

STAYING ALIVE! REENGAGING BOOMERS IN SECOND ADULTHOOD MINISTRY:
GUIDANCE FOR 21ST-CENTURY CHURCH LEADERS

by

Hilery L. Ward, Jr.

Liberty University

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF WORSHIP STUDIES

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April 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff, instructors, and fellow students at Liberty University School of Music, who have better equipped me to shepherd Christ's Church, especially Dr. Mindy Damon, my advisor—an asset to my Liberty experience. I would also like to thank Dr. Tara Ross for her advice to get back on track in Chapter Two and my reader, Dr. Jerry Newman.

I am forever grateful to God for His faithfulness and grace manifested in countless ways and people, which played a significant role in my spiritual formation: Billy & Janice Cruce, Brad & Barbie Branson, Bill Davis, Nancy Hammett, Al Hall, Ron & Dee Keenan, SRO Chandler, Doc & Sara Martinez (Jenny), Coach & Glenda Wolaver, Ron & Jane Adema, David Whisenant, Barry Trippe, Tony Butler, Jay Mattox, Ed Glasscock, Gary Greene, Anita Scroggins, Don Hawkins, Henry Hazard, Drue Freeman, Leonard Chandler, Jim Peacock, Denver Bierman & DMHO, Chaplain Tom Elbert, Chris “Skosh” Batterton, Ken Brookins, Terry & Sid David, Tom & Sylvia Daniel, Andy & Shannon Zumwalt, Kyle Peddie, Pete Hyde, the Mathers, Meyer, Baxter, Spradlin, Broadhead, Butler, Ryan, Davenport, Price, Glenn, Farmer, Smith, Holt, Hoover, Van Curen, Simmons, Manning, Parr and Webster families, plus the spiritual family and pastors from all my churches. Special thanks to my beloved preschool buddies for their prayers.

And to my most favorite Boomers, which I have the privilege of calling mom (Vicki) and dad (Von), along with equally amazing parents-in-law (Mike & Sarah Schoen), the best sister to ever exist in the world, Pamela, who has a heart of gold, along with my large, extended family—thanks to you all for your faithful love, support, and encouragement. I cherish you all.

And to the greatest tangible favor from God, my beautiful bride, Amy Renee, thanks for your countless prayers, peaceful presence, and reassuring love. My life is better because you are in it! Now off we go on many more fun adventures together with the Lord—I love you lots.

ABSTRACT

Never before in American history have five generations lived together within the same time period. In 1900, the average life span in the United States was 48. Since 2015, the average life span in the U.S. has expanded to 79. The advances in technology, healthcare breakthroughs, and scientific discoveries in medicine have increased longevity, creating two new, life stages: emerging adulthood and second adulthood. Emerging adulthood is the life stage that encompasses the expanded development of young adults from late teens through mid to late twenties. Second adulthood, primarily a Baby Boomer experience, begins around age 65 and continues to “old age” (i.e., end-of-life care). Today, many churches are focused on reaching the next generation. In doing so, Boomers are often unintentionally marginalized in the periphery of church ministry in preference of reaching younger families with children. Furthermore, retiring Boomers in second adulthood face an identity crisis, seeking relevant roles in the local church. If left unnoticed and disengaged in the worship life of the church, there is a great possibility that Boomers will also retire spiritually or seek significant ways to serve outside the church. This qualitative historical study examined the existing literature to bring awareness to twenty-first-century church leaders in an effort to encourage and enable them to seize the opportunity to reengage Boomers in second adulthood. Research supports churches that are able to effectively reengage Boomers in an intergenerational, encore ministry may be the churches that see the most significant impact and sustainability for the future.

Keywords: Boomer, Millennial, second adulthood, generation, ageism, senior ministry, intergenerational ministry, multigenerational, worship ministry, generational intelligence

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Intergenerational Ministry – IM

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD

Youth for Christ – YFC

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The last song ended as the heavy, scarlet curtains closed, muffling the sound of the band. The audience responded with standing ovation in such monstrous applause it pierced through the thick and ruffled, red velvet barrier. The ensemble of well-seasoned musicians knew their beloved fans wanted the band to play just one more song. Cheers grew louder as the curtains slowly opened. The front man acknowledged the crowd's approval, mouthing the words, "Thank you," as he pointed to his band mates. As the cheers began to dissipate, the drummer kicked off the final number and the rhythm section started a familiar and energetic groove, accented by everyone's rhythmic clapping. It was the encore, an apex to another amazing performance.

An encore experience exceeds expectations and concludes a performance with an even stronger finish. There exists a generation of people alive today that need to be rallied for an encore as they enter the final quarter of their lives—the Baby Boomers. This generation includes people born between 1946-1964, so labeled by their booming birth rates, which averaged four million a year following the end of World War II until 1965 when births significantly declined. Their sheer numbers have made Boomers dynamic, change agents in American and Christian culture. It is estimated that "by 2030, one in five Americans will be sixty-five or older," as the last of the remaining seventy-six million Boomers crescendo into their senior years.¹ Based on the averages, they will live thirty or more years longer and they hold great potential for ministry impact in and through the local church.² Also, they have many

¹ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, *Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), 1.

² Haydn Shaw, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2015), Kindle edition, 219.

growing challenges to navigate, such as caring for aging parents and adult children along with financial stress and adapting to the many fast-paced changes of the new millennium.³ Therefore, when twenty-first-century church leaders understand the unique challenges of Baby Boomers, they may better be able to minister to them. Additionally, witnessing the vitality of reengaging Boomers in the worship life of the church, especially as they transition through retirement and into second adulthood,⁴ informs their decision-making regarding existing church programs and whether they need to be sustained or revitalized.⁵ Great potential exists for churches to engage Boomers who are looking for more meaningful options to retirement.⁶

Background of Topic

No matter the size of the local church, motivating members of the body of Christ to unite in worship and service for the Kingdom of God can be quite challenging. It is disheartening to see how much division exists in the Church today. Examine any protestant denomination in the United States of America to quickly discover many sub-denominations abound or churches that intentionally move away from a denominational affiliation for a number of reasons.⁷ The division does not stop there, and if further examined, most individual churches also have their own host of issues that hinder unifying the body as Christ intended. The heart of the issue stems from spiritual immaturity that results in age-segregated programs and separate styles of worship

³ Phyllis Moen, *Encore Adulthood: Boomers on the Edge of Risk, Renewal, and Purpose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Kindle edition, 109-110.

⁴ Gordon MacDonald, *Who Stole My Church: What to Do When the Church You Love Tries to Enter the 21st Century* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), Kindle edition, 84-88.

⁵ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 226-227.

⁶ Bob Buford, *Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance, updated and expanded ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), Kindle edition, n.p.

⁷ Bill Sizemore, *The Fractured Church: Denominations and the Will of God* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2012), Kindle edition, n.p.

based on personal preferences rather than Divine mandates.⁸ The Church has become fractured into many small sub-congregations to the point that small churches (defined as less than one-hundred members) make up 46% of all the churches in America. Coupled with medium-sized churches (defined as having more than one-hundred but less than five-hundred members), 83% of all the churches in America have less than five-hundred members.⁹ This certainly conflicts with Christ's high priestly prayer, "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21, NIV).

It is vital that congregations seek ways to unify as a spiritually family and continue to raise up the next generation of Christ followers. This on-going transformation process is inevitable both for the spiritual health of individual believers and their respective local churches. Change is constant in the twenty-first century. Church leaders must be equipped to navigate the changes, communicate the best practices based on Biblical principles, and monitor the pace of transitioning methods in order to circumvent church splits. While in the process of evaluating where the church is and where it needs to be, church leaders should address several factors related to worship. Numerous church growth strategies have been centered on reaching young families. If not approached carefully, these strategies can easily become impersonal formulas applied to sustaining programs that grow churches numerically, but not necessarily spiritually.¹⁰ The consumer mindset of many churchgoers must be changed to emphasize the higher priority

⁸ Donald Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1993), 307.

⁹ Data compiled from the online research sample of "The State of the Church Report," Ventura, CA: *Barna Group*, September 2016, accessed April 26, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016>.

¹⁰ Hustad, 306.

needs of Christ and His church.¹¹ This change begins with church leaders and ripples outward in the process of disciple-making that is to be modeled by mature saints in the church, which should be led by its seniors. Pastors must prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance in bringing everyone in the family of God together (intergenerationally) by intentionally communicating the truth of God's Word through the power of His Spirit and with courage, grace, great patience, and love.

In the past, age-segregated programs seemed to work for a time, but the cultural climate has forced the Church to reinvent ways to engage the world around it. The strategies that brought the Church to this point will not sustain it moving forward. The focus of this study will address reaching the newest seniors in the church (i.e., the Baby Boomers) along with the changes twenty-first-century church leaders must implement in ministry to be effective at engaging them in the worship life of the church, so that they do not retire spiritually.

Boomers are facing the challenges of caring for aging parents, raising adult children (some serving as surrogate parents for their grandchildren), and retiring from a career only to return to work.¹² In many ways, churches must learn to grow backwards by targeting Baby Boomers now entering retirement, while keeping an overall intergenerational approach postured to minister to its current members and whomever God brings into the community of believers—regardless of age. Boomers have had an enormous impact in both American and Christian culture.¹³ They have been a driving force of the American economy,¹⁴ revolutionized the entire

¹¹ Frank S. Page and L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014), Kindle edition, n.p.

¹² Terry Hargrave, *Boomers on the Edge: Three Realities that Will Change Your Life Forever* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 11.

¹³ Shaw, 45-46.

¹⁴ J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, *Generation Ageless: How Baby Boomers Are Changing the Way We Live Today...And They're Just Getting Started* (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2009), Kindle edition, n.p.

music scene,¹⁵ pioneered the civil rights movement,¹⁶ and championed political reform.¹⁷

Boomer influence in both sacred and secular culture are identified and analyzed in an effort to show the potential they hold to greatly impact the twenty-first-century church if they are engaged in encore ministry.¹⁸ The late Bob Buford, founder of *Leadership Network*, underscores this untapped potential in his book, *Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance*. He writes, “Nonprofit agencies — of which more than fifty percent are churches and faith-based organizations — have the greatest potential for doing the greatest good.”¹⁹ The catalyst for change lies in transforming notions of aging and retirement. Amy Hanson, an expert on the study of aging (i.e., gerontology) redefines the concept of retiring. She writes, “Retirement is not purely about leisure, and if we fail to recognize this, we will lose an army of people whom God can use to make a tremendous difference.”²⁰ This echoes the Psalmist’s words: “But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. For they are transplanted to the Lord’s own house. They flourish in the courts of our God. Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green” (Psalm 92:12-14, NLT). The *English Standard Version* translates the word, “vital,” in verse fourteen as “full of sap.” This imagery demonstrates the great potential that godly adults can have to flourish spiritually—no matter their age. Seasoned pastor and Chancellor of Denver Seminary, Gordon MacDonald,

¹⁵ Rachel Pruchno, “Not Your Mother’s Old Age: Baby Boomers at Age 65,” *The Gerontologist*. 52, no. 2 (April 1, 2012): 149, accessed January 31, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gns038>.

¹⁶ McIntosh, 79.

¹⁷ Barbara Raynor, "Ageism in Action? Ageism Inaction!" *Generations* 39, no. 3 (Fall, 2015): 60, accessed June 3, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1750054775>.

¹⁸ Cal J. Halvorsen and Jim Emerman, "The Encore Movement: Baby Boomers and Older Adults can be a Powerful Force to Build Community," *Generations* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 38, accessed June 3, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1503769096>.

¹⁹ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁰ Amy Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), Kindle edition, n.p.

expresses concern for his fellow Boomers: “What saddens me is the number of people I see in their later fifties and sixties who suddenly surrender to an organizational heaviness of some sort. They quit wanting to grow, to make this or that happen. They let their marriages drift, their friendships go shallow, their skills get stale and dull. Somehow all they want to do is duck their heads and run away from the challenges.”²¹ Franklin-Covey[®] leadership consultant and Boomer, Haydn Shaw, challenges the church to rally seniors in this opportune time. In his recent book on generational intelligence and its need within churches, Shaw writes, “We have been telling young people for twenty years that their generation could be the difference makers, that their lives could be big and they are dreaming too small. It is time to tell their grandparents the same thing.”²² This is a wonderful challenge for church leaders to ensure they do not write off this new generation of senior adults. Therefore, it is imperative to provide guidance for twenty-first-century church leaders to educate and equip them in reengaging Boomers in an intergenerational, encore ministry and encouraging them to embrace this Divine opportunity for eternal impact.

Problem Statement

Although Baby Boomers generally have time, resources, and desire to be used in ministry, they may perceive that they are not needed in church and therefore, they are not engaged.²³ Church leaders are faced with a dilemma: as Boomers perceive to be overlooked and forced to accept status quo ministry solely aimed at the next generation, it is only a matter of time before they retire spiritually.²⁴ Church leaders who understand Boomer challenges in second adulthood, from financial hardships in caring for aging parents to raising adult children

²¹ MacDonald, 202.

²² Shaw, 41.

²³ Michelle Van Loon, "The Midlife Church Crisis," *Christianity Today*, September 2014, 31, accessed June 3, 2018, *AcademicOneFile*, <http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A382319301>.

²⁴ John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 33.

and grandchildren, enable themselves to more effectively minister to Boomers.²⁵ The consumer-driven approach of age-segregated worship, which has spanned nearly three decades, has caused many of its aging members to gravitate toward self-centeredness, self-preservation, and fails to engage them in the Biblical mandate of reaching the next generation.²⁶ If the church does not respond to these issues, the next generation will be left with little to no spiritual legacy.²⁷

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative historical study is to examine ways Boomers can move from marginalization to inclusion in the worship life of the church. Information will be gathered from various experts in the fields of sociology, gerontology (i.e., the study of aging), church growth, and ministry, along with the Biblical examples and mandates in order to equip twenty-first-century church leaders to reengage Boomers into an intergenerational, encore ministry for eternal impact and significance.

Significance of the Study

In an attempt to reach the next generation, churches have marginalized the important role seniors play in the process. There exists a pervasive, negative attitude toward aging members of society.²⁸ This attitude has crept into the church where focus has been primarily on reaching the next generation of families with young children, resulting in a decline in Boomer attendance.²⁹

²⁵ Hargrave, 27-28.

²⁶ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁷ Robert Bakss, *Worship Wars: What the Bible Says about Worship Music* (Port Orchard, WA: Ark House Press, 2015), Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁸ Raynor, 59.

²⁹ Van Loon, 31.

Boomers provide a wealth of potential for the church.³⁰ For more than fifty years, Boomers have been catalysts for dynamic change in both secular and sacred culture.³¹ They desire to make a significant impact in the latter half of their lives.³² Churches need to find ways to reengage retiring Boomers in encore ministry to stay connected in the worship life of the church—from being pew warmers to becoming star performers for Jesus Christ.³³ Boomers are just as important to the future of the church as the Millennials.³⁴ There must be an intentional commitment among church leaders to harness their potential and use it for God’s glory. The Psalmist writes, “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come” (Psalm 71:18, NIV). This responsibility has always existed throughout human history dating back to the Genesis account.

Boomer attitudes and actions must be transformed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Twenty-first-century church leaders who are educated and equipped to reengage Boomers in second adulthood will enable them to leave a lasting impact for Christ in the final quarter of their lives. The challenge remains as it does in every generation—to serve God faithfully and sustain a spiritual legacy for generations to come.

Research Questions

There are many obstacles to navigate when trying to integrate one or more generations in the worship life of the church. A balanced approach that welcomes all members of God’s family

³⁰ Terry A. Wolfer, Dennis R. Myers, Edward C. Polson, and Betsy Bevis, “Baby Boomers as Congregational Volunteers in Community Ministry,” *Religions* 8, no. 4 (2017), 66: 159, accessed June 3, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.3390/rel8040066>.

³¹ Raynor, 60.

³² Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

³³ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

³⁴ Shaw, 41.

around the worship table is the goal.³⁵ Gordon MacDonald expresses this idea so clearly when he writes, “A church is not meant to be a club organized for the convenience of insiders but a cooperative where people combine together to grow spiritually, to worship the triune God, and to prepare themselves for Christian living and service in the larger world.”³⁶ The primary purpose of this inquiry is to address the need for Boomers in second adulthood to engage in an encore ministry.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

RQ1: In what ways do Baby Boomers perceive themselves as marginalized in the local church?

RQ2: In what ways can church leaders reengage Baby Boomers in the local church for an encore ministry?

In an effort to answer the primary research questions, this study will examine ways the church can reengage Boomers in second adulthood ministry and seek to change Boomer perceptions concerning their role in the worship life of the church, presently and in the future.

Hypotheses

The following are the working hypotheses:

H1: Baby Boomers perceive themselves to be marginalized in the church due to age-segregated stereotypes in terms of ministry role exclusion, insensitivity to needs, and technology aversion.

³⁵ Ross Parsley, *Messy Church: A Multigenerational Mission for God's Family* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishing, 2012), Kindle edition, n.p.

³⁶ MacDonald, viii.

H2: Church leaders may reengage Baby Boomers for an encore ministry through worship collaboration, ministry role validation, and relevant inclusion in the local church.

Definition of Terms

Ageism: age discrimination, including negative perceptions and attitudes toward older people, aging, and old age in general.³⁷

Baby Boomers (Boomers): officially designated by the U. S. Census Bureau, this term applies to individuals born in the United States between 1946 and 1964, so named for the substantial rise in birth rates post-World War II and subsequent decline in birth rates after 1964; ages fifty-six to seventy-four in 2020.³⁸

Emerging Adulthood: the life stage that encompasses the expanded development of young adults from late teens through mid to late twenties.³⁹

Encore (or Second) Adulthood: the life stage that begins after retirement and continues to the point of end-of-life care.^{40 41}

Encore Ministry: a ministry primarily facilitated by Boomers in encore (or second) adulthood that engages them into the worship life of the church.⁴²

³⁷ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 14.

³⁸ Colby and Ortman, 2.

³⁹ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Presidential Address: The Emergence of Emerging Adulthood: A Personal History," *Emerging Adulthood* 2, no. 3 (September 2014): 156-157, accessed January 31, 2020, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177%2F2167696814541096>.

⁴⁰ Shaw, 38.

⁴¹ Moen, 5.

⁴² This conceptual term was created by H. L. Ward, Jr. to distinguish Boomers in second adulthood that are engaged in ministry.

