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## ABSTRACT

The Echo Boom: Developing Ministry in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church To Be Effective in Reaching a New Generation

by

Lyndol L. Loyd

At this time little information exists concerning the Echo Boom Generation born after 1977. Awareness of this void in generational studies prompted this study concerning the future and what it holds for the Echo Boomers specifically those in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.

The purpose of this study was to discover what current United Methodist youth ministers in Arkansas report to be the needs and values of the Echo Boom generation. The purpose was also to discover what Arkansas United Methodist Echo Boomers report to be their own felt needs and values.

The study was comprised of both quantitative and qualitative components. A researcher designed survey questionnaire method with a purposive sample was used to observe the opinions of youth ministry workers for quantitative research. A discussion format involving three focus groups of Echo Boomers made up the second portion of the descriptive measure study.

The study identified that the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church can be characterized as trusting, self-

reliant, motivated, visually oriented, narrative thinkers, spiritually open, relative thinkers, open to technology, desirous of deep relationships and optimistic. The findings also affirmed the importance of such characteristics as being incarnational, indigenous and customized in ministry to Echo Boomers. Concerning important characteristics of worship for Echo Boomers, the study reports the significance of contemporary music, laid back atmosphere, narrative preaching and usage of media and technology.

The strongest life influence was found to be friends and the most likely family situation was to come from a home where the parents are divorced.

Based upon the findings of the study, recommendations for future ministry to the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church are suggested so that they might find the church to be culturally relevant to their lives.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
THE ECHO BOOM: DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MINISTRY  
TO REACH A NEW GENERATION IN THE  
ARKANSAS AREA OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Presented by

Lyndol L. Loyd

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

Wilmore, Kentucky

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February 1, 2000

Program Date

THE ECHO BOOM: DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE  
MINISTRY TO REACH A NEW GENERATION IN THE  
ARKANSAS AREA OF THE UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

By

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May 2000

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## Acknowledgements

I offer my deepest appreciation to:

my wife, Joni. I could have never dreamed of completing this process without your love and support. I thank God for the gift that you are to my life.

my daughters, Abigail and Madeline, for loving me and letting me love you.

my parents, Lyndon and Noveline Loyd, for raising me to believe that getting a good education is important and that there isn't anything I can't do if I put my mind to it.

the congregation of Mountainside Church. Thank you for understanding and supporting me through the dissertation process even as God develops our new congregation.

Bryan Collier, for providing accountability to finish the dissertation process. I could have never made it this far without having a friend to walk through the process with me.

Burrell Dinkins and Toddy Holeman, for keeping me on track, giving me the feedback I needed and encouraging me through to the end.

Jack Meadows, for helping me make sense out of the statistical portion of my dissertation.

Dale Galloway and Ellsworth Kalas, for allowing me to be a Beeson Pastor and to share in this incredible experience.

the Echo Boomers and youth ministry workers that participated in my study.

## CHAPTER 1

## Overview of the Study

A Personal Concern Arising Out of Ministry

From June of 1993, until May of 1997, my wife and I served as the directors of the Henderson State University and Ouachita Baptist University Wesley Foundation Campus Ministry. Through this process of working with college students, my interest grew in the differences between the generations.

Most people led me to believe that the college students I worked with were members of Generation X, born from 1965 to 1976. At the same time, I found people classifying me as a member of Generation X as well. I found it difficult to believe that we could be members of the same generation.

Day after day, my observations of the students I worked with seemed dissimilar from my own college experience. We appeared to be very different people. Frustrated at first, I thought I did not have what it takes to be a campus minister because the methods of ministry I used seemed to be ineffective.

I remained fixated on the concept of the students being members of Generation X. After attending a seminar on generational differences, I came to understand that the college students entering the two universities where I worked are not members of Generation X as I

previously thought. They are considered the front end of the Echo Boom generation or Generation Y. (Childress)

Not only did I observe differences in ways we acted and responded, I also found that the programs and approaches that worked with my generation proved ineffective in reaching the Echo Boomers for Jesus Christ. It was no longer enough to plan a great program, advertise it, and expect people to attend. In ministering with the Echo Boomers, I discovered I must take new approaches.

I found that this group of students hungers for relationships and are highly desirous of authenticity. The old adage that says, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care" held true down the line for this group. If I expected students to become part of the Wesley Foundation ministry, a deeper level of relationship was required, a deeper level than was seemingly needed when I attended college less than ten years prior.

I also discovered the Echo Boomers hesitated to commit their time and resources. For example, writing a signature on a piece of paper as an agreement to attend an event or complete a task meant nothing to this generation. Interestingly enough, this group of college students could become deeply committed to a purpose if they felt enough personal investment or relevance. An Echo Boomer's commitment came only after having enough time to observe and check out the ministry for themselves.

These mindsets and personalities of Echo Boomers took a while for me to understand. The needs of Echo Boomers were clearly different than mine had been during college.

Mistakenly I based the program of the campus ministry upon the program I had participated in during college. While a wonderful program and ministry, it did not meet the needs of these emerging Echo Boomers. The needs of the current student body required me to make a paradigm shift in order for the ministry to survive as a viable outreach to the two university campuses.

Listening to the college students I worked with, I found Wesley Foundation's program missed the mark in meeting their needs. Students also reported that the churches from which they came failed to meet their needs. They spoke of finding much of what took place in church irrelevant to daily living.

I also discovered what I believe to be a lack of awareness in the church concerning the characteristics, culture, and needs of the Echo Boom Generation. This matter became all the more compelling to me after hearing a lecturer state that social scientists and researchers predict this generation to be as large or larger in size than the Baby Boomer Generation. A generation that continues to impact society because of its immense size.

From my experience of working with college students, I conceived the idea for this dissertation on "The Echo Boom: Developing Effective

Ministry to Reach a New Generation in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.”

### The Problem

A wealth of information exists concerning the generations that came before the Echo Boom Generation. There are endless books and web sites devoted to previous generations. However, little information is available on this emerging generation of American youth. Awareness of this void in generational studies prompted my interest in the future and what it holds for the Echo Boomers. This in turn caused me to ponder how ministry needs to change in order for the Echo Boomers to perceive the church as culturally relevant, especially in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church where I serve.

After conversations with the college students, I developed a hypothesis that many churches and campus ministries use outdated models of ministry. It seems the church is unable to move from aging paradigms of ministry in order to adopt needed changes. Although once successful, these models no longer remain valid in meeting the needs of the current culture.

The rate of change in popular culture advances with rapid speed, while some within the church remain fixated in the cultural past assuming that the needs and values of Echo Boomers are the same as those of previous generations. Just as the Baby Boomers are distinctly different from the generation which preceded them and require a



different approach, so Echo Boomers differ from Baby Busters. The church faces the challenge of examining the needs and values of the Echo Boom Generation and adapting its ministries accordingly in order to be perceived as culturally relevant while at the same time holding in balance the needs of other generations.

