, as well as the rate and amount of learning. He also made this general observation: "Throughout recorded history there have been men and women who continued to pursue learning with vigor until the end of their days ... ." Then he asks a key question: "Does such a learner differ in any marked way from other people?" (p. 47)

Houle (1961) attempted to answer such a question by studying very active learners. He conducted twenty-two case studies in an attempt to discover why these learners were so active. When Houle studied holistic interviews to find common threads running through the activities and motivations of the learners, three subgroups emerged. The first, goal-oriented learners, used learning to gain specific objectives such as learning how to do something. The second subgroup, activity-oriented learners, participated for the sake of the activity itself. The third subgroup identified by Houle, learning-oriented, seemed to pursue learning for its own sake. This group seemed to possess a desire to know and to grow through

learning, and they joined groups and even chose jobs for the learning potential offered.

McClelland (1973) identified some of the same characteristics which Houle found in the learning-oriented person in what McClelland termed the "achievement motivated" person. He said, "what we mean by n Achievement [need to achieve] is best conceived as a kind of spontaneously recurring concern to do things better, which a person may or may not be aware that he has....He seeks out challenging, moderately difficult tasks, does better at them, is very interested in feedback from the task as to how well he is doing, does not like to gamble or be directed by someone else as to what he should do, is restless and seeks out new tasks because the old ones get boring as the probability of succeeding at them increases" (p. 477).

Houle's typology has stimulated complex statistical analyses over the past decade. These studies generally use a psychometrically constructed instrument such as the Educational Participation Scale or the Reasons for Educational Participation Scale and then subject the responses to factor analysis, cluster analysis, or some other technique which reduces item responses to cluster or subgroups (Cross, 1982). The factor analysis of the Educational Participation Scale done by Morstain and Smart

(1974) is an example of such a study. In their analysis, Morstain and Smart found six factors which influence adult participation in education. These factors were identified as follows: social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, excape/stimulation, and cognitive interest. Cross (1982) observed that while Houle's three subgroups may be seen in the six factors of Morstain and Smart, the important difference is that Houle was classifying groups of people and Morstain and Smart were identifying clusters of reasons for participation in adult education.

Houle's study implies that people are consistently motivated by characteristic orientations to learning throughout their lives, and the Morstain and Smart approach makes room for the same individual to have multiple reasons for participating in education, and also allows the possibility for change in motivation from time to time.

Boshier (1971) also conducted a factor analytic exploration of Houle's typology. Boshier, also using the Educational Participation Scale, found that participation stemmed from motives more complex than those originally identified by Houle and proposed that participants are basically "being" or "deficiency" motivated (p. 3).

Using a survey instrument which he developed entitled Reasons for Educational Participation, Burgess (1971)

identified motivational factors for adult learning. A factor analysis of the responses of 1,046 adults revealed seven factors: (1) desire to know, (2) desire to reach a personal goal, (3) desire to reach a social goal, (4) desire to reach a religious goal, (5) desire to escape, (6) desire to take part in a social activity, and (7) desire to comply with formal requirements. Burgess' study will be referred to again in the third section of this chapter.

According to Tough (1971), exploratory interviews, which he conducted prior to his research project and from which he developed his hypotheses, indicated that anticipated benefits constituted a significant portion of the person's total motivation for learning. Tough stated, "Though subconscious forces deep inside the person and the stimuli in his environment affect his decision to learn, in most learning projects the person's clear anticipation of certain likely benefits is even more important" (p. 45). High among expected benefits, reported Tough, is an increase in one's self-esteem or confidence. The person expected to regard himself more highly after he gained and retained the knowledge.

Researchers (Boshier, 1971; Burgess, 1971; Morstain & Smart, 1974) have found that social motives are often present in adult educational choices. There are certain situations in which education is used as an escape from

daily routine and an opportunity to meet new people. Hamilton (1976) conducted a statewide study in Iowa and found that 90% of the subjects who expressed an interest in crafts (mostly older people, 70% female from middle and lower income levels, and 40% farm residents) said that meeting new people and getting away from daily routine were reasons for their learning interests.

A study conducted by Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that 83% of 744 adult learners interviewed by telephone named some transition in their lives as the motivating factor to become involved in an educational activity. Changing jobs was the most common transition mentioned (56%), followed by a change in family life (16%).

Cross (1982) has made a major contribution to the study of motivation for adult education by synthesizing findings from 30 studies. She stated, "The reasons people give for learning correspond consistently and logically to the life situations of the respondents" (p. 91). For instance, people who do not have jobs or who want better jobs enroll in classes that will help them achieve those goals. Cross stated that about one third of potential learners gave personal satisfaction as their main reason for learning, but in most studies even more of those polled said that personal satisfaction was _one_ of their reasons for learning. Often, adults who have no need for economic

advancement cited personal satisfaction as a major motive.

According to Cross, a surprising number of adults (Cross cited over one third) admitted that escape is one reason for pursuing education. It is rarely the primary motive, however.

It is obvious from a review of the literature that there is no single motive for participation in adult education. In fact, most participants listed multiple reasons for participation. Several researchers (Boshier, 1971; Burgess, 1971; Morstain & Smart, 1974) have added categories to Houle's three motivational orientations but have not suggested additional dimensions. Most adults fall into Houle's category of "goal-oriented" because they learn in order to solve a particular problem or because they are seeking help in a transition period of their lives. Others are activity-oriented and participate primarily to be actively engaged, and still others are learning-oriented and deliberately put themselves in situations conducive to learning. There is a distinct possibility that every person has more than one orientation or motivation when he or she gets involved in an educational activity.

Adult Participation in Education

From adolescence through senescence adults engage in educational activities. The term "educational activities" is used here to cover at least three categories

for adult learning. One category includes what some researchers call "organized instruction" which is usually offered in classlike formats. Included in this area would be learning activities offered by continuing education and extension divisions, industries, community agencies, churches, and individualized courses taught or prepared by professionals. A second area for adult learning is termed "self-directed" learning and describes activities that are usually self-planned and self-directed. The third category included in educational activities involves adults enrolled in courses for credit which will usually lead to a formal degree (Cross, 1982).

Knox (1977) found that adults vary greatly in the extent of educative activity with some adults continually engaging in such activities as reading books and magazines, consulting experts, and participating in educational programs related to work, family, community, and leisure time. Knox wrote, "The new ideas and increased competencies they acquire enable them to adapt, grow, and change to solve the problems and grasp the opportunities that confront them. Educative activity is a central ingredient in a self-directed and evolving life-style" (p. 173). At the other end of the continuum from those who regularly participate in educational activities are adults who seldom engage in any activity for the main purpose of

expanding what they know or are able to do (Knox, 1977). Most adults are between these two extremes.

Tough (1971) carried out extensive research into the participatory patterns of adults in education. His research showed that as much as 90% of the adult population in the United States carried out what Tough termed a "learning project." [A "learning project" is a deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge or a skill.] Tough found that almost all of the adult population undertakes at least one or two major efforts a year, and some individuals undertake as many as 15 or 20. In Tough's study, the median was eight "learning projects" a year.

Further research by Tough indicated that it was common for a man or woman to spend 700 hours a year at "learning projects." Some persons spent less than 100 hours, but others spent more than 2000 hours "in episodes in which the person's intent to learn or change is clearly his primary motivation" (Tough, 1971, p. 1).

It has already been noted that adults vary greatly in the degree or extent of participation in education. Tough (1971) identified certain influential factors that affected participation. Of all the influential factors, Tough found that past experiences were among the most influential factors that determined how much time a person devoted to learning. Other factors included the following:

> (1) the extent to which the person's parents read and learned, (2) the amount of activity or achievement in his childhood home, (3) the use of vocabulary there, (4) the number of years he spent in school, (5) the characteristics and curriculum of those schools, (6) his satisfaction with his previous attempts to learn, and (7) his ordinal position among his siblings. (Tough, p. 174)

In addition to external factors, Tough also found that certain psychological characteristics played a part in participation. Such characteristics included:

> (1) level of mental ability, (2) energy level, (3) degree of initiative and aggressiveness in daily life, (4) degree of deliberateness and rationality in daily life, (5) amount of insight into himself, (6) amount of current knowledge and skill, (7) strength and number of interests, (8) positive perceptions regarding the pleasure, usefulness, and appropriateness of learning, and (9) extent to which he is future-oriented and willing to put forth effort in hopes of later gratification. (p. 174)

Tough's list of psychological characteristics easily move into the area of motivation and personality and this list is one example of the overlapping of subject matter referred to earlier in this chapter.

Two other influential factors which Tough identified were other people and community or societal factors. The customs and expectations about education of a person's circle of friends may be important and the extent to which a person's community is oriented toward learning is also to be considered.

Other researchers in the area of adult participation in

educational activities have identified other key variables or determinants for participation. Frequently identified as factors influencing participation are levels of formal education, age, and income.

Many researchers have found that level of formal education is more highly associated with extent of participation in continuing educational activities than any other variable. Virtually all surveys show that the more education people have, the more they want. Based on a review of research in this area, Cross (1982) reported, "A college graduate is more than twice as likely to be engaged in adult education as a high school graduate, and a high school graduate is more than twice as likely as a nongraduate to be a participant" (p. 55). Cross based her conclusions on studies done by Boaz (1978), Carp, Peterson and Roelfs (1974), Johnstone and Rivera (1965), National Center for Educational Statistics (1980), and Okes (1976).

The participation of well-educated adults cannot be easily explained. The fact that they may have more money for tuition and fees, or that education is important to their jobs only partially accounts for participation of the well-educated. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) found that the gap between well-educated and poorly educated adults was greater when interest was measured than when actual participation was measured indicating that interest, which

costs nothing, was not as high among the less educated. A study done by Anderson and Darkenwald (1979) concluded that the level of education factor operates relatively independently of other factors such as income and occupation. For example, a high school graduate from a low socioeconomic level is more likely to participate in educational activities than a high school dropout from an upper-middle-class environment.

Cross (1982) reported that after educational attainment, the most powerful predictor of the extent of participation in adult education is age. The participation rate for adults 55 and older is only 4.5%, compared with 12% participation for all adults. Most researchers, according to Cross, found that both interest and participation in education start to decline in the early 30s, continue to decline gradually through the 40s, but then drop drastically for those 55 and older. The generally lower level of formal education among older generations, however, accounts for some of the difference in participation levels.

There is some indication that the pattern of less participation by older adults is changing. Boaz (1978) reported that for adults 55 and over, participation has grown from 2.9% of the age cohort in 1969 to 4.6% in 1978. Along the same line, Riddler and Crimmins (1984) reported

that in 1969, a total of slightly more than one million persons over age 55 attended educational programs. By 1981 that number had increased to more than 2.5 million.

Annual family income seemed to be another accurate predictor of participation in educational activities by adults. National Center for Education Statistics (1980) showed that participation rate for persons with annual incomes of $25,000 and over was 18.3%; participation rate for persons with annual incomes of under $5,000 was only 4.9%.

The final area of educational participation by adults reviewed was involvement in higher education. According to Bishop and Van Dyk (1977), adult education is a major element in the nation's overal higher education enrollment. They reported that according to the May, 1972, population survey, over 12 million adults, 7 million of whom were over 35, engaged in some kind of higher education study during the 1971-72 academic year. Haponski and McCabe (1982) reported that the percentage of total enrollment in higher education made up of adults 25 and over was 25.9% in 1968 and 37.5% in 1978, an increase of 12%. Haponski and McCabe also projected that the percentage would rise to 43.9% in 1988. Riddler and Crimmins (1984) gave another perspective from which to analyze the increasing significance of adults engaged in higher education. Their data showed that

between 1972 and 1982, while the number of students in higher education under age 35 was increasing by 32%, the number of students over age 35 increased by 76%. The conclusion can be made, therefore, that adults above the traditional college age of 18 to 22 are forming a substantial base of higher education's enrollment in this country and the percentage is very likely to increase.

To summarize, the research findings in the area of adult participation in education showed, first of all, that adults are actively involved in many educational activities. Participation varies from individualized learning projects to formal degree programs. Secondly, there are many factors involved in determining who participates, but level of education, age, and income seem to be among the more accurate predictors. Past experience with education is also a determining factor. Finally, the number of participants is increasing dramatically, particularly in the area of higher education. The concept of continuing education is becoming an important factor in all areas of American life, and the adult learner is being given more attention by researchers, theorists, and practitioners.

Adult Participation in Religious Education

Reference was made in the introduction of this dissertation to the lack of research on participants and participation in adult religious education. In a doctoral dissertation written at Ohio State University, Lindamood (1975) stated, "Education has been at the foundation of the Judeo-Christian tradition since its inception. Yet, that tradition's examined understanding of its educational participants and their needs pertaining to the curriculum, the setting and the instructor is nothing short of impoverished" (p. 75). The situation has not drastically improved in the last decade.

While the research on participation in adult religious education is scant, actual participation in programs of adult religious education is not. Knowles (1962) estimated that 15,500,000 adults participated in adult education activities in religious institutions during 1955. As a result of their extensive research into participation of adults in educational activities, Johnstone and Rivera (1965) estimated that there were approximately 3,820,000 adults who were engaged in activities in the learning category which included religion, morals, and ethics.

Ryan (1974) reported on a research effort undertaken by the National Center for Educational Statistics of the United States Office of Education designed to examine the

involvement of American adults in educational activities. This research showed that of over 20,000,000 courses reported in a particular survey, 681,000 were in the broad category of religion which included Bible study, courses related to denominational church dogma, doctrine, organization and administration, and all courses related to ethics, morality, or Christian values. Of these courses, 602,000 were perceived by the participants as "religious adult education" and 76,000 were conducted at church or synagogue locations. In addition to scientific research, a visit into almost any congregation, parish, or synagogue would confirm the fact that adults participate on a regular basis in the educational activities of their faith communities.

A report by Hesburgh, Miller and Wharton (1973) suggested that the responsibility for lifelong learning or continuous learning of adults resides in all of the major institutions of society and at all levels of the formal educational system. They saw an interdependence among schools, churches, families, employers, and governments in carrying out educational responsibilities. Churches and synagogues have made an effort to fulfill their responsibilities in the area of adult education. The 1972 Pastoral Message on Catholic Education of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops stresses that "the

continuing education of adults is situated not at the periphery of the Church's educational mission, but at its center" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 12). Thompson (1976), reflecting on the emphasis on adult religious education, stated that adult religious education is not simply more classes for adults. It is "an awareness of the dynamics of a faith community in which a group of people reflect upon the meaning of existence, act upon the convictions that such reflection engenders, and draw their children and youth into the process of seeking for value and meaning in life" (p. 166).

After confirming that adults participate in a rather large degree in religious education, the next logical step is to try to identify who these adults are by identifying common characteristics. The data are not only scant but sometimes contradicting. Studies reviewed reported on participation in all religious activities and were not confined just to religious educational activities.