Generational Cohort: a sociological concept referring to a group of people who grew up and came of age together with shared experiences during their formative years, which had a common and lasting effect on their values and lifestyle decisions.⁴³

Generational Intelligence: an understanding of the ideas, assumptions, and influences that shape each generation's perceptions, including positive and negative aspects.⁴⁴

Generational IQ: generational intelligence quotient; coined by Haydn Shaw as a relative measurement of generational intelligence (i.e., low or high).⁴⁵

Generational Theory: cultivated by Strauss & Howe's seminal work in *Generations*, this term describes an understanding of the recurring cycle of age cohorts (i.e., generations) with specific patterns of behavior that are regarded as intertwined with the history of the United States of America.⁴⁶

Gen X (Busters⁴⁷): This term refers to individuals born between 1965 and 1980, as the advent of the birth control pill marked a rapid decline in birth rates in the U.S. during this period; ages forty to fifty-five in 2020.⁴⁸

Gen Z: This newest generational designation refers to anyone born from 1997 to present-day.⁴⁹

Gerontology: the academic study of aging.⁵⁰

⁴³ Smith and Clurman, *Generation Ageless*, Kindle edition, n.p.

⁴⁴ Shaw, 19.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991), 433-453.

⁴⁷ McIntosh, 17.

⁴⁸ Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," *Pew Research Center*, January 17, 2019, accessed January 18, 2020, <https://pewrsr.ch/2szqtJz>.

⁴⁹ Ibid., n.p.

⁵⁰ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 27.

Greatest Generation (WWII / GI Generation): a term created by national news anchor and author, Tom Brokaw, referring to the older half of traditionalists born in the U.S. from 1901 to 1927, the majority of which served in the WWII effort; age ninety-three or older in 2020.^{51 52}

Intergenerational Ministry: implies ministry that brings the generations together in mutual serving, sharing, or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community.⁵³

Jesus Movement (or Revolution): a remarkable upsurge in a traditional, evangelical Christianity among young people (e.g., Jesus People) in the U.S. from the late 1960s into the early 1970s.^{54 55}

Millennials (Bridgers⁵⁶): Defined as anyone born between 1981 and 1996; ages twenty-four to thirty-nine in 2020.⁵⁷

Silent Generation: The younger half of traditionalists born in the U.S. from 1928 to 1945; ages seventy-five to ninety-two in 2020.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998, 2005), xii, 11-12.

⁵² Tim Elmore, *Generation iY: Secrets to Connecting with Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age, Updated and Expanded 5th Anniversary Edition* (Atlanta: Poet Gardener Publishing, 2015), Kindle edition, n.p.

⁵³ Holly C. Allen and Christine L. Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 17.

⁵⁴ Greg Laurie and Ellen Vaughn, *Jesus Revolution: How God Transformed an Unlikely Generation and How He Can Do It Again Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 23.

⁵⁵ Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Kindle edition, 1.

⁵⁶ McIntosh, 17.

⁵⁷ Dimock, "Defining Generations," n.p.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Traditionalists (Builders⁵⁹): This term refers to individuals born in the U.S. prior to the end of 1945; age seventy-five or older in 2020.⁶⁰

Chapter Summary

Today, many churches are focused on reaching the next generation. In doing so, Boomers are often unintentionally marginalized in the periphery of church ministry in preference of reaching younger families with children. Furthermore, retiring Boomers in second adulthood face an identity crisis, seeking relevant roles in the life of the church. If left unnoticed and disengaged in the worship life of the church, the possibility exists that Boomers will also retire spiritually or seek significant ways to serve outside the church. This qualitative historical study will examine the existing literature to bring awareness to twenty-first-century church leaders in an effort to encourage them to seize the opportunity to reengage retiring Boomers into the worship life of the church. Great potential exists for churches to engage Boomers spiritually as they are looking for more meaningful options to retirement.⁶¹

⁵⁹ McIntosh, 16.

⁶⁰ Shaw, 25.

⁶¹ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature pertaining to the Baby Boomer generation, including factors which shaped their existence and impact upon American and Christian culture and also the challenges they face as they enter second adulthood (i.e., the financial and emotional stress of caring for aging parents, raising adult children, or in some cases becoming surrogate parents for their grandchildren, and retiring from a career only to return to work). Boomers are redefining the concept of retirement as they seek significant ways to make a meaningful contribution to the world.⁶² They hold great potential for making an encore comeback in the final quarter of their lives.⁶³ Understanding the way Boomers perceive themselves in the twenty-first-century world and church will better equip church leaders to minister to their needs, dispel any misconceptions they may have about their role in the body of Christ, and encourage them to reengage in the worship life of the local church.

The information presented contributes to the field of worship studies as it informs application to an intergenerational worship approach within the context of a local church—namely, how to reengage the Boomers in the family of God. Ministry methods must be adapted beyond existing church programs to ensure relevance to Boomers is maintained.⁶⁴ The discussion on senior adult ministry and Baby Boomers started back in 2008, when their generational cohort began approaching retirement into a new phase of life called second adulthood. Several books, journal articles, and concept papers about their significance and

⁶² Halvorsen and Emerman, 34.

⁶³ Moen, 9.

⁶⁴ Craig Kennet Miller, *Boomer Spirituality: Seven Values for the Second Half of Life* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2016), Kindle edition, n.p.

impact in the church were written and forecasted the challenges of engaging them in the worship life of the church. However, the means by which these concepts could be implemented were quickly overshadowed by a focus on the emerging Millennial generation and efforts to reach them. The unintended consequence was a marginalization of Boomers' role within the church. Program-oriented applications for church growth changed to meet the spiritual needs of the emerging adults (i.e., Millennials), but at the same time failed to adapt senior adult programs and ministries to equally nurture and spiritually develop Boomers entering their retirement years.⁶⁵ *Religions* journal posits, "the large boomer generation represents a potentially significant volunteer resource for congregations. But current research on boomers and congregational life provides little information about this age cohort for engaging them in community ministry."⁶⁶

The purpose of this qualitative historical study is to examine literature from various experts in the fields of sociology, gerontology, church growth, and worship ministry in an attempt to educate and equip twenty-first-century church leaders to minister more effectively to Boomers and inspire them to reengage in an intergenerational, encore ministry for eternal impact in God's Kingdom. Several recent works were included, with several new resources being published as this writing process was finalized. In addition to the academic criteria set forth in the Doctor of Worship Studies' program, the author intentionally included research that focused on the more optimistic aspects of Boomers and aging. It is important to note there also exists some disparaging literature on Boomers; however, for the purposes of this study, literature of a positive outlook was selected as it best served to answer the underlying research questions and hypotheses.

⁶⁵ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 99.

⁶⁶ Wolfer et al, 159.

The literature review is comprised of three sections. The first section reviews literature addressing several factors that influenced Boomers' experience and the resulting impact their generation has already made on society and the church in America. The second section incorporates literature highlighting Boomer challenges in second adulthood and the potential they hold for continuing to make a difference in the twenty-first-century world and church. These obstacles include how they perceive to be marginalized in the local church through age-segregated church programs, an insensitivity to their unique needs in second adulthood, and their aversion to technology. By synthesizing literature that demonstrates how to overcome these challenges, the potential Boomers hold for an encore performance in second adulthood is released in the worship life of their respective churches through worship collaboration, ministry role validation, and relevant inclusion through an encore ministry. In the third and last section, Scripture is given the final word as it offers spiritual guidance and ties all sections together with the responsibility of every generation to serve God faithfully and sustain a spiritual legacy for generations to come.

Factors that Shaped Boomer Experience and Boomer Impact in Society

For more than fifty years, Boomers have been catalysts for dynamic change in both American and Christian culture.⁶⁷ They have been a driving force of the American economy,⁶⁸ revolutionized the entire music scene,⁶⁹ pioneered the civil rights movement,⁷⁰ and championed political reform.⁷¹ To completely grasp the potential that Boomers possess as change agents

⁶⁷ Raynor, 60.

⁶⁸ Smith and Clurman, Kindle edition, n.p.

⁶⁹ Pruchno, 149.

⁷⁰ McIntosh, 79.

⁷¹ Raynor, 60.

within twenty-first-century culture, it is necessary to briefly describe the historical scene in which they came of age and the resulting impact their generation has already made upon the American society and church. The Boomer generation refers to Americans born between 1946-1964, so labeled by their booming birth rates (i.e., baby boom), which averaged four million a year following the end of World War II until 1965 when the number of births significantly declined with the advent of the birth-control pill.⁷² Born into a world of promise filled with great aspirations, opportunities, and dreams, these new Americans would eventually face one of the most turbulent times in the history of the United States and make a significant impact that still resonates today.⁷³

At the outset of their appearance in human history, Boomers had an enormous effect on the U.S. economy as Rosenberg notes, “Baby food sales jumped from 2.7 million cases in 1941 to fifteen million cases in 1947.”⁷⁴ Marilyn Rock further supports that “Boomers are the largest generation in history and currently 10,000 of them are turning sixty-five every day” a projection that will continue until 2030!⁷⁵ Based on the most recent population estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2016, Boomers remain the nation’s largest living generation (seventy-four million); however, it was then projected that Millennials (seventy-one million) would soon surpass them in latter 2019.⁷⁶ This is in large part due to the influx of Millennial immigrants into the U.S. The *2020 Census* is currently being taken, which will mostly likely confirm these projections

⁷² Colby and Ortman, 2.

⁷³ Strauss and Howe, 302.

⁷⁴ Yuval Rosenberg, “Talking ‘bout Our Generation,” *Fortune* 153 (12): June 21, 2006, 106, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=21168781>.

⁷⁵ Marilyn Osborne Rock, “Images of Aging-Baby Boomer Style” (PhD diss., Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2012), iii, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1366395056>.

⁷⁶ Richard Fry, “Millennials Projected to Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation.” *Pew Research Center*, March 1, 2018, accessed September 27, 2019, <http://pewrsr.ch/2FgVPwv>.

once completed. Shaw notes this “baby boom” as one of four factors that shaped Boomers: “Boomers are used to being heard. The sheer size of their generation made them the center of attention. So, they reshaped markets as well as business and political priorities at every stage of their lives.”⁷⁷

Smith and Clurman agree with Shaw concerning affluence as another defining factor on the Boomer experience. In a detailed book concerning how baby boomers have changed the ways Americans age, authors Smith and Clurman record a statement by historian James Patterson that “economic growth was indeed the most decisive force in shaping the attitudes and expectations in the postwar era.”⁷⁸ Boomers were born into a time of great prosperity following World War II, which afforded them promise to pursue their dreams and an opportunity to receive a college education. As an article for *Religions* journal notes: “The boomer generation is one of the most highly educated generations in American history.”⁷⁹ Boomer parents desired to provide a better life for their children and the prosperity of the nation afforded them the means for doing it.

Another factor which influenced the cultural landscape that young Boomers experienced was the mass production of the television in 1949, with one million sold in the United States.⁸⁰ Psychologist Dr. Ross Goldstein reveals the impact television had on Boomers, “It created a homogeneity in this generation that was unprecedented before.”⁸¹ As Gillon suggests, “The irony of growing up in the 1950s was that consumption and television, two ingredients in a recipe for

⁷⁷ Shaw, 45-46.

⁷⁸ Smith and Clurman, *Generation Ageless*, Kindle edition, n.p.

⁷⁹ Wolfer et al, 160.

⁸⁰ Strauss and Howe, 300.

⁸¹ McIntosh, 76.

conformity and contentment, instead produced an explosive mix of power and skepticism that would find full expression in the 1960s.”⁸² Concerning the beginning of the television age, Jessica Stollings notes that Boomers “were able to see national and world events unfold daily on the evening news. Their collective experience—from the Cold War to the tumultuous Civil Rights struggle was...that they were part of momentous historical events.”⁸³ Boomer political discourse was shaped more by image than by substance, as the realities of the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were aired on the relatively new medium of television. In his exhaustive anthology on Boomers, veteran news anchor, Tom Brokaw provides a large compilation of his interviews and personal reflections on the 1960s from those who experienced it. From the voices of celebrities and ordinary citizens, he explores topics of race, war, politics, feminism, and music, demonstrating this tumultuous time as a defining era in American history. During his interview with Representative John Lewis, who was a close associate of the late Bobby Kennedy, Lewis describes the spirit of America being completely broken in 1968 with the deaths of both Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy. He states, “Something died in America in 1968, and we haven’t been able to bring it back. Many of us still believe that good and right will still prevail, but we don’t have the same spirit.”⁸⁴ Through the lens of television, Boomers were continually exposed to the atrocities of war, infidelity of elected officials, racial injustice, and threat of nuclear annihilation, which gave way to a cultural upheaval that led countless Boomer

⁸² Steve Gillon, *Boomer Nation: The Largest and Richest Generation Ever, and How It Changed America* (New York: Free Press: 2004, 2010), Kindle edition, 24.

⁸³ Jessica Stollings, *ReGenerate: A Guide to Connect Generations* (Nashville: Jessica Ink, 2019), Kindle edition, 25.

⁸⁴ Tom Brokaw, *Boom! Voices of the Sixties: Personal Reflections on the ‘60s and Today* (New York: Random House: 2007), 54.

youth to rebel against the Establishment and express their disdain through music, drugs, and sex. This hippie revolution explored the limits of mind, body, and spirit in its attempts to placate the emptiness of life.⁸⁵ Surprisingly, it provided a ripe environment for the Gospel to take root in the Jesus Movement and music was the vehicle for it to be introduced to the masses.⁸⁶

As the generation gap became more prominent between Boomer youth and their WWII Generation parents, their value system shifted from sacrifice to self. “Boomers were the first generation to be raised in an era that emphasized that people are special,” and as a result of economic prosperity in America, they “were the first generation to have the money, time, and freedom to explore self and search for meaning.”⁸⁷ While some may feel this was a negative trait, Gillon responds by saying:

When future historians look back at the contribution made by the Boomer generation, they will no doubt place the expansion of individual freedom at the top of the list of achievements. Boomers not only cheered on the civil rights movement, they spearheaded the feminist cause in the 1970s, and fought for a host of new rights and responsibilities—not just gay rights, handicapped rights, the right to privacy, but the responsibility of everyone to participate in the economy, or more generally just to become engaged in the culture—that changed the tone and character of modern life. Their emphasis on individual rights and the underlying challenge to authority led to a dramatic democratization of American culture.⁸⁸

One area where this individualism expressed itself was music. An influential leader in the Jesus Movement, Don Williams, was struck by “the role music was playing among alienated youth,” and he discovered “music was the one place in the mass media where kids editorialize to kids.”⁸⁹ The secular music written during this time was both prolific and prophetic from folk artists like

⁸⁵ Laurie and Vaughn, 3.

⁸⁶ Eskridge, 60.

⁸⁷ Shaw, 48.

⁸⁸ Gillon, 12.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

Bob Dylan to the soulful sensations of various Motown artists. Barry Gordy, founder of the influential, Detroit-based record company shares the Motown philosophy: “There are no stupid ideas, nobody could be embarrassed. Everybody spoke up. We did not let the politics get in the way. It was about the best idea.”⁹⁰ Brokaw notes: “Gordy also says he had no interest in the Sixties’ most common denominators of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. That wasn’t what he was selling. “Not at all,” he says decisively. “Motown was not about that. Our bigger purpose was to make the world a better place.”⁹¹ Music, including many of the hits from Motown, became the primary vehicle of expression for Boomers and further supported their counter-cultural movement.

In his account of the spiritual awakening of boomer youth and their resultant impact on secular and Christian culture, author Larry Eskridge provides a comprehensive discourse on the Jesus People movement in America and demonstrates its influence among the broader, evangelical subculture. This historic, spiritual awakening among Boomer youth brought authentic worship back to the church, bridging secular-sacred divides and forever changing the spiritual landscape of many churches in America.

Far from being an ephemeral blip or a religious fad, the Jesus People movement was a major episode in American religious history...the Jesus People movement was from its beginnings a unique combination of the counterculture and American evangelical religion that eventually had a national impact during a life span that lasted almost a decade. For many Baby Boomers who were involved in the movement, their experiences as part of God’s Forever Family continued decades later to be the benchmark by which they measured their own spirituality and the health of the American church.⁹²

⁹⁰ Brokaw, *Boom! Voices of the Sixties*, 273.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁹² Eskridge, 5.

Initially, there were challenges to overcome as the hippies found Jesus and started attending churches. For example, when the long-haired, barefoot Christians showed up *en masse* and in casual clothing, many strait-laced churchgoers found it difficult to embrace these new Christians. Such was the case for Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, where Pastor Chuck Smith, a prominent pastor, had to gently shepherd his flock to embrace this newest generation of believers. The simple, clear message given in the power of the Holy Spirit changed hearts, and He was just getting started. Several key music groups birthed a fresh, new form of spiritual songs that became a “passionate vehicle for communicating their own experience of God’s love and reality.”⁹³ One Boomer youth that was impacted by the ministry of Chuck Smith at Calvary Chapel was hippie turned evangelist, Greg Laurie. He reflects on his personal experience in the Jesus Revolution and how God transformed unlikely generation of young Boomers writing, “It surely was not perfect, but the people loved and accepted each other.”⁹⁴ Calvary Chapel went from rituals and playing religion to becoming more like Christ and growing in a relationship with God. There were pockets of churches that followed Smith’s example in embracing the Christian hippies, but it took the influential role of Billy Graham to substantiate the significance of the Jesus Revolution in the mainstream of conservative Christians. Graham outlined several characteristics between the Jesus Movement and the early church experience in the book of Acts, noting it was centered on Jesus, Bible-based, and focused on an experience with Jesus Christ, not simply head knowledge.⁹⁵ It also placed a renewed emphasis on the Holy Spirit and Christian discipleship, which transformed the lives of the young people in it.⁹⁶ It crossed racial and

⁹³ Laurie and Vaughn, 131.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁹⁵ Billy Graham, *The Jesus Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 16-18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

cultural divides with an evangelical fervor and a focus on the second coming of Christ.⁹⁷ Laurie and Vaughn further note: “If the Jesus Movement started as a spontaneous movement among hippies, Billy Graham helped to shape its second wave as traditionally conservative Christians got on board. The clearest manifestation of that was Explo ’72, a gathering of about eighty thousand young people in Dallas in August of that year.”⁹⁸ Organized by Bill Bright of *Campus Crusade for Christ*, this “religious Woodstock” was the largest camp meeting to take place in the United States up to that time, as recorded by the *New York Times*.⁹⁹ The event concluded with a memorable moment as the stadium was covered in darkness. Billy Graham and Bill Bright began lighting candles one by one, then on to others who lit their neighbors’ candles until the entire stadium was aglow with thousands of candles. It remains a vivid memory in the minds of all who experienced it.¹⁰⁰ The spiritual momentum that followed Explo ’72 led Greg Laurie and many of his Christian hippie brothers and sisters to birth wonderful ministries for the Kingdom of God. Laurie believes the most prevalent influence of the Jesus Movement is that it “changed the face of worship in many churches for decades to come.”¹⁰¹ Towns and Whaley affirm, “Much of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) has its roots in Calvary Chapel worship music.”¹⁰²

Concerning the impact of Boomers, Rachel Pruchno summarizes:

Baby Boomers redefined each stage of life as they experienced it, modifying fashion design and hair length as well as key societal institutions. They questioned

⁹⁷ Ibid., 19-21.