An incarnational approach to ministry signals to the Echo Boomers that the Church wants to understand who they are and meet their specific needs. Those seeking to reach the Echo Boomers must attempt to be more like them in order to gain their attention.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover what current United Methodist youth ministers in Arkansas report to be the needs and values of the Echo Boom Generation. The study also sought to discover what Arkansas United Methodist Echo Boomers report to be their own felt needs and values. From this research I suggest a ministry direction for this generation of the church for the twenty-first century.

#### Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the study.

##### Research Question One

What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report as the distinctive characteristics, attitudes, beliefs and values of the Echo Boom Generation?

##### Research Question Two

What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report as important elements in church life and that are important in effectively working with the Echo Boom Generation?

### Research Question Three

What do current Echo Boomers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report as their own characteristics, attitudes, beliefs and values?

### Definitions

Several terms are central to this study: The Booster Generations, Baby Boomer Generation, Baby Buster Generation, Echo Boom Generation, needs-based ministry, models of ministry, and perceived needs.

#### 1. The Booster (or Builder) Generations

For the purpose of this study I defined the Booster or Builder Generations as anyone still living born in or before the year 1945. This group encompasses the GI Generation and the Silent Generation.

#### 2. The Baby Boomer Generation

For the purpose of this study I defined the Baby Buster Generation as anyone born after 1945, but before 1965.

#### 3. The Baby Buster Generation

This group is anyone born from 1965 until 1976.

#### 4. The Echo Boom Generation

This generation comprises anyone born from 1977 until 1995.

#### 5. Needs Based Ministry

For the purpose of this study I defined needs based ministry as ministry and programming designed to meet the specific needs of a group of people. (For example, if divorce is high among a group of people, needs-based ministry would include divorce recovery groups and pre-marital counseling.)

#### 6. Perceived Needs

This term describes what other people discern or detect to be the needs of a specific group of people.

### Context of the Study

The study took place in congregations spread throughout the Arkansas Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church. The context covers churches of various size and demographics. The Arkansas Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church consists of 736 charges and 524 pastors.

The majority of these churches have an established United Methodist Youth Fellowship for the teenage members of their congregation. Fifty of these churches have some kind of paid youth ministry staff. The rest of the churches in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church function with volunteer youth ministry workers.

## Methodology

This was an exploratory study utilizing a descriptive measure. A researcher designed questionnaire and focus groups were used. A researcher-designed, questionnaire survey was developed for the purpose of research with youth workers. This questionnaire was based upon a review of the scholarly literature that examines what previous scholars had to say about the Echo Boom Generation.

A discussion format involving three focus groups of senior high Echo Boomers made up the second portion of the descriptive measure study. This gave the study a qualitative component in addition to the quantitative research done with the youth ministry workers. Based upon the suggestions of the Arkansas Area Youth Coordinator, youth groups were selected to utilize as focus groups for the study.

With the assistance of the local youth workers of the selected youth groups the focus groups were formed. Each of the three focus groups consisted of four Echo Boomers, ages 13-18. Youth workers selected participants based upon their perceived ability to articulate their views and values.

## Data Collection

Concerning the youth worker portion of the study, I contacted the fifty identified youth workers by letter informing them about my research project. Enclosed with the letter was an additional letter from the Arkansas Area Youth Coordinator requesting their cooperation in the

study. Enclosed with the two letters was a questionnaire survey. My letter requested that each person respond by filling out the survey and returning it to me in a provided self-addressed, postage-paid envelope.

Two weeks later, follow-up letters were sent to anyone who failed to respond to the survey asking them to please take the time to fill out the survey. Found inside the envelope was a second copy of the questionnaire, in case the original was irretrievable. The second copy was marked for identification so as not to utilize two surveys from one respondent. After completing the questionnaire, all respondents promptly received a letter thanking them for participating in the study.

Concerning the research with Echo Boomers, I set up focus group discussions with the Echo Boomers through the youth workers of the three selected youth groups. These three groups were chosen from the churches of the fifty youth ministry workers identified by the Arkansas Area Youth Ministry Coordinator. One focus group came from a large urban church youth group of over one hundred youth. One came from a medium sized church youth group with approximately fifty youth. The final group came from a smaller rural church youth group of less than one dozen youth.

Each interview took place at a local church in a casual setting, with each of the participants sitting in a circle around a table. In an approximately hour-long interview, participants were encouraged to discuss questions that asked about their views, values and attitudes

relating to their lives and the church. Their responses were recorded and encoded using special ethnographic software.

### Population and Sample

The population of the quantitative element consisted of people who are currently a youth worker in the Arkansas Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church of which there were fifty-one. The sample consisted of fifty youth workers.

The criterion for being part of the sample required that respondents served on a church staff in the capacity of youth minister. Only one respondent from each church in the Arkansas Episcopal Area was asked to respond to the questionnaire.

The population of the qualitative element of the study consisted of Echo Boomers who attended one of the churches in the Arkansas Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church identified by the area youth ministry coordinator and local youth workers. Participants ranged from 13-18 years of age.

### Delimitations and Generalizability

Because some of the people that make up the Echo Boom Generation are still quite young, it is difficult to anticipate what many of their life shaping forces are. No one can factually describe what the future holds for this generation of young people. However, this study assisted in anticipating what some early signs seem to be.

This study was limited to the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. Results of the study cannot be generalized outside of Arkansas because of the unique qualities and characteristics of the population studied. The relevance of this study is limited to churches within the Arkansas Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church.

This study does not attempt to show all of the differences between the various generations. It is only intended to assist the United Methodist Church in Arkansas in understanding the important characteristics of ministry to the Echo Boom Generation as a unique and distinctive group.

The intent of this study isn't to create an exhaustive literature search concerning the Echo Boom Generation. The pertinent literature concerning aspects of how the Echo Boomers relate to the church was reviewed as well as the literature which assists in understanding how this group fits within the general population.

### Overview

Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework for use in understanding who the Echo Boom Generation is in the context of living generations and the future of the church. It also provides a rationale for new models of ministry. Beginning with the social sciences and current church literature on the Echo Boom Generation, the literature review also presents the biblical and theological framework of the study.

Chapter 3 describes in detail the design of the study, while Chapter 4 summarizes the findings of the study. Chapter 5 reflects upon the meaning and implications of the findings. The dissertation concludes with observations of what this information means for the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.



## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

This chapter presents a review of the salient literature describing and analyzing ministry to the Echo Boom Generation. In order to facilitate an orderly presentation of the materials, the literature review is divided into five themes, which comprise the overall topic of the study.

These themes are

- (1) the differences between generations.
- (2) the characteristics, attitudes, and cries of the Echo Boom.
- (3) the future and cultural context of the Church.
- (4) the need for new models and methods of ministry.
- (5) theological and biblical grounding.

#### The Differences between Generations

To assist in understanding how social scientists classify the United States population into generational categories, the first theme of the literature review establishes a brief overview of the four widely held generational groups. These four groups consist of the Booster (Builder) Generations, the Baby Boomer Generation, the Buster Generation, and the Echo Boom Generation. Understanding the foundational differences between each of these groups assists in understanding the necessity for new models of ministry for the Echo Boom Generation.