Roof (1978) stated that virtually all research in the past 25 years which focused on correlates of religious commitment have centered attention on sex, age, and social class. Research about these three characteristics was reviewed, and then other variables were examined.

Some research indicated that women in the United States are more religious than men if participation is used as an

indicator of being religious. Roof (1978) observed that practically all research on participation by males and females in religious activities indicate that women in the United States are more religious than men. According to data gathered by Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975) women are more religious regardless of type of commitment: church membership, church attendance, orthodox beliefs, devotional practices, mystical experiences, and favorable attitudes toward organized religion.

In a survey conducted by the Gallup organization for the Religious Education Association (Princeton Religious Research Center, 1985), adults professing a religious preference were asked if they were members of a church or synagogue. Of the women surveyed, 68% were members and 63% of the men were members. In the same survey respondents were asked if they felt they currently had a great deal of faith. Thirty-two percent of the women said that they did, and 26% of the men. Eighty-seven percent of the women and 77% of the men felt that their faith was stronger as a result of changes in their lives.

More than 60,000 adults have participated in Word and Witness, an adult education program conducted by the Lutheran Church in America. During 1977, 352 females and 172 males participated. In other words, 67.2% of the participants were women and 32.8% were men. According to

the Gallup Poll, male-female proportions among Lutherans were close to the national 49%-51% split.

Roof (1978) stated, "While sex differences in religion are easy to document, explaining why they exist is not so easy....Many of the interpretations offered reflect preconceived, and often sexist, notions about women that are suspect and increasingly indefensible by contemporary social science standards" (p. 55).

Not all of the studies reviewed found significant differences in male and female participation. Lindamood (1975) found that while a high percentage of the participants interviewed in his study were women (64%) the numbers were not significantly different given the frequencies expected in that specific population. In the Gallup survey conducted for the Religious Education Association which has already been cited, one of the hypotheses to be tested was stated this way: "The dynamics of faith development are different for men and women" (p. 37). The study reported, "Comparing men and women concerning their attitudes toward faith and their experiences regarding change, we find no differences between the sexes. Men are as likely as women to believe one´s faith should change over time" (p. 37). The conclusion can be reached, therefore, that women are presumed to be more religiously active than men, but the

data did not always confirm that conclusion.

The second correlate with participation which Roof (1978) mentioned was age. The Duke Longitudinal Study of Aging revealed that religion becomes increasingly important to the adjustment of most older persons as they age, even though participation in religious activities may decline (Blazer & Palmore, 1976). Other research showed a direct relationship between good personal adjustment in old age and religious activities such as church membership and attendance, Bible reading, and listening to religious broadcasts (Moberg, 1983). Cutler (1976) also concluded that life satisfaction and happiness among the elderly appear to be related to frequency of church attendance. National survey data (Cutler, 1976) revealed that life satisfaction is correlated with membership in a church-affiliated group but not with membership in any of 17 other types of voluntary associations.

Roof (1978) again raised caveats about accepting interpretations of research without very close examination. He says, "That religious involvement reaches low levels among young adults (18-30 years of age) few would question, but in the years beyond early adulthood there is little consensus about what happens" (p. 57). Lazerwitz (1961) and Orbach (1961) took the position that aging and religious involvement in the adult years are unrelated, and

that the pattern between the two is one of lifetime stability. Albrecht (1958) proposed that a family-cycle model best describes what happens and called attention to the fact that religious involvement usually increases after marriage, increases even more in the years when there are school-age children in the home, and tends to decline once children are no longer living with parents.

The conflicting findings in the literature point out that it is very difficult to generalize about trends and behaviors in middle-to-older adults, and this difficulty carries into the area of participation in religion as well as many others. The research seemed to indicate that there is greater participation in religion with age, but it cannot be presumed that simply getting older is the only variable involved.

The third correlate to be examined was social class. Research of the 1960s indicated that middle-class Americans showed great involvement in voluntary organizations of all kinds, including religious participation (Estus & Overington, 1970; Goode, 1966; Lazerwitz, 1961; Lenski, 1953). Participation was usually defined as church attendance and involvement in congregational activities. Roof noted (1978) that percentage differences between participation by middle-class and working-class people in church attendance was very small in most studies done

during this period. Using a 1970 national sample of American adults, Mueller and Johnson (1975) concluded that all of the findings reported indicated that "socio-economic status although exhibiting somewhat different magnitudes of influence across subpopulations, is not an important determinant of religious participation and the considerable attention given it in the theoretical literature is perhaps unwarranted, at least in contemporary American society" (p. 798).

Just as with sex and age, social class cannot be viewed as a predictor of participation in religious activities without simultaneous consideration of other variables.

The most extensive study into the characteristics of adults who participate in religious education was done by Lindamood (1975). He attempted to gain information about participant-learners in an adult religious education program in a middle and upper-middle-class suburban Protestant church. He did this by comparing data from 50 participant-learners in the church with a random sample of 50 nonparticipants in the same congregation. The participant-learners in the sample were adults who had actively participated in the religious education program of a particular Protestant congregation during a period of time just prior to the study. The 50 nonparticipants in the sample were members of the same congregation, selected

randomly, who had not participated in the religious education program in which the participant-learners had. The analysis and comparison were made on the variables of sex, marital status, average monthly church attendance, annual family giving, the number of church organizations to which subjects belonged, average number of monthly church meetings the subjects attended, organizations outside the church to which subjects belonged, average number of monthly meetings attended outside the church, number of closest friends in the church, level of self-esteem, perceived integration of the self of the subjects, and the religious orientation of the subjects.

Lindamood used three instruments in his study: The Religious Adult Education Questionnaire which consisted of nine items of a demographic nature, the Religious Orientation Scale, and the Tennessee Self Concept Scale. The variables of male/female and married/single were tested for significant differences.

Lindamood's results are very interesting. In the variables pertaining to sex and marital status, no significant differences were found in either sex or marital status given the expected frequencies that were known for the particular population from which the subjects for this study were drawn. Although the differences were not significant, Lindamood believed that they were substantial

enough to warrant further study. For instance, the study showed that more married people than all single types together participated in the religious education program. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) had found the same to be true of the population participating in adult education, not just religious education.

As each of the remaining variables was analyzed separately, the following results were shown: (1) The difference between participants and nonparticipants in average monthly church attendance was significant at the .02 level with participants showing more regular attendance. This variable, along with the number of church organizations to which persons belonged and the average number of monthly church meetings attended appeared as significant characteristics for participant-learners in the setting of Lindamood's study. (2) The amount of annual family giving did not significantly differ between participants and nonparticipants. (3) The mean number of outside organizations to which participants belonged was greater than those to which nonparticipants belonged; however, the difference was not significant. (4) There was no significant difference in the level of self-esteem between the two groups. (5) Participants had significantly more close friends within the congregations than did nonparticipants. (6) On the Tennessee Self Concept Scale

participants scored lower than nonparticipants, thereby showing less variability from one category to another and, therefore, more unity or integration of the self. Lindamood considered this one of the more salient findings, and one which should receive much more attention. (7) Finally, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant differences in the religious orientation between participants and nonparticipants was not sustained. This difference was significant at the .001 level. Lindamood concluded that participants have religion as a formative factor within themselves, and that religion is a strong and directive motivating power.

A review of Lindamood's study leads to an examination of not only the characteristics of adult participants in religious education, but also further consideration of the motivating factors behind participation. The Burgess study (1971) cited earlier listed "The Desire to Reach a Religious Goal" as one of the seven factors found to be identified as a reason for participation in educational activities. This factor had not been predicted but emerged from the factor analysis with three items. The three items which emerged as reasons for participating in educational activities were (a) to be better able to serve a church, (b) to improve spiritual well-being, and (c) to satisfy interest in mission work.

Burgess reported that the religious goal factor was not identified by any of the previous studies which he reviewed. Burgess stated that the reason that it was not identified may be either that items related to religion were not included in instruments used for collecting data, or the people who were sampled did not feel that religion was a motivating factor in participation. The fact that the items surfaced in the Burgess study demonstrated that some participants in adult education are motivated by a desire to learn in order to improve their spiritual well-being, and to better serve in a religious community.

Utendorf (1985) conducted a study in order to identify the motivational orientations of participants in Roman Catholic lay ministry training programs. His sample consisted of 427 adult students in seven programs. The instrument used by Utendorf was an adapted form of the Education Participation Scale. Reasons related to personal religious development were found to be the most influential in the decision to participate, followed by a desire to prepare for church and community service, and cognitive interests. The least influential reasons were the desire to escape, the need to meet external expectations, and the desire to keep up and conform socially. Utendorf observed that it is very easy to see the three learning orientations described by Houle (1961) in the factors extracted in the

study of participants in the lay ministry training program.

In the study done by Aslanian and Brickell (1980) which was cited earlier, 83% of the learners surveyed described some change in their lives as reasons to learn. Of the remaining 17%, a number described themselves as continuous learners, pointing out that learning was a normal part of living for them. Some said that they were continuing studies they had begun earlier in life, and Bible study was mentioned more often than anything else as a topic of continuous study. Few religious transitions were cited by those interviewed as reasons for learning (2%). In the religious transitions cited by the 2%, what usually happened was that the person had undergone a significant life-changing event which caused a re-examination of his or her relationship with God.

In summary, even though not much is known about participants in adult religious education programs, it is a well-established fact that large numbers of adults continue to study and learn in their faith communities. Some of the literature suggested that more women than men, more married people than single, and more middle-aged than younger adults participate in religious education. Other literature raised questions about the interpretations of these observed differences.

The Burgess study (1971) showed that some participants

in adult education are motivated to learn in order to improve their spiritual well-being and to better serve in a religious community. Utendorf (1985) also found that adults participated for reasons of personal religious development and a desire to prepare for church and community service.

The common thread that this investigator began to see is that among those adults who actively participate in religious education, there may be a large number of learning-oriented individuals (by Houle's definition) who probably should receive much more attention from religious education curriculum and program planners. On the other hand, there may be fewer activity-oriented individuals involved in religious education than there used to be. Until more research is done into the area of motivation for adult participation in religious education, much of the practice must be based on the research done in the general area of adult participation in education, but there are some major differences in the two disciplines. Some of these differences will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORIES OF ADULT EDUCATION

A review of the theories of adult education must state at the very beginning that there may, in actuality, be no theory of adult education. Cross (1982) claims, "There are pessimists and optimists about where we stand in the 1980s regarding theories of learning in adult education" (p. 220). Vogel (1984) states simply that "Adult education has had many practitioners and few theorists" (p. 67). Houle (1972) observes: "It cannot be said that most of the work in the field is guided by any . . . system or even by the desire to follow a systematic theory" (p. 6).

The fact remains, however, that with or without adequate theories, the proliferation of adult education is one of the educational phenomena of the 1970s and 1980s. This very proliferation accounts for some of the lack of theory. Cross (1982) defines part of the problem when she says, "Theory broad enough to cover the spectrum of learning situations in adult education is necessarily so broad that it offers little guidance to either researchers or practitioners" (p. 221).

In the United States, even a superficial survey of participation in education by adults can range from YMCA recreational activities, to specific industrial job

training, to Department of Agriculture Extension programs, to religious education programs. Houle (1972) further points out that with so much emphasis on self-directed learning, even suggesting a theory for teaching adults is offensive to many participants and practitioners.

Despite the difficulty of theorizing definitively in the area of adult education, there are theories of learning and development that offer a substantial framework for building a theoretical base for adult education. The theories reviewed here have been selected for their appropriateness to adult education.

Humanism

Traditionally, adult education has regarded its learners as volunteers. Even with the growing societal trend that all people must become life-long learners to keep in step with technological advances, and the increased need for certification for many professions, the general assumption is that adults still have the freedom to choose the degree to which they continue their education. This unrestrictive, more accepting environment for adult learning comes largely from humanistic theories of learning (Cross, 1982).

Humanists assume that there is a natural tendency for people to learn, and that learning will take place in a conducive environment. The educational environment should

be permissive so that the learner, who is at the center of this ideology, can naturally "unfold" as any living organism does as it develops. Two psychologists writing in the field of humanistic theory of learning are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

Some basic assumptions of humanistic learning theory are presented by Rogers (1969). Briefly stated they are as follows: (1) Learning requires personal involvement of cognitive and affective aspects of persons; (2) learning should be self-initiated; (3) learning should be pervasive, that is, make an impact on the behavior, attitudes, or personality of the learner; (4) self-evaluation should take place to determine if needs are met; (5) the essence of learning is the meaning that is incorporated into the person's total experience.

Maslow's primary contribution to humanistic learning theory is his analysis of human needs. Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" includes (1) physiological needs; (2) safety needs; (3) belongingness and love needs; (4) esteem needs; and (5) need for self-actualization (1954, pp. 80-92). The final goal he sets for all human learning and education is the self-actualized person. Although self-actualization is an adult achievement, few adults, according to Maslow, reach this level of development.

One of the best known and controversial writers in the

field of adult education is Malcolm Knowles. Knowles has developed a theory of adult learning which he calls andragogy. This theory is based on principles of humanism. Knowles (1970) defines andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 38) and contrasts it with pedagogy which is concerned with helping children learn. He consistently draws distinctions between adults and children as learners, and he makes the following assumptions about adults: As a person matures, (1) his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directing human being; (2) he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning; (3) his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles, and; (4) his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation towards learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of problem centeredness (1970, p. 39).

Knowles′ theory of andragogy has undergone serious criticism. Cross (1982) summarizes the criticism this way: "The confusion starts with the very nature of andragogy. There is the question of whether andragogy is a learning theory (Knowles, 1978), a philosophical position (McKenzie, 1977), a political reality (Carlson, 1979), or a set of

hypotheses subject to scientific verification (Elias, 1979)" (p. 225).

In addition to his criticism about the lack of research in Knowles´ theory, Elias (1982) also sees a serious problem in the lack of consideration for adult development in later years. He says, "The assumptions do not take account of research findings in gerontology: older persons often become more dependent in their self-concept; past experience often is a block to new learning; there is often a disengagement from social roles; time perspective often shifts to the past in life reviews and to the future" (p. 115). It must be pointed out here that many theorists would disagree with Elias´ assessment of what takes place in adult development in later years. Elias´ assumptions may be as far afield as he claims Knowles´ are.

While the criticisms voiced against Knowles are legitimate concerns, and there is reluctance among some educators to accept his theory, he makes at least two points that adult educators would do well to remember: (1) Adults have accumulated a vast store of experiences that can be very useful for learning new information, particularly when learning can be transferred from one experience to another, and; (2) middle-aged adults are generally independent and self-directing and often view education as a means to solving a particular problem. The

result of combining these two concepts is a method for instruction that allows for hands-on experience and much opportunity for interchange of ideas and experiences between the instructor and adult student.

Cross (1982) highlights Knowles' contribution to adult education in another way. She sees that he has heightened awareness of several questions yet to be answered, one of which is this: "Is it useful to distinguish the learning needs of adults from those of children? If so, are we talking about dichotomous differences or continuous differences? Or both?" (p. 228).