⁹⁸ Laurie and Vaughn, 167.

⁹⁹ Edward B. Fiske, “A ‘Religious Woodstock’ Draws 75,000,” *New York Times*, 16 June 1971, 1,19, accessed March 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/06/16/archives/a-religious-woodstock-draws-75000-a-religious-woodstock-explo-72.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Cru, “What Really Happened at Explo ’72,” *Cru, What We Do*, Article online, last modified October 15, 2015, accessed January 5, 2020, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/what-we-do/what-really-happened-at-explo-72.html>.

¹⁰¹ Laurie and Vaughn, 16.

¹⁰² Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), Kindle edition, n.p.

the underlying values and attitudes of society. They influenced education, music, race relations, sex roles, and child rearing. They are about to change what we know about old age.¹⁰³

Boomers have been change agents in American society and church, and although they face challenges in the retirement years, they still possess great potential to make an encore performance in the final quarter of their lives.¹⁰⁴

The Boomers are such a huge generation that they've transformed every institution, and they're already transforming retirement. Financial services companies are spending millions of dollars on ads that portray them as beginning their next adventure rather than settling into traditional retirement, because these companies know that nothing turns Boomers off faster than making them feel old or irrelevant.¹⁰⁵

Boomers “remain a potentially substantial community ministry volunteer resource for congregations.”¹⁰⁶ There are several challenges they face in second adulthood and churches that understand these challenges will be better equipped to minister to them and help them embrace their new role in worship life of the church.

Boomer Challenges and Potential in Second Adulthood

In the previous section, several defining factors noted from the Boomers' experience shaped their perceptions of the world. When discussing literature that highlights challenges faced in second adulthood, it is important to first understand the idea of the generation gaps that exists among all generations—what makes them unique and how they perceive the world and others in it. Gary McIntosh offers a succinct description of this generation gap in his book on bridging generations in the church:

¹⁰³ Pruchno, 149.

¹⁰⁴ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁰⁵ Shaw, 48.

¹⁰⁶ Wolfer et al, 160.

The struggle that has taken place in the last fifty years between generations is due in part to the intersection of two major trends: longer lives and rapid change. The pace of change has created a “generation gap” and “technology gap” in knowledge and experience. Longer lives have meant more generations are interacting together; they each push their own views and agendas. In such an environment, it is not surprising that there are conflicts and misunderstandings between generations.¹⁰⁷

In his influential book on the Jesus Movement written in the early 1970s, Billy Graham explained this phenomenon with eloquent clarity:

There has always been a gap between the generations—and there always will be. I rather expect it was meant to be. It is normal and wholesome and good when the young are taught to respect age, and when the older generation, assuming the responsibilities that come with age and experience and wisdom, understand the young and guide and support them without stifling. When this gap is distorted, blown up out of proportion, and even misused, it becomes an unhealthy and abnormal situation.¹⁰⁸

Graham provided helpful spiritual insights and observations on the Jesus Movement to help bridge the generational gap and assist his conservative Christian readership in understanding this modern movement of God among the emerging generation of Boomer youth in the seventies.

A recent commercial for the Apple[®] iPad Pro[®] illustrates this concept by its portrayal of a technologically savvy and active teenager named Scout—a digital native of Generation Z. The advertisement gives viewers a glimpse of a day in her creative and connected life, equipped by the many unique features of the iPad Pro[®]. A typical, fall Saturday after breakfast, Scout puts on her shoes, stows her iPad Pro[®] into her backpack, then heads out on her bike to meet up with her girlfriend on the steps of a nearby apartment complex. Multi-tasking is second nature to Scout, who is seen socializing via FaceTime[®] with a friend that recently got a new cast, while at the same time snaps a photo amid the conversation, signs it with an Apple[®] Pencil[®], and shows it to

¹⁰⁷ McIntosh, 201.

¹⁰⁸ Graham, 35.

her other friend (physically with her) while sending it back to the digitally connected friend via iMessage[®]—all in less than six seconds. Scout is an iPad Pro[®] expert.

The next scene places her at a makeshift desk in the middle of a slow garage sale, where she types away on a keypad connected to the device. Something catches her eye and she quickly opens a camera app to snap a photo of a praying mantis, posing on the leaf of a potted plant conveniently located beside her. Obviously proud of her photo, she heads to grab a much-needed lunch at the local taco shop. While she waits for her order, she perches her iPad Pro[®] atop the curved glass counter. She receives her to-go order in one hand, thanks the server, and quickly folds up her tablet and keypad with the coolest, one-handed maneuver akin to Marty McFly's hip skateboard scene out of *Back to the Future*—all without missing a step as she heads out the door. She finds a spot to eat her lunch, where she snaps another photo of the cobblestone street nearby and doodles a cartoon octopus coming out of it. Scout is loaded with talent, and leaves viewers wondering what else she might do.

Next, she is seen riding on her bike through a tunnel to a nearby park where the scene cuts to her perched up in a large tree balanced among a network of barren branches. She puts the finishing touches on her stellar science project, “Bugs of the City.” It is evident that she has captured more pictures and created additional drawings with her iPad Pro[®], which explains why she takes her bike and hops on a bus for home. While on the bus, the camera angle is shot from the front of the bus where Scout is seated beside a man in a suit, who is reading a comic book. She is on her tablet and appears to be reading as well. The Millennial businessman glances over to see what she is reading, unbeknownst to her, and seems somewhat impressed in his reaction. As the camera moves over Scout's shoulder, it appears she is also reading a comic book—

perhaps the same one as the gentleman sitting next to her? His facial expression discloses his intrigue as if to say, “I should have considered that.”

The final scene shows Scout arriving home. She crashes on the backyard lawn terraced by several poorly landscaped shrubs and surrounded by a chain-link fence with vines growing sporadically throughout it. She is typing away on the iPad Pro[®] with the attached keypad. Her older neighbor from Generation X, comes out of her house onto an adjacent patio and greets Scout as she dusts off a broom. Scout respectfully acknowledges her and continues her typing with laser-sharp focus. The nosey neighbor asks Scout, “What are you doing on your computer?” to which she responds, “What is a computer?”¹⁰⁹ and continues typing away as the shot pans overhead, fading out to the Apple[®] logo.

On the initial view of the last scene, some from other generations may perceive Scout as being disrespectful in her response to the Gen X neighbor, but she was genuinely asking and, truly, may have never experienced working on a computer. It is easy to jump to a conclusion without considering Scout’s generational lens, as a digital native of Gen Z. Apple[®] intentionally showboats the enormous capabilities of the iPad Pro[®] for three main generations that use its technology, calling all to join their digital revolution. The commercial was made to sell a product; however, it offers a realistic snapshot of the generation gaps that still exist among the generations today. They are created by major world events and a myriad of different circumstances, which each succeeding generation has faced in the span of their lives. The data stream of facts on the causes of these gaps is endless and navigating it can be overwhelming.

¹⁰⁹ Apple, "iPad Pro – What's a Computer" (YouTube[®] Video Commercial), November 16, 2017, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://youtu.be/sQB2NjhJHvY>.

Gary McIntosh clarifies this generational effect by illustrating it in the convergence of what he calls “generational waves” and the riptides they create in today’s culture:

Riptides, I have discovered, result when the return flow of the tide moves away from the shore. The resulting undercurrent can pull with great force back out to the ocean whatever it catches. The larger the wave, the stronger the riptide will be. Generational waves can collide in a kind of riptide. As the seventy-six million-member Boomer wave converges with the Builder wave and crashes into the Buster and Bridger wave, numerous problems emerge. Not only are these generational waves creating turbulence in our society, they are also causing turbulence in our churches. That is why it is essential to understand each generational wave and how it affects the other waves to effectively serve God’s purpose today. Most of us are faced with the problem of ministering to a church that includes members of all four generational waves. We must try to understand the generations as well as how they affect each other.¹¹⁰

That is why an intelligent conversation about the generations is imperative. In his recent book, *Generations’ Expert*, Haydn Shaw addresses the need for generational intelligence in the church.

Note his observation:

We respond to the church, to the culture, and to our relationships based on the ideas of our generation—the things that go without saying—whether we realize it or not. Often, we miss opportunities to connect with others because our assumptions are based on our own generation’s experiences and culture...generational intelligence requires us to understand the ideas that shape the other generations. But there’s another part to generational intelligence. Not only do we need to understand other generations’ assumptions, we also need to understand our own. Each generation has unique spiritual strengths God wants to use. Each generation also has temptations that hold back their spiritual growth. That is why we cannot grow in our own faith and relationships if we do not understand how the things that go without saying change our relationship with God....generations relate differently to God and often fight about those differences based on their unique generational characteristics....We struggle to love people we do not appreciate or understand. When we understand other generations, we will quit judging them and start learning from them. Generational intelligence does not make the key teaching of Jesus to “love one another” easy, but it does make it easier.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ McIntosh, 201.

¹¹¹ Shaw, 19-20, 24.

Understanding other generations, acknowledging their strengths and weakness, helps everyone appreciate and respect one another in the context of a growing relationship with God and others in the local church. Generational intelligence offers insights to assist church leaders in navigating the multigenerational worship landscape presented in the twenty-first-century church. Although it falls more into the field of sociology, writers like Haydn Shaw are able to take the information, merge it with the wisdom of Scripture, and provide answers to certain questions on intergenerational worship challenges where other tools have fallen short. As Strauss and Howe suggest, “Much of the stress in cross-generational relationships arises when people of different ages expect other to behave in ways their peer personalities will not allow... Boomers remain the most generation-conscious peer group.”¹¹² Generational intelligence often sheds light on why intergenerational worship is not working and what things to consider in fixing it—a redemptive tool of wisdom.

Never before in American history have five generations lived together within the same time period. In 1900, the average life span in the United States was forty-eight years of age.¹¹³ According to *OECD’s Health at a Glance* (2015), the average life span in the United States has expanded to seventy-nine years of age.¹¹⁴ The advances in technology, healthcare breakthroughs, and scientific discoveries in medicine have increased longevity, creating two new, life stages: emerging adulthood and second adulthood. Emerging adulthood is the life stage that encompasses the expanded development of young adults from late teens through mid to late

¹¹² Strauss and Howe, 13.

¹¹³ Johanna M. Bonds, "Baby Boomers' Perceptions of Benefits in Community-Based, Multigenerational Creative Experiences" (EdD diss., University of South Dakota, 2018), 11, accessed July 29, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2040504014>

¹¹⁴ OECD, *Health at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), 31-44, accessed September 27, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2017-en.

twenties.¹¹⁵ Second adulthood, primarily a Baby Boomer experience, begins around age sixty-five and continues to “old age” (i.e., end-of-life care).¹¹⁶ Boomers face several challenges in the twenty-first-century world and church. These obstacles include how they perceive to be marginalized in the local church through age-segregated church programs, an insensitivity to their unique needs in second adulthood (a lack of generational intelligence on the part of ministry leaders), and their aversion to technology. The literature presented will assist ministry to leaders understand these challenges for Boomers in second adulthood. It will also help them overcome and mitigate these obstacles with the intent of releasing the potential Boomers hold for an encore performance in the worship life of their respective churches.

Boomers’ leaning into new forms of paid or unpaid work mean that organizations and communities can continue to draw on the experience and expertise of the vast numbers wanting to make a difference, mentor the next generation, transfer knowledge, and contribute in meaningful and useful ways. Tapping the time, talents, and skills of Boomers leaning out from demanding, often unrewarding, and increasingly risky career jobs but who feel they are not yet done makes sense on a variety of levels.¹¹⁷

In an attempt to reach the next generation, churches have marginalized the important role seniors play in the process. Today, many churches are focused on reaching the next generation.

Michelle Van Loon exposes the marginalization of the older generations in the ministry of many churches: “Decades ago, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers pushed to create churches centered on the young, nuclear family. Sadly, this ministry model now excludes many of us. Having outgrown the core programs, we are left to usher, teach fourth grade Sunday school, or attend committee meetings...while churches work to reach a younger generation, some of their graying members

¹¹⁵ Arnett, 156-157.

¹¹⁶ Moen, 5.

¹¹⁷ Moen, 9.

are stepping away.”¹¹⁸ One of the reasons for this marginalization stems from ageism, or age discrimination. In an article on challenges for Boomers in the workplace, the authors describe this as a common practice within America. “Unlike some societies which revere and respect their senior population, the United States seems to practice ageism, i.e., systematic discrimination against older people strictly because of their age, as it does other types of prejudice.”¹¹⁹ Citing Boomer think tank and consulting firm, *Age Lessons*, the authors note “workplace concerns for Baby Boomer employees are redundancy, relevance, and resentment from younger co-workers.”¹²⁰ This fear of redundancy concerns Boomers because of layoffs; relevance because Boomers feel behind the times; and resentment from the younger generations because the “old folks” will not get out of the way. Barbara Raynor also describes the issues of ageism as it relates to Baby Boomers. She writes:

Ninety-percent of marketing dollars today target the under-fifty population. Consequently, adults fifty and older not only *feel* invisible to and disregarded by society, but, from a marketing standpoint they actually *are*...The public typically views older adulthood as a time of loss, physical and cognitive decline, and diminished relevance—something to be “overcome” or “defied”—experts on aging see it as a time of new opportunities and capacities for growth, contribution, and self-exploration.¹²¹

For Boomers, she urges them to fight marginalization and highlights the growing need for organizations to value and leverage the Boomers’ wisdom.¹²² Carmel Joe highlights the implication of Boomers leaving the workforce in retirement. Their massive numbers coupled

¹¹⁸ Van Loon, 31.

¹¹⁹ Jane Whitney Gibson, J. P. Jones, Jennifer Cella, Cory Clark, Alexandra Epstein and Jennifer Haselberger, "Ageism and the Baby Boomers: Issues, Challenges and the TEAM Approach." *Contemporary Issues in Education Research* 3, no. 1 (January 2010): 55, accessed June 3, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/196351380?accountid=12085>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Raynor, 59.

¹²² Ibid.

with the wisdom and experience they hold, have resulted in a huge gap in the continuity and knowledge base for sustainability in organizations.

The oldest members of the post-World War II baby boomer generation — born between 1945 and 1963 — are soon nearing retirement, reducing or reviewing the extent of their participation in the workforce in the future. This has significant implications, especially for organizations relying on knowledge workers' expertise and experience, as within this cohort resides knowledge that is valuable to organizations.¹²³

His study seeks to find ways for knowledge transfer from Boomers to their Gen X and Millennial replacements through information and communications technology (ICT). The wisdom and knowledge afforded by the Boomer generation underscores their potential for utilization in other fields during retirement. The concerns of losing Boomer wisdom and experience are not exclusive to secular society. Just as businesses need to capture and communicate that wisdom to the next generation, so also the church should utilize the resources that Boomers provide.

Ageism is prevalent within churches as Boomers are often unintentionally marginalized in the periphery of church ministry in preference of reaching younger families with children. In *Boomer Spirituality*, Methodist Pastor Craig Miller captures the attitude of a Christian Boomer concerning the marginalization she feels within her church:

“You do not know what it is like out there. My church and the senior center treat us like we are mindless infants with nothing to do.” She explained that the goal of the older-adult ministries at her church and the senior center in her community was to keep people entertained and give them something to do with their time. “They do not recognize us for what we can offer, for the people we are. I am not dead yet!” This vibrant, talented, and experienced woman had run headfirst into a world that was designed for the senior life of years past. When she is eighty-five, maybe this is what she will need. But now, she needs to be challenged, to have opportunities to serve, and to be valued.¹²⁴

¹²³ Carmel Joe, “Retaining the Knowledge of Older Experts in an Organisational Context and the Role of ICT.” PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2010: i, 133, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10063/1613/thesis.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

Miller analyzes four key values of brokenness, loneliness, rootlessness, and self-seeking in Boomers' existence and offers insights on how each plays a part in forming their spiritual roots. He explains what has shaped their beliefs and informed their relationships to others and to society. His purpose is to educate, encourage, and equip Boomers (along with those who minister to them) to continue growing spiritually, especially in the last quarter of their lives. Amy Hanson, a leading expert on aging, speaks to the great opportunities church leaders have in engaging them:

These baby boomers who revolutionized youth ministry are now entering their fifth and sixth decades of life. They are marching into their later years at an unprecedented rate. And the urgency of ministry with them is just as great as when they were young—perhaps even greater. The stakes are high. There is much to be gained for Christ or much to be lost. And it starts with whether or not we choose to ignore or embrace this aging reality.¹²⁵

Retiring Boomers in second adulthood face an identity crisis, seeking relevant roles in the local church. Michelle Van Loon expresses Boomer concerns for their function in today's church as a Boomer "midlife crisis of faith...questioning not *their* [italics mine] beliefs, but *their* [italics mine] role in the body of Christ."¹²⁶ If left unnoticed and disengaged in the worship life of the church, there is a great possibility that Boomers will also retire spiritually or seek significant ways to serve outside the church. In his book *The Master's Plan for the Church*, John MacArthur addresses the dangers of spiritual complacency when senior saints disengage from the worship life of the church.

Often, I hear young pastors say, "My church is good and is in a nice area, but it is full of old people." If you are a Christian but do not apply God's word to your life, you will eventually become one of those inert older people. You will reach age fifty and want to retire spiritually. You will say, "I have been going to church for many years. I do not want to get involved in evangelism; I would rather leave that kind of thing for younger people." Look at the Old Testament leaders of Israel—many of

¹²⁵ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 3.