The literature indicates the generation to which a person is born greatly influences individual values, attitudes, lifestyle, and worldview. Research also claims the most important shaping factors of a generation are the historical, social, economic, and political events occurring in one's adolescence and young adulthood ("From Generation"). In a simpler manner, William Strauss and Neil Howe state, "a generation is composed of people whose common location in history lends them a collective persona" ("Exploring History" 2).

Although some variances of opinion occur concerning the starting and ending dates of each generation, most authors' information agrees within a couple of years time span (Childress; Strauss & Howe; "From Generation"). Because it seems to best represent the overall abiding opinion of the generational timeline, this dissertation used as its framework the categories established by Leadership Network (Childress). Under this theme of generational differences, the literature explains what the demographic information reports concerning each of these distinct groups of people within the general population.

### The Booster (Builder) Generations

The GI Generation was born before 1929. This group of people is in their mid-60s and older. They are survivors of the Great Depression as well as World War II. This group is noted for having received the educational benefits of the GI Bill, as well as participating in post-war economic growth. But perhaps the GI generation's greatest claim to

significance is that they are the mothers and fathers who produced the generation known as Baby Boomers (Childress).

The Silent Generation was born between the years of 1930-1945, people who make up this generation are in their mid-50s and early 60s. They are the smallest generation in the current population. Born during the Great Depression and World War II years, they share many characteristics with the GI Generation (Childress).

Because the GI Generation and the Silent Generation share so many common characteristics, demographic researchers have combined the GI Generation and the Silent Generation into one grouping, which is popularly known as being the Boosters or Builders. Combined by most social scientists, the two groups are the smallest group in the population and continue to grow smaller.

Characteristically, Boosters are loyal to institutions and denominations. They make up the membership and leadership base of most churches and denominations. As members of the Booster category continue to die, people with similar values, life experiences, and worldviews are not replacing them in society (Childress, "From Generation").

Major Family Status: Nuclear and Extended, parents married

Major Influences: Automobile, Radio

Major Issues: Security, Stability, New Deal, WWI & WWII, GI Bill,

Children

(Childress, "From Generation").

### The Baby Boom Generation

Born from 1946-1964, these people are currently in their 30s and 40s. At a total of seventy-six million, the Boomers make up one third of the entire United States population. Because of their sheer large numbers they reshape everything within society. This effect is witnessed by observing the social change of the 1960s and 1970s. Because this group is known for a strong entrance of women into the workforce, they are noted for having predominantly two-income households. For this group, work is life.

In contrast to the Boosters, Boomers are non-institutional and rights oriented. (Childress; "From Generation").

Major Family Status: Nuclear, some divorce, mother at home

Major Influences: TV, Sputnik, Computer

Major Issues: Identity, Growth, Meaning, Materialism, Drugs, Race &  
Gender Equality, Vietnam

(Childress; "From Generation").

### Baby Busters (Generation X)

Baby Busters were born between 1965 and 1976. Their numbers within the population approach approximately 41 million. They are noted as being the first post-modern and global generation. Key advents for this generation include cyberspace and the information super-highway. For this generation, experience is everything. Large

percentages come from broken homes, so they consider friends to be their family. Many remain single and choose to stay that way. Unlike the Boomers, the Busters find there is life beyond work. Busters also reflect a more pervasive pragmatic attitude. (Childress, “From Generation”, Celek & Zander 21).

Major Family Status: Fractured, Divorce Common, Latch Key Kids

Major Influences: Cyberspace, Information Highway

Major Issues: Identity, Community, Relationships, Drugs, Violence,  
Gangs, Suicide, Environment

(Childress; “From Generation”).

#### Echo Boomers (Generation Y and Millennial Generation)

The final demographic group observed in the population, the Echo Boomers comprise 64 million of the United States population. Born after 1977, they are currently twenty-two and under. Largely parented by others, the Echo Boomers epitomize the phrase “latch-key kids.” Within this generation exists a much greater economic contrast between poverty and affluence. They value high-tech connectedness with an orientation toward entertainment. A huge chasm exists between their world and that of their grandparents (Childress).

Major Family Status: Broken Families, Multiple Divorce

Major Influences: Advanced Technology in all forms

Important Issues: Violence, Sexual Awareness, Drugs, Relationships,  
Environment, Family Breakdown  
(Childress; “From Generation”).

The Characteristics, Attitudes, Cries,  
and Prophecy of the Echo Boomers

Size and Impact

According to Strauss and Howe, the noticeable presence of the Echo Boom Generation began with the advent of the “Baby on Board” sign hanging from the rear window of vehicles (“Exploring History”). Jim DeBrosse maintains that by the year 2010, the Echo Boomer presence will be formidable with their population reaching 30.8 million members at the height of their teenage years, making it the largest teen population in United States history. “Like their Boomer parents, Generation Y will someday put its lasting stamp on American culture and civilization,” claims DeBrosse (1).

“They have been suckled on Sesame Street and Disney, spoon-fed Snoop Doggy Dog and Madonna, and are ‘mainlining’ the Internet. But this same generation is coming of age when society is putting on the brakes and trying to forge a new path,” states Wendy Murray Zoba (9).

Research shows the Echo Boomers are keenly aware of life’s complexities as they follow on the heels of their Generation X brothers and sisters. Violence, racial tension, increased sexual awareness, and technical sophistication make up their ever-present reality. Further

research argues that the Echo Boom experience includes dealing with the apathy, general discontent, and hostility of the Xers. Considered by many to be the torchbearers of the next millenium, the Echo Boom Generation takes on a rather mystical significance (“Millennials Commitment”).

### Personal Qualities

Research reflects Echo Boomers as being mostly trusting, liberal sorts who believe in second chances. They act as preservers of the social conscience (“Millennials Commitment”). These qualities connect closely with their self-reliant attitudes.

Concerning Echo Boomers, Don Tapscott reports, “They began to develop self-reliance at an early age: they can find what they want and what they need quickly, easily, and honestly. Many express that they don’t feel they need protection . . . from anyone or anything” (87).

Although self-reliant and trusting, Hoy states that even with the technological advancements as well as the idealism and activism of their parents, Echo Boomers face a world that seems to be getting worse and worse rather than better and better. Disillusionment increases for the Echo Boomers because traditional places fail to provide the answers they search for (8).

Reporter Jim DeBrosse explains that despite the overarching attitudes of Generation X, Echo Boomers remain doers and achievers, one characteristic they share with their great-grandparents (2). For this

reason youth culture researchers anticipate the Echo Boomers becoming more interested in the political arena, whereas their predecessors showed a bent toward working after school to earn spending money (“Millennials Commitment”).

This plays directly into the question of commitment levels. Research suggests, “Millennials will be a whole lot more open to commitment than Xers ever were. They will be more trusting. They will respond to programs that call them to commit, especially when there is a focus on collaboration and not competition” (“Millennials Commitment”).