Besides Knowles, another adult educator who gives considerable support for humanistic theory is Allen Tough. Tough (1971) has done research on self-directed learners. He has demonstrated by his research that there is undeniably a natural tendency for adults to learn, and that 90% or more of them do so.

Behaviorism

Another approach to understanding learning is based on behaviorist theories. In these theories, learning is explained through such processes as association, connection, reinforcement, conditioning and extinction. The focus is on external behavior and environmental factors, and little attention is given to internal states of the mind such as habits, motives, abilities, and needs.

(Elias, 1982).

Salkind (1981) observed that behaviorism, or any theory for that matter, has many variations, but most behaviorists share a basic tenet: Development is a process that adheres to principles and laws of learning, and learning is defined in this context as "short-term changes in behavior" (p. 126). When short-term changes are combined and build on each other, the result is development. According to Salkind, development is "the result of accumulated experiences linked to one another. Development results from learning. Learning does not result from development" (p. 126).

The name of B. F. Skinner has been identified with behaviorism in American psychology since World War II (Birren et al., 1981). The behaviorists suggest that humans develop through the selective reinforcement of behavior. Some behaviors are rewarded by the environment and become dominant over behaviors that are punished or not rewarded. Skinner believes that there is no genetic plan of development and no goals of development, and that a person is "unprogrammed" and learns essentially by reactions to stimuli and by reinforcement.

While behaviorism seems to contradict the student-centered principles of many adult educators, this position is frequently the foundation for one of the

largest segments of adult education, namely job and skills training. Cross (1982) notes, "Many of the self-instructional packages prevalent in occupational and professional programs are direct applications of theories formulated by behaviorists" (p. 232).

Srinivasan (1977) outlines the following characteristics of such programmed learning materials:

1. Objectives must be clearly stated in specific and measurable behavioral terms.
2. The learning tasks must be analytically designed in relation to desired end behaviors.
3. Content must be broken into small steps which are easy to master. These steps must be designed to encourage self-instruction and require an overt response by the learner (for example, filling in the blanks or selecting a response from multiple options.)
4. The materials should provide a means for immediate feedback so that the learner will know if his response was correct and so that he can be aware of the pace of his progress.
5. The subject matter and activities must adhere to a set sequence and process conducive to mastery.
6. The successful completion of each step and the chain of steps must provide its own reward or incentive.
7. The responsibility for ensuring that learning takes

place must rest with the materials themselves as learning instruments and not with any instructor, leader, or helper.

Psychosocial Theory

According to the psychosocial theory of development, learning occurs within a developing life history that is shaped by an attempt to handle basic and often conflicting needs. Erik Erikson, the foremost proponent of psychosocial theory, suggests that the growth of personality always follows the epigenetic principle. Each part of the personality, according to Erikson, has been geneticallly "programmed" for a particular sequence of development, and development cannot occur until the proper sequence has occurred (Taylor, 1966). Erikson (1950) explains epigenesis in a general way as follows: "Anything that grows has a ground plan, and . . . out of this ground plan the parts arise, each having its time of special ascendancy until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole" (p. 52). Psychosocial theory suggests that learning always involves conflicts and crises.

Erikson has outlined "Eight Ages of the Life Cycle" as follows:

Opposing Issues of Each Stage	Emerging Value	Period of Life
(1) Basic Trust	Hope	Infancy

vs. Mistrust		
(2) Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt	Will	Early Childhood
(3) Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose	Play age
(4) Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence	School age
(5) Identity vs. Identity Confusion	Fidelity	Adolescence
(6) Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Young Adulthood
(7) Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	Maturity
(8) Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	Old age

(In Kimmel, 1980, p. 14)

Each stage in Erikson's scheme represents a dialectical struggle between two tendencies, each of which the individual experiences. Thus, each stage is represented by two opposing qualities. Each conflict is eventually resolved by a synthesis that represents one of the basic human strengths or "emerging values." The struggle within the individual is both conscious and unconscious, and it involves both inner (psychological) and outer (social) processes (Kimmel, 1980).

Erikson's eight periods encompass the entire life span, but the last three focus on adulthood and the last two include the middle and late years of the life cycle. The stages are very general in their focus, but Peck (1968)

more precisely defines the crucial issues of middle age and old age. He proposes seven central issues in these two periods. For middle age, Peck identifies the following challenges: (1) valuing wisdom vs. valuing physical powers; (2) socializing vs. sexualizing in human relationships; (3) cathectic flexibility vs. cathectic impoverishment; (4) mental flexibility vs. mental rigidity. In old age, Peck lists the following three issues or challenges: (1) Ego differentiation vs. work-role preoccupation; (2) body transcendence vs. body preoccupation; (3) ego transcendence vs. ego preoccupation.

Peck's stages, like Erikson's, represent struggles between two opposing forces. Peck suggests that successful resolution of these conflicts depends on the individual's ability to decrease emphasis on the physical body and its function and increase mental function so that the mind transcends the body. He emphasizes the importance of emotional flexibility so that as close relationships with children, parents, or friends are lost, other friendships may be developed to fill the void. Peck also called for a development of self-identity apart from work roles.

Cognitive-Developmental Theories

There are several other theoretical positions that seem compatible within the context of adult education, and one such position is the cognitive-developmental model. This

model of development stresses the individual's active rather than reactive role in the developmental process. Cross (1982) identifies two positions among the developmentalists. One position sees the various stages and phases of human development as an inevitable unfolding of predetermined patterns. The environment may influence the rate of growth, but it has little effect on form and sequence.

The second position of developmentalists, the interactionists' position, places more emphasis on the role of the environment in development. Despite differences attached to the importance of the environment, developmentalists subscribe to four basic assumptions: (1) Each stage of development is an integrated whole; (2) a particular stage is integrated into the next stage and finally replaced by it; (3) each individual acts out his own synthesis; he does not merely adopt a synthesis provided by family or society; (4) the individual must pass through all previous stages before he can move on to the next stage. Thus, the order of succession of stages is constant and universal (Craig, 1974).

One of the most influential thinkers in developmental psychology has been Jean Piaget. Piaget and his followers hold that the stages of cognitive development occur in the same sequence for all persons, although the ages at which

transitions occur may vary depending on the biological maturation of an individual and on the timing and amount of experience (Birren et al., 1981). Although Piaget's work was almost exclusively with children, others have extended his cognitive/developmental theory into adult learning. Lawrence Kohlberg has developed a theory of moral development, and James Fowler a theory of faith development based on Piaget's work. Both Kohlberg and Fowler depend heavily on the premises of stage development, particularly the passing through previous stages before moving to the next stage.

Social/Cultural Theories

In an important way, the study of adult development involves the study of transitions throughout the life cycle. The study of transitions is providing a great deal of new information about the nature and patterns of adult development. Two different types of transitions may be distinguished: (1) normative transitions--those changes that are expected according to the social norms for individuals at particular times of their lives (Kimmel, 1980), and; (2) idiosyncratic transitions that are unique to a particular individual. Since normative transitions are part of the social timetable for a given culture (Kimmel, 1980), they serve as one of the primary timing mechanisms for development of adults within that culture.

The theories of Erikson and Peck focus on changes in adult development that result from internal factors. In contrast, Neugarten's concept of what she terms "the social clock" emphasizes external social norms as the primary cause of transitions. While Neugarten does not see the individual merely as a responder to external events, she does not see any inner developmental scheme that regulates human development (Kimmel, 1980). Neugarten's perspective is an interactive one in which the interaction between the individual and social processes regulates development.

Two other theorists who are transition-oriented are Levinson and Gould. They each studied development from young adulthood to middle age. Levinson (1978) describes four phases of development which alternate between stressful and stable periods in each phase. He identifies the following transitional phases: Early Adult Transition, Entering the Adult World, Age 30 Transition, and Settling Down. Levinson, whose sample included men only, emphasizes two unique relationships which are especially important during the Entering the Adult World Transition, ages 22-28. These relationships are the "mentor" and the "special woman," and they play an important role in helping the young adult realize his "Dream," which develops during the Early Adult Transition, ages 17-22. Levinson identifies the Age 30 Transition (ages 28-33) as one which is likely

to have crises due to a growing sense that changes have to be made soon or a person may become locked into or out of commitments and situations that cannot be changed later. The Settling Down period, in Levinson's scheme of transitions, comes between ages 33 and 40 and is a calm, stable period in a man's life. During this time, a man grows beyond the mentor relationship and becomes his own person.

In many ways Gould's (1978) transitions parallel those of Levinson; however, women were included in Gould's sample. He emphasizes the misconceptions that individuals need to discard as they progress through different stages. Gould is sensitive to the fears that young people have in becoming independent of parents, and points out that young women especially experience this fear, and then in a later transition, break out of the dependent mold which society has forced on them in an effort to become more independent. This transition often results in returning to school or the work force and development of careers outside the home.

Havighurst (1972) has introduced the concept of developmental tasks for adults. According to him, maturing individuals find themselves facing consecutively new demands and expectations from the society in which they live. Havighurst calls these demands developmental tasks and claims that some tasks arise from maturation, some from

cultural pressures of society, and some from the individual's personal values and aspirations. All of these tasks have biological, psychological, and cultural bases, and all must be mastered at an appropriate stage of the life span.

The identification of the transitions of life as positive forces for learning is related to much of the current interest in adult phases of development. Havighurst (1972) uses the term "teachable moment" (p. 7) to identify periods of special sensitivity to learn certain things. These times depend on developmental tasks that are associated with each phase of human development. For example, the "teachable moment" for instruction on child development is when persons are expecting or rearing children.

Moran (1983) issues an interesting warning regarding the study of transitions and phases of the life cycle. He says, "The images of life cycle and seasons may be useful tools for psychologists, but such language should not be mistaken for an adequate description of human development" (p. 46).

Summary

It is clear that there is no single theory of adult education, and any theorizing must be a synthesis of concepts about adult learning and development. The study

of adult development is by no means a clear-cut science. Moran (1983) states, "Despite all the apparent interest in adult development, we are still at the beginning stage of asking what adulthood (and thereby childhood) means" (p. 40).

At the end of chapter two, reference was made to major differences between adult education in general and adult religious education. One of these differences is in identifying a theoretical base from which to practice. Selection of theories of adult development and learning is particularly difficult for the educator in the area of religious education because theories typically ignore two elements of development which are fundamental in the thinking of religious people. First of all, theorists do not deal with the beginning of the process of human development or the purpose of that beginning. Erikson's epigenetic principle comes closest to describing what Christians would perceive as a ground plan for their inherent development toward wholeness. The idea of being biologically pre-planned fits in well with many of the givens of Christian faith. Erikson's dialectical struggles through the life span also represent a Biblical view of life in this world as a series of adjustment and struggles, in effect, a pilgrimage, through which humans move.

The second element which is particularly bothersome to

religious education and which is apparent in almost all stage developmental theory, is the concept of developing or maturing toward a certain integrated whole, usually characterized by increasing independence. From a Biblical perspective, there is a great paradox in the maturing process of an adult Christian. At the same time that he or she is becoming increasingly independent in thinking and actions, the adult Christian is aware of a growing dependency upon God, and as faith deepens or matures, child-like qualities of trust and reliance are very much in evidence. In addition, the adult Christian who views himself or herself as an integrated whole has a great desire to be subsumed by an even greater Wholeness.

These are just two of the difficulties educators in religious education face in adjusting theories of adult development and learning to their particular discipline.

CHAPTER IV

REVIEW OF THEORIES OF ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Before reviewing the theories of adult religious education, it is necessary to try to be definitive about the term "religious education." In the literature the terms "religious education" and "Christian education" are used almost interchangeably. Writers in the field of Christian education also use the term "religious education" as often as they delineate "Christian education." For the last several years, the term "religious education" has also been used in a much broader sense. Groome (1980) suggests that "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" (p. 22). From this standpoint, almost any education could be considered religious education. In this study a much narrower concept has been applied, and the term "religious education" has been used when concepts and theories can be applied to any faith community, but the theories reviewed have been developed within the context of the Christian tradition.

The definition of religious education used in this study was based on a definition suggested by Moore (1984) which states: "Religious education is an intentional study of

teaching-learning and the educative process as it relates to the faith and practices of a religious community" (p. 91). The task of the religious educator is to put theories of education and human development in juxtaposition with specific beliefs and practices of a particular religion (see Definition of Terms, p. 7). The task, however, is much more than just a positioning of theories; it is a blending of theories and positions, and decisions regarding curricula must be made based on theoretical orientations. The way in which theorists and educators handle this task of blending will be examined later in this chapter as specific theories are reviewed. Two key terms in Moore's definition, "teaching-learning" and "religious community," will be highlighted as each theory is examined.

Defining theoretical positions in adult religious education is a task as elusive as trying to establish a definitive position for theorizing in adult education in general. There is no single adequate theory for adult religious education. There are, however, just as in the field of secular adult education, many presumptions from which to build an adequate theoretical framework.

In reviewing selected theories, the work of two religious educators, William Burgess and John Elias, will be used as a framework for analysis. Each has identified several theories. While Burgess works within the total

scope of religious education, Elias narrows specifically to adult religious education.

Burgess (1975) identifies four theoretical approaches to religious education. He selected the term "theoretical approaches" to avoid certain difficulties which arise with using the word "theory," one of which is the reluctance of religious educationists to use this term to apply to their work.

Burgess′ (1975) four approaches are (1) Traditional Theological, (2) Social-Cultural, (3) Contemporary Theological, and (4) Social-Science. Elias′ (1982) theories are (1) Analysis of Language and Concepts, (2) Adult Liberal Education in Religion, (3) Progressive Adult Education in Religion, (4) Socialization-Behavioristic Theories, (5) Humanistic Adult Education in Religion, and (6) Socio-Political Adult Religious Education. Each will be briefly explicated, and where two theories are very similar, they will be reviewed together. The following chart should be helpful.

<u>Parallel of Theories Presented by Burgess and Elias</u>

Burgess: Traditional Theological
Elias: Adult Liberal Education in Religion

Burgess: Social-Cultural
Elias: Progressive Adult Education in Religion

Burgess: Contemporary Theological
Elias: Humanistic Adult Education in Religion

Burgess: Social-Science
Elias: Socialization-Behavioristic

Elias: Analysis of Language and Concepts

Elias: Socio-Political Adult Religious Education

It should be noted at this point that use of the words "norm" and "normative" in theological literature have a distinctive meaning. They are generally used to imply the criterion by which something is judged. For example, the Bible is the rule and norm for all of Christian life.

Traditional Theological Theoretical Approach

Burgess (1975) outlines the following criteria for the Traditional Theological approach: (1) Theology based upon writing or happenings which have been divinely revealed is normative for all decisions relative to religious education. (2) Religious education is essentially concerned with the transmission of a message based on revelation which leads to salvation. (3) The teacher of religion has received the message of salvation and has, in some sense, been commissioned to pass it on. (4) Students, following the message in its fullness, will live out the message with respect to daily living and eternal destiny.