¹²⁶ Van Loon, 31.

them were older people. The early church found its energy in mature saints. Today, the church is deriving its energy mostly from younger people. We need the energy that young people have, but we also need the power that seasoned believers have developed from their long, obedient lives. An older believer should be ready to “blast off” into heaven from the energy he has built up. But because many believers do not apply what they hear as they get older, their lives don’t change. They may know a lot of spiritual facts, but they have no power.¹²⁷

Wolfer underscores the need to proactively recruit Boomer volunteers while they are still involved in the workforce:

As baby boomers begin the transition to retirement, continuity and role theories help explain volunteerism in this age cohort. Continuity theory posits the importance of maintaining established patterns of behavior throughout one’s life and especially across important status transitions such as retirement to preserve a person’s well-being through the life course...patterns in preretirement lend to higher probability to volunteering postretirement.¹²⁸

Bob Buford notes that “retirees have not proved to be the fertile source of volunteer effort we once thought they would be. They cut their engines off and lose their edge.”¹²⁹ His mentor, Peter Drucker believed that “if you do not have a second or parallel career in service by age forty-five, and if you are not vigorously involved in it by age fifty-five, it will never happen.”¹³⁰ This presents a crucial need for churches to engage Boomers in ministry efforts prior to their retirement.

Marginalization coupled with an insensitivity to or ignorance of Boomer needs in second adulthood further exacerbates their disconnect in many churches. In an effort to bridging the age gap in working with older adults, Dr. Cody Sipe suggests investing in one’s knowledge base can achieve desired results. “The most important ‘tool’ is to be well versed in the needs and desires

¹²⁷ MacArthur, 33.

¹²⁸ Wolfer et al, 161.

¹²⁹ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

of an older constituency.”¹³¹ In his article on recruiting and engaging Baby Boomer volunteers, Ken Culp explains their unlimited potential for volunteer service: “Many Boomers will seek volunteer opportunities as a means to remain active, use their skills, and pursue interests that they have not previously had time to do.... Boomers need (and expect) to see the results and impact of their volunteer service and affiliate with the *needed skills* of the role.”¹³² He goes on to highlight that it is the impact of service that motivates Boomers to serve. This demonstrates that they not only want to contribute something of significance, but they need to feel valued, needed. Concerning motivations for recruiting and engaging Boomer volunteers, Ken Culp advises:

Boomers will seek volunteer opportunities in which they can make a meaningful contribution *in a limited amount of time*. Recognition based upon hours of service is not a motivating factor. This generation focuses on *quality* rather than *quantity*. Boomers need to understand the impact of their afternoon spent volunteering rather than receive a reward for a number of hours they have served.... Boomers are busy people. Two-thirds of volunteers fifty-five and over discovered volunteer opportunities through their involvement in faith communities, because someone asked them, or through participating in their children’s activities.¹³³

Ageism and the identity crises are not the only reasons Boomers feel marginalized in their churches. They are facing several other unique challenges as well: “They are navigating multiple personal and family transitions such as family caregiving, individual health, parenting adult children, rightsizing their living environment, and economic challenges. Developmentally, most are renegotiating their own identities, intimate relationships, and the sense of significance.”¹³⁴ Many Boomers “lead busy lives and have significant caregiving

¹³¹ Cody Sipe, “Bridging the Age Gap: Working with older adults--an investment in your knowledge base can bring many rewards,” *IDEA Fitness Journal*, June 2008, 26.

¹³² Ken Culp III, “Recruiting and Engaging Baby Boomer Volunteers,” *Journal of Extension*, 47, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 1-2, accessed September 2, 2019, <https://www.joe.org/joe/2009april/rb2.php>.

¹³³ Culp III, 4.

¹³⁴ Wolfer et al, 161.

responsibilities—either for their parents or grandparents, their children or grandchildren—or both.”¹³⁵ There are similar financial hardships shared between Boomers in second adulthood and Millennials in emerging adulthood. Kathleen Shriver forecasted these concerns and the desire for financial security among Boomers. In her dissertation, she stated that Boomers “could face economic...and psychological challenges when contemplating retirement” and that their retirement “could affect families, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and financial institutions.”¹³⁶ Phyllis Moen’s tireless research provides an exhaustive reference to enable understanding of the challenges Boomers face in entering “encore adulthood.” Three factors Moen addresses throughout her book include recognizing inertia, time-shifting improvisations, and innovations to engage the Boomer generation in the twenty-first century:

*This new stage, what I call *encore adulthood*...is a time of varied paths, including for some ongoing engagement in meaningful activities made possible by medical advances and lifestyle changes improving population health and longevity. It turns out that the bonus years of life expectancy are coming not at the end of life but sometime around fifty-five through seventy-five, as the infirmities associated with being elderly are postponed. As a result, Boomers (born 1946–1964) are like Millennials in that they both confront ill-fitting blueprints for the future. Both generations are moving beyond conventional life stages to—they are not quite sure what. It is hard to plan for the future when expected verities like education leading to stable employment, seniority leading to employment and economic security, and retirement leading to a carefree golden age no longer apply. The linear, predictable life course has become nonlinear and unpredictable.*¹³⁷

Moen puts a positive spin on second adulthood with the term, “encore adulthood.” She outlines ways to engage the Boomer generation in meaningful work in their retirement years as they learn to adapt to the ever-changing culture. She also notes, “There are similarities in the changes at

¹³⁵ Raynor, 61.

¹³⁶ Kathleen Shriver, “Assessing the Factors that Influence Members of the Baby Boom Generation to Retire Before Age 62” (PhD diss., Northcentral University, 2010), 1, accessed July 9, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/openview/531434abfccf7e500daf3edd65313b06>.

¹³⁷ Moen, 5.

both ends of the adult life course....Generations today are more similar than different from each other in their beliefs and values.”¹³⁸

In *Boomers on the Edge: Three Realities that Will Change Your Life Forever*, Terry Hargrave notes these factors that have changed Boomers’ present existence, maintaining that Boomers are poised to once again change the sociological landscape of the twenty-first century, “This comes at a time when we may have thought we would be slowing down—but the reality is that we are on the edge of a totally different way of living.”¹³⁹ Bob Buford addresses the crisis of Boomers in “second adulthood.” He explains the importance of their desire to make the final half of their lives count by seeking significance over success. He echoes much of the timeless wisdom he gleaned from his mentor, Peter Drucker, which suggests the “huge potential within churches to care for the social needs of the nation, especially within the ranks of Baby Boomers who will be looking for more meaningful options to retirement.”¹⁴⁰ Johanna Bonds demonstrates this need for “life-long learning” for active seniors in their “Third Age” (what she terms “second adulthood”). By providing creative experiences for seniors in multigenerational environments, the seniors reported feeling joyful and happy.

The call for creative experiences, during the multiple retirement years these aging adults will experience, is expected to increase dramatically. It will be the responsibility of profit and non-profit organizations offering continuing education to provide these experiences....Creative experiences are one way that society can provide a vehicle for senior citizens to stay socially engaged throughout their retirement, which in turn will add to the value of their lives...like classes in ceramics, guitar or writing.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹³⁹ Hargave, 9-11.

¹⁴⁰ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁴¹ Johanna M. Bonds, "Baby Boomers' Perceptions of Benefits in Community-Based, Multigenerational Creative Experiences" (EdD diss., University of South Dakota, 2018) iii, 1, accessed July 29, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2040504014>.

She demonstrates the benefits of this approach and challenges community agencies to lead this role in engaging Boomers in these experiences. The church has a great opportunity to facilitate this because of its multigenerational makeup.

Terry Hargrave believes the Boomer generation to be one of heartfelt caregivers that has the potential to become the greatest generation:

Our generation, the ‘baby boomers,’ has remade society by our sheer numbers, new attitudes, and distinctive behavior...demonstrated great commitment, resiliency, and grit in the past fifty years, all while remaining reasonably well connected emotionally...perhaps thinking we were just about finished with making an impact on the world—when God taps us lightly on the shoulder as if to say, “Ah, but there is one more thing.” God has chosen *us* to embark on the greatest sociological change of this century...and just as we changed education, social mores, and the American dream in the last century, so will we change how life and family are ‘done’ in this one...it will be our task yet again to make our mark and once more change the world.¹⁴²

In addition to this driving passion, they do not want to be perceived as old. Hanson further explains:

These adults are dealing with a number of issues, including concerns regarding retirement, grandparenting, caring for aging parents, and preparing for their own aging. For the most part, they are healthy, active, and quite capable of serving God in some remarkable ways. They have more discretionary time and may naturally be searching for what their purpose will be as they begin to phase out of their careers. They have a strong desire to not “get old” and are doing all they can to stay young.¹⁴³

As Haydn Shaw points out, Boomers will live thirty or more years longer and they hold great potential for ministry impact in and through the local church. “Many of them have twenty or thirty years left in their second adulthood. What are they going to do with all that extra time? This additional thirty years is one of the greatest changes in the history of the human race.

¹⁴² Hargrave, 11.

¹⁴³ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

Should not you and your church start talking about how you will help them figure it out?”¹⁴⁴

Amy Hanson echoes this sentiment on Boomer potential for Kingdom impact in the worship life of the church if they are effectively engaged in second adulthood. In an effort to equip ministry leaders to reach the Baby Boomers during the “second adulthood,” she demonstrates ways to navigate the challenges of ministering to these “new old” members of the Christian community. In her book, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, she offers suggestions for engaging them in the life of the church through the revitalization of senior adult ministries: “The ages we assign to people are merely numbers, and they do not completely define the people themselves. We are talking about a philosophy of ministry in which older adults are engaged in meaningful service and Kingdom impact that have the ability to transcend age.”¹⁴⁵ In her concept paper on how to overcome age barriers, Amy Hanson shares seven ways churches can successfully do intergenerational ministry and develop meaningful connections: “...one of the most important goals of intergenerational ministry—to leave a legacy of faith for the next generation. In a society where the retirement years are often seen as a time for ‘self’—some retirees are turning this idea upside down and investing themselves in the future generation.”¹⁴⁶ Her action steps are supported from Scripture and provide examples along with easy and practical ways to implement them. If the church does not connect Boomers to meaningful service through an encore ministry, they will seek significant ways to serve outside the church. Craig Miller also mentions, “Churches and nonprofits that are willing to embrace ministry with boomers will be critical providers of support for boomers and

¹⁴⁴ Shaw, 219.

¹⁴⁵ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁴⁶ Amy Hanson, “Breaking Down the Age Barriers,” Concept Paper, *Leadership Network*, 2008. Accessed June 28, 2018. <http://leadnet.org>.

their families as they face an uncertain future.”¹⁴⁷ McIntosh reflects the need for church leaders to implement a paradigm shift in connecting with the Church’s newest seniors:

The Boomers support people-oriented programs, and as leaders they will evaluate old ministries against this value. Programs and projects that can show they are honestly making a difference in people’s lives are being kept; those that cannot are being discontinued... Boomers do not give their money to pay bills. They give it to support vision. Boomers can never get away from the ’60s when they poured their lives into big concerns like civil rights. Churches that continue to give Boomers a big vision will get their time, their money, and their emotional support. We have the “cause of all causes,” but we must learn to communicate it with passion and in the language of today if we want to attract the Boomers’ commitment.¹⁴⁸

Boomers hold great potential for an encore performance in second adulthood, especially in the worship life of their churches.

Church leaders must work to validate the role of Boomers in the church. Halverson and Emerman flip the cultural perception of Boomers, underscoring the valuable resource they can be for building communities and contributing greatly to society in their “encore careers.” The wisdom and experience from the Baby Boomer generation offers valuable insights and creative solutions to social problems. Boomers are living longer and are able to revolutionize the traditional concept of aging. The authors emphasize the “need to issue an urgent call to them to offer their talents, skills, and experiences to solve some of our largest problems.”¹⁴⁹ They believe Boomers will answer the call if they are needed and valued: “Local nonprofits, grassroots organizations, and community leaders should make the call for people in the encore stage of life to give back through work and community service... Aging is a fact of life, but it brings more than chronic disease and death—it holds a wealth of talent, skills, and experience, treasure that

¹⁴⁷ Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁴⁸ McIntosh, 226-227.

¹⁴⁹ Halvorsen and Emerman, 34.

should be used to benefit older adults and, to a higher degree, benefit society as a whole.”¹⁵⁰

Gibson echoes the wisdom from marketplace leadership resources concerning Baby Boomers as mentors: “Mentoring, like training, is like a two-way street when it comes to the Baby Boomers....As younger and older workers interact together in the close relationship of mentor and mentee, understanding and trust develops, and biased perceptions diminish.”¹⁵¹ He also shares the benefit of having an intergenerational team whereby wisdom is shared: “One benefit of having an intergenerational team is to avoid a massive loss of knowledge as the Baby Boomers retire. The experience and knowledge possessed by the Baby Boomer generation needs to be transferred to the next generation...in order for the organization to remain successful and competitive in the future.”¹⁵² Culp adds, “Boomers will retire earlier, stay healthier, be more physically active, and live longer than any previous generation. They have greater wealth and more expendable income than other generations of retirees.”¹⁵³ This does not even take into consideration the motivating factor of faith shared by Christian boomers.¹⁵⁴

The boomer generation stands on the precipice of a sea of change in the way American life and family are done. More and more we have been forced out onto the ledge by the pressing needs of caregiving for our parents, the discouragement and the difficulties of our own aging and the problems of financing our long lives....We will find ourselves swimming in an ocean of need, with problems that seem to defy solution. We will have fewer and fewer resources to call on as we struggle to meet this need. And we will feel exhausted as every day we will be called on to rise up and meet the next onrushing challenge. We will have to live by faith, trusting God on the very edge—just as the heroes of faith did, both large and small, who are honored in Hebrews 11. We may be among the unknowns, but I am convinced that as a generation, we can also be listed among the heroes of faith.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵¹ Gibson et al., 57.

¹⁵² Ibid., 56.

¹⁵³ Culp III, 2.

¹⁵⁴ Wolfer et al, 162.

¹⁵⁵ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 12-13.

Boomers' faith strengthens their desire to serve. Amy Hanson highlights the need for church leaders to take advantage of reaching this generation:

Is it possible to be a vibrant, growing, active church that intentionally seeks to reach middle-aged and older adults? Absolutely. But far too many churches in too many communities are failing to take an honest look at their demographics and pay attention to whom God has put in their path...the older adult population is growing, meaning that there will be a constant flow of people turning sixty, seventy, and eighty for many years to come. As long as we discover effective ways of reaching these adults, our churches will never have to die.¹⁵⁶

Pastor Craig Miller also suggests the opportunity that exists for church leaders to reengage Boomers:

As boomers move deeper into the second half of life, churches of all sizes will have a second chance to connect with them. Once they become empty nesters or retire from work, their whole value system will be up for grabs. For boomers, the ongoing questions of meaning and purpose are not going away. In fact, as they age, these questions will only intensify as they look to answer two additional questions that will fuel their spiritual quest: "What am I going to leave behind? What is my legacy?"¹⁵⁷

Church leaders must be postured to reach Boomers by helping them understand their role in the church and engaging them in an encore ministry, a ministry concept of Boomers in second adulthood that are actively engaged in the worship life of their respective churches.

Relationships are also crucial for allowing the encore ministry to be effective both in fulfilling the Great Commission and retaining Boomer engagement. In her recent book, *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, Holly Allen emphasizes the benefit and blessing of intergenerational relationships in the church:

The benefits of human connection run in both directions up and down the generations. This is not something that church leaders can accomplish with a packaged program or resource. Building affectionate and continuous experiences of human attachment requires changing the culture of congregations from peer-centered efficiency to places where relationships of all kinds reign supreme. In the

¹⁵⁶ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

caring church, getting things done is not as important as with whom and for whom we get things done.¹⁵⁸

Engaging Boomers in an encore ministry will ensure their spiritual vitality and equally sustain the health and longevity of the church. Michelle Van Loon highlights, “Those in their second adulthood are most aware that they do not have time to waste on church busywork. They may in fact be signaling the way forward for all of us.”¹⁵⁹ The senior adult ministry methods of the past will not address the unique needs of the Boomers and therefore must be revitalized to ensure Boomers are engaged. “This has been the target group for a traditional senior adult ministry. Historically, these ministries have been characterized by trips and fellowship-centered programs. And yet there is a great opportunity to engage people in this age group in meaningful service opportunities as well as encouraging them to reach out to their unchurched peers.”¹⁶⁰ Allen and Barnett further support this need for revitalization, because Christian churches and communities “are lamenting the silos created by age-segregated ministries.”¹⁶¹ Amy Hanson suggests “a philosophy of ministry in which older adults are engaged in meaningful service and Kingdom impact that have the ability to transcend age.”¹⁶² She underscores the urgency to revitalize senior ministries, “We have just a short window of time to catch these people as they are planning how they will spend their retirement years and how they will invest the rest of their lives.”¹⁶³ Allen also points out, “When spiritual formation primarily takes place alongside one’s own peers, a

¹⁵⁸ Holly Catterton Allen, ed., *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018), Kindle edition, 33.

¹⁵⁹ Van Loon, 31.

¹⁶⁰ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁶¹ Allen, *Intergenerate*, Kindle edition, 17.

¹⁶² Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

broader understanding of the church is distorted. Individuals begin to see themselves at the center of the faith community rather than part of the larger whole.”¹⁶⁴

There is a growing emphasis for intergenerational ministry and relationship building across the generations. While this topic will also be addressed under the third section and supported by Scripture, it is pertinent to share support on this from extrabiblical sources. Gary McIntosh first suggested this need in *One Church, Four Generations*:

Vital, growing churches in the next decade will be those that can successfully reach, win, and keep the Boomer, Buster, and Bridger generations. For this to happen in existing churches, leaders need to make bold, long-term plans for blending Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers into a unified church. Of course, there are risks involved in attempting a blend, but the call of Christ to make disciples makes the risks worthwhile.¹⁶⁵

In his dissertation on developing an intergenerational ministry, David Eikenberry supports this need to bridge relationships across generations:

Older adults need to stay involved, and that includes staying involved with other generations. Older generations have a lot to offer others of their same age. But they also have an important contribution to make to the following generations. It is easy for all of us to expect to be served, and to forget our need to serve others. It is also easy for us to expect to have things our own way, instead of seeing what is best for others.¹⁶⁶

Concerning intergenerational ministry, Hanson further adds: “Ministry with aging baby boomers must also include an intergenerational component. Boomers want and need to be challenged to use the later years of their lives to make a significant impact. Most older adults have talents and experiences to share, but without intergenerational connections, their impact is limited.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Allen, *Intergenerate*, Kindle edition, 46.