Among other qualities possessed by Echo Boomers, research shows the group holds a favored status within the culture. They are portrayed as somehow special. Already visible in movies, there exists an almost angelic characterization of Echo Boomers as opposed to the view of the Xers (“Millennials Commitment”).

Favored status also shows up as evidenced in an overall protective attitude concerning the generation. Steve Gerali reports this group of children to be “a wanted, precious, planned-for and protected generation” (1). Echo Boomers are “coming of age at a time when the adult community has determined the conditions of childhood are unacceptable. It has become the nation’s top priority” (“Exploring History”).



“This generation’s pulse runs fast. Bombarded by frequent images, they are in need of continual ‘hits’. The remote control symbolized their reality; change is constant; focus is fragmented,” states Zoba (2).

According to Zoba this is a generation with a vast complexity of experiences. Zoba contends, “They are jaded, having a ‘been there, done that’ attitude, nothing shocks them” (2).

John Buckeridge explains that Echo Boomers do not process information the same as previous generations. They approach and do many things differently than previous generations (“Millennials Commitment” 3). According to current research Zoba concludes, “They process information in narrative images like Nike ads. Their ‘detectors’ are always on. They don’t trust adults” (2).

According to Graeme Codrington, statistics also tell us this generation does not know even the basics of the Christian story. Echo Boomers are so unfamiliar with Christian concepts that an increasing number of people can no longer be classified as non-Christian, but should rather be thought of as pre-Christian (9).

### How Echo Boomers View Their World

Part of understanding how to minister to Echo Boomers means examining their views on various matters such as spirituality, religion, truth, technology, family, and relationships.

### Spirituality and Religion

When it comes to this generation, “Spiritual exploration begins with the assumption that it doesn’t start with Christianity” (Childress). Other works bear out the same conclusions (“Millennials Commitment”).

Seven in ten Echo Boomers say religion is important to their lives. It appears that they are more open to the church than Xers. Research also reports Echo Boomers remain open to experience God especially in ways that involve them in corporate experiences (“Millennials Commitment”).

“As their world increasingly revolves around electronic communication (high tech), they will be longing for an opening to intimate relationships (high touch). They will want to find and enjoy a closer and personal relationship with God” (“Millennials Commitment”).

### Truth and Knowledge

On matters of truth Gerali argues that this generation will be the first to grow up under the umbrella of postmodernism. For this reason, he concludes Echo Boomers will believe that everyone’s feelings are as valid and as authoritative as God’s word, science, or anything else (3).

Hoy points out that this exists because many people have rejected the beliefs and thoughts of the past two centuries concerning truth and knowledge while failing to replace them with anything of substance. Hoy also asserts that for the Echo Boomer belief exists as a matter of experience and not rational thinking. “Life has become a subjective

experience with little or no substance and meaning,” writes Hoy (9).

Other research supports Hoy’s conclusion that as high as 60 percent of people believe absolute truth cannot be known (“Four Cries”).

### Media and Technology

Shifting to the Echo Boom outlook on media and technology, Don Tapscott maintains that a new world exists for this generation to explore which continues to grow in its attraction (87). Media is the major influencing institution of the 1990’s. Media surpasses even family, schools, friends, and church in its level of influence over Echo Boomers. (“Four Cries”1).

As evidence of this phenomenon research explains, “MTV has been successful in its goal to create a world wide youth culture. The average teen today listens to four hours a day of music and will see 23,000 hours of TV by the time they leave high school”. Echo Boomers attempting to understand the world they live in use this infusion of media to provide “maps of reality” (“Four Cries” 1).

Besides music and television, there is also the internet to consider. Speaking of the information super-highway’s impact on Echo Boomers Tapscott says, “This virtual world contains much of the world’s knowledge, millions of their peers, countless virtual places to discover, and thrilling, enchanting, and bizarre new experiences unimaginable when the TV generation was growing up.” Thus dubbed the “Net Generation,” Tapscott explains Echo Boomers grow up virtually always

knowing how to use a computer, compared to former generations which are characterized as sometimes hesitant to utilize technology (87).

### Family and Relationships

Family issues are important in understanding the Echo Boomers. Family issues include the ever-changing family structure, parents taking less responsibility for their children's spiritual formation, and a rise in Echo Boomers with special needs due in part to the effects of fetal drug and alcohol abuse during their mothers' pregnancies. Research also notes the complexities of daily living for Echo Boomers because of the high incidence of divorce amongst their parents ("Children Today's").

The cry of the changing family remains one of the loudest of the Echo Boomers. Research shows the family traditionally remains the strongest cultural force and greatest influencer of teens, but with the changes witnessed in today's culture this is no longer true. Three thousand Echo Boomers a day see their parents divorce, while 40 percent of Echo Boomers go to bed at night in a home where their father is not present ("Four Cries").

Concerning relationships, Allan Martin asserts, "The primary need (Echo Boomers) expressed was the desire to have significant adults relationally involved in their lives" (2). Buckridge concurs, stating that the Echo Boom Generation desires greater levels of relationships. Buckridge further asserts that for the Echo Boomer, bigger is not better,

because they desire intimate, long-term, protective kinds of relationships (1).

### Prophecy Concerning the Echo Boom Generation

William Strauss and Neil Howe believe that the future looms as a time of turning and trial for the Echo Boomers. “Whether the crisis will be won or lost will depend in large measure on (the Echo Boomers’) teamwork, competence and courage” (327).

Research projects the Echo Boomers will combine peer pressure with optimism to bring solutions to problems. The literature also suggests the Echo Boomers will create a more wholesome, upbeat, conformist culture (“Millennials Commitment”).

Strauss and Howe concur; “Today’s Millennial children should bask in adult hope, remain upbeat themselves, and reject the unraveling-era cynicism that surrounds them” (327).

### The Future and Cultural Context of the Church

#### The Future

Commenting on the status of the church, Childress proclaimed, “The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be. The thinking that brought you to where you are today will not take you to where you need to be tomorrow” (1). Folk wisdom seems to concur with Childress’ statement, “Even if you are on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there” (1).

Childress asserts, “An organization faces discontinuous change when its past doesn’t prepare it for the future” (1). Childress made these statements in light of new paradigms and changing ways of doing things.

According to futurist Joel Arthur Barker, paradigms heavily influence our perceptions. “A paradigm is a set of rules and regulations (written or unwritten) that does two things: (1) it establishes or defines boundaries; and (2) it tells you how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful” (Barker 32).

In turn, when people are good at using paradigms they resist changing them. For this reason, Barker explains, an outsider usually creates a new paradigm. Going further, Barker points out that those using the old paradigm must step out in faith to the new paradigm, for no assurances exist in the early stages that it works. Barker suggests those who adopt the changing paradigm find new ways for problem solving as an outcome of the shift in thinking. Finally Barker notes that new paradigms level the playing ground for those who held an advantage with the former thinking (198).

Fellow futurist Wendell Bell echoes Barker’s call to the future by maintaining, “Although we of the present generation have obligations to both past and future generations, our obligations to future people are far greater than are our obligations to past people” (38).