Antecedents to the Traditional approach can be traced back to Augustine in the fifth century, and the catechumenate, the chief religious education endeavor of the early church. In more recent history, it has been

reflected in the Sunday school movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, the National Association of Evangelicals in the more recent Protestant tradition, and the kerygmatic movement in Roman Catholicism.

Teaching practices conforming to the Traditional Theological approach are usually verbal in nature and rely heavily on lecture for teaching the message. More important, however, than teaching method, is the teacher's personal life as witness to the message.

The student is viewed as the receiver of the message of salvation in the Traditional approach. The nature of the student is given consideration, and the teaching-learning process is not ignored, but the student is primarily looked upon as a vessel to be filled, but a very special vessel since the student is God's creation. Burgess (1975) says,

> Possibly the one characteristic of the student which is most crucial to traditional theorizing about religious education is that he is assumed to participate in the supernatural as well as the natural order. The central religious educational process (though affected by the natural dimension of existence) is considered to be, at its core, a supernatural process" (p. 48).

The Traditional Theological approach is very much in evidence in religious education programs today. In many congregations, the primary focus of the entire religious community is the transmission of the divine message to children and adults. Content, based on authoritative sources, is taught, reviewed, memorized. The Traditional

Theological approach answers a concern expressed by Smart (1954) that there is a lack of theological emphasis in religious education. Smart states, "The Christian educator has erred in assuming that his subject is educational rather than theological" (p. 12). The educator operating from the Traditional Theological posture would not make that error.

Elias (1982) reviews a theory which he terms Adult Liberal Education in Religion. The common element with the Traditional Theological approach is the emphasis upon content, especially content of the Bible. Elias says, "Study of the Bible, commentaries on the Bible, classical writings of theologians, and contemporary efforts to relate religious traditions to present culture and experience form the basis of liberal religious education and are found in adult religious education" (p. 158). Greater importance is given to content than to processes of education, but process is not entirely ignored. Schaefer (1972) describes the process of the Liberal Education theory as "interpersonal appropriation by faith" (p. 167). Problem-solving approaches to learning are also advocated by Schaefer. The primary focus of this theory as outlined by Elias, however, is content.

Social-Cultural Theoretical Approach

Burgess (1975) outlines the following criteria for the

Social-Cultural approach: (1) Theological concepts are open to continual change in such a way that experience is normative for religion itself as well as for religious education theory and practice. (2) Religious education is primarily concerned with social and cultural reconstruction rather than individualized salvation. (3) The religious education teacher's task is to create social consciousness and to develop social living skills. (4) The Christian personality and life-style of the student grow out of the development of his or her latent personal and religious capacities.

The Social-Cultural approach is a radical departure from the historic, theologically and Biblically-founded religious educational endeavor of the church. In fact, Social-Cultural theorists find Traditional Theological theories regrettably defective. The focus of the Social-Cultural approach is upon the individual and the society rather than upon the content of a divinely-inspired message.

John Dewey's progressive educational proposals are among the most significant factors which gave form to the Social-Cultural approach to religious education. His philosophical redefinition of knowledge and learning became a theoretical foundation of the Social-Cultural position, according to Burgess (1982). The founding of the Religious

Education Association in 1903 grew out of a meeting of leading American educators in Chicago. Dewey (1903) gave a major address at the meeting and hoped that the proposed association would become an agency for enriching secular education. Opposing Dewey was George Coe who wanted the new association to have religious education as its primary interest. Coe's position prevailed. Although Dewey did not continue active membership in the Religious Education Association, his views continued to have an influence on the theoretical and practical positions adopted. The Religious Education Association has never taken an official stance toward a particular theory or practice of religious education, but a major number of articles that appeared on the pages of its official journal during the first 30 years were written essentially from a Social-Cultural perspective.

Religious educationists adopting a Social-Cultural orientation are unanimous in their rejection of the Traditional Theological idea that content of religious education is a divinely authoritative message. The Bible is considered an educational resource. From their viewpoint the content of religious education encompasses all of life's experiences. From this standpoint, content is indistinguishable from teaching method. Social interaction is regarded as basic to religious education.

Burgess (1975) says, "For Social-Cultural theorists, then, content of religious education is social experience, not printed facts which can be mastered" (p. 75).

The role of the teacher in this theoretical approach is to promote individual personal growth through guided participation in a group. Teachers should be skillful in group processes and possess a personality which is open and inviting to participation. The Social-Cultural theorists hold that these necessary teacher qualities can be taught as any skill can be taught. The student, then, is understood with the aid of modern science rather than theological doctrines. The means by which a student may be educated for full participation are within the student and are to be discovered through observation, experiment, and participation, and not through theological speculation. Through active participation in the religious community, the student works out his or her relationships with other people and with God.

Within the scope of adult religious education, Elias (1982) identifies the same theoretical approach which Burgess terms Social-Cultural; however, Elias calls the approach Progressive Adult Education in Religion. According to Elias, the concerns of Progressive adult religious educators are with personal growth, the totality of the human experience, and social change. In addition to

Dewey and Coe, Elias cites Moran as a religious educator who has greatly influenced American Progressive religious education. Unlike other Progressives, however, Moran (1979) places the education of adults at the center of attention.

Elias perceives that Progressive Adult Education in Religion has greater potential for adults than for children because religious education for children is primarily a process of religious socialization and enculturation. The religious faith of adults, however, confronts problems of growth and changing experiences and presents opportunities for involvement in social change.

Although Burgess and Elias use different terms, they are basically describing the same approach to religious education.

<u>Contemporary Theological Theoretical Approach</u>

The third approach to religious education outlined by Burgess (1975) is the Contemporary Theological approach. Burgess delineates the following criteria: (1) Theological concepts which recognize the continuing revelatory activity of God are normative for all decisions related to religious educational theory and practice. (2) Religious education attempts to establish individuals in a right relationship with God within the fellowship of the religious community and to educate them for responsible, intelligent, adult

living. (3) The teacher's task is to enter into a relationship with students in order to guide them in their internal growth, their growth toward God, and toward other persons. (4) The student's spiritual life is nurtured and sustained by the educational ministry of the church.

Burgess states that theorists within the framework of Contemporary Theology represent a wide range of theological and educational positions. They tend, however, to agree on the following: (1) They oppose the liberal theology of the Social-Culturalists; (2) they see human nature as being in need of redemption; (3) they believe that the religious community is the locus of religious life and education; and (4) they generally advocate some form of participation within the religious community as a feature of religious education practices.

The antecedents of the Contemporary Theological approach are much the same as those for the Social-Cultural approach. In addition to John Dewey, Horace Bushnell (1967) has had a considerable influence on both groups. There was a decided transition by religious educationists from a social to a theological emphasis in the 1930s and 1940s. By the early 1940s, revived theological interest was beginning to influence the climate of religious education in America. In Can Religious Education Be Christian? Elliott (1940) wrote: "There has been an increasing

tendency in Protestant churches to return to the historical formulations of the Christian religion and to repudiate the adjustments which had been made under the influence of modern scientific and social developments" (p. 9).

In 1944 a committee of the International Council of Religious Education was formed to survey the entire field of religious education and to look at "the need of a considered statement as to the place of theological and other concepts in Christian education" (Vieth, 1947, p. 7). The report of this committee was published in 1947 and has been identified by Little (1961) as "the beginning of a clearly discernible theological emphasis in religious education which is distinctive enough to be termed a movement" (p. 12).

In contrast to the focus of both the Traditional Theological position and the Social-Cultural position, Contemporary Theological theorists focus upon the church and its corporate life. These theorists concern themselves with some specific religious educational objectives which are, according to Burgess (1975), personal growth, intellectual growth, Biblical understanding, and training for effective participation in the life of the church. The intellectual growth of individuals is looked upon by many Contemporary Theological theorists as a valid aim of religious education.

Although religious educational purpose for theorists in the Contemporary Theological tradition is focused in the life of the church, these theorists also recognize the social and moral responsibilities that rest upon the religious community. Wyckoff (1955) suggests that in addition to the aim of nurturing the Christian life, there is the aim of a life to be lived and a character to be built.

From the theoretical standpoint of the Contemporary Theological tradition, the teacher of religious education is neither the transmitter of an unchanging message nor the creator of an idealized social order; rather, the teacher is both a promoter and participant in a process through which God presently reveals himself to humankind. The best candidate for teaching religion in this tradition is, according to Wyckoff (1955), the person who is continually growing and becoming more competent in Biblical understanding, in the Christian faith, in active Christian service, fellowship, and worship.

The student is perceived to be an active participant with God and with other persons in a relationship which is the core of the religious educational process. One cardinal principle, says Burgess (1975), of much Contemporary Theological theorizing is that "the religious educational process should eventuate in a kind of learning

that will be evidenced by the growth and development of the student as a person" (p. 117). Such theories of learning as conditioning, and trial and error, are regarded as largely inadequate to explain those learnings which take place within the religious educational process. While no common view of learning is fully shared by the theorists in this tradition, most would agree that learning which contributes to the religious growth of students is accomplished primarily through interaction between persons and the undefinable working of the divine spirit which Christians would call the Holy Spirit.

Elias (1982) outlines many of the principles which Burgess has placed in the Contemporary Theology theory under the heading of Humanistic Adult Education in Religion. It is essential to understand, at this point, that Elias' use of the term "humanistic" in no way implies acceptance of a philosophy which emphasizes the nature of human beings and ignores the omnipotence of God. Human beings are seen as unique because they are created in God's image and, therefore, their potential for growth is limitless.

Elias places the foundation of this theory on the work of humanistic psychologists such as Rogers and Maslow. From the field of adult education he draws from Knowles, Kidd, and Tough. From religious education, he acknowledges

the work of McKenzie (1977) and Bergevin (1958). McKenzie presents as the major objective of adult education the "enabling of adults to actualize their potentialities to the end that they become more fully liberated as individuals and more fully prepared to participate in bettering the life of the communities to which they belong" (1977), p. 13). Education becomes religious by content or intent. McKenzie draws from the work of Bergevin when he states that key principles in adult education should include affirmation of the adult as learner, respect and consideration for persons, promotion of adult freedom in the learning situation, meeting the needs of individuals and institutions, promoting continuing and lifelong growth, and involving adults in a civilizing process (McKenzie, 1975, ch. 3). In a humanistic framework, greater emphasis is placed on processes that lead to growth than on the content of religious teachings. Content is not ignored, however.

Because they emphasize the potential for human growth, the goals of Humanistic theory are compatible with the goals of most religious bodies; therefore, Humanistic theories have been extensively used in the field of religious education. Elias (1982) has directed programs from Humanistic orientations and attests to the practical value of this theory. He also observes pitfalls such as

goals that are idealistically stated and therefore difficult to evaluate, and extended attention upon self-growth and group life to the exclusion of social and political concerns.

The Social-Science Theoretical Approach

The fourth theoretical approach to religious education presented by Burgess is the Social-Science approach, and he lists the following criteria: (1) There is a fusion of religious and theological concepts on the one hand and empirically validated facts and laws pertaining to teaching-learning on the other. Religious and theological as well as Biblical content are accepted and used when pedagogically appropriate. (2) Religious education is the facilitation of specified, behaviorally defined, religiously targeted behaviors. (3) The teacher's function is to structure all of the relevant variables in such a way that the student's religious behavior will be modified in a positive way. (4) The student's religious behavior is learned in essentially the same way as any other human behavior.

The Social-Science theoretical approach perceives the findings of the social sciences as a critical factor in planning religious instruction. This scientific orientation is evidenced by (a) its commitment to empirical methodology, (b) its orientation toward quantitative

treatment of data, (c) its emphasis upon understanding and predicting behavior, (d) its concentration on identifying and developing teaching practices by which desired religious behaviors may be facilitated, and (e) its strong emphasis on the link between theory and practice.

A Roman Catholic educator, James Michael Lee, was the initial developer of the Social-Science approach to religious education. The central thrust of Lee's position is that "the religion teacher fundamentally is a professional specialist in the modification of student behavior as it affects his religious life" (1970, p. 67). According to Burgess, Lee has developed what is possibly the first comprehensive theoretical system of religious instruction and has set forth this framework in a trilogy, the last of which was published in 1985. According to Burgess (1975), Lee agrees with the majority of Christian religious educationists that the aim of religious instruction is that "every student should live a life characterized by love and service to both God and man in this present world and attain happiness with God in the world to come" (p. 130).

A teacher, as defined by Social-Science theory, is a teacher simply because of the function that he or she performs. Life-style and personal beliefs of the teacher are irrelevant. Importance is placed entirely upon the

pedagogical capabilities and the pedagogical behavior of the teacher. Like some other educators, Lee makes a distinction between learning theory and teaching theory. Lee (1985) views teaching as a distinct activity with a particular set of goal-directed activities. Learning, on the other hand, is a hypothetical construct which can only be presumed because it can be inferred from observed changes in behavior.

The student is the key element in Lee's Social-Science theory of religious instruction since learning begins and ends with the student. Lee states, "Effective religion teaching is that which focuses on performance and behavioral change rather than on learning as such. In the final analysis, performance is all the religion teacher has to work with" (1973, p. 59). Lee uses the facts of learning which have been established by empirical research in the context of religious instruction since he does not think that learning about religion is different from any other kind of learning. Lee devotes an extensive chapter in <u>The Flow of Religious Instruction</u> (1973) to a survey of findings about human learning. Unlike theories that concentrate primarily on content, Social-Science theory places great emphasis on environment, particularly the classroom environment.

Elias (1982) proposes the Socialization-Behavioristic

Theory which to some extent parallels Burgess' Social-Science approach. Elias, however, places much more emphasis on socialization than behaviorism. He traces the roots to this theory to Bushnell's classic work, Christian Nurture (1967), in which Bushnell sees the educational ideal for children as growing up Christian and never knowing themselves to be otherwise. For Bushnell, home and experience are fundamental to religious learning.

Elias sees Nelson (1967) as drawing primarily on sociological sources. Nelson, like Bushnell, focuses primarily on the education of children, but he also stresses the importance of adult education because of the prominent role adults play in the religious community. Westerhoff (1976) is another theorist who places great emphasis on environment. He concludes that schooling is an inappropriate mode for communicating faith and proposes a model for religious education based on the rituals and experiences of religious communities. His focus is on active participation in the rites, symbols, beliefs, morality, and life-styles of the faith community. Elias sees value for adult religious education in the theories of behaviorism which focus on attitudes and behaviors, as well as theories of socialization which emphasize life-style, values, and enculturation.