¹⁶⁵ McIntosh, 223.

¹⁶⁶ David A. Eikenberry, "Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation." Order No. 3687421, Trinity International University, 2014: 36, accessed December 21, 2019, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1668381789>.

¹⁶⁷ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

Another challenge for churches to help Boomers overcome is dealing with their aversion to technology.¹⁶⁸ In an article on e-learning, Vaughn Waller, a senior instructional designer, indicates that methods of learning vary across the age spectrum. He finds that “digital immigrants” (i.e., Boomers) get used to doing something a certain way and are therefore reluctant to change. “In many cases, the learning need is not to teach someone how to do something for the first time, but to correct behaviors that come from always doing something a certain way.”¹⁶⁹ Demonstrating the usefulness and convenience of e-learning will change perceptions of technology and make it effective with anyone at any age. “To avoid the perception of obsolescence, Baby Boomers need opportunities to keep up-to-date on technological changes.”¹⁷⁰ Waller further suggests, “We should banish the thought that the age of the learner dictates in any way the design of the learning. Make it good and everyone will use it.”¹⁷¹ This puts the burden on church leaders to make the tech good and effective, explaining its usefulness in a positive manner. Gibson suggests another benefit of an intergenerational ministry team is “an upward mentoring system where Baby Boomer ‘mentees’ could profit from coaching in the new technology applications from their Gen X or Gen Y counterparts.”¹⁷² This offers both a functional and relational advantage.

Michael Rogers is an expert on the impacts of technology on business and society. He has made several appearances on *MSNBC* and has worked for the *New York Times*. He also served as vice president of the *Washington Post*'s media division and an editor for *Newsweek*.

¹⁶⁸ Raynor, 61.

¹⁶⁹ Vaughn Waller, "An Argument Against Ageism" *E.Learning Age*, November 2008, accessed July 9, 2018, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/200890148?accountid=12085>.

¹⁷⁰ Gibson et al., 56.

¹⁷¹ Waller, 12.

¹⁷² Gibson et al., 57.

magazine. While at *Newsweek*, he developed the first CD-ROM newsmagazine and later launched their award-winning, technology section, which covers technology-related news. In his report on Boomers and technology for *AARP* and *Microsoft*, Rogers echoes the importance of tech for Boomers to serve the need of usefulness and communication, “revealing the thoughtful and complex relationship this generation has with technology.”¹⁷³ By compiling data and polls from various tech and research firms, Rogers notes several components to overcoming Boomer aversion to technology and suggests Boomers’ relationship with technology as cautiously optimistic: “Boomers have a dynamic, thoughtful and ever-changing relationship with technology, viewing the world ahead with great enthusiasm and just a touch of caution.”¹⁷⁴ This is in stark contrast to the Millennials and Gen Z digital natives relationship with technology. Hunt affirms, “Moderns tend to embrace all technological change without thinking very hard about its unintended consequences.”¹⁷⁵ James White agrees, “There can be little doubt that the defining mark of the new generation is that it has never known life without the internet.”¹⁷⁶

In an interview for *World Future Review*, Rogers shares this skepticism among Boomers concerning how tech interacts with their lives: “You have to keep in mind that this is the generation that grew up on the first Macintosh, the first ones to use PCs in their home offices, the first ones to buy cell phones. They are not uncomfortable with new technology, but they are

¹⁷³ Michael Rogers, “Boomers and Technology: An Extended Conversation,” Sponsored and prepared by *AARP and Microsoft*, New York: Practical Futurists (October 2009): 3, accessed January 2, 2020, https://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/articles/computers/2009_boomers_and_technology_final_report.pdf.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷⁵ Arthur W. Hunt, III, *Surviving Technopolis: Essays on Finding Balance in Our New Man-made Environments* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), Kindle edition, 2.

¹⁷⁶ James E. White, *The Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), Kindle edition, 141.

uncomfortable with the idea that technology forces them to change their lives.”¹⁷⁷ The findings from Roger’s report are summarized, as follows: “Boomers want to bring their own values to technology. Their ideals were forged in an era when human rights and individual freedoms were central concerns, and boomers apply that perspective to technology.”¹⁷⁸ Two, when Boomers learn a technology, they are more likely to actively share it with their peers. Three, Boomers report frustration with technology as a result of too many features. This coupled with their insistence to solve tech on their own compounds their irritation. Most do not mind a learning curve, but simplicity and usefulness are vital to curtailing these obstacles.¹⁷⁹ Four, Boomers expect technology to adapt to them. When it does make sense to them, they may become early adopters and help lead the way in showing others. This is demonstrated in their use of online health websites.¹⁸⁰ Five, Boomers desire for technology to retain the human element and enhance relationships. They have embraced online dating as another aspect of connection through technology. They realize that technology has the potential to create new barriers and isolate, but Rogers argues this is more a social than technological issue.¹⁸¹ Six, Boomers believe technology should strengthen communication, yet they are always trying to sort out whether they have legitimate concerns about social changes, or are merely showing their age. “No one wants to appear to be the old fogey.”¹⁸² Seven, “Boomers see technology as a tool, not a tyrant” and believe healthy boundaries are important to limit its misuse.¹⁸³ Eight, Boomers are big

¹⁷⁷ Michael Rogers, “Technology and the Baby Boomers,” *World Futures Review* 2, no. 3 (June 2010): 55, accessed April 4, 2020, doi:[10.1177/194675671000200313](https://doi.org/10.1177/194675671000200313).

¹⁷⁸ Rogers, “Boomers and Technology: An Extended Conversation”, 3.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 6.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 8-10.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 10-12.

¹⁸² Ibid, 14.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 15.

proponents for online banking, investing, and donating to charities provided it is convenient and secure.¹⁸⁴ Finally, the most telling place where Boomers adopt technology is social networking:

Users over fifty-five for example, are the fastest-growing age group on Facebook, and as of summer 2009 there were more people over fifty-five on that site than high school students. Use of social networks by those over fifty has tripled over the past eighteen months, and once boomers join a social networking site a third of them visit *at least* once a day....The boomer migration into social networking will only accelerate. Social networks will serve at least three main purposes for Boomers. First, as a connection to family....Second, as a connection to friends....And finally, it is very clear that as boomers redefine their roles in the workforce, business-oriented social networking will become an increasingly important way to keep track of colleagues and peers, and to create new kinds of employment opportunities beyond the traditional nine-to-five corporate roles.¹⁸⁵

These discoveries were intended to help *AARP* and *Microsoft* forecast needs and project technological applications for Boomers in the twenty-first century; however, they also provide insights that equip church leaders to more effectively design and present technology to Boomers in a way that engages and connects with them.

The Final Word

In any discussion related to the church, it is imperative to bring God's Word into the conversation. In view of the inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency, and authority of the Holy Scriptures, it is necessary to establish the importance of the Bible in further supporting the arguments presented in this work and to allow its truths to have the final word. The Psalmist declares, "I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Psalm 138:2, NKJV); "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105, ESV). In His high priestly prayer, Jesus intercedes to the Father on behalf of all believers saying,

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 16-17.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 22-23.

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17, ESV). The writer of Hebrews notes, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, ESV). In his letter to young Timothy, the Apostle Paul expresses, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV). Also, the Apostle Peter claims that “no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21, ESV).

Several passages from the Scriptures underscore intergenerational worship as God’s intended goal for the human race. The following examples can guide church leaders in their current worship context. Coupled by Spirit-filled wisdom and passion, these truths yield a philosophical construct that forms an intergenerational worship strategy. Intergenerational worship has the potential to spark revival in the world and prepare the Bride of Christ for His immanent return. It is sanctioned by God and communicated through His Word, which provides a frame of reference for developing an intergenerational worship ministry philosophy. This philosophy guides the strategic planning process and implementation to create the mindset, motivation, and method for intergenerational worship.

No one will ever find the word “Trinity” or “intergenerational” in the Bible; however, it is a concept that resonates throughout the Bible. It is important to start from the beginning to get a grasp of the importance of the intergenerational concept. There exists a period of silence in Genesis 3-4 in the years between Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the

birth of their sons: Cain, Abel, and Seth. For whatever reason, God did not include many details in His revelation about their lives, except how they worshiped. Genesis 4 records the story of Cain and Abel. The Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice, but Cain's was rejected. Filled with envy, Cain murdered his brother. The Lord punished him for his sin, but God did protect Cain and used his offspring in a number of ways—some of them becoming musicians and metal workers. The story leaves questions unanswered, but one thing is certain—the family unit was fractured as a result of Adam's original sin, which resulted in his sons being born with inherent sin in his fallen likeness. This reality came to a head in this first recorded murder in the Bible. Thankfully, there is a spiritual turning point in this sad narrative—a ray of hope at the end of Genesis four at the birth of Seth: “Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:25-26, NIV). This shift toward God caused a spiritual momentum in the lives of Adam's progeny. Perhaps, Adam instilled in Seth the importance of walking with God, which Seth, in turn, passed down to his son, Enosh. This is implied by the closing words of verse twenty-six, and not only Enosh, but a generation of people “began to call on the name the Lord.”

The sibling rivalry exists in every family since the fall of man: the sons of Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and even Jacob. It runs deep and wide throughout every family tree. The pride of the sinful nature fuels the rivalry among brothers. If left unchecked, it run a vicious course and leaves a jagged trail of jealousy and hatred that hardens the hearts of its victims. This is the curse of the flesh and apart from God's redemptive plan no one could ever break its bondage. At its core, pride coaxed man to fall and put a chasm between sinful man and holy God—one that

only God could bridge. Thankfully, the promise of the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He bridged the gap and made it possible to truly love the way God intended. Through the cross of Christ and His marvelous, infinite grace, the enmity that even separated man from God was removed. It is only by man's choosing to serve flesh apart from the help of God's Spirit that he is again enslaved to the old life. Every morning presents the same challenge posed by Joshua long ago: "Choose this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15, ESV). Who will be served today? Who will be worshiped today? Like the sibling rivalry described above, many brothers and sisters in the body of Christ can turn to the flesh and become inward focused. In fact, the natural course of the aging believer will tempt him or her to succumb to the desire to hold on the old ways and not embrace the new—but with the continual help of the Holy Spirit, believers can put to death the desires of the flesh no matter what age. Spiritual maturity is about spiritual maintenance. It is a journey—not a destination. The believer will never be fully mature or complete until the day of Christ Jesus (cf. Philippians 1:6).

Pastor Craig Miller identifies with the fracture of the traditional family in society and its effect on family life within twenty-first-century churches:

The institution of society that has been most affected by the shifting nature of family life is the church. Church is the unique place that celebrates family life. Weddings, baptisms, confirmations, and funerals are rites of passage designed to affirm and support families as they transition through different stages of life...as boomers entered adulthood, the traditional family went by the wayside. Perhaps the most devastating blow to congregations came as a result of key families going through divorce. Parents not only divorced each other; in many cases, they divorced themselves from their churches. Many who have experienced divorce find it too painful to show up in worship, knowing that someone is going to wonder what happened to their family.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

Ross Parsley shares from his personal experience of growing up in and serving the local church. He provides sage advice for maintaining the Divine mission for the church and staying relevant for all ages as everyone grows in the loving family of God.

The family is where we are supposed to learn how to love deeply, fight fairly, share justly, work willingly, and survive during tough times....We are not learning enough from each other. We are not connecting generationally, and we are not birthing new family members. Most tragically, we are not making enough disciples to make a dent in our current culture. We are sneezing into the wind....We have seen purpose-driven, power-driven, culture-driven, and seeker-driven movements evolve, and while they all have something very good to say about how church should be done, we may have missed this fundamental and foundational principle that shapes who the church is: the fact that we are the family of God....If we are not careful, we can easily fall into the trap of becoming consumers of goods and services rather than the family members God designed us to be.¹⁸⁷

Intergenerational worship has always been the type of worship God expects. This is supported by frequent uses of the terms throughout Scripture: “generation(s)” [165 times] with nearly one-third of those used in conjunction with “generation(s) to come” [thirty-eight times] (including “next generation”, “future generation(s)” [nine times] and use of “generations that follow” or “generation to generation” [four times] when referring to passing the things of God onto the next generation [fifty-one occurrences total]).¹⁸⁸ From the outset of giving God’s succeeding covenants with Noah, Abraham and Moses to the fulfillment of the new covenant in Christ, God’s expectation is that worship includes all ages. The most glaring example of intergenerational worship failure occurs during a forty-year period after the Exodus from Egypt. God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, gave them the Law, and set them apart as His chosen race to bring Him glory and teach other nations of the One True God. In giving the Law to Moses, God was clear it was to be obeyed and passed on to succeeding generations. “This is a

¹⁸⁷ Parsley, *Messy Church*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁸⁸ These figures came from a word search of “generation” from the *New International Version* ©2011, accessed www.biblegateway.com on .

day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance...Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come” (Exodus 12:14, 17, NIV). The phrase “for the generations to come” occurs quite frequently throughout the Old Testament and indicates that proper worship of God was to be modeled by the elders as an example for the younger generation to follow.

In addition to the frequent use of “generation(s)” throughout the Scriptures, the importance of passing along a heritage of worship is seen in the retelling of the law to the young generation of Israelites prior to their entering the Promised Land.

Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children” (Deuteronomy 4:9-10, NIV).

Evidently, the Exodus generation did not revere the Lord or bring up their children in the laws of the Lord. They left that responsibility to Moses, Caleb, and Joshua. Otherwise, Deuteronomy would not have needed to be written. Moses reiterates the intergenerational worship mandate in Deuteronomy 6:1-9, which includes the well-known *Shema* of Israel:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:1-9, NIV).

This passage is one of the very first verses taught to Jewish children. The *Shema* is found in verses four to five and means to “hear; listen; obey.” It goes beyond mere hearing or listening as a mental activity to application in obedience. Obeying the Word is just as important as hearing the Word. Ezekiel prophesies, “My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice” (Ezekiel 33:31-32, NIV). Singing is one component of worship; moreover, worship incorporates the idea of obedience to God in doing—not just hearing. Allen and Borrer note: “*Worship* is paying attention to God's revelation (both special, the Bible, and general) and responding to it....In our day of strong expository preaching, we have become better at hearing than doing the Word. Hear the Word—receive! Do the Word—respond! Worship means to respond to God. If we fail to respond, worship has probably not occurred.”¹⁸⁹ Perhaps James, the brother of Jesus, had this in mind when he reminds his readers of Lord's words from the Prophet Isaiah, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22, NIV; cf. Isaiah 29:13). Daniel Block expresses “the heart and life of a person provided the lens through which their worship was evaluated.”¹⁹⁰

The *Shema* formed the pledge of allegiance in Jewish life to the one true God and its relevance to today's Christian cannot be overemphasized. Likewise, Christians today must pledge their hearts and lives in love to God through obeying His Word and walking daily with

¹⁸⁹ Ronald Allen and Gordon Borrer, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1987), 39.

¹⁹⁰ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), Kindle edition, n.p.

Him. This requires making disciples by mentoring the younger generation to become Christ followers (Matthew 28:18-20), just as the Psalmist declares: "...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done...he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands" (Psalm 78:4, 5b-7, NIV). This responsibility has always existed throughout human history dating back to the Genesis account.

Boomer attitudes and actions must be transformed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Twenty-first century church leaders who are educated and equipped to reengage Boomers in second adulthood will enable them to leave a lasting impact for Christ in the final quarter of their lives. The challenge remains as it does in every generation—to serve God faithfully and sustain a spiritual legacy for generations to come. "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:18, NIV).

The most important ingredient to developing an intergenerational worship environment grow from a personal walk with the Lord: love for God and others, an attitude of humility, a heart of wisdom, and devotion to prayer. Worship renewal is the key to the spiritual health and vitality of the church and its individual members. In his book *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*, Bob Kauflin shares, "I want to make it clear from the start that worship is not primarily about music, techniques, liturgies, songs, or methodologies. It is about our hearts. It is about what and who we love more than anything."¹⁹¹ God must be

¹⁹¹ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), Kindle edition, 25.

recognized at His supreme place in the hearts of His people. Sanctification is a continual process of freeing the heart to serve Him—not simply going through the motions of religion. Gareth Goosen speaks of this predicament in worship and offers a clear solution as well:

Our crisis in worship today is not a crisis of form, but of spirituality. We continually look outside for the change that needs to be taking place inside! We continue to resurface and reface and rethink our forms and formats before considering that perhaps the renovation God desires is a renovation of our heart by his Holy Spirit. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5: 16–19, “Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”¹⁹²

Spiritual growth is what matters most in the life of a church—not numerical growth. Church leaders must redefine what is termed a “win,” not in the numbers game, but in seeing God work in the individual lives of His people. Spiritual maturity does not automatically come with age or financial status. None of those things matter to God—it is hearts He wants. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17, ESV). Humility is the defining trait of a mature Christ-follower, and with humility comes grace, because “God gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6b, ESV).