On the horizon, Hoy asserts this means the church needs to interact with the present culture. However, Hoy cautions against

simulation of culture (9). According to Johnny Sertin, “We need to create a church in such a way that it serves what’s coming next not what has been” (17).

In light of what is coming next, Allan Martin contends the church may have waited too late for Generation X. Martin argues, given the slow movement of the church bureaucracy in the past, Echo Boomers will be on their way out before the church comes to grips with Generation X. Martin maintains now is the time to act for future generations (1).

### Thinking Like a Futurist

Futurist scholar Peter Bishop believes understanding our assumptions about the future can increase our ability to conceive alternative plausible futures. Which he in turn believes leads us to understand the implications of those futures for others and ourselves and begin to work with others to increase the chances of the preferred future occurring (42).

Bishop responds to the question “Can we know the future?” by asserting, “If by know you mean that you can predict what will happen, then the answer is obviously no. Efforts to predict the exact future of human systems are so prone to error that they are futile. However, if by know you mean what might or could happen, then the answer is a qualified yes” (39). Bishop continues, “Futurist hold that we can know the majority of plausible futures, if we relax our assumptions and preconceptions of what is possible” (40).

Concerning the accuracy of making a good forecast of the future, Bishop states, “Accuracy and precision are supposed to make the best forecasts, particularly quantitative ones. People even ask futurists how often they are correct. The question indicates a misunderstanding of applied futurism” (40).

Bishop points out that fortunately, the indeterminacy of the future also gives us the time and opportunity to exert our own influence. Bishop contends that trends, events, and choices all influence the future equally. “The future is a combination of them all; leaving out any one truncates the range of plausible futures” (40).

Defining which attitude toward the future is most often correct, Bishop asserts that optimism, pessimism, transformationalism, and fatalism are equally correct attitudes because the future is not singular, but plural. Bishop writes, “The point is that all views need to be considered to get a full, well rounded view of the real future” (41).

### The Church’s Cultural Context

Naisbitt and Aburdene contend the one thing people of today share with those of the past millennium is living in a time of great change. They also report when people experience such times of enormous change, interest in spirituality intensifies (271).

Although spirituality rises in times of change, Hoy believes danger exists concerning the future of the church (2). Francis Schaffer asserts, “We are facing present pressures and future manipulation which will be



so overwhelming in the days to come that they will make the battle of the last forty years look like child's play" (5).

Contributing to the rough times ahead, research cites the reality of the church having to compete with other options such as leisure and sporting events. Literature also notes the American culture's consumer mentality which encourages church hopping from congregation to congregation and results in difficulty establishing deeper relationships with Echo Boomers and their parents ("Children Today's ").

Author Gary DeLashmutt notes that not only does greater competition result, but many churches attempt to minister to a type of family which no longer exists. DeLashmutt writes, "We should do more than just follow the culture; we should instead point the way" (1).

Hoy agrees, contending the task of Christianity is relating and applying to the fast-moving culture of the Echo Boomer. Hoy warns against relying solely upon prayer, although he considers prayer vital. Hoy argues the church needs to use its brains. He calls for serious thinking rather than quick fixes for what he believes ails the culture (9). "It is time to do the hard work of listening to the world around us, reflecting our finding in the light of God's word and then, as a result, engaging our culture," states L.J. Francis (11).

The changing culture of the new millennium exists in the context of an age of mission where Christianity's influence declines daily. The literature also reminds us of the global, urban, and multi-cultural nature

of the church's context. "Twenty-first century leaders and churches understand and engage the culture proactively at the point of need." ("Five Windows").

### The Need for New Models and Methods of Ministry

#### Why New Models?

"We waste time when we use inappropriate models simply because they are available," claims author Stanley Davis (194). Hoy concurs with Davis, arguing that fewer Echo Boomers are responding to the traditional religion of their parents. Hoy asserts the church no longer remains effective in reaching the Echo Boom Generation (8). Zoba attributes this problem to the differences between Echo Boomers and their Baby Boomer parents' culture (11).

Hoy further suggests that many churches exist as irrelevant in the eyes of Echo Boomers. Hoy believes buildings, songs, and language leave Echo Boomers confused, bored, and disillusioned. Hoy contends that the infrastructure and traditions of many churches while effective at one time now fail in facilitating relationship with God (8).

Adding to the strength of Hoy's argument, Leith Anderson claims liberal Christians often desert revelation for relevance, while conservative Christians forsake relevance for revelation. Anderson believes neither is consistent with the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Anderson says, "To be like Jesus we must not compromise any of the supernatural nor fail to be relevant to our world and generation"

(119). Hoy maintains those in ministry need to be students of people and trends, constantly updating ministries to be effective. However, Hoy also warns against the danger of compromise in the pursuit of relevance (1).

Other sources report churches need to be culturally indigenous in their approach to ministry. Churches are challenged to pay specific attention to the local culture in which they minister. Research challenges ministers to customize their worship, teaching, and outreach ministries for Echo Boomers by building strictly around their needs according to specific cultural and demographic settings (“Five Windows”).

Zoba explains the need for incarnational ministry by reporting on the marked drop-off rate in church attendance once young people graduate from high school. According to Zoba, the church leaves Echo Boomers vulnerable to separation from the church when they fail to relate to them on their own level (5).

#### Models, Methods, and Qualities of Ministry

Codrington believes no single program or method can effectively reach the Echo Boom Generation. He contends effectiveness requires a multiplicity of methods (1).

Research claims multiple methods work best when based upon the needs of the people. Congregations sense their needs are heard when need-based ministry takes place. They suggest need-based ministry as a method of allowing for multiple stages of faith development and a process which fosters growth and maturity at each stage (“Five Windows”).

Multiple authors report on the necessity of relationships in ministry to the Echo Boom Generation. Codrington insists these relationships must build upon time spent listening to the Echo Boomers (2). However, Gerali suggests rather than spending time in relationships the church currently exalts program over people, reflecting a value of Baby Boomers, not Echo Boomers (Gerali 1).

Codrington sees the emphasis upon relationships as being most pertinent to evangelism. “Friendship evangelism is a lifestyle. It is evangelism by showing others what it really means to live with Christ as our Lord and Savior. People will be drawn to that” (2). Codrington contends presenting the gospel by way of a lifestyle and in the context of friendship reaches the Echo Boomers (2).

Allan notes these relationships do not come easy. Echo Boomers want people who will be there for them for a long period of time. Allan contends this generation wants to know how long a person plans on staying around before entering into deep relationships (Buckeridge, et al. 2).

Another key method widely found in the literature on ministering to Echo Boomers is the use of narrative techniques. Current findings suggest people today struggle with grasping truth at the rate information moves. For this reason ministry returns to the usage of narrative story form to engage the Echo Boomers (“Generation Fault”). Codrington suggests narrative creates the chance to communicate in a common

language when expressing such concepts of Christianity as “grace, redemption, unconditional love, freedom, justice and forgiveness” (8).

“The key to reaching this person is to tell them the story of the Gospel, without application or explanation. Let them begin to work out the implications for themselves,” suggests Codrington. Simply telling the story of Christ and then asking what they think allows the minister to guide Echo Boomers to a better understanding of truth, according to Codrington (9).