Other Theories

Elias explicates two other theoretical approaches to adult religious education. The first, Analysis of Language and Concepts, is, as the name denotes, concerned with the examination of language. This theoretical approach utilizes the techniques of traditional logic and contemporary semantics to clarify the meaning of educational language. Williamson (1970) and Melchert (1974; 1977) have used this approach, although neither focuses explicitly on adult religious education. Williamson (1970) analyzes concepts such as educational objectives, teaching, and learning. Melchert (1974; 1977) analyzes the concepts of education, religion, and religious education.

The need to clarify language in the field of religious education has been expressed earlier in this study, and a systematic analysis would certainly be helpful. Unless some agreement can be reached on the terminology to be used, however, just to study the semantics of the field does not seem particularly pertinent to practice.

The final theoretical approach described by Elias is Socio-Political Adult Religious Education. Elias (1982) states, "It has always been recognized that education is related to the social and political life of a society. . . . Social and political purposes have also had an important place in some religious education theories" (pp. 171, 172).

Groome (1980) suggests a theoretical rationale for a shared praxis approach to religious education. He utilizes the Christian symbols of the Kingdom of God, salvation, and liberation as major elements in his theoretical approach to religious education.

Elias' Socio-Political theory is, in a sense, a reconstructionist position in that a goal of the theory is to remake society. Another reconstructionist theory of adult religious education is presented by Wren in Education for Justice (1977). Wren's work raises the important issues of ideology in education for justice which Elias deems as especially appropriate for adult religious education. Adults are more deeply involved in institutions and organizations in society than young people and are less susceptible to the dangers of indoctrination and propaganda, according to Elias. Another writer in the socio-political approach is Wogaman (1976) who analyzes the compatibility of the Christian tradition with various economic and political systems.

Elias (1982) calls attention to the potential personal dangers involved in a Socio-Political theoretical approach to religious education when he says, "The risks of this form of religious education are well-known if one recalls the price that Christians in South and Central America and Jews in the Soviet Union have paid in their attempts to

educate and act for justice" (p. 175).

Summary

Burgess outlines four theoretical approaches to religious education: Traditional Theological, Social-Cultural, Contemporary Theological, and Social-Science. Elias delineates six theoretical approaches to adult religious education: Analysis of Language and Concepts, Adult Liberal Education, Progressive Adult Education, Socialization-Behavioristic Theories, Humanisitic Adult Education, and Socio-Political Adult Religious Education. Although Burgess and Elias use different terminology, there is a great deal of overlapping in their descriptions.

A current survey of practices in religious education would find each of the theoretical approaches described in this chapter in operation, and other approaches could probably be identified and added to the list. Based on what is known about adult education, is there one theoretical approach to adult religious education which is more useful than the others in developing an adequate adult religious education program?

In the introduction to this chapter, it was stated that the primary task of religious educators is to blend appropriate theories of education and human development with practices and beliefs of a particular faith community.

The Contemporary Theological theoretical approach seems to achieve this necessary blending. The religious educational objectives of this theory--personal growth, intellectual growth, Biblical understanding, and training for effective participation in the life of the church--are compatible with the concepts which have grown out of the theories of adult learning and development. The content, Biblical understanding, has a primary focus but does not ignore in any way the needs of the individual. Finally, the relational aspect of the importance of the faith community is well established. While there are components of the other theories which should not be ignored, the Contemporary Theological approach is well in line with what is known about adults as learners.

CHAPTER V

THE INTERVIEWS

Methodology

This study was exploratory in nature and attempted to define common areas of motivation for adult participation in religious education. Six interviews were conducted with people who are actively involved in some area of religious education. All of the informants were white, female, Protestant, and middle class. The age range was from 25 to 70 years, with one person in each decade between 20 and 70. All six were residents of Forsyth County in North Carolina. Five of the informants were acquaintances of the researcher, and one was introduced by a mutual acquaintance.

The study focused on why adults involve themselves in religious education. The study did not investigate involvement in formal religious education classes taken for credit or certification, but on voluntary, non-credit gatherings such as Sunday school classes, Bible study groups, women's groups or circles, or individual study.

The interview method was modeled on an approach that Daniels and Weingarten (1982) call the "psychological research interview" (p. 315). This method is intended for small samples and emphasizes the "descriptive and the

reflective rather than the codable and the measurable" (p. 316). The technique combines asking questions with intense listening on the part of the researcher. The style of the interview is conversational, and while some questions are planned in advance, the interviewer relies on his or her judgment to keep the conversation going in the most productive way.

Burgess (1984) labels the same process the "unstructured interview" and suggests that the interviewer develop a list of topics or themes which he or she wishes to cover during the interview. The interviewer, therefore, develops an instrument to guide the discussion but does not stay with a more rigid interview schedule. Corbin (1971), in addition to listing themes, also devised some questions under each topic to start an interview or a particular topic. The questions may or may not be used, depending on the responses of the person being interviewed. These two procedures, listing topics or themes and posing questions under each topic, were used in the interview process (See Appendix A - Interview Instrument).

The time spent in each interview ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. For the most part, the informants were asked the same questions, but not necessarily in the same order. Question #2 under the second topic asked for a response to a definition of adult education read by the

interviewer. This question was dropped after the third interview because it seemed cumbersome and unproductive. Leaving out this question, however, created some difficulties in the interpretation of the interviews, and that problem will be discussed more fully in Chapter VI. The other four topics usually were covered as outlined in the Interview Instrument. The names of the informants have been changed, but other information given about the informants is factual.

Several notes are made for clarity: The terms "congregation" and "church" (lower case) are used interchangeably to mean the local entity of the Christian Church to which a person is affiliated as a member. The expression "home church" is rather colloquial and identifies the congregation in which a person spent her childhood. In the same vein, "going to church" means attending a worship service. Youth groups and women's circles usually have a three-fold function: education, service, and fellowship, so participation in these two kinds of organizations was considered a part of religious education.

There will be times during the reading of the interviews when the reader will have the feeling that the informant is talking about over-all involvement in church activities that have little or no relationship to religious

education. In other words, the interviews did not always stay neatly on the subject. The researcher had to decide whether to include this material or omit it. For the most part, the material stayed in for three reasons. (1) The researcher was very reluctant to edit the data extensively for fear of manipulating the data. (2) Since the study was exploratory, the researcher did not wish to limit the exploration in any way. One of the advantages of interview research is that answers are given to questions which are not asked. (A real serendipitous adventure, or, in more formal language, a heuristic study.) It is hoped that something disclosed in these interviews will lead to further study, and the disclosure may not be what this interviewer was seeking, but may be important to someone else. (3) In the light of some theories of religious education, the conversations may not be as off the subject as they at first appear, and this reason will be discussed in Chapter VI.

Sue

"Sue," age 25, is a Presbyterian and is a graduate student in a physician's assistant program. She is married and does not have children. She attended a Presbyterian college and graduated with a degree in biology. She was interviewed in the library of her church.

When asked to relate her earliest memory about her

involvement in religious education, she said, "I remember coloring a picture of my baby brother in a classroom downstairs in this building." She guessed she was three or four at the time. She was baptized as an infant, and both of her parents and all four grandparents were very active in church. She remembered attending church services with her grandparents when she visited them, and stated that going to church was a "very important part of family life."

When asked to name some of the activities in which she participated as she was growing up, she named Sunday school, going to church, choir, youth fellowship groups, and being on the church vestry (governing board of the local church) as the youth representative when she was in high school. Again she emphasized the activity of her parents. Her father was a deacon, her mother a circle leader, and she said, "We were the family that was always here. When the church flooded, we were here to mop up."

When Sue went away to college, she "shopped around" (her expression) for a church to attend. She was disillusioned by the academic aloofness of the college church and started going to a Methodist church. She was also active in an Episcopal group which revolved around a once-a-year retreat. After college, she returned to her home church for several months, got married, and then moved away again.

In her new home, Sue began to "shop around" again. "I am pretty rigid of what I expect of a church," she said. When asked to expand on that, she listed a friendly atmosphere, being able to relate to the minister's style of preaching, and what is available in the way of religious education activities. She said, "In sermons I look for something pertinent, some reasonable interpretation based on the original writing, helping me understand how to study the Bible--not just fire and brimstone." She said that she likes a Sunday school class where the curriculum is not so fixed and again, is "pertinent." She also indicated that she looks for a peer group with which to associate, but peer group has not always been that important to her. For example, when she returned to her home church after college, there was no class for her age group, so she attended what she called with a great deal of affection, the "Little Old Ladies' Bible Class." The youngest person in that class was probably 45 and most were grandmothers. She found an instant acceptance there and has continued a relationship with that class (which will be referred to later) even though she is now a member of a young adult class.

Sue was asked if she depends on the learning experiences in church when she is going through a transition or making changes in her life. She replied,

"When I have had changes, it took several Sundays to get into a church, and in that time between churches there was a kind of emptiness, a kind of superficiality and something was not all there. I need the community, the growing experiences. I need strength that I find that is different there than in any other relationship. Something I need."

She was asked if she found that relationships with people in her church community were somehow different from those outside the church. She answered, "Even though there may be the same degree of friendship, and doing things together, the similarity of interest and background in this area adds a dimension of quality that makes the friendship even better."

Sue´s continuous activity, except for two or three Sundays when she made a move to another town, was noted, and she was asked if that activity was more than just a habit. She said, "I think it is. If it were just a habit, it would be easy to break. There are times I could really use the four hours on Sunday or choir practice time. I need the renewal, I need something given, I need the worship."

Sue was asked to list the activities in which she is currently involved in church. She listed being a member of a Sunday school class and on the steering committee for that class, Strengthening the Church committee (a committee

responsible for all educational activities of adults and children), religious education subcommittee, senior choir, and substitute teacher in the "Little Old Ladies' Bible Class." She concluded, "Right now, that's all. When I finally get settled down [when she graduates in August] I will go back to the women's circle."

Even though she is a full-time student, Sue was asked to describe her other educational activities in addition to religious education. She said, "I like going to school. I like studying to learn, not just to get a degree. Learning is always important to me. In the Physician's Assistant program you have to get re-certified periodically, and I like that part of the program."

Sue was asked to elaborate on her involvement, over a period of years, with the class she called, the "Little Old Ladies Bible Class." She laughed as she said, "They love me no matter what I say. I can really challenge them." She was asked, "Are they up to a challenge?" and she replied, "Oh, they love it! We have discussed things such as family relationships, divorce, death and dying, abortion, simplifying lifestyles. They want a challenge and they need it, and that is why the keep asking me back. They will talk to me . . . . When I teach that class, I ask questions because I want to hear their points of view. I don't have all of the right answers. . . . Some things,

like abortion, don't have just one answer, but it's important for church groups to discuss the issues to try to get some understanding of various positions. ...In a sense, they [this class] are the backbone of the church, but we need to remind ourselves that everybody needs to be challenged. It's so easy to kind of drift off."

Sue was asked if she found her own young adult class as challenging. Her answer was a true reflection of what her age group feels. "I think we are just bombarded by challenge almost so much that we have to put up walls just to be able to deal with it. That class expects to be challenged."

Sue was asked if she prefers to study about her faith alone or with a group. She confessed that she has always tried to read the Bible in a systematic way, but she is not satisfied with her ability to do that. She prefers group study because of the variety of views expressed.

Again, Sue was asked about the relationship between religious education and coping with transitions or crises. She spoke about the death of her mother, at age 42, in a very interesting way. Her mother was so young and so active in church, and groups of people in the church as well as individuals prayed diligently for her recovery. It was hard for them to accept the fact that she died despite their prayers for her. Even when she was in the last

stages of her illness, she was elected a deacon in the church. Sue did not relate how she coped with this premature death. Perhaps she felt so much a part of this faith community that as she expressed their grief, she was also expressing her own, but she talked about it only in terms of the congregation, not her own personal experience.

The word "challenge" came up very often during the conversation, 12 times, in fact. Sue was asked if she thought this would always be her stance toward learning, or if she would reach the point when she would be looking for validation or affirmation of what she already believed. She replied, "I think I need more stretching in a lot of ways. I keep meeting new areas of life that have some challenges, and I keep needing more study in that area. I am not a complacent person. I always need a challenge. . . .I don′t understand some things now that I will later. Some things I will never understand, but I′ll keep on looking."

Wilma

"Wilma," age 39, is a Methodist and works as a secretary. She is married and his two sons, ages 10 and 14. The interview was conducted in her office after working hours.

To start the discussion on her background in religious education, Wilma was asked if she had always been a

Methodist. She replied, "No, I was born Lutheran, into a Lutheran family, and we went to church every Sunday, sat on the front pew with Grandmother because she lived with us."

Wilma's tendency, all the way through the interview, was to minimize the degree of her participation in church activities. In relating her background she said, "Other than going to Sunday school and church, singing in the choir, and being in Luther League, [a youth organization] I can't remember having a lot to do." She had catechetical instruction, a requirement in the Lutheran church, in the fifth or sixth grade. She recalled her early church experience this way: "My grandmother was a very strict, very strict Lutheran. I didn't consider the Lutheran congregation there (her home congregation) very friendly. They were nice because we knew all of them, but they were not outgoing in any way. I'm not sure but what it's still like that."

After finishing high school, Wilma worked in a near-by city and lived at home until she married. During the time at home before marriage, she continued going to Sunday school and church, attended youth functions, and sang in the choir.

After marriage she became a Methodist. She said, "I can't say I changed the way I believed in any way; he was a Methodist and was very active in the church, and so I

changed to his church. It seemed the right thing to do."

Wilma then enumerated a series of five family moves in which her general participation in the church was going to Sunday school and worship service, actively participating in discussion in Sunday school but not teaching, and keeping the nursery. She described three congregations in which she and her family were members as being very large and not needing any more help or participation from new members. At one time they went to a non-denominational community church because they lived outside of town and "it was there." Her husband taught Sunday school in that congregation. After the non-denominational church, they moved to Wilmington and joined a very large Methodist church. The young adult Sunday school class alone had 100 members and met in the fellowship hall. Again she minimized her participation. "Other than that [going to worship service and Sunday school], I watched the nursery and Al helped with the men's club and Michael went through Methodist Youth Fellowship and joined the church there, and still we were not real active."

The interviewer observed that there had never been a time in Wilma's life when she did not go to Sunday school and church. She said, "No, I can't think of a time. If my children were sick, I might have missed, but my grandmother or mother must have drilled it into me somewhere. They

seemed to think it was important, and I think it is important. I really do."

Wilma then described her present involvement in a small (300 members) Methodist church in the community in which they now live. Finally she admitted being "real involved." She and her husband rotate with three other couples in teaching an adult class; they are on the ushers' committee; she "does refreshment, nursery, flowers, whatever;" he is on the missions committee, administrative board and belongs to the men's group. Both sons are also heavily involved in youth activities.