God will use anyone that seeks Him first and desires to please Him above all else. Church leaders must be thermostats that set the environment in their churches because the house of God must have the right mindset—a Biblical view of worship. “For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17, NIV). Church leaders can encourage their congregations to create a culture that desires to please Christ and seeks God’s will. It is in this spirit of unity and love that Christians are mobilized to influence the world. Borrowing a

¹⁹² Gareth J. Goossen, *Worship Walk: Where Worship and Life Intersect* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2013), Kindle edition, n.p.

concept from John F. Kennedy, Ross Parsley reminds church members of the importance of serving one another in the family of God as an act of worship:

When you evaluate a church from a family perspective, it changes the way you analyze everything. Love becomes the motivation that guides your critique. You approach the process from a completely different paradigm. You think about what you can add to this family rather than what it can do for you. In fact, you are more willing to say hard things because you love this family and belong to it. When you size up a church as a consumer and base your assessment on what that church can offer you, it creates an unhealthy frame of reference. This consumer paradigm forces us to conduct an analysis of the benefits, while the family paradigm fosters a sense of belonging. One paradigm is focused on you, and the other paradigm is focused on others....God designed us to live in a community of selfless serving, sharing, and correction. The dinner table is one of the best analogies we can use to understand how the family of God might relate to one another. On Sunday mornings people should be as comfortable at church as they might be at Grandma's house. The dream is to create an environment where people come with anticipation and expectation of what God will say and do as we gather for worship.¹⁹³

Parsley suggests thinking of worship in church as being gathered around a “family worship table” in an effort to encourage “every age-group to embrace people at different points on the age continuum.”¹⁹⁴ Daniel Block speaks to the Scriptural basis of worship and states:

Instead of worship uniting God's people, conflicts over worship have divided them. In the hubbub over worship styles, I sometimes wondered if we have explored seriously enough what the Scriptures have to say about acceptable worship....Our challenge, then, is ensuring that even when forms of worship are culturally determined, the principles underlying them are biblically rooted and theologically formed.¹⁹⁵

In his lecture, Charles Billingsley suggest the importance to “educate people on the subject of worship.”¹⁹⁶ Everyone is ingrained with a desire to worship, but not everyone worships in the

¹⁹³ Parsley, *Messy Church*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, Kindle edition, n.p.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Billingsley, *How to Bring About Transition in Your Church* (Liberty University Video Presentation, Lynchburg, VA: 2017), www.liberty.edu, accessed November 9, 2017.

right way or to the correct object of worship. In light of this, Greg Laurie poses some thought-provoking questions:

Young or old, are we going through the motions, comfortable and complacent, consuming some brand of cultural churchianity that has little or nothing to do with the electrifying gospel of Jesus Christ? Are we really desperate to know God, to embrace the fresh, mysterious, powerful wind of His Holy Spirit? Revival, after all, is not about human plans, programs, campaigns, or particular denominational movements. It comes from the real revolution that only God can bring.¹⁹⁷

Perhaps the Youngbloods capture the sentiment best in their hit song, “Come Together”: “If you hear the song I sing, you will understand (listen!). You hold the key to love and fear all in your trembling hand. Just one key unlocks them both; it is there at your command. Come on people now, smile on your brother; everybody get together, try to love one another right now.”¹⁹⁸ The Bible has much to say about this, so church leaders must accurately teach Bible studies in order to renew minds on the Biblical meaning of worship.

The Word is powerful and with the Spirit’s help can sharpen the church’s focus on what it means to be a true worshiper. Jesus says, “A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24, NIV). God seeks true worshipers that worship in spirit and in truth. Without spirit, worship becomes idle, meaningless ritual with no passion for God. Without truth, worship itself becomes the idol, an aimless, self-gratifying pursuit of emptiness. The human race was made to worship and will worship something—if it is not the true God, it is another god of some sort.

¹⁹⁷ Laurie and Vaughn, 23.

¹⁹⁸ The Youngbloods. 1967, 1969. “Get Together,” by Chet Powers. Recorded in 1966 at RCA Victor’s Studio B in New York City. Track 4 on *The Youngbloods*. Amazon Music streaming audio.

There is no such thing as a non-worshipping human being. The Prophet Isaiah poignantly records God’s message concerning the futility of idolatry:

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing? People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen are only human beings. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and shame. The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal; he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.” From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, “Save me! You are my god!” They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, “Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?” Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?” (Isaiah 44:9-20, NIV).

Again, the human heart is prone to worship something, and anything it pursues in the place of God can be considered an idol and thus considered false worship. Idolatry is the tap root from which many sins spring forth. Believers should never shortchange their heart or lives with worship of gods that cannot satisfy or fulfill. God is greater than all. Believers should seek worship renewal that combines a healthy balance of spirit and truth and gives God His rightful priority—worship on earth the way it is in Heaven.

Perhaps the final two-thirds of the Pentateuch would look different had the Exodus generation succeeded in modeling true worship for the younger generation, mentoring them in

the ways of the Lord. Sadly, they perished in the wilderness, because only two men, Caleb and Joshua, trusted fully in the Lord. Jensen presents some staggering numbers about this generation who spent their lives marking time and died without entering the Promised Land:

Figuring 1,200,000 (600,000 of both men and women) as having to die in 14,508 days (thirty-eight and one-half years), gives eighty-five per day. Figuring twelve hours per day maximum for funerals, gives an average of seven funerals per hour for all thirty-eight and one-half years, a continuous foreboding reminder of God's punishment upon them....The history of Numbers records very few events of these transitional years, for in a real sense they were years of void; one generation of Israel's sacred history was quickly dying off, and its rising youth as yet had no history at all. But though the period lacked in events, it did not lack in its significance as a transitional period.¹⁹⁹

Deuteronomy would not have needed to be written if the Exodus generation lived out the truth and taught the next generation to rely on God. This was also true during the time of King Saul and young David. Dr. Robert Bakss recounts the failure of the previous generation to lead from the front:

When David came out to fight against Goliath, he was fighting the giant that should have been fought against and killed by the previous generation –“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth” (1 Samuel 17:33)....Throughout my life and twenty-five years in the ministry, I have at times had the overwhelming sense that some of the battles I have fought were never mine in the first place. Sometimes I think I am fighting a battle that was supposed to be fought by my predecessors. Every Goliath we do not kill will live to terrorize our children and their children...What we do not do or say, win or fight for, our children will be left to deal with. David's example stirred the heart of the generation to follow him in as much as they were quite willing to take on the giants of their own generation.²⁰⁰

Like Caleb and Joshua before him, David did not allow his faith in God to waver in the midst of an impossible circumstance. Goliath is slain by the power of Almighty God through His

¹⁹⁹ Irvin L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 119.

²⁰⁰ Bakss, *Worship Wars*, Kindle edition, n.p.

obedient servant and future king, David. Today's Christians must embrace the opportunity to demonstrate God's power in their lives as a model for the next generation.

When the church fails to model the virtues of a spirited-filled life, the only option is a self-centered pursuit. The world offers so much on its buffet of choices. Sadly, this concept has trickled into the way churches shape programs—full of activity with little or no food for the soul.

Kathleen Chapman writes,

Our postmodern world indoctrinated children into believing everything is about them. Worship is one of the few things where the focus is completely off of them. Worshiping God is focusing only on God...The unspoken, but increasingly common assumption of today's Christendom is that worship is primarily for us--to meet our needs. Such worship services are entertainment-focused, and the worshipers are uncommitted spectators who silently grade the performance...Taken to the nth degree, this instills a tragic self-centeredness.²⁰¹

Mike Cospers in *Rhythms of Grace* identifies the tendency for today's generation seeing worship as something to attend rather than participate. He writes:

We have been taught in our churches and in the Christian marketing subculture around us to treat music as another product to consume—just as we have the rest of our faith. If something does not meet our preferences, we have learned to discard it, join another church and buy a different CD. We have learned to be spectators on Sundays—listening, enjoying, and critiquing—but the Bible unapologetically calls us to be participants.²⁰²

Hustad highlights concerns over worship based on preferences in the Church Growth movement and its effects on the spiritual life of the church:

...a new standard for worship based on the statistically determined preferences of a certain age group....is evidence of a tragic decline in the spiritual health of the church, which has been infected with the unchristian spirit and appetites of our time....while worship should bring joy, it is not designed for purposes of giving pleasure or of stimulating the emotions; it is *work* which places physical and cognitive demands on the worshiper....Worship music style is the most explosive

²⁰¹ Kathleen Chapman, *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship: How to Keep Them Close to God for Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 30.

²⁰² Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 163.

issue in churches today....Popular music styles have changed with each generation, yet this is the first time they have threatened to divide families at the worship hour! It may be remembered that the boomers are not really strangers to the church; they were part of that young crowd who insisted on writing their own songs and singing those pop-style musicals in the 60s and 70s. As I remember it, church leaders allowed them to enjoy their own preferences and listened to their performances, without asking them to learn the historic, lasting music of the church or even the hymns and gospel songs enjoyed by their parents.²⁰³

In *Story Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History*, author Robbie Castleman takes an exhaustive look at the patterns of worship throughout the lives of God's people and demonstrates God's purpose and plan. He makes a keen observation:

When worship is designed for congregational taste and preferences, however, God as the mediator and center of the worshiper's intent is easily lost. Services of worship can become storefront windows advertising the attractions of a community instead of an offering of the congregation's gifts intended for God's acceptance and pleasure, centered on God's glory. Worship that is pleasing and acceptable to God can be offered in many different styles; style itself is not the issue....worship itself is evaluated not by the satisfaction of personal preference but by its acceptance by God as pleasing and honoring to him.²⁰⁴

Haydn Shaw captures Jesus' words in the sermon on the Mount in a very sobering light and reminds readers the priority of Jesus' desires, which always trump the preferences of man.

He cares if we and our church are seeking first his Kingdom, and then he adds all the other things he wants to give us (see Matthew 6:33)...it is about what Jesus wants and not what you prefer. That is what aging gracefully rather than turning into "grumpy old men" is about—getting over ourselves and losing ourselves in people and purposes that matter. Church is a great place for losing ourselves, but it is a bad place for finding happiness. If you can't get that sorted correctly, church will make you grumpy.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Hustad, 306-307.

²⁰⁴ Robbie F. Castleman, *Story Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁰⁵ Shaw, 220.

Pastors must challenge their members to get away from the idea that worship is a noun and start seeing it as a verb. So many folks in church have become accustomed to Sunday worship—not everyday worship. A.W. Tozer addresses this:

Come 9:00 A.M. Monday morning, if you do not walk into your office and say, “The Lord is in my office and all the world is silent before Him,” then you were not worshipping the Lord on Sunday. If you cannot worship Him on Monday, then you did not worship Him on Sunday. If you do not worship Him on Saturday, your worship on Sunday is not authentic. Some people put God in a box we call the church building. God is not present in church any more than He is present in your home. God is not here any more than He is in your factory or office.²⁰⁶

Twenty-first-century church leaders must revitalize worship for all generations and get back to the basics of what it means to truly worship God. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944, defined worship by saying, “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”²⁰⁷ In other words, worship is revelation and response. God expects worship from his children. Part of worship is the offering of service to Him. Through Bible study, Christians come to the realization of what they are to do for Him—His will for their very lives.

Pastors must get themselves and their congregations turned onto a steady diet of the Word of God with a contagious, Spirit-filled passion. This in turn will fuel a common zeal in accordance with knowing and living God’s Word from a pure heart and a sincere faith that equips them to empower others. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s words still speak volumes for today’s church:

²⁰⁶ A. W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2009), Kindle edition, 125.

²⁰⁷ Martin H. Manser, ed., *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 407.

Let the churches stop trying to outstrip each other in the number of their adherents, the size of their sanctuary, their abundance of wealth. If we must compete, let us compete to see which can move toward the greatest attainment of truth, the greatest service of the poor, and the greatest salvation of the soul and bodies of men. If the Church entered this type of competition, we can imagine what a better world this would be.²⁰⁸

The world longs to see God at work in the lives of His people. The lost are chasing empty pursuits that will leave them desolate. When the church truly worships God, it becomes a catalyst for evangelism. John Piper explains how worship is the end goal of evangelism and mission:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship does not. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man... worship is the fuel and goal of missions...with all the change in the world, that has not changed. Worship has always been and will always be the ultimate purpose of God in the universe. It has always been the fire that fuels our passion to reach peoples who do not worship the true God through Jesus Christ.²⁰⁹

In order to be effective in worship ministry, pastors must continually be led by the Spirit of God as they follow Christ day by day as personal worshipers, leading by example and pointing others to the cross and preparing the church for Christ's return.

The Psalmist writes, "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:18, NIV). The next generation needs Christian role models who show them what true worship of God looks like. Through a Biblically based, spiritually vibrant, intergenerational ministry, the Body of Christ is able to foster relationships that bridge generation gaps. The younger generations bring vitality and creativity; the older generations provide wisdom, support,

²⁰⁸ Clayborne Carson, Susan Carson, Susan Englander, Troy Jackson and Gerald L. Smith, eds., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume VI: Advocate of the Social Gospel, September 1948 – March 1963* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 583-584.

²⁰⁹ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd Ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010). Kindle edition, n.p.

and consistency.²¹⁰ All working together in unity with truth and grace brings glory to God and sustains spiritual vitality of the members and the church as a whole. This responsibility has always existed throughout human history dating back to the Genesis account aforementioned. This is the process of discipleship and it occurs in relationships. Sharp suggests that the mentoring relationship begins in a family the environment. “Traditionally, the incubator for mentoring in all aspects of life has been the family unit: from learning basic survival, how to communicate, how to relate to others, to learning the tools and techniques of a trade toward ongoing sustenance—whether the arena was a cave, a rural outpost, a medieval village, or a modern home.”²¹¹ With the many fractured home environments today, “We need mentors, fathers, mothers, older brothers and sisters who will teach the next generation that they are accepted and loved even in the midst of conflict, correction, and challenge.”²¹² The mentor must first provide an environment for the mentoring relationship to grow. There is certainly a level of intimacy required in the mentoring relationship in order for influence to affect change. Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer add:

Relationally intentional environments practice one-on-one relationships. Larger and smaller gatherings will never provide all that is needed for real transformation. What the larger groups begin through teaching, worship, and encouragement is completed by God in individual conversations...Jesus often preached to large crowds, but the most compelling conversations with individuals were informal and seemingly unplanned.²¹³

Jesus provides a perfect example in His mentoring the disciples. While there were certainly hundreds of Christ’s followers who were true disciples, there were twelve select few in whom He

²¹⁰ McIntosh, 201.

²¹¹ Tim Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts: Helping Others Find Their Voice* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011), Lifeway e-Reader, n.p.

²¹² Parsley, *Messy Church*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²¹³ Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), Kindle edition, n.p.

invested a considerable amount of time. Of these twelve, the “inner circle” of Peter, James and John formed a more intimate relationship. This type of mentoring relationship involves a certain level of selflessness, a great deal of time and effort with return that may take years to manifest. John Maxwell offers sage advice for leaders who wear the mentoring hat, “Mentoring is a mantle that they wear willingly, and they strive to add value to others. They value it because they have transitioned from chasing a position of success to pursuing a role of significance.”²¹⁴ In their desire to develop and transform others, mentors can selflessly empower future leaders with success in professional and personal life. They are rewarded with seeing their legacy continue on and hopefully develop future mentors that continue mentoring others. This is discipleship in its truest form and church leaders have the responsibility to equip the Boomer saints to do this work of relational ministry. Haydn Shaw suggests:

What do I want to do in retirement? is not a Christian question. A better question is, What exciting adventures might God have for me, where I can get caught up in his great plan for the world and feel the power of his holy purpose blow through me, so that every day is rich with meaning and every trip or time of leisure provides refreshment and joy along the way? We have been telling young people for twenty years that their generation could be the difference makers, that their lives could be big and they are dreaming too small. It is time to tell their grandparents the same thing.²¹⁵

Amy Hanson recognizes the potential among Boomers for making an eternal investment in the final quarter of their lives:

What it could be if we started recognizing the potential for Kingdom impact lying dormant among older adults. What it could be if we reshaped our churches to be more intergenerational, with a focus on reaching all age groups, equally. What it could be to see people in their fifties, sixties, and seventies finding their way to God and grabbing hold of the salvation only He offers. What it could be to call people out of a self-focused retirement lifestyle and into something much greater. Let’s

²¹⁴ John C. Maxwell, *How Successful People Lead: Taking Your Influence to the Next Level* (Nashville: Center Street, 2013), Kindle edition, n.p.

²¹⁵ Shaw, 41.

dream about what could be—and then let us go make it a reality. Seventy-eight million boomers are waiting.²¹⁶

In light of the great opportunity that lies before the twenty-first-century church, Boomers should be challenged to stay engaged in the worship life of their churches and utilized for the Kingdom of God. “Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord” (Psalm 102:18, NIV). Church leaders can challenge Boomers in their midst to Stay Alive for Christ in the final quarter of their lives and make the most significant impact in history. “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:14, NIV).

²¹⁶ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research pertained to the Baby Boomer generation, including their significant impact upon American and Christian culture and the challenges they face as they enter second adulthood. These challenges include the financial and emotional stress of caring for aging parents, raising adult children (and in some cases becoming surrogate parents for their grandchildren), and retiring from a career only to return to work. Boomers are redefining the concept of retirement as they seek significant ways to make a meaningful contribution to the world.²¹⁷ They hold great potential for making an encore comeback in the final quarter of their lives.²¹⁸ Understanding the way Boomers perceive themselves in the twenty-first-century world and church will better equip church leaders to minister to their needs, dispel any misconceptions they may have about their role in the body of Christ, and encourage them to reengage in the worship life of the local church.

Design

The qualitative historical research design was used to identify the existing literature concerning Baby Boomers' influence on American and Church culture, including many of the unique challenges they face in second adulthood and ways they perceive to be marginalized within the local church. In keeping with Creswell's definition of qualitative research, this research design approached a social or human problem with an inductive method of data analysis, while allowing the researcher to make interpretations as to the meaning of data and its

²¹⁷ Halvorsen and Emerman, 34.

²¹⁸ Moen, 9.

importance.²¹⁹ “The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information.”²²⁰ The use of qualitative historical design to gather data from various experts in the fields of sociology, gerontology (i.e., the study of aging), church growth, and ministry, along with the Biblical examples and mandates to equip twenty-first-century church leaders to reengage Boomers into the worship life of the church through an intergenerational, encore ministry for eternal impact and significance.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study are:

RQ1: In what ways do Baby Boomers perceive themselves as marginalized in the local church?

RQ2: In what ways can church leaders reengage Baby Boomers in the local church for an encore ministry?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses considered in this study are:

H1: Baby Boomers perceive themselves to be marginalized in the church due to age-segregated stereotypes in terms of ministry role exclusion, insensitivity to needs, and technology aversion.

H2: Church leaders may reengage Baby Boomers for an encore ministry through worship collaboration, ministry role validation, and relevant inclusion in the local church.

²¹⁹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 4th ed.* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 4.

²²⁰ Creswell, 186.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Understanding the way Boomers perceive themselves in the twenty-first-century world and church will better equip church leaders to minister to their needs, dispel any misconceptions they may have about their role in the body of Christ, and encourage them to reengage in the worship life of the local church. Ministry methods must be adapted beyond existing church programs to ensure relevance to Boomers is maintained.²²¹ Several books, journal articles, and concept papers about their significance and impact in the church were written and forecasted the challenges of engaging them in the worship life of the church. However, the means by which these concepts could be implemented were quickly overshadowed by a focus on the emerging Millennial generation and efforts to reach them. The unintended consequence was a marginalization of Boomers' role within the church. Program-oriented applications for church growth changed to meet the spiritual needs of the emerging adults (i.e., Millennials), but at the same time failed to adapt senior adult programs and ministries to equally nurture and spiritually develop Boomers entering their retirement years.²²² *Religions* journal posits, "the large boomer generation represents a potentially significant volunteer resource for congregations. But current research on boomers and congregational life provides little information about this age cohort for engaging them in community ministry."²²³

This qualitative historical study examined literature from various experts in the fields of sociology, gerontology, church growth, and worship ministry in an attempt to educate and equip

²²¹ Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²²² Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 99.