Finally, Codrington reminds us that God chose to reveal much of himself in narrative story form. He suggests by telling the story of our life and development, we naturally tell a part of God’s story of how he wants to work in the world (9).

The review of scholarly literature reports usage of the Internet as another key method for working with the Echo Boom Generation. Gerali cites the Echo Boomers’ cyber literacy as the key consideration at this point. Gerali points to the prevalence of chat rooms and e-mail as common forms of Echo Boomer communication. “On-line ministries are going to be really important,” states Gerali (Buckeridge, et al. 3).

Wellman and Gulia go so far as to suggest that ministry usage for the Internet include the formation of support groups for social, physical, and mental problems along with information about treatments, practitioners, and other resources. The two authors also hail the

Internet's potential for making connections without regard to race, creed, gender, or geography (5).

Interactive learning closely aligns with usage of the Internet as a ministry tool. NetFax suggests a shift to interactive learning is taking place in ministry because it allows for an increased sensitivity to the different learning styles of children ("Children Today's").

A review of the literature also reveals an emphasis upon a seeker model of ministry to Echo Boomers. Stefan Bruggemann concludes that worship experiences need to be formulated for seekers. Bruggemann believes Echo Boomers need creative methods of evangelism which welcome them "as they are". Being a seeker, Bruggeman suggests, must be allowed and legitimized (1).

The review of literature suggests service as an important method of Echo Boomer ministry. Older Echo Boomers long to get involved in corporate action where they bring about change in society. The literature contends service feeds the Echo Boomers' sense of significance ("Millennials Commitment").

In relation to service, Echo Boomers work best on projects they can do with others. There is an emphasis on doing things in teams. Collaborative learning is being stressed ("Millennials Commitment").

Finally, literature shows Echo Boomers hold an expanded view of what time of the week ministry takes place. The literature claims people today feel that too much emphasis is placed upon Sunday morning.

“People are seeking spirituality seven days a week” (“Assessing Landscape”).

### Theological and Biblical Grounding

Research found in the review of literature calls for a change in the way the church approaches emerging generations. Scripture gives a theological grounding for this change in Matthew 9:16-17.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. (NIV)

Commentator William Barclay suggests Jesus held a keen awareness that he brought with himself new ideas and certainly a new concept of truth. Barclay also contends that Jesus knew the difficulty of getting people to accept new ideas so he used pictures the Jewish people would understand (337).

Barclay reminds us how often in churches when a new idea is presented the criticism comes, “We never did that before.” For this reason Barclay insists Jesus argues that there comes a time when patching is foolish so it becomes necessary to do away with something and begin again. (338).

Barclay also believes Jesus’ example calls us to be flexible enough to receive new ideas. Barclay decries the church’s multiple attempts to pour new things into old molds. Barclay argues against the misplaced direction of housing modern activities in ancient church buildings,

reading from Scripture translated in Elizabethan English, and praying in language which better fits a different century (340).

Fellow commentator Myron Augsburger compliments Barclay's reflections upon the passage by stating the challenge of new ideas is a call to objectivity which frees us from prejudice and opens the mind to the Spirit's guidance (123). "It may be that we would do well to remember that when any living thing stops growing, it starts dying. It may be that we need to pray that God would deliver us from the shut mind," writes Barclay (340). Barclay maintains we live in a changing, expanding world. He contends this is Jesus' warning for the church not to be the only institution living in the past (340).

On the other hand, Martin uses Galatians 3:26-29, "There is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female . . ." (NIV), as the theological basis of his argument for needs based ministry to the Echo Boom Generation. Martin suggests the first century church was aware of the potential for alienation and found the inspiration in Jesus Christ to transform that culture. Martin believes Christians followed the lead of Christ by seeking deep, authentic relationships regardless of age, sex, race, class, or language. Looking to the first century as a model, Martin believes today's Christians must also do what is necessary to build relationships with younger generations (3).

Literature also supports the idea that effective ministry to the Echo Boom generation is built upon the idea of incarnational ministry.



Scripture strengthens this notion at several points. Most notable perhaps is the incarnation of Jesus Christ found in John 1:1-5, 14.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV)

Commentator John Fredrikson suggests, “In this act of incarnation, eternity and time, the divine and the human, salvation and creation, are reconciled” (43). Going further, Fredrikson upholds that in becoming flesh, God subjected himself to all of the conditions of the human existence. He argues that those who make up the church have turned their backs on great areas of real, fleshly life that could be used to reach unchurched persons (44).

Fredrikson admonishes, “In our own country, vast church buildings, TV programs, and burgeoning statistics could blind us from accepting the reality and implications of the Word that has become flesh” (44). According to Fredrikson, God made flesh opens endless possibilities for us (44). Fredrikson also asserts that the church has taken far too lightly the areas of fleshly life and needs to reclaim the earth in the name of Jesus who has come in the flesh (45).

Depicting incarnational ministry, Barclay speaks to the words of John 1:14 as they concern how people view God. He states, “The glory of

God is not that of a despotic eastern tyrant, but the splendor of life before which we fall not in abject terror but lost in wonder, love and praise” (70).

Other Scripture supporting the idea of incarnational, indigenous ministry includes 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law though I myself am not under the law, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law, so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.  
(NIV)

Kenneth Chafin asserts that this passage of Scripture might possibly have more to say concerning what is necessary to be an effective, strong, spiritual leader than any other passage of Scripture because of the incarnational message (114). Chafin also suggests that building ministry around the components of this passage allows for flexibility and the ability to identify with people where they are. Chafin claims that there is not a finer statement of what it means to really love people than Paul’s declaration in verses 20-22. Chafin even goes as far as to recommend Paul as a model of incarnational ministry because he was “a people-lover who did not let cultural or religious differences become barriers between him and persons for whom Christ died” (118).

Chafin charges, “The church would be more effective in her evangelism if all those of us who are members could really learn to identify with all kinds of people” (119). Chafin claims that the inability of the church to identify with and minister in Jesus’ name to all kinds of people has caused the death of many individual congregations. Chafin states, “The individual Christian who cannot reach across the barriers of age, sex, race, culture or reputation and love people needs to learn Paul’s valuable lesson” (119).

Barclay concurs with Chafin. “The man who can never see anything but his own point of view and who never makes any attempt to understand the mind and hearts of others, will never make a pastor or an evangelist or even a friend” (83). Barclay continues by stating that this method of ministry is about being able to get alongside a person (83).

In summary, Barclay suggests, “We can never attain to any kind of evangelism or friendship without speaking the same language and thinking the same thoughts as the other man” (84). Barclay concludes, “One of our greatest necessities is to learn the art of getting alongside people; and the trouble so often is that we do not even try” (84).

## CHAPTER 3

### Design of the Study

This study was designed as a way of obtaining insight into the distinctive qualities of the Echo Boom Generation, specifically those in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church, and to uncover characteristics of ministry that are currently successful in ministering to this generation.