Wilma described the Sunday school classes in her congregation. There is a young adult class, primarily composed of newly married couples without children, her class which ranges in age from 25 to 40, and one older group. Her class is studying a course called "Ages and Stages" which is part of the Methodist curriculum, and she has really enjoyed the course. She said, "It's nice to sit in Sunday school and feel like you are learning something from other people that is in relationship to something that has happened to you, or something that they feel. And yet, it all goes back, we relate it somehow, as to how we should live as Christians. Going out and facing different things and not worrying so much about or thinking that I'm the only one who is in this position, and you are not. I like

Sunday school. I enjoy going to Sunday school. I come out feeling like, well, we are all in there together trying." She said, when asked directly, that one of the reasons she goes to Sunday school is the kind of support she gets from other people.

Wilma was asked, "When you go into a Sunday school class do you go hoping to learn something new or different, or do you hope to validate what you already believe?" She answered, "I go always looking toward anything that is going to help. I'm sure they [the other members of the class] reinforce things that I think are right . . . but we don't all agree in our class, but I don't think I am in charge of changing how they feel about something. . . .I hope I have some pretty good values and they are keeping me in line with them and helping me out with anything I'll have to face in the future, so that at least I'll have an idea, or get an example, or know how they handled it."

Wilma was asked about her participation in educational activities outside of church. In the last two years she has not been involved in any deliberate learning activity other than in religious education. She has had two years of college and probably will go back when her children are older. She has gotten a bulletin from a near-by community college, but she said that she is not yet ready to return. "Not in the right frame of mind," she said. She

participates in PTA. and conferences with her children's teachers.

Wilma was asked to what extent she separates worship from education. "Do you consider worship service and educational experience, or would you consider Sunday school worship?" She said, "I consider Sunday school more educational for me. I sit in there and learn something from experiences that others in that class have had . . . . In church I guess I consider it worship. It is more of a prayer-like atmosphere than in Sunday school. Normally his [the minister's] sermons will have a point, but its more towards a Bible point . . ."

Wilma's church activity seems to be an equal mix of education, service, and worship. She said, "I enjoy that church out there. I am happy with the membership; they are really nice people. The thing I like about it is that we must have gotten there about the time it started growing, and its been a real experience for both of us to get so involved with a church. We can look at some things and say, 'I don't think I would have ever done that at another church,' but now I can say, 'Yes, I don't mind participating.' Maybe that's because of the size of the church. . . . We feel very comfortable out there."

Faith

"Faith," age 45, is an Episcopalian and is a high school guidance counselor. She is married and has a son, 17, and a daughter, 15. The interview was conducted in her office. The written summary cannot begin to capture the zest and enthusiasm this woman exhibits.

To start the discussion, the interviewer asked Faith if she had grown up in the church, and if she had always been Episcopalian. She responded that she had grown up in the church, but was a very active Methodist until she married, and then she became a very active Episcopalian with no noticeable break in activity when she made the transition.

Faith was raised in a small rural community in the eastern part of North Carolina, and she was very active in her church and in her community. She isn't sure where the interest in the community came from unless she was just following the example of her parents. She attended Sunday school and church, youth groups, and sang solos or duets with her sister at almost every church function. She said, "I always have been very interested in my church and the neighboring churches even if their views were different. I have just been very curious about religious differences as well as similarities. I think that stems from my parents' being very interested." Her parents were active in church and Sunday school, and so was her grandfather who lived in

their home. Faith recalled that at some point her grandfather had promised to give 10% of his income to the church, and people regularly visited him to collect his tithe for whatever project they had going.

Apparently there was never a time in Faith's life when she had not been an active participant in religious education. In reflecting on her lifelong activity, Faith said, "How much of that is habit, and how much is religious commitment and very basic with my beliefs, or just part of my lifestyle, I really don't know."

She attended a Methodist college and while a student she taught Sunday school for seventh and eight graders and sang in the choir. She became good friends with the president, a Methodist minister, and his wife. The president's wife discouraged Faith from majoring in religion and encouraged her to "do something practical," and so she majored in English and earned a teaching certificate. The counselor reasoned that Faith already had enough experience to become a youth director or a director of religious education. In high school she had directed recreation programs for her district Methodist Youth Fellowship.

Faith became Episcopalian when she married John, but she credited her Methodist Youth Fellowship training for the change. She remembered that in youth programs they had

role-played problems that could develop in marriages with different religious beliefs, so she decided early that if she married, she would accept the religious beliefs of her husband, or she would not marry. John had always been active in the Episcopal church, and since her previous experience with that denomination was positive, she joined the Episcopal church after attending confirmation class.

Soon after marriage Faith and John enrolled in graduate school and were very involved in an Episcopal congregation while in school. Faith said that the church became their social life, too, and they began an association with the priest in that parish that continues to the present. She and her husband drive miles to hear this priest speak, she said, "Because he is so interesting. His topics always whet my curiosity."

Faith is a member of a large Episcopal church with a varied educational program. She expounded on her feeling for the educational ministry in her congregation. She said, "That is a phase of religion that appeals to me because there is always something to learn . . . always something to look forward to learning. The education director does a Sewannee [seminary] course that involves weeks of intensive study. I have noticed that a lot of people who take that course, not all but a lot, are in a transition period of their lives, either a career change or

belief change, or really beginning to ask questions like 'Is that all there is to it?' Passages. Those in their 40s and 50s who are at critical turning points. I am looking forward to doing that when I have more time." She also told of attending one session of a course advertised as "healing ministry," but after one session she realized she was "not into that. I'm curious, but I'm not into that right now." She commented on the large number of people who had turned out for that particular program.

By this time in the conversation, Faith had used the word "curious" several times. Picking up on that, the interviewer asked if she would say that one of the reasons that she participates in different avenues of learning is just a curiosity or an openness to learning. She answered, "I like change. Not all change is good, but there is something so exciting about change, or it can be if you are open to all the energy it takes to make adjustments."

The interviewer suggested that some adults take courses in religion in an effort to validate or get reassurance about what they already believe. Faith was asked if that was one of the reasons she participates. She replied, "I don't think so. It might be, but I don't think so. The classes I enjoy the most sometimes, at points, are somewhat stressful in that there are people in there who have views very different from mine, and I don't necessarily want them

to believe the way I do, and I don´t want to change their views, especially if I value their opinions, but if someone has actually given something some thought, then I find it challenging, even stressful, for them to go off in a different direction from my thinking altogether. Validate? Maybe so. In a way, that is validating. . . . When I walk in, I don´t know what I want to hear. I am very bored if I can predict a possible answer."

Faith was asked why she participates in religious education. She answered, "It makes me feel full. I know I don´t do it out of fear, or because I think I am going to be punished."

Faith was asked, "Do you consider worship a learning experience?" She answered, "Yes, at times, but the focus of the worship service is prayers of the people; the minister is not center stage. . . . Sometimes in a worship service I float. Sometimes in Sunday school a little bit of the devil [devil´s advocate] is in me. I am reacting or evaluating. I am a very different person in Sunday school, I know I am."

Her congregation offers a wide variety of courses and Faith does a lot of switching classes "because I want to get samplings of a lot of different things. . . . When I am mature, I´ll finish something." She really enjoys the flexibility in the educational program in her congregation.

Faith listed the church activities in which she has participated in the last 18 months. She and her husband have chaired the acolyte team and both children are acolytes, they taught the seventh grade boys' class and found that very difficult, but gratifying; she regularly attends Sunday school and worship services; has attended several educational programs not held on Sunday morning; and has participated, vicariously she said, in a ministry to street people through her husband's volunteer work, but cannot get directly involved because of her own "alcohol hurt" since her father and several uncles were alcoholics. "But I am curious," she said. "I want to know everything about it." Faith's daughter attends a youth group at a Moravian church because she likes it better than her own youth group, and her parents do not object to that. Faith noted the good job that churches do to provide leadership development that children do not get anywhere else. She remembered how her own leadership skills were cultivated in Methodist Youth Fellowship and other church youth groups.

Faith related two incidents in which her church and faith had been particularly meaningful to her. One was the accidental shooting death of a young man in her congregation that left the whole church in "a state of shock." Her Sunday school class studied Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People? because "We were grasping at things

to hold on to." That study also helped her work through the suicide of a favorite uncle and also helped her support her mother who was devastated by her brother's death.

The second situation affected her immediate family. Her 17-year-old son has a disease for which there is presently no cure. "When Johnny became ill," she said, "every phase of our lives was changed--eating, sleeping, schedules, communication--fears were rampant, it was hard to feel normal. The church helped. A prayer group that meets on Wednesdays prayed for Johnny every week. The people in the church were so involved in where we were and how we were doing. They constantly reached out to us, kids and parents, by calling and visiting and praying. In September of last year, he suddenly went into remission and is no longer on medication that changes his personality. Medically, there is no explanation, but spiritually there is."

Faith was asked how comfortable she would be in the little rural Methodist church in which she grew up if she moved back there. She said, "I would still visit there, because all through college those people wrote to me, and sent me money anonymously, and invited me back for reunions. I have a real warm feeling about that church."

Finally, Faith brought up the subject of her career choice and said she often wonders how different her life

would have been if she had stayed in the field of religious education. She said that she knew she could have been happy with that choice. The interviewer asked her if she regretted her decision. She replied, "There have been days when I think I am in a mission field in that there is a mission field here that is just as challenging, as much in need of attention, as anything that I could do in a [church] mission field." The interviewer has seen Faith with students and colleagues and does not doubt at all that she is needed right where she is.

Norma

"Norma," age 53, is a Lutheran and a high school math teacher. She is married and has three grown children and one grandchild. The interview was conducted in her home.

Norma, like all of the others interviewed, could not ever remember a time when she and her family did not go to Sunday school and church. She said simply, "I went because I always went. I can't ever remember missing unless I got sick." There were three children in the family and she well remembered the "hassle" to get everybody ready on Sunday morning to get to Sunday school on time. Her father did not always go. Norma said, "Sometimes he would go, but he went in spurts. He would get mad at somebody and stay home and pout for a while, but Mother always went."

Other things about religious education that are firmly imprinted on her memory are singing out of "the little red book" (a children's hymnal), "openings" of Sunday school in each department, being segregated by sex after first grade, tiny little Sunday school rooms, and as a teenager, giggling at one particular teacher who used the same phrase over and over. Much to her chagrin, she can't remember the phrase, she can only remember counting the number of times the teacher used it during a class period. She also remembered Vacation Bible School with lemonade made in tin tubs, and going to the well behind the church for water and everybody drinking out of the same dipper. From age 12 through high school she was also active in Luther League (the youth organization), and she sang in the choir. She taught Sunday school from the time she was in the ninth grade. She said, "I always got left with a class, although I certainly wasn't qualified. Nobody said anything, and I didn't know any better."

The interviewer asked if her active participation in church and religious education continued through college. She answered, " . . . I never missed a Sunday when I went off to college. I don't think I could have gotten through if I hadn't [gone to church]. This Catholic girl and I would get up every Sunday morning and wait out front of our dorm, and somebody would come and pick us up to take me to

the Lutheran church and her to the Catholic. There were others who would come to worship service, but I went to Sunday school, too . . . . I never thought of going back to sleep on Sunday. I got up, ate breakfast, put on my hat and high-heeled shoes, and once in a while, even walked back to the dorm after church."

Norma had already expressed the feeling that she could not have gotten through the college experience without going to church and Sunday school, but the interviewer pursued this by asking if she also went because she sensed that this was something her mother expected her to do. She replied, "I don't know. I have thought about that, although she never told me, 'You better go,' or 'Something will happen to you if you don't go.' She just always went, and I guess I just looked at that as an example. That's why I have always gotten so impatient with my kids and others who don't seem to have that sense of loyalty or whatever you call it, because it has always meant so much to me. . . . I don't think I would have made it through this week if I hadn't gone to Palm Sunday services [which included Sunday school last Sunday.] It's just something I always look forward to. Getting up and going to church has never been a big problem to me. . . . its just important for me to get up and go to church."

After her marriage to Bob, the son of a Presbyterian

minister, Norma joined the Presbyterian church, and through a succession of family moves, they joined several different Presbyterian congregations, but Norma never felt like she had been to church unless it was Lutheran. In Durham, they moved close to a Lutheran church that was just being established and became very active, and after Durham, there was never any question as to which denomination they would join.

Over the years Norma has been involved in many church activities including teaching Sunday school, directing Vacation Bible School, women's groups, and keeping the nursery. She taught Sunday school until she went back to work about 10 years ago. She talked about the last time she taught in Sunday school--a class of seventh graders--and described it as "the worst thing I ever dealt with. If I ever lost my religion I guess I could have lost it right there. I'm serious." (The interviewer had also taught that particular class and could identify with the pain.) Norma has also maintained membership in Lutheran Church Women over the years. When asked about her participation in that organization, she replied, "That's always been my way to get started in a new church. That and Sunday school. . . . a way to get myself settled." She saw attending circle meeting as a valuable contact with people she did not see every day. "If something bad

happens to somebody, maybe I could do or say something if I know about it." Currently she participates in church activities by attending Sunday school, worship service, Lutheran Church Women circle, and is a member of the Campus Ministry committee.

Norma was asked about her participation in other kinds of learning activities outside of church. She is not involved in any organized program right now, but she reads a great deal and spends much time in preparation for the math classes she teaches. In the past she got very interested in history because of a job as a tour guide at a local historic site. She also stated, "I have been through all the craft classes trying to find something I can do, and after I do it one time, I don't want to do it anymore."

She said that she has no desire to pursue another degree, but she likes to sit in on classes that she is interested in and read the assignments, but she is not interested in grades or reports. She said she would quit teaching if the State Department of Public Instruction ever requires a master's degree, or requires her to use a computer in her classroom.

Norma was asked, "Can you differentiate between worship service and Sunday school? Are they two entirely different functions?" She replied, "Not really, I don't guess. Sometimes if it's a matter of time, it is difficult to

choose whether to go to Sunday school or church. I think one is just as important as the other." Then she was asked, "Is worship a learning experience?" She said, "Yes, we are all there to learn."

Norma was asked, "If you had to say why you participate in the educational activities in the church, what would you say?" She responded, "Well, it seems part of the overall experience. Having taught, I know how much trouble that is, and when somebody prepares a lesson, I think they deserve some support. I think it is part of the ongoing process, and if you were to do without Sunday school, you would have a void there that would destroy some of the continuity that you have had all these years. . . . It is just such a valuable experience, and I wouldn't do it on my own. I feel like that the least I can do is to avail myself of it, if it is there. If somebody is going to do [prepare] it, then I won't let it go by."

Margaret

"Margaret," age 62, is a Lutheran and is retired from a telephone company where she worked for over 30 years. She is a widow and has one daughter and one granddaughter. The interview was conducted in a classroom in her church. This was the shortest of the six interviews primarily because Margaret was rather reticent and tended to answer questions with one word.

Margaret grew up in the Methodist church, was baptized as an infant, and remained active all during her childhood. She had one brother and six sisters, and they all went to Sunday school and church every Sunday. She remembered that getting ready for church was quite a production which actually began on Saturday with ironing clothes, polishing shoes, and taking baths. She can also remember when all ten in her family sat on one pew. Educational activities that she remembered participating in throughout her childhood were singing, programs, especially Christmas programs, and Sunday school classes.