²²³ Wolfer et al, 159.

twenty-first-century church leaders to minister more effectively to Boomers and inspire them to reengage in an intergenerational, encore ministry for eternal impact in God’s Kingdom.

Ways Boomers Perceive to Be Marginalized in the Local Church

First, it is important to understand the idea of the generation gaps, which exists among all generations. Boomer perceptions are greatly influenced by them. Gary McIntosh offers a succinct description of this generation gap in his book, *One Church, Four Generations:*

Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church:

The struggle that has taken place in the last fifty years between generations is due in part to the intersection of two major trends: longer lives and rapid change. The pace of change has created a “generation gap” and “technology gap” in knowledge and experience. Longer lives have meant more generations are interacting together; they each push their own views and agendas. In such an environment, it is not surprising that there are conflicts and misunderstandings between generations.²²⁴

In his influential book on the Jesus Movement written in the early 1970s, Billy Graham explained this phenomenon with eloquent clarity:

There has always been a gap between the generations—and there always will be. I rather expect it was meant to be. It is normal and wholesome and good when the young are taught to respect age, and when the older generation, assuming the responsibilities that come with age and experience and wisdom, understand the young and guide and support them without stifling. When this gap is distorted, blown up out of proportion, and even misused, it becomes an unhealthy and abnormal situation.²²⁵

Graham provided helpful spiritual insights and observations on the Jesus Movement to help bridge the generational gap and assist his conservative Christian readership in understanding this modern movement of God among the emerging generation of Boomer youth in the seventies.

Generational gaps exist and are created by major world events and a myriad of different circumstances, which each succeeding generation has faced in the span of their lives.

²²⁴ McIntosh, 201.

²²⁵ Graham, 35.

Another reason Boomers feel marginalized is that today, many churches are focused on reaching the next generation. Michelle Van Loon the marginalization of the older generations in the ministry of many churches: “Decades ago, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers pushed to create churches centered on the young, nuclear family. Sadly, this ministry model now excludes many of us. Having outgrown the core programs, we are left to usher, teach fourth grade Sunday school, or attend committee meetings...while churches work to reach a younger generation, some of their graying members are stepping away.”²²⁶ One of the reasons is age discrimination, a common practice within America. “Unlike some societies which revere and respect their senior population, the United States seems to practice ageism, i.e., systematic discrimination against older people strictly because of their age, as it does other types of prejudice.”²²⁷ Citing Boomer think tank and consulting firm, *Age Lessons*, the authors note “workplace concerns for Baby Boomer employees are redundancy, relevance, and resentment from younger co-workers.”²²⁸ This fear of redundancy concerns Boomers because of layoffs; relevance because Boomers feel behind the times; and resentment from the younger generations because the “old folks” will not get out of the way. Barbara Raynor also describes the issues of ageism as it relates to Baby Boomers. She expresses that the majority of marketing dollars target the under-fifty population leaving those over fifty years of age to “not only *feel* invisible to and disregarded by society, but, from a marketing standpoint they actually *are*.”²²⁹ Boomers already feel somewhat marginalized by the culture and they are often unintentionally marginalized in the periphery of church ministry in preference of reaching younger families with children. In

²²⁶ Van Loon, 31.

²²⁷ Gibson et al, 55.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Raynor, 59.

Boomer Spirituality, Methodist Pastor Craig Miller notes Boomers need “to be challenged, to have opportunities to serve, and to be valued.”²³⁰ Retiring Boomers in second adulthood face an identity crisis, which Michelle Van Loon exposes in today’s church as a Boomer “midlife crisis of faith...questioning not *their* [italics mine] beliefs, but *their* [italics mine] role in the body of Christ.”²³¹ Bob Buford addresses the crisis of Boomers in “second adulthood.” He explains the importance of their desire to make the final half of their lives count by seeking significance over success. He suggests a “huge potential within churches to care for the social needs of the nation, especially within the ranks of Baby Boomers who will be looking for more meaningful options to retirement.”²³² When churches recognize their needs and address them, Boomers are empowered and fueled with inspiration to serve. If left unnoticed and disengaged in the worship life of the church, there is a great possibility that Boomers will also retire spiritually or seek significant ways to serve outside the church.

Marginalization coupled with an insensitivity to or ignorance of Boomer needs in second adulthood further exacerbates their disconnect in many churches. In an effort to bridging the age gap in working with older adults, Dr. Cody Sipe suggests investing in your knowledge base can achieve desired results. “The most important ‘tool’ is to be well versed in the needs and desires of an older constituency.”²³³ In his article on recruiting and engaging Baby Boomer volunteers, Ken Culp explains their unlimited potential for volunteer service and their need and expectation “to see the results and impact of their volunteer service.”²³⁴ He goes on to highlight that it is the

²³⁰ Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²³¹ Van Loon, 31.

²³² Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²³³ Sipe, 26.

²³⁴ Culp III, 1-2.

impact of service that motivates Boomers to serve. This demonstrates that they not only want to contribute something of significance, but they need to feel valued, needed. If they feel marginalized, it is because they do not feel utilized. Concerning motivations for recruiting and engaging Boomer volunteers, Ken Culp reminds leaders that “this generation focuses on *quality* rather than *quantity*. Boomers need to understand the impact of their afternoon spent volunteering rather than receive a reward for a number of hours they have served.”²³⁵

When churches are unaware of the unique challenges Boomers face in second adulthood, they unintentionally communicate that Boomers are not valued as a ministry resource. “They are navigating multiple personal and family transitions such as family caregiving, individual health, parenting adult children, rightsizing their living environment, and economic challenges. Developmentally, most are renegotiating their own identities, intimate relationships, and the sense of significance.”²³⁶ Many Boomers “lead busy lives and have significant caregiving responsibilities—either for their parents or grandparents, their children or grandchildren—or both.”²³⁷ There are similar financial hardships shared between Boomers in second adulthood and Millennials in emerging adulthood. Phyllis Moen’s notes: “Both generations are moving beyond conventional life stages to—they are not quite sure what. It is hard to plan for the future when expected verities like education leading to stable employment, seniority leading to employment and economic security, and retirement leading to a carefree golden age no longer apply. The linear, predictable life course has become nonlinear and unpredictable.”²³⁸ Moen puts a positive spin on second adulthood with the term, “encore adulthood,” outlining ways to engage the

²³⁵ Ibid., 4.

²³⁶ Wolfer et al, 161.

²³⁷ Raynor, 61.

²³⁸ Moen, 5.

Boomer generation in meaningful work in their retirement years as they learn to adapt to the ever-changing culture.

Another reason Boomers feel marginalized in the local church is because some churches group them in with their parents in more traditional senior adult ministries. Boomers do not want to be perceived as old. As Hansen exclaims, “They have a strong desire to not ‘get old’ and are doing all they can to stay young.”²³⁹ Haydn Shaw echoes this sentiment, he writes “nothing turns Boomers off faster than making them feel old or irrelevant. Many of them have twenty or thirty years left in their second adulthood.”²⁴⁰ Amy Hanson explains: “The ages we assign to people are merely numbers, and they do not completely define the people themselves. We are talking about a philosophy of ministry in which older adults are engaged in meaningful service and Kingdom impact that have the ability to transcend age.”²⁴¹ If churches do not connect Boomers to meaningful service through an encore ministry, they will seek significant ways to serve outside the church. Craig Miller also mentions, “Churches and nonprofits that are willing to embrace ministry with boomers will be critical providers of support for boomers and their families as they face an uncertain future.”²⁴² McIntosh reflects the need for church leaders to implement a paradigm shift in connecting with the churches newest seniors:

The Boomers support people-oriented programs, and as leaders they will evaluate old ministries against this value. Programs and projects that can show they are honestly making a difference in people’s lives are being kept; those that cannot are being discontinued... Boomers do not give their money to pay bills. They give it to support vision. Boomers can never get away from the ’60s when they poured their lives into big concerns like civil rights. Churches that continue to give Boomers a big vision will get their time, their money, and their emotional support. We have

²³⁹ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁴⁰ Shaw, 219.

²⁴¹ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁴² Miller, *Boomer Spirituality*, Kindle edition, n.p.

the “cause of all causes,” but we must learn to communicate it with passion and in the language of today if we want to attract the Boomers’ commitment.²⁴³

Boomers hold great potential for an encore performance in second adulthood, especially in the worship life of their churches. Boomers can be reengaged in second adulthood through worship collaboration, ministry role validation, and relevant inclusion through an encore ministry.

Ways Church Leaders Can Reengage Boomers in the Church

An encore experience exceeds expectations and concludes a performance with an even stronger finish. There exists a generation of people alive today that need to be rallied for an encore as they enter the final quarter of their lives—the Baby Boomers. This generation includes people born between 1946-1964, so labeled by their booming birth rates, which averaged 4 million a year following the end of World War II until 1965 when births significantly declined. It is estimated that “by 2030, one in five Americans will be sixty-five or older,” as the last of the remaining seventy-six million Boomers crescendo into their senior years.²⁴⁴ Based on the averages, they will live thirty or more years longer and they hold great potential for ministry impact in and through the local church.²⁴⁵ Also, they have many growing challenges to navigate, such as caring for aging parents and adult children along with financial stress and adapting to the many fast-paced changes of the new millennium.²⁴⁶ Therefore, when twenty-first-century church leaders understand the unique challenges of Baby Boomers, they may better be able to minister to them. Additionally, witnessing the vitality of reengaging Boomers in the worship life of the church, especially as they transition through retirement and into second adulthood,²⁴⁷ informs

²⁴³ McIntosh, 226-227.

²⁴⁴ Colby and Ortman, 1.

²⁴⁵ Shaw, 219.

²⁴⁶ Moen, 109-110.

²⁴⁷ MacDonald, 84-88.

their decision-making regarding existing church programs and whether they need to be sustained or revitalized.²⁴⁸ Great potential exists for churches to engage Boomers who are looking for more meaningful options to retirement.²⁴⁹ Michelle Van Loon challenges status quo by encouraging intergenerational ministry that welcomes everyone around the worship table. She believes this approach will signal the way for the future health of the Church. “The Boomer attendance decline is forcing many congregations to rethink the way they have done church. Those in their second adulthood are most aware that they do not have time to waste on church busywork. They may in fact be signaling the way forward for all of us.”²⁵⁰ The senior adult ministry programs that brought the church to its current state will not sustain it moving forward. There must be an intentional commitment among church leaders to harness their potential and use it for God’s glory. The Psalmist writes, “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come” (Psalm 71:18, NIV). This responsibility has always existed throughout human history dating back to the Genesis account. Boomers can be reengaged in second adulthood through worship collaboration, allowing them to have input in the ministries of the church. Concerning Boomers, Hargrave also mentions:

We are a generation of people who have traditionally looked at life in terms of what makes us feel good. The hedonistic mantra of “if it feels good, do it!” originated out of our mouths. Scripture, on the other hand, teaches us that life is not about feeling good or being happy; rather, it is about growth: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12: 2). The tap on the shoulder, if you will, is God commissioning us boomers for a work to be performed in this part of the twenty-first century. It is not, however, only about loving and caregiving for our aging parents, instructing and guiding our adult children, or even learning how to cope

²⁴⁸ McIntosh, 226-227.

²⁴⁹ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁵⁰ Van Loon, 31.

with resources stretched to the maximum. It is about our growing into the image of Christ and learning how to be his people, eager to do his will.²⁵¹

By validating their respective roles in ministry leadership and connecting their passion to an encore ministry that meets the needs of the church and community will ensure they remain relevant and active in the worship life of the church,

Boomer attitudes and actions must be transformed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Twenty-first century church leaders who are educated and equipped to reengage Boomers in second adulthood will enable them to leave a lasting impact for Christ in the final quarter of their lives. The challenge remains as it does in every generation—to serve God faithfully and sustain a spiritual legacy for generations to come. Amy Hanson, a leading expert on aging and a Christian Boomer, captures the importance of revitalizing senior ministry “to call people out of a self-focused retirement lifestyle and into something much greater.”²⁵² In his book, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future is Bright*, he writes:

What do I want to do in retirement? is not a Christian question. A better question is, What exciting adventures might God have for me, where I can get caught up in his great plan for the world and feel the power of his holy purpose blow through me, so that every day is rich with meaning and every trip or time of leisure provides refreshment and joy along the way? We have been telling young people for twenty years that their generation could be the difference makers, that their lives could be big and they are dreaming too small. It is time to tell their grandparents the same thing.²⁵³

This is a wonderful challenge for church leaders to ensure they do not write off this new generation of senior adults.

²⁵¹ Hargrave, 27-28.

²⁵² Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁵³ Shaw, 41.

Church leaders can reengage Boomers in the worship life of the local church by understanding the need to increase their generational intelligence. As Haydn Shaw addresses the need to dispel assumptions that get in the way of meaningful and effective conversations:

Each generation has unique spiritual strengths God wants to use. Each generation also has temptations that hold back their spiritual growth. That is why we cannot grow in our own faith and relationships if we do not understand how the things that go without saying change our relationship with God....generations relate differently to God and often fight about those differences based on their unique generational characteristics....We struggle to love people we do not appreciate or understand. When we understand other generations, we will quit judging them and start learning from them. Generational intelligence does not make the key teaching of Jesus to “love one another” easy, but it does make it easier.²⁵⁴

Understanding other generations, acknowledging their strengths and weakness, helps everyone appreciate and respect one another in the context of a growing relationship with God and others in the local church. Generational intelligence offers insights to assist church leaders in navigating the multigenerational worship landscape presented in the twenty-first-century church where other tools have fallen short. Generational intelligence often sheds light on why intergenerational worship is not working and what things to consider in fixing it.

In addition to generational intelligence, church leaders must value and leverage the Boomers’ wisdom.²⁵⁵ Carmel Joe highlights the implication of Boomers leaving the workforce in retirement. Their massive numbers coupled with the wisdom and experience they hold, have resulted in a huge gap in the continuity and knowledge base for sustainability in organizations.

The oldest members of the post-World War 2 baby boomer generation — born between 1945 and 1963 — are soon nearing retirement, reducing or reviewing the extent of their participation in the workforce in the future. This has significant implications, especially for organizations relying on knowledge workers’ expertise and experience, as within this cohort resides knowledge that is valuable to organizations.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 19-20, 24.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 41.

²⁵⁶ Joe, i, 133.

His study seeks to find ways for knowledge transfer from Boomers to their Gen X and Millennial replacements through information and communications technology (ICT). The wisdom and knowledge afforded by the Boomer generation underscores their potential for utilization in other fields during retirement. Culp suggests a new term to replace the old, “Call me a *master* not a senior citizen.”²⁵⁷ He also mentions that labels matter when recruiting Boomer volunteers:

The skills needed and the role to be performed should be the focus of recruitment efforts and marketing strategies. Boomers should not be asked to volunteer; they should be asked to apply their skills to a particular task in order to meet a community need. Usage of the word “volunteer” should be reduced (to Boomers, the word “volunteer” conjures up negative images of a certain type and generation of people, e.g., retired women or mothers)... Boomers will not respond to generic appeals for volunteer service. Rather, they will be more likely to serve a cause, fulfill a need, or execute a specific task, based upon their individual interest and skill set. Because they were born into large families and education in big classes, Boomers are conditioned to work on committees, participate in group activities, and enjoy team efforts. All of these have widespread appeal to Boomer volunteers.²⁵⁸

The concerns of losing Boomer wisdom and experience are not exclusive to secular society. Just as businesses need to capture and communicate that wisdom to the next generation, so also the church should utilize the resource that Boomers provide.

Craig Miller explains what has shaped Boomers’ beliefs and informed their relationships to others and to society. In his book, *Boomer Spirituality*, he educates, encourages, and equips Boomers and their church leaders with resources to assist them in connecting to the church and growing spiritually in the last quarter of their lives. He notes a crucial component in ministering to them:

More and more boomers are faced with the heartrending decision of how to take care of parents who can no longer live on their own. Should they bring parents into their own house, find a retirement home, or put them in a rest home? As boomers

²⁵⁷ Culp III, 5.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

and their parents age, these are some of the hardest choices they will ever face....Any group that seeks the help of boomers to do its work—whether it is the church, the Red Cross, or any community organization—needs to realize that boomers are far more likely to be willing to pay to get something done than to volunteer their time. Anyone who asks boomers to come to a meeting or an activity had better make sure it is worth their time or that person will never see those boomers again. Because boomers recognize how little time they have to develop meaningful and lasting relationships, their most important commodity is time, not money.

Amy Hanson, a leading expert on aging, speaks to the great opportunities church leaders have in engaging them:

These baby boomers who revolutionized youth ministry are now entering their fifth and sixth decades of life. They are marching into their later years at an unprecedented rate. And the urgency of ministry with them is just as great as when they were young—perhaps even greater. The stakes are high. There is much to be gained for Christ or much to be lost. And it starts with whether or not we choose to ignore or embrace this aging reality.²⁵⁹

Boomers will retire spiritually if church leaders do not engage them by connecting them in the worship life of the church pre-retirement. Wolfer suggests establishing this practice based on continuity theory, which supports patterns of behavior are sustained through one's life and especially in the midst of transitions. He states, "patterns in preretirement lend to higher probability to volunteering postretirement."²⁶⁰ Bob Buford notes that "retirees have not proved to be the fertile source of volunteer effort we once thought they would be. They cut their engines off and lose their edge."²⁶¹ His mentor, Peter Drucker believed that "if you do not have a second or parallel career in service by age forty-five, and if you are not vigorously involved in it

²⁵⁹ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 3.

²⁶⁰ Wolfer et al, 161.

²⁶¹ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

by age fifty-five, it will never happen.”²⁶² This presents a crucial need for churches to engage Boomers in ministry efforts prior to their retirement.