The attempt was to gain insight about Echo Boomers concerning the most important elements in church life and ministry in order to work effectively with them in the future. I hoped to find out that the responses of Arkansas United Methodist Youth Workers and Echo Boomers matched up with the information assimilated together in the review of literature. I wanted to see if there were any variances that might be unique to United Methodist Echo Boomers in the state of Arkansas.

#### Statement of Research Questions

##### Research Question One

What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report as the distinctive characteristics, attitudes, beliefs and values of the Echo Boom Generation?

Operational question one of research question one asked, “How do current youth ministers characterize the Echo Boom Generation concerning issues of trust, self-reliance, achievement, motivation, ways

of thinking and processing information, spirituality, relationships, life outlook, and truth?”

I asked research operational question one of research question one in order to discover what current youth ministers reported to be the distinct characteristics of the Echo Boom Generation. Operational question one was derived from the literature review. The literature reported Echo Boomers have the following characteristics: trusting, self-reliant, motivated, visually oriented, narrative-thinking, spiritually open, technologically open, believing truth is relative, desiring deep relationships, and optimistic. This question tested to see if the current youth directors in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church reported the same findings as the literature. My assumption was that the responses of the youth directors would support the information compiled in the earlier literature review.

As a way of checking against the ten characteristics listed, respondents were also asked to respond to ten directly opposite characteristics which were inversely scored. This measure was taken in surveying the youth directors in order to insure that the assessment items were correctly understood.

Operational question two of research question one asked, “What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church believe to be the strongest influence in Echo Boomer’s lives -- family, friends, media/technology, or school?”

I asked operational question two of research question one to test against the literature review. I looked to see if media and technology were reported to be the strongest influence in the life of an Echo Boomer as stated in the literature. My assumption once again was that the youth directors' responses would support the information found in the review of literature.

Operational question three of research question one asked, "What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church find to be the most likely family situation for Echo Boomers? (parent's divorced, single parent, raised by grandparents, blended family, parents married never divorced)."

I asked operational question three of research question one to test against the literature review. The researcher sought to find out if current youth ministers reported the most likely family situation for Echo Boomers as one of divorced parents as found in the literature. My assumption once again was that this would be the case.

### Research Question Two

What do current youth ministers report to be important elements in church life and that are important in effectively working with the Echo Boom Generation?

Operational question one of research question two asked, "What is the importance of developing effective ministry that is incarnational, indigenous and customized for Echo Boomers?"

The researcher asked operational question one of research question two to test against the literature review that upholds the importance of the ministry qualities that are incarnational, indigenous, and customized.

By being incarnational, I sought to find out if the youth directors believed it was important for them to find ways to relate to Echo Boomers on their own level. By being indigenous, I wanted to discover if the youth directors found it important for them to adapt their ministry to the local culture in which they minister. And by being customized, I sought to find out if the youth directors felt it was important that specific ministries are built strictly around the needs of the Echo Boomers. The goal of this question was to determine if current youth ministers report the same level of importance that was given to these qualities in the literature. I once again assumed that the findings would support the literature review.

Operational question two of research question two asked, “What is the importance of relationship building concerning ministry to Echo Boomers?”

Operational question two of research question two was based upon the review of literature as well. I wanted to discover if current youth ministers reported a high level of importance given to relationship building in ministry to Echo Boomers. The literature presupposed this to

be the need. I expected to find support for this notion in the responses of the youth directors to this question.

Operational question three of research question two asked, “How important will contemporary music, liturgy, laid-back atmosphere, and narrative preaching be for Echo Boomers as far as worship is concerned?”

I asked research operational question three of research question two to test against the reports of the literature that contemporary music, laid-back atmosphere, and narrative preaching are important in worship for Echo Boomers.

The literature review granted these presuppositions as being true. I expected to find that the responses of the youth ministers would back up these findings in the literature. In the questionnaire I included a response item concerning the importance of liturgy in worship to Echo Boomers. While this item did not show up in the review of the literature as being important, the literature did report that more traditional styles of worship were not appealing to Echo Boomers. The importance of liturgy was used as a measure of how youth directors believe Echo Boomers view traditional styles and formats of worship. My assumption was that the presuppositions of the literature review would be supported by the youth directors’ responses.



Operational question four of research question two asked, “What is the importance of media and technology in Echo Boom Generation ministry?”

I asked operational question four of research question two to test against the literature reviews’ reports of media and technology usage being important to Echo Boomers. I desired to know if current youth ministers reported the same level of importance as is presupposed in the literature. My assumption once again in this case was that the responses of the youth directors would give support to the findings of the literature review.

Operational question five of research question two asked, “What issues are, or will be, the most important for the church to address in order to be perceived as culturally relevant by Echo Boomers?”

Operational question five of research question two tested the reports of the literature review that relationships will be the most important issue for the church to address in order for Echo Boomers to perceive the church as being culturally relevant.

My assumption was that relationships may well be the most important issue for the church to address with Echo Boomers, but I wanted to test this notion by asking respondents to consider other topics of importance as well. Other possible responses included the topics of sexuality, family issues, truth and salvation. I expected to find that relationships would be the highest rated of the five choices offered

### Research Question Three

What do Echo Boomers have to say about their own characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and values?

Research question three brought into play the qualitative aspect of this study. At this point I sought to find out if the information which was found in the literature, as well as in the responses of youth directors was consistent with how the Echo Boomers spoke about themselves and how they viewed their future.

My assumption in this case was that the information from this qualitative component of the study would generally support the findings of the literature review and the youth directors. I made this assumption realizing that this portion of the study had great potential for presenting new information about Echo Boomers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.

### Population and Sample

The population of the research done with youth ministry workers, pertaining to research questions one and two, consisted of current youth workers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. The sample consisted of fifty youth directors, thirty of whom agreed to participate in the study by filling out a survey questionnaire. Each respondent fit the criterion of serving on an Arkansas Area United Methodist Church staff in the capacity of youth director.

For the research with the Echo Boomers pertaining to research question three, the population consisted of Echo Boomers who attend one of the churches in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. These Echo Boomers were identified by the youth director at their local church. The sample consisted of three focus groups of four Echo Boomers each to complete the descriptive measure of the study. Each of the Echo Boomers ranged in age from 13-18.

### Instrumentation

#### Research with Youth Workers

The research with youth ministry workers portion of this study utilized a researcher-designed survey method of collecting information directly from youth ministry workers about their feelings, beliefs, and perspectives. The self-administered survey was a self-explanatory questionnaire to be completed privately.

The questionnaire consisted of questions and instructions relevant to the context of this particular study. The questionnaire itself was made up of fixed-choice or forced-response choices. I chose this form of questioning because it allowed for the responses to be scored quickly and objectively. These types of responses are considered best at measuring complex behaviors. This also allowed for more than one right answer and is generally considered to be the least threatening of question types (Fink & Kosecoff 17).

The instrument used for this study is a researcher-designed, self-report questionnaire which sought answers to the research questions and the operational questions listed previously in this chapter.