Margaret married Dwayne while he was in military service, and when he was discharged, they built their first home very close to a Lutheran church in a rural neighborhood of Forsyth County. They were invited by neighbors to attend the Lutheran church, and since it was so close, they decided to go one Sunday. Margaret said, however, that she did not like it at all and did not want to go back. The next Sunday they did go back, however, and someone asked her "to take a job teaching a little class of three children." She thought about that, and then took the job. She said, "I was interested in building it up. I knew a lot of children who weren't going to church, so I got out and worked on that."

Margaret was asked if she remembered how long it was before she began to like going to church there. She said, "The more I got involved, the more I liked it, and I felt sort of like it was a calling, and I joined the church. Dwayne had never been baptized, so he was baptized there. We became real active."

Margaret´s list of leadership and educational activities in that congregation is rather amazing. She was a youth adviser, taught the youth Sunday school class several years, was the first woman elected to the church council (the official governing board of the congregation), secretary of the congregation, building fund treasurer and church treasurer, chair of every committee at one time or another, president of Lutheran Church Women, and member of the choir. She and her husband moved to another part of the county about 10 years ago and joined another Lutheran church. Her husband died five years ago.

Margaret´s activity in the church continues, and she currently is chair of a Lutheran Church Women circle, attends Sunday school and worship service every Sunday, and attends weekly a Word and Witness class which is an intensive, 54-week course which focuses on Bible study and witnessing. When asked why she signed up for that particular course, she said that she felt she was not getting enough Bible study. She studies the Bible on her

own, and this course gave her an avenue to intensify and focus her personal study. She also recalled going to several Bible study courses when she was still a Methodist.

Margaret was asked if she goes into a religious education program hoping to learn something new, or if she wants to have what she already knows reinforced. She said, "Well, I really like both. I like to build up what I already know, and learn more, and like for it to be reinforced."

Margaret was asked about learning activities outside of church. She has, over the years, taken courses through her company that related to her job, and after retirement she has taken courses "in finances and some things that would benefit my retirement."

Margaret was asked if being a part of the church had helped her through difficult times in her life. She said that it did and, on coaxing, gave the death of her father as an example. "He died very suddenly, but my faith was strong enough then to take it. It's rough, but you just have something there to hold on to, and another thing that helps is being around people that are good Christians. That makes you strong."

Margaret was asked, "Do you consider worship service a learning experience?" She said, "Yes." The interviewer

asked, "Do you come to worship on Sunday morning with learning in mind?" She said, "The main reason I come to worship is that I feel like I have a need to fellowship with God."

She was then asked if going to Sunday school and church helped in everyday life as well as crisis situations. She said, "Yes. I especially enjoy hearing other people's opinions. You know your opinions, and then you hear other people's, and you learn a lot of things you hadn't thought about. During the week you think about these things at home." She went on to say that when she was working and things got in a turmoil, she could remember parts of the liturgy like "Create in me a clean heart, O God," and those things helped her learn to be calm. She also cited the advantages of being able to use what she learned wherever she was. Last summer she went on a bus tour, and the group had devotions every day primarily from the memory of the people who participated.

Finally, Margaret was asked if she thought she had always been active in church and Sunday school just because these activities became a habit. She replied in her characteristic few but meaningful words: "It may be a habit, but I go because I love it."

Chip

"Chip," age 70, is a Baptist and is a retired nurse whose husband died nine months ago. She has six children. The interview was conducted in her home. Because of the eloquence of her remarks, Chip was quoted more than the other five women interviewed.

The interviewer asked Chip, "When was the first time you remember going to church?" She said, "I couldn't remember. I am a missionary's daughter, born in Brazil, and I was born on Easter Sunday. I really messed up my father's sermon. That's the way I started out. Really messing up my father's sermon." She confessed that that might not have been the only time she was an inconvenience for her father.

Being a missionary's daughter, Chip was always actively involved in the educational activities of the church even as a child. She remembered going to Sunday school and participating in "park-type ministries" which she described as really "being out on the street corner." She began helping her father with the park ministry at about 12. She led the singing and passed out literature, especially to the children. She did not preach.

At 16 Chip came to the States to go to school. She enrolled in a small woman's college for one semester and then transferred to a large Baptist university. She was

asked if she continued to be active in religious education while she was in college. "Of course, I was regular in attendance at Sunday school and church, but no definite participation other than what was offered at school. I was president of the freshman class [at age 16] and active in student government.

Before graduating from college, Chip transferred to the School of Nursing at the University of Virginia. Her participation in religious education was limited there because of the long working hours on the floor of the hospital, and at the same time she was completing requirements for a B. S. in nursing. Usually she attended worship service at a Lutheran church which was across the street from the university. The pastor at that church also served as chaplain for the nursing students and he reserved a pew near the back of the church so that they could slip in in uniform to attend worship. She was not able to participate in any organized church activities during that time because of the strenuous schedule. Chip recalled one Sunday morning when a patient asked her if she had been to church. When Chip told her no, the woman gave her a disdainful look and said, "So you don't worship!" Chip recalled that that statement hit her very hard and she replied, "I worship God when I am washing your face.!"

When Chip finished nurses' training she went into the

Army through the Red Cross. She served five years of active duty, 27 months of the time in a combat zone. She said, "There was no Sunday school or Baptist Women, but I sang. I did all of the solo work, even out in the field, especially on Easter, and I attended church service."

The interviewer asked, "So there has really never been a time in your life when you were not very regular in church attendance?" Chip said, "That depends on what you call regular." The interviewer responded, "I call 'regular' attending every worship service you possibly can." She said, "Well, yes I did that. And in addition I always had my own private devotions. Yes, I studied whenever I couldn't make service." She was asked if she had analyzed why she was regular with private devotions. She responded, "It was always an urgency to communicate with my Creator. A need for reemphasizing my worship and for thanksgiving to the Lord for the things He had done for me and His protection of me."

Chip was asked to reflect on her active participation in religious education through the years and analyze what might have motivated her, even as a young woman away from parents for the first time, to continue doing what she had always done. She said, "Sometimes as I look back, I am positive that there were times when it [her faith] wasn't as meaningful, or I didn't make it as meaningful. I was no

saint. I was just a plain old gal with a lot of drives. I know there were times when the Lord probably said, 'Whoa, girl, you're slipping!' And I would know it. But I always knew where I could come back in to be restrengthened. "

Chip related a dream she had soon after going into military service. She was standing on a river bank and several soldiers were floating down the river on a raft. They were calling for help, but she was not able to help them. She felt a sense of panic that there they were, and she was not able to help. Near the end of the war, as she was coming back to the States, she had the same dream. This time, however, she was able to call to them and steer them to a cove where they could come ashore. She concluded, "I always felt that the Lord gave me the second dream to let me know that I had done what he had wanted me to. He had sent me to help, and I had."

Near the end of her military service, she met Joe, an Army officer. When they both returned to the States, they were married at her parents' home (her parents were retired by then) in South Carolina. Chip was 29 when she married, and she and Joe immediately started a family. They had seven children in four years, including two sets of twins. One of the twins died at birth. I asked her to describe her religious education participation during those early years of marriage because Joe remained in military service,

years of marriage because Joe remained in military service, and they travelled a great deal. She described being active in the chapel guild, an auxiliary for women, and attending the Protestant chapels on military bases. If there was no guild she usually organized one, and she and all of the children went to Sunday school, and she usually sang in the choir. Her six children are still active in church.

Chip was asked to list her present activities in church. She is president of Baptist Women which has 11 groups, she participates in and organizes prayer groups, she is a member of the evangelism committee, an active participant in Sunday school, and she is enrolled in Master Life, an intensive educational program that meets every week for two and a half hours. She does not teach Sunday school because "that's not one of my talents." She described Master Life as "a course based on the Bible, but not just factual Scripture, it's more application. It makes you really concentrate. It's a wonderful course. We take up witnessing. That's not one of my talents either. I cannot just walk up to somebody and start off. I have no qualms about telling people Who I belong to. It is a pleasure to me. But just to walk up to you and say, 'Now' ... I can't do it." The interviewer speculated that 10 minutes into a conversation with a stranger Chip would

probably, somehow, reveal the fact that she is a church member. She laughed and said, "Well, it might creep out."

After her children were grown, Chip felt the need to go back into nursing because "That part of me was not finished." She worked for several years at a facility for severely mentally and physically handicapped children. At 58, she stopped nursing because "I had finished it. I have to finish things. These cubicles have to be straightened up and closed out. I don´t leave things dangling."

Naturally, the interviewer asked if there is anything in her life that is dangling now. She said, "Oh yes. I´ve got lots of things going that I´ve got to get moving on. My children say, ´Mama is always at the church.´ There is so much there that I can help with. And I enjoy it." The interviewer observed, "You are a service-oriented person. You are always doing something for someone. She replied, rather matter-of-factly, "I´ve always been. That´s my nature. Just the way I´m made. No credit. Just the way I turned out."

Chip enumerated other learning experiences in the church in which she regularly participates. Her congregation has mission studies twice a year which involve one week-long study of foreign missions and another week-long study for home mission. She is always involved in those presentations in some way. Every summer she goes

to Ridgecrest (Baptist camp in the mountains of North Carolina) to learn about the Baptist Women's work. Next year she will become director of the Women's Missionary Union, an umbrella organization in the church for a lot of activities, and she must prepare for that responsibility.

Chip does much studying in preparation for Master Life and for her responsibilities as president of Baptist Women. She spends from 9:30 to 11 every night studying for Master Life or something else that is church-related. She says, "It's wonderful. I have all of this time now. Time was a real bug-a-boo at first, after Joe died. I had lots of time, and I had to learn to handle it. These are things I had always wanted to do, and now I can. I used to just study my Sunday school lesson once a week and study a devotional booklet, but not on the level I know now."

Chip was asked if she preferred to study with a group of people or alone. She said, "Oh I love it with people. That's easy. When I have to talk to myself I sometimes find I don't like myself. One of the things about Master Life, there are 12 in the class, and all but two are young women in their late 20s or early 30s. Two of us are the grandmothers of the group. We have a marvelous time. Martha and I (she's 80 and fabulous) looked at each other the first night and said, 'Will we intimidate these women with our white heads?' We didn't. They have been

wonderful to us and it has meant a lot to us to get their viewpoints." The interviewer said, "Faith development does not break down into age categories as neatly as some other kinds of development." Chip responded, "The maturity of a child and the maturity of a Martha are both beautiful and a praise to God."

The interviewer asked, "When you go to Master Life, do you go expecting or hoping to learn something new or to validate what you already know?" Chip answered, "I go with the anticipation of growth. The foundations have been laid, they just need opening up and expanding. That´s what Master Life does. It gives the ability to see hidden treasures that I carried all of these years. . . . It has been a tremendous blessing to me. I have always known, since I was nine years old, have known my Christ, and known He was my Master, but now I can better see the wonders of why I was created, and how marvelous all has been worked out and planned to bring about my whole being. In studying the Old and New Testaments, you can see the pattern over and over, and in a small way, just the same pattern exists in my own life. I am so insignificant in the whole picture, and yet He made me for a definite purpose. It is almost beyond comprehension."

The final question was, "Do you see a study like Master Life as an opportunity to integrate what you believe, as

well as a time to expand and grow?" Chip answered, "Rather to bring into focus, I think. To me right now I, through knowing myself better, and I don't mean to sound egotistical, but because I know myself better, I know my relationship with God better. I have a stronger relationship with God."

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The interviews were conducted in order to gain some insight into the motivation for participation in adult religious education. Since this was an exploratory study, definitive or conclusive answers were not expected. The researcher hoped to discover commonalities in the reasons given for participation that would identify directions for further study. The informants, all female, white, and Protestant were very cooperative and even seemed appreciative of the opportunity to discuss their involvement in religious education.

One informant was selected from each age decade between 20 and 70 in order to gain some perspective on the relationship between age and the reasons for participation in religious education. The age variable seemed to make no difference, however, in the way these women viewed their reasons for participation or in their general level of activity, and in reviewing the transcripts of the interviews, it was easy to forget that there was an age difference. The experiences of "Sue," the youngest in the study, with her "Little Old Ladies′ Class," and "Chip," the oldest, in her Master Life class, confirmed this finding.

The analysis of the interviews and discussion of the

findings have been organized by the topics covered in the Interview Instrument (Appendix A). Questions raised and projections made in earlier chapters will be included in the discussion.

Background in Participation in Religious Education

By far the most salient area of commonality among the sample in this study was their continued active participation in religious education since birth. None of the six informants could ever remember not actively being a part of Sunday school and worship service. All except "Chip" were baptized as infants, and she was baptized at age nine, which is relatively young even for those denominations which practice baptism at the time a person professes belief.

In addition to early participation, the degree of active participation of these six people all through childhood was impressive. They attended Sunday school and church weekly, were active in youth organizations, and all six sang in choirs at various age levels. A somewhat surprising finding, considering the literature, was the continuity of the participation. Roof (1978), cited in Chapter II, reported that religious involvement reaches low levels among young adults (18-30). Albrecht (1958) suggested a family-cycle model in which involvement increased after marriage and children, and stayed constant

until children leave home. These trends did not hold true for the women in this study. Four of the women had attended college away from home, and their church-going and Sunday school attendance continued during that period. There also was no slack period during the early years of marriage, and no decided increase after the arrival of children. By early adulthood, church activity evidently had become a basic part of their lifestyle.

The activity in religious education of these informants as children directly related to the active participation on the part of parents. All six attested to the active involvement of their parents in all aspects of the church. With the exception of "Norma," whose father attended "in spurts," both parents had a high degree of activity. Moreover, four of the informants volunteered that their grandparents had also been church goers, and the other two were not asked that question. The tendency toward regular church attendance of parents and grandparents, however, may reflect a characteristic of the rural Southeast 25 to 50 years ago rather than a more personal commitment to the church. For a period of time in that part of the country, the only acceptable activity on Sunday morning was to go to church. While this societal trend might partially explain why grandparents and parents attended and even brought their children up to do the same, it does little to explain

why their grown children continue that activity.

This pattern of inter-generational participation is consistent with the findings of Setiawani (1984). Her sample consisted of 480 members selected at random from eight Baptist churches in Texas. She reported that 95% of the subjects in her sample had some religious training during childhood. Setiawani also found that religious commitment is dependent on the perceived home religious training during childhood, that religious commitment is independent of perceived childhood religious education (Sunday school), and that religious commitment is dependent on the combination of childhood family relationships, home religious training, and church religious education.

The informants were asked how much their present participation depends on simply "being in the habit" of participating. "Sue" denied that it was habit at all, others allowed that it might be habit, to some extent, that kept them active in church and Sunday school, but it is a habit that they deliberately reinforce. As "Margaret" said, "It might be habit, but I go because I love it."