In his article on recruiting and engaging Baby Boomer volunteers, Ken Culp explains their unlimited potential for volunteer service as they “seek volunteer opportunities as a means to remain active, use their skills, and pursue interests that they have not previously had time to do.”²⁶³ He goes on to highlight that it is the impact of service that motivates Boomers to serve. This demonstrates that they not only want to contribute something of significance, but they need to feel valued, needed. Concerning motivations for recruiting and engaging Boomer volunteers, Ken Culp makes a surprising observation that supports the need for churches lead the way. “Two-thirds of volunteers 55 and over discovered volunteer opportunities through their involvement in faith communities, because someone asked them, or through participating in their children’s activities.”²⁶⁴ Boomers “lead busy lives and have significant caregiving responsibilities—either for their parents or grandparents, their children or grandchildren—or both.”²⁶⁵ Craig Miller echoes these burdens, “Boomers find themselves caught in a web of demands from a variety of sources—from work to home, from children to parents to friends and relatives, and on and on it goes.” There are similar financial hardships shared between Boomers in second adulthood and Millennials in emerging adulthood.

Bob Buford addresses the crisis of Boomers in “second adulthood.” He explains the importance of their desire to make the final half of their lives count by seeking significance over

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Culp III, 1-2.

²⁶⁴ Culp III, 4.

²⁶⁵ Raynor, 61.

success. “looking for more meaningful options to retirement.”²⁶⁶ In addition to this driving passion, they do not want to be perceived as old. Hansen further explains:

These adults are dealing with a number of issues, including concerns regarding retirement, grandparenting, caring for aging parents, and preparing for their own aging. For the most part, they are healthy, active, and quite capable of serving God in some remarkable ways. They have more discretionary time and may naturally be searching for what their purpose will be as they begin to phase out of their careers. They have a strong desire to not “get old” and are doing all they can to stay young.²⁶⁷

Terry Hargrave believes the Boomer generation to be one of heartfelt caregivers that has the potential to become the greatest generation and “once more change the world.”²⁶⁸ Boomers will live 30 or more years longer. They hold great potential for ministry impact in and through the local church. Haydn Shaw posits, “What are they going to do with all that extra time? This additional thirty years is one of the greatest changes in the history of the human race. Should not you and your church start talking about how you will help them figure it out?”²⁶⁹

Halverson and Emerman flip the cultural perception of Boomers, underscoring the valuable resource they can be for building communities and contributing greatly to society in their “encore careers.” The wisdom and experience from the Baby Boomer generation offers valuable insights and creative solutions to social problems. In an editorial written for the *Wall Street Journal*, entitled “The Killers in Our Midst,” the authors provide a thoughtful observation concerning the need for institutions like the church to revitalize efforts at reaching troubled youth:

This is one price we are paying for the decline in what the late sociologist Peter Berger called the “mediating institutions” that help individuals form cultural and

²⁶⁶ Buford, *Halftime*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁶⁷ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁶⁸ Hargrave, 11.

²⁶⁹ Shaw, 219.

social attachments. These are churches, business and social clubs like the Rotary, charitable groups, even bowling leagues, and especially the family. Government programs can never replace these as protectors of troubled young people....Recognizing this reality is not a counsel of despair to do nothing about mass shootings. But revitalizing these private institutions of social capital is crucial to reversing the cultural decline at the root of so many of America's ills.²⁷⁰

Boomers are living longer and are able to revolutionize the traditional concept of aging. The authors emphasize the “need to issue an urgent call to them to offer their talents, skills, and experiences to solve some of our largest problems.”²⁷¹ They believe Boomers will answer the call if they are needed and valued: “Local nonprofits, grassroots organizations, and community leaders should make the call for people in the encore stage of life to give back through work and community service...Aging is a fact of life, but it brings more than chronic disease and death—it holds a wealth of talent, skills, and experience, treasure that should be used to benefit older adults and, to a higher degree, benefit society as a whole.”²⁷² Culp add, “Boomers will retire earlier, stay healthier, be more physically active, and live longer than any previous generation. They have greater wealth and more expendable income than other generations of retirees.”²⁷³ This does not even take into consideration the motivating factor of faith shared by Christian boomers.²⁷⁴ Their faith strengthens their desire to serve.

Amy Hanson also underscores the need and opportunity for churches to engage the Boomers in the church because of “the constant flow of people turning sixty, seventy, and eighty for many years to come....As long as we discover effective ways of reaching these adults, our

²⁷⁰ “The Killers in Our Midst.” New York: *Wall Street Journal Online*, August 4, 2019. Accessed August 5, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-killers-in-our-midst-11564958792>.

²⁷¹ Halvorsen and Emerman, 34.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁷³ Culp III, 2.

²⁷⁴ Wolfer et al, 162.

churches will never have to die.”²⁷⁵ Church leaders must be postured to reach Boomers by helping them understand their role in the church. In her recent book, *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, Holly Allen emphasizes the benefit and blessing of intergenerational relationships in the church. She also suggests this cannot be done through prepacked programs. Relationships matter more than simply getting things done.²⁷⁶

Engaging Boomers in an encore ministry will ensure their spiritual vitality and equally sustain the health and longevity of the church. Michelle Van Loon highlights, “Those in their second adulthood are most aware that they do not have time to waste on church busywork. They may in fact be signaling the way forward for all of us.”²⁷⁷ As previously stated, the senior adult ministry methods of the past will not address the unique needs of the Boomers and therefore must be revitalized to ensure Boomers are engaged. Hanson notes this as “a great opportunity to engage people in this age group in meaningful service opportunities as well as encouraging them to reach out to their unchurched peers.”²⁷⁸ Allen and Barnett further support this need for revitalization, because Christian churches and communities “are lamenting the silos created by age-segregated ministries.”²⁷⁹ Amy Hanson suggests “a philosophy of ministry in which older adults are engaged in meaningful service and Kingdom impact that have the ability to transcend age.”²⁸⁰ She underscores the urgency to revitalize senior ministries, “We have just a short window of time to catch these people as they are planning how they will spend their retirement

²⁷⁵ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, 12-13.

²⁷⁶ Allen, *Intergenerate*, 33.

²⁷⁷ Van Loon, 31.

²⁷⁸ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

²⁷⁹ Allen, *Intergenerate*, 17.

²⁸⁰ Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, Kindle edition, n.p.

years and how they will invest the rest of their lives.”²⁸¹ Allen also points out, “When spiritual formation primarily takes place alongside one’s own peers, a broader understanding of the church is distorted. Individuals begin to see themselves at the center of the faith community rather than part of the larger whole.”²⁸²

Another challenge for churches to help Boomers overcome is dealing with their aversion to technology.²⁸³ In an article on e-learning, Vaughn Waller, a senior instructional designer, indicates that methods of learning vary across the age spectrum. He finds that “digital immigrants” (i.e., Boomers) get used to doing something a certain way and are therefore reluctant to change. “In many cases, the learning need is not to teach someone how to do something for the first time, but to correct behaviors that come from always doing something a certain way.”²⁸⁴ Demonstrating the usefulness and convenience of e-learning will change perceptions of technology and make it effective with anyone at any age. “To avoid the perception of obsolescence, Baby Boomers need opportunities to keep up-to-date on technological changes.”²⁸⁵ Waller further suggests, “We should banish the thought that the age of the learner dictates in any way the design of the learning. Make it good and everyone will use it.”²⁸⁶ This puts the burden on church leaders to make the tech good and effective, explaining its usefulness in a positive manner. Gibson suggests another benefit of an intergenerational ministry team is “an upward mentoring system where Baby Boomer ‘mentees’ could profit from coaching

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Allen, *Intergenerate*, 46.

²⁸³ Raynor, 61.

²⁸⁴ Waller, 12.

²⁸⁵ Gibson et al., 56.

²⁸⁶ Waller, 12.

in the new technology applications from their Gen X or Gen Y counterparts.”²⁸⁷ This offers both a functional and relational advantage.

In his report on Boomers and technology for *AARP* and *Microsoft*, Michael Rogers echoes the importance of tech for Boomers to serve the need of usefulness and communication, “revealing the thoughtful and complex relationship this generation has with technology.”²⁸⁸ Boomers desire for technology to retain the human element and enhance relationships. They realize that technology has the potential to create new barriers and isolate, but Rogers argues this is more a social than technological issue.²⁸⁹ Boomers believe technology should strengthen communication, yet they are always trying to sort out whether they have legitimate concerns about social changes, or are merely showing their age.²⁹⁰ “Boomers see technology as a tool, not a tyrant” and believe healthy boundaries are important to limit its misuse.²⁹¹ These discoveries were intended to help Microsoft forecast needs and project technological applications for Boomers in the twenty-first century; however, they also provide insights that equip church leaders to more effectively design and present technology to Boomers in a way that engages and connects with them.

²⁸⁷ Gibson et al., 57.

²⁸⁸ Rogers, “Boomers and Technology,” 3.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 10-12.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 14.

²⁹¹ Ibid, 15.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a brief summary of the study, which includes a synopsis of its purpose and the procedures for answering the research questions and hypotheses. In addition, it will provide a summation of the findings, their relationship to prior research, and specific limitations of the study. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research to further assist twenty-first-century church leaders to effectively reengage Boomers into the worship life of the church.

Summary of Study

This qualitative historical study examined the existing literature to bring awareness to twenty-first-century church leaders in an effort to guide them in seizing the opportunity to reengage retiring Boomers into the worship life of the church through an encore ministry. Boomers are often unintentionally marginalized in the periphery of church ministry in preference of reaching younger families with children. Furthermore, retiring Boomers in second adulthood face an identity crisis, seeking relevant roles in the life of the church. If left unnoticed and disengaged in the worship life of the church, the possibility exists that Boomers will seek significant ways to serve outside the church. Great potential exists for churches to reengage Boomers spiritually as they are looking for more meaningful options to retirement.

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine ways church leaders may address reaching the newest seniors in the church (i.e., the Baby Boomers) along with the changes they must implement in ministry to be effective at reengaging them in the worship life of the church, so that they do not retire spiritually. Boomers have made an enormous impact in both American and Christian culture and they should be rallied for an encore performance for Christ as they enter the

final quarter of their lives. There must be an intentional commitment among church leaders to harness their potential and use it for God's glory. As twenty-first-century church leaders understand the unique challenges of Boomers in second adulthood, they are better equipped to minister to them and determine whether existing church programs need to be sustained or revitalized with the goal of bringing everyone together in the family of God and continue making disciples for the Kingdom.

Summary of Procedure

This research study addressed two specific research questions. One, in what ways do Baby Boomers perceive themselves as marginalized in the local church? Two, in what ways can church leaders reengage Baby Boomers in the local church for an encore ministry? From the previous research questions, two hypotheses were developed for further exploration. First, Baby Boomers perceive themselves to be marginalized in the church due to age-segregated stereotypes in terms of ministry role exclusion, insensitivity to needs, and technology aversion. Second, church leaders may reengage Baby Boomers for an encore ministry through worship collaboration, ministry role validation, and relevant inclusion in the local church. In an effort to address these research questions and hypotheses, this qualitative historical study examined the existing literature and surveys from a variety of experts in the fields of sociology, gerontology, church growth, and worship ministry. In addition, several Biblical examples and mandates were provided to bring awareness to twenty-first-century church leaders. This effort served to educate and equip them to reengage Boomers in second adulthood ministry and change Boomer perceptions concerning their role in the worship life of the church, presently and in the future.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

Boomers are once again redefining the concept of retirement as they seek significant ways to make a meaningful contribution to the world. They have always made an impact in every stage of their lives. Therefore, it is no surprise they hold great potential for an encore comeback in the final quarter of their lives. Church leaders must be better equipped to minister to their unique needs in second adulthood. They are navigating challenges unique to the twenty-first century and pastors must dispel any misconceptions they may have about their role in the body of Christ, encouraging them to reengage in the worship life of the local church and not retire spiritually. Ministry methods must be adapted beyond existing church programs to ensure relevance to Boomers is maintained. Senior ministries require a massive overhaul to connect Boomer desires and passions for making a significant impact in their communities and churches.

Many Christian Boomers have an identity crisis in their local churches because the emphasis has been primarily on reaching the younger generations with families. While this worked for several years, the research shows that moving forward the church has to function more like a family and less like an institution. As pastors seek the Lord for guidance in prayer and the Word, they are also in need of wisdom from sociological resources to increase their generational intelligence among the many generations to which they minister. This information will aid to improve their understanding of each generation's strengths and weaknesses while also facilitating better communication cross-generationally. Intergenerational worship is practical, and it is also Biblical. Church leaders have an enormous responsibility and opportunity to provide this Christ-centered family environment for all ages to experience God's love and grace.

If church leaders can connect Boomers into the worship life of the church prior to retirement, they will ensure Boomers do not retire spiritually. Boomers do not want to be

perceived as old. Pastors can honor and validate their role in the church by recasting the senior ministry as an encore ministry that connects them to significant needs and intergenerational relationships, whereby they can interact with and mentor younger generations. Church leaders must maintain communication of impact of service, rather than expecting them to simply volunteer their time. Boomers seek significance in second adulthood and ministry opportunities will not appeal to them without seeing the impact of their service.

As digital immigrants, Boomers have a cautiously optimistic view of technology and many of their aversions stem from social more than technological issues. Church leaders that can help them navigate those aversions through upward mentoring, such as Millennials helping them and showing them how to use it and its benefits, will dispel any negative connotations they may hold. They also might help the younger generations establish more healthy boundaries with digital devices and strengthen relational connections.

The mandates of the Scriptures have not changed and will not change. The need for making disciples today is greater than ever. If the Boomers embrace this responsibility, they will most likely have the greatest impact for Christ in the final quarter of their lives. The church will be unified as a family and prepared for the immanent return of Christ.

Limitations

While this study did address other generations, it was primarily limited to the impact and influence of the Baby Boomer generation in America over the last sixty years, leading up to and into the twenty-first century. This study focused on one aspect in the scope of generational intelligence. Although generational intelligence is an all-encompassing topic requiring a greater understanding of all generations, the understanding of the Boomers was the thrust of this study.

It is encouraged for church leaders to read Shaw's *Generational IQ* and Strauss & Howe's *Generations* for a more exhaustive look at generations intelligence and generational theory.

Another limitation of this study is that research focused on the more optimistic aspects of Boomers and aging. There also exists some disparaging literature on Boomers, such as Gibney's *A Generation of Sociopaths*; however, for the purpose of this study, literature of a positive outlook was selected as it best served to answer the underlying research questions and hypotheses. While some of the critical literature concerning Boomers was consulted, it did not serve to sustain the positive aspect of the writer and was therefore eliminated in the course of this writing.

At the outset of the study, it was noted that "current research on boomers and congregational life provides little information about this age cohort for engaging them in community ministry."²⁹² Therefore, research on the congregational engagement of Boomers was demonstrated from the resources conducted by Amy Hanson, Haydn Shaw, Gary McIntosh, Craig Kennet Miller, and Holly Catteron Allen in their recent books and/or concept papers. In addition to these, several articles from secular and sacred leadership journals were helpful to fill in the gaps. The studies utilized in this thesis were within ten years and many less than five years, with the exception of extant works like Strauss & Howe, Graham, the Bible and related commentaries from renown church pastors, authors, and Christian leaders. The *2020 U.S. Census* is currently in the process of being taken. While every attempt was made to get the most up-to-date studies, there are some currently in the works that will be produced after this work is completed. The rapidly changing environment of present-day America has demonstrated the need to stay current as the generational landscape continues to develop and change—especially

²⁹² Wolfer et al, 159.

in light of the coronavirus pandemic. It will be interesting to note how much technology has come to play in culture at the moment and just how this has forced those digital immigrants to assimilate.

The final limitation within a study of this kind is noting exceptions to the broad generalization of age cohorts. For example, not every Boomer necessarily aligns with the broad generalization mentioned in this study. As Shaw notes, “Generalizations make sense when talking about thousands of people, but not when talking about one person—the person you know. Applying a valid statistical generalization to one person is stereotyping.”²⁹³ Generalizations are helpful to note trends that distinguish one generation’s ideas, experiences, and influences from another generation. This kind of information helps to inform church leaders on the need to understand the unique generational lenses that exist among five generations.

Recommendations for Future Study

Much more can be written on this subject, especially as the culture continues the change and move into the digital age in lightning fast speeds. Generational intelligence provides a missing link that helps troubleshoot pitfalls and obstacles presented in an intergenerational context. Coupled with a spirit of humility and empathy, the information generational intelligence provides can help church leaders better understand the people to whom they minister. Haydn Shaw (*Generational IQ*) and Tim Elmore (*Generation iY, Marching Off the Map, Gen Z Unfiltered*) are the generational intelligence gurus. Their contributions in the field of sociology, namely its significance to the Christian life and church, assist today’s pastors to maintain relevance across the generational divide. Ross Parsley’s *Messy Church* is another fantastic resource for pastors to reference when leading a church through a worship transition. It

²⁹³ Shaw, 32.

is more or less a case study on intergenerational worship that can prove beneficial to pastors as well. Greg Laurie and Ellen Vaughn's book, entitled *Jesus Revolution* is another great resource that should prove fruitful for anyone looking to further their understanding of the spiritual awakening that occurred among Boomers and how it relates to the potential for another spiritual awakening among today's youth.

Pastor Gordon MacDonald's book on the twenty-first-century church is a fictional story that tells the all too real tale of many church communities today. The book is written for the reader to walk alongside an imaginary community, led by real-life pastor Gordon MacDonald and his wife, Gail, as they both discover how to meet the needs of all believers without abandoning the dreams and desires of any. The book is written from the perspective of older church members (including Boomers and Traditionalists), as if they were telling the story. MacDonald states his primary goal in writing the book is "to spark dialogue among people of all generations who love the church... convince younger generations of church leaders to be more sensitive to the older generation and their thoughts... [that] older Christians would be led—to understand why many things about the way we have made church work must change and reflect new realities."²⁹⁴ God can certainly use this resource in a small group setting to serve as a catalyst for conversations to identify fresh ways to love God and serve people. It is recommended for the context of traditionally older churches.

One of the more recent books published on intergenerational ministry, entitled *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, which is edited by Holly Catterton Allen, is another indispensable resource for understanding the different ways to bring the generations together with helpful and practical discussions for implementation. Other

²⁹⁴ MacDonald, x.

helpful resources include *Boomer Spirituality* by Craig Kennet Miller and *Who Moved My Pulpit* by Thom Rainer.

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