Even if habit is or is not the reason they are active, the pattern was set in their early environment, and the importance of their early conditioning cannot be denied. "Norma" spoke of the example set by her mother, and "Wilma," more forcefully, said that her mother and

grandmother must have "drilled" into her the habit of going to church and Sunday school. She quickly affirmed, however, that she, too, thought it was important.

In Chapter I and Chapter III attention was called to the different perspectives of Behaviorism and Humanism as they relate to adult development. Perhaps a point should be scored for the Behaviorists in citing participation during childhood as one of the reasons given for adult participation in religious education. On the other hand, it is possible that these six participants learned early that religious education provided them with a growth experience that continued to be valuable throughout their development, and this position is in line with the Developmental Interactionists.

The important conclusion to be reached in analyzing the interviews from the perspective of the first topic is that these six people participated in religious education because it had always been an important part of their lives and the lives of their parents and grandparents. They were reluctant to call participation in religious education a habit, and they admitted that they had given little thought to ever giving it up.

Areas of Participation

The topics or themes in the Interview Instrument were arranged so that the informant was first asked to reflect

on her background in religious education. One of the reasons this topic was placed first was to make the informant feel at ease in the interview situation since she would be recalling her own history. The second topic was intended to continue the natural flow of the conversation and lead into a discussion of why they participate in the activities they listed. From this standpoint, the placement of both topics was successful. However, in responding to the invitation to reflect on their backgrounds and then to enumerate present activities, the informants seldom discriminated between religious education activities and other church-related activities. For instance, attending Sunday school and church seemed to be one process, not two distinct activities. In some cases, the women were asked if they viewed worship and Sunday school as different functions, and those responses were recorded. Four informants said that they learn from a worship service, and one of those four ("Norma") thought that Sunday school and worship were somewhat the same experience and deserved equal emphasis.

One part of the problem of discrimination between the two lies in the design of the questions. Informants were asked to identify "church-related" activities rather than "religious education" activities. A second part of the problem is a result of dropping the second question under

Topic Two. A reference was made in Chapter V to the difficulty this omission created. The original intent of the question was to have the women identify church-related activities which were educational in light of the definition that was read (Topic Two, Appendix A). That approach simply did not work, and after two attempts, the question was dropped. The researcher feels that the definition of adult education which was chosen was too long and complicated to be applied in this situation.

The significant finding to come out of this topic is the degree of activity in all church-related activities by the people who are deeply involved with the educational program of the church. Although much more research needs to be done on this subject, it is proposed that involvement in religious education may even be seen as a predictor of overall involvement in the church. (The reverse of that proposal may not be true, however.) To take this proposal one step further, religious education may actually generate participation in other areas of the church, and perhaps even outside of the church commmunity. This conclusion is based on two things: (1) The important role that religious education plays in leadership development (cited in the interviews with "Sue," "Faith," "Wilma," and "Chip") and, (2) the goals set forth in some theories of religious education to prepare individuals for service in the church.

For instance, one educational objective of the Contemporary Theological approach (Burgess, 1975) is training for effective participation in the life of the church.

Reasons for Participation

When each person was asked, either directly or indirectly, why she participates in religious education, the answers were varied; however, some common threads are evident. Each response to that question will be summarized at this point for the purpose of comparison.

"Sue" participates in religious education to be challenged and to meet challenges. She said, "I think I need more stretching in a lot of ways. . . . I always need a challenge." "Wilma's" participation helps her gain support from other Christians who are going through the same life experiences that she is. "It's nice to sit in Sunday school and feel like you are learning something from other people that is in relationship to something that has happened to you. . . . I come out feeling like, well, we are all in there together trying." When "Faith" was asked the question directly, her reply was, "It makes me feel full. I know I don't do it out of fear, or because I think I am going to be punished." In another instance she said, "That [educational ministry] is a phase of religion that appeals to me because there is always something to learn .

. . always something to look forward to learning." Curiosity also plays a big part in "Faith's" pattern of participation. "Norma's" answer to the question about her participation was very direct. She said, "Well, it seems a part of the overall experience. . . . I think it is part of the ongoing process, and if you were to do without Sunday school, you would have a void there that would destroy some of the continuity that you have had all these years." "Margaret" continued to study in a class because she was "not getting enough Bible study." She also said that going to Sunday school and church help in everyday life as well as crisis situations. "Chip" views participation in religious education as a growth experience and also as an opportuntiy to better prepare herself for responsibilities in leadership positions in her congregation.

Challenge, curiosity, continuity, support, growth--all are key words in identifying why these six women participate in learning experiences in their faith communities.

In Chapter I the question was raised, "Do adults engage in education to assist them in "becoming"? The second, third, and fourth questions in this general topic, Reasons for Participation, sought answers to that question. The women in this study were definitely working within Luther's framework of "becoming." Their general high degree of

participation in all areas of the congregation--service, education, worship, fellowship--seems to be a further reflection of their effort at becoming adult, becoming "grown up" in their faith. For them, all of these activities are a part of the growing experience. "The Christian life, then, is conceived as indefinite growth, itself the product of a full engagement with temporal experience involving the whole personality. The Christian is not to evade the challenges, the struggles, the difficulties and dangers of life, but to accept, make his way through, and grow in them" (Bouwsma, 1978, p. 87).

Further evidence of this effort toward growth or "becoming" is the lack of rigidity in the way these women approach a new learning situation. All six said that they go into a learning experience expecting to learn something new, and, again, all six expressed a need to hear others' points of view and experiences. This attitude was further affirmed in "Sue's" description of her experiences in the "Little Old Ladies' Bible Class." The women in this class were also willing to engage in dialogue in a variety of subjects and, from "Sue's" perspective, were always ready for a challenge.

Engaging in religious education to promote spiritual growth seem fairly logical. Wickett (1980) found that engaging in "learning projects" (Tough, 1961) of any kind

often results in spiritual growth. He interviewed 50 people to discover if their learning projects were in any way related to their spiritual growth. Most respondents indicated that a large number of their learning efforts were somehow related to their spiritual growth; 22% stated that all of their learning efforts were related to their spiritual growth, and 66% indicated that 50% or more of their learning efforts had a connection with their spiritual growth. Wickett's sample came from five groups, three of which were from churches.

One conclusion that can be drawn, then, from the analysis of this topic, is that people do engage in religious education for the purpose of growing spiritually. They do not see themselves, even as adults, as finished products, but human beings in the making. They rely on their religious education experiences to help them toward their goals.

A second finding is that they also see religious education as an avenue for developing skills that will be of service to their faith communities, and being a part of a faith community is extremely important to them. Small groups such as Sunday school classes, committees, circles, and study groups help build a sense of community. In a way that can probably never be documented but is nevertheless very real, there is sometimes something very special about

a group that learns together, and when the syntality of that group experience is operative in a religious education context, the results can be powerful, even transcendent in nature. Religious educationists are increasingly aware of the importance of the small group experience in helping adults learn about their faith and how to express their feelings about their faith (Elias, 1982: Trester, 1982). In this study, all six of the informants said that they preferred to study with other people, and only two said that they spent time in individual study.

Relationship of Religious Education to Life

This topic was developed to find out whether adults who participate in religious education do so in order to better cope with the transitions in their lives. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that only 2% of their sample cited religious transitions as reasons for learning, but that finding in no way suggests that people do not rely on what they learn about their religion to help them through life's transitions.

The sample in this study clearly relied on religious education as an aid to coping with change. "Sue," "Wilma," and "Norma" cited involvement in church, particularly involvement in Sunday school or some other small group as being helpful when they were going through changes as a

result of moving, or when they went to college. "Faith" talked about the support she received from a particular study when she experienced the death of an uncle. "Margaret" did not refer particularly to educational experiences, but cited her faith as being important to her in the death of her father. "Chip" revealed how much being able to engross herself in study helped to fill the hours after her husband died. "Wilma" also talked about the importance of hearing how other people in her Sunday school class related their Christian beliefs to everyday life, and all six expressed the desire to hear other points of views, presumably, to help them make their own decisions.

Again, the importance of the size of the group, particularly in cases of transitions related to moves, may be as significant as the educational experience itself.

The important finding in this topic, then, is that these six women relied very heavily on their religious education experiences to help them cope with changes in their lives.

Participation in Other Educational Activities

This topic was included in the study primarily to confirm or deny a supposition of the researcher (stated in Chapter II) that adults who actively participate in religious education are learning-oriented individuals as delineated by Houle (1961). Much more research needs to be

done in this area, but the tendencies or leanings toward a pre-occupation with learning are present in these six informants. "Sue" is a full-time student, but her description of why she likes to study goes far beyond the desire for certification as a physician's assistant. Her "challenge motif" also bespeaks a learning orientation. "Wilma" is not currently involved in educational activities outside of church, but at 39, she expects one day to complete a four-year degree. "Faith" does not list specific learning activities outside of church, but the researcher knows that she is very active in the teaching/counselling profession, and that requires continuing education. Her "curiosity" also is a sign of learning orientation. "Norma" reads a great deal and studies to prepare for the math classes she teaches. "Margaret" took courses related to her job, and now takes courses related to her retirement, and finally, "Chip," at age 70, cannot seem to quench her desire to learn.

Also related to Houle's (1961) typology is the projection in Chapter II that the participants in religious education are not particularly activity-oriented. That projection is hard to defend in light of the almost frenzied activity of the sample in this study. Their reasons for participation, however, hardly seem to be just for the sake of being actively engaged.

What did become apparent in the study, however, again in the light of Houle's (1961) typology, is the goal-orientation of these individuals. Each knew why she participated in religious educational activities and seemed to enter the activities with some degree of expectation about the outcome of the experiences.

The possibility of the learners in this study being goal-oriented had not been projected, because when goals are spoken of in the context of adult education, the tendency is to think in terms of "how to do" something specific, a goal toward advancement in a career, or some other very practical aspect of human life (Cross, 1982). These individuals, however, seek additional education in their faith not to learn "how to do," but "how to be." Their overriding goal seemed to be to live a life that is consistent with what they believe.

To summarize, the general findings for this topic are that (1) these six individuals participate in learning activities in addition to religious education and show a strong tendency toward Houle's learning-oriented personalities, and (2) the persons in this study are also goal-oriented, but their goal is "how to be" rather than "how to do." The goal-oriented and the learning-oriented participants are consistent with the reasons given for adult participation in education in general (Cross, 1982;

Houle, 1961) but are not usually applied to the field of religious education.

One last reference needs to be made to material in previous chapters. Chapter III examined theories of adult learning and development. While no one theory of development was singled out as particularly appropriate to religious education, it was stated that Erikson's pyschosocial theory, particularly the epigenetic principle and the dialectical struggle of successive stages in the life cycle, seems compatible with the Christian understanding of development. There was nothing in the analysis of the interviews that would contradict that statement. The references to Behaviorism and Developmental Interaction referred to earlier in this chapter simply reinforce the need for adult religious educators to be aware of the theories of development that are operative in the field of adult education.

Additional Findings

Two other findings are not directly related to the purpose of this study but are part of the "serendipitous adventure" referred to in Chapter V. The first one indicates an ecumenical stance which the researcher had not anticipated. All six of of the women interviewed, at some time, had participated in a denomination that was different from the one in which they were baptized. Four had

actually joined other denominations, and while the other two had not joined, "Sue" had participated in different denominations as she "shopped around" for a church, and "Chip" had attended a Lutheran church while she was in nurses' training and had been actively involved in interdenominational study and worship while she and her husband were in military service. This finding may not be important, but it does seem to say that the dedication which these women feel toward religious education is not just a loyalty to a particular denomination. They have found a way to be actively involved in religious education and worship regardless of their circumstances and the availability of a particular denomination.

Another commonality among the informants has to do with language or the way they expressed their feelings about their involvement in the church. Except for the words "faith, worship, and prayer" there was almost no use of words relating to God, Christ, Holy Spirit, the sacraments, or any particular doctrines of the church. It is true that the interviewer did not ask specific questions about beliefs, but it is somewhat curious that in an hour-long conversation between two people who actively participate in religious education, the conversation would be so lacking in traditional religious symbols. A study by Johnson (1979) revealed the same phenomenon. He reported, "The

vast majority of lay persons interviewed simply did not find the language of belief--including the basic symbols and doctrines of the Christian tradition--to be a comfortable or meaningful way to express their faith (p. 63). Johnson's researchers were very aware of what he calls "the dearth of 'God talk'" (p. 63), and on a second round of interviews asked intentional questions about basic Christian beliefs. He reports, "We quickly discovered that questions concerning beliefs were the most effective conversation stoppers available to us, although we often were posing them to persons previously identified as the most articulate spokespersons of their faith in any given congregation" (p. 63). The one exception to the "dearth of 'God talk'" in this study was "Chip." She talked easily of her relationship with God. The interviewer did not get any sense that the other five were any less "religious" than "Chip." They simply did not use religious terminology. Three possible explanations are offered: (1) The interviewer did not ask questions that elicited more specific language. (2) Since the informants knew that the beliefs of the interviewer were not decidedly different from their own, they simply did not feel the need to explain in any great detail the components of their faith. They thought she would understand what they were saying, and she believes that she did despite the lack of

specificity in language. The reverse of this explanation could also be true. Knowing the position of the interviewer should have made expressing beliefs more comfortable for the informant, and therefore elicit more "God talk." (3) The fact that all six women were from moderate, mainline denominations may reflect a moderate (for lack of a better word) choice of religious language. People from a fundamentalist position may have chosen more explicit religious language. This language finding reinforces the problem cited in Chapter I and Chapter IV concerning the difficulty of a common language for the purpose of doing research in religious education.

In Conclusion

The nature of this study was to explore. The nature of the researcher is to explore, and one of the motivations for this study may have been to validate her own experiences as a long-time active participant in religious education. The findings have not been disappointing and certainly encourage continuation of the study just concluded, and therefore just begun.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

1. <u>Background in Participation in Religious Education</u>
   How long have you participated in religious education? Did your parents participate in educational programs such as Sunday school? Was there a time in your life when you did not participate? Why? Do you prefer to study alone or in groups?

2. <u>Areas of Participation</u>
   What church-related activities have you participated in during the last 18 months? If adult education is defined as "all experiences of men and women that result in gaining new knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, values, and interests," which of the activities just listed would you describe as "educational"?

3. <u>Reasons for Participation</u>
   Why do you participate in religious education? Do you study expecting to reinforce what you already believe? Do you expect to learn something new about yourself or God or faith? Do you expect to learn how to live a life that is consistent with what you believe?

4. <u>Relationship of Religious Education to Life</u>
   Do you think that being involved in the educational program of the church has helped you cope with changes which have occurred in your life, such as marriage, birth of children, death of a loved one, career choices, moving, divorce?

5. <u>Participation in Other Educational Activities</u>
   Do you participate in other learning activities or educational programs outside of the church? What kind of activities? Do you read a lot? What kinds of things do you read? Do you watch educational television?