A group of five experts were selected by me to review the instrument in order to determine its face level validity. The five experts had experience in working full time with the Echo Boom Generation. Each reported the instrument as satisfactory for measuring the desired subject matter of the study. These same five experts answered the questionnaire to test it for face and construct validity. The intention was to test the questions in terms of being easily understood and to determine if they evoked a proper response for the study. All five of the test respondents found the questionnaire to be easily understood and appropriate.

In order to prepare the questionnaire, I read from How to Conduct Surveys (Fink & Kosecoff). Each of the elements found in the questionnaire related to one of the three research questions listed earlier in this chapter.

The first Likert scale on page one of the questionnaire refers to research question one, operational question one. The scale was designed to test if the respondents believed the characteristics portrayed in the literature review were in line with their perceptions of Echo Boomers. Listed in the literature review are ten items which are considered to be descriptive of the Echo Boom Generation. These ten items are listed in

the first Likert scale. Also listed are ten items which were designed to represent ten direct opposite characteristics. The characteristics listed on the Likert scale which do not represent the prescribed characteristics of Echo Boomers were inversely scored.

The first Likert scale on page two of the survey answered research question number two, operational questions one and two. This scale was designed to test the importance of certain qualities in ministry to Echo Boomers.

The second Likert scale on page two of the survey answers research question two, operational questions three and four. This was designed to test the importance of certain characteristics concerning worship and Echo Boomers.

The first rank-order question was designed to discover the strongest influence in Echo Boomer's lives as reported by youth ministers. This question directly responded to research question one, operational question two.

The second rank order question was designed to discover the most likely family situation for Echo Boomers as reported by youth ministers. This question responded to research question one, operational question three.

The final rank order question was designed to discover the most important issues for the church to address in order to be perceived as

culturally relevant to Echo Boomers. This directly responded to research question two, operational question five.

### Research with Echo Boomers

The principal research question guiding this portion of the study was: What do Echo Boomers have to say about their own characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and values?

I sought answers through a series of focus group interviews with Echo Boomers who attend churches in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. My desire was to find out if their self-reports correspond with the responses given by the youth ministry workers who were surveyed.

The survey responses of the youth directors of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church expressed their views on the Echo Boom Generation. My hypothesis was that the view of the youth directors would match those of the sources noted in the review of literature. I also believed that the qualitative responses given by the Echo Boomers would remain consistent with the responses of the youth ministry workers and the information compiled in the literature review.

As preparation for the focus group sessions with the Echo Boomers, I ran a test focus group with a set of Echo Boomers from another congregation. This hopefully provided some preparation for the types of responses that might be expected from the Echo Boomers included in the study.

During this pilot focus group, I had the ability to reformulate questions in an effort to clarify the intention of questions or to better elicit information from the Echo Boomers.

### Focus Group Design

Prior to the pre-test described earlier, I developed the following interview pattern which is composed of two sections. The first section of questions correlated with the questions asked of the youth directors concerning what aspects are important in a worship service and toward what the most important issues are for churches to be addressing in order to be perceived as relevant.

The second section of questions correlated with the items concerning the strongest life influences upon Echo Boomers as indicated by youth directors and addressed the most likely family status for Echo Boomers as indicated by their youth workers. This set of questions also went toward correlation of the items in the youth director survey which sought to find out which characteristics are true of the Echo Boom Generation as reported in the review of literature.

The first section of focus group questioning began with something similar to, "Hello, I'm Lyndol Loyd, pastor of Mountainside, a United Methodist congregation in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. I'm conducting a study to learn more about teenagers today. As a pastor I think it is important to be able to relate to youth. My hope is that this study will help pastors have a better understanding of youth like yourselves in

order to be more effective in ministry, which in turn would help form better youth programs in Arkansas. I appreciate your willingness to help me answer some questions.”

“Let’s start by talking about church. If your parents told you that you were going to go to church on Sunday morning and they said you could choose which church you wanted to attend which one of the following churches would you choose? (First Church, Christ Community Church, St. Matthew’s, The Orchard, Calvary Chapel, New Age Fellowship)”

“What do you think the people are like who attend that church? How would you describe the worship service? What kinds of things are they talking about? What is the youth group like? Describe the pastor to me? Describe the youth director to me? How is the music? What would make you decide to go back there again?”

This completed the first section of questioning; the second section of questioning began in the following manner. “Tell me about your best friend? What do you like to do together? Tell me about the other kids you hang out with? Tell me about what kinds of families your friends come from?”

“I would like to learn some more about each of you. What makes you laugh? What makes you cry? What characteristics in other people turn you off? How do you like to spend your free time?”



“Let’s talk about school for a moment. What are the different groups of people in your school? Which group would you put yourself in? Which group would you never want to be put in?”

“What is the most popular movie among you and your friends right now? What is the movie about? What is the main point of the movie? What kind of music do you like to listen to? What television shows do you watch?”

Next, I presented two different scenarios for the Echo Boomers to discuss. Scenario one stated, “Imagine with me if you will that you find out that you are pregnant (or your girlfriend is pregnant). How do you feel about it? What decisions do you make about handling the situation? How would you make the decision? How would your friends react?” The second scenario states, “You inherit a million dollars from a deceased family member and you have to spend it immediately. How would you spend it? How do you make your decisions about using the money?”

At this point I ended the focus group sessions with an expression of my gratitude to the participants for taking part in the study.

### Data Collection

Concerning the research with youth ministry workers portion of the study, I contacted the youth workers of the identified churches by mail. Each one received a letter from me requesting their cooperation in the study, as well as a letter from Rev. Kissa Hamilton, Arkansas Area Director of Youth Ministries, asking for their assistance. One week later

members of the sample received a follow-up letter with an enclosed questionnaire survey asking for each person to respond by filling out the survey. In addition, each person was asked to return the completed questionnaire to me by using a provided self-addressed, postage-paid envelope.

The following week, letters were sent to anyone who failed to respond to the survey; the letters asked for them to please take the time to fill out the survey and return it.

After receiving the completed questionnaires of the respondents, the data for this study was tabulated and quantified. These responses were in turn entered into a computer program which utilized a multinomial chi-square goodness-of-fit test for further analysis and interpretation.

Concerning the research with Echo Boomers portion of the study, I set up focus group meetings with three different youth directors. One focus group came from a large urban church youth group of over one hundred youth. One came from a medium sized church youth group with approximately fifty youth. The final group came from a smaller rural church youth group of less than one dozen youth.

I facilitated conversation on a variety of matters stated earlier in this chapter. These focus group sessions were taped and the conversations transcribed for coding purposes. To assist in this matter I made use of ethnographic computer software. These findings were

incorporated into the study for comparison against the quantitative results of the youth ministry worker questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

The purpose of the quantitative data analysis was to examine the results of the answered questionnaires. The percentages were calculated concerning each question. I examined the data and listed it according to the research question it answered. The statistical procedure necessary was a multinomial chi-square goodness-of-fit test.

Qualitative data analysis of the focus group transcripts was done using ethnographic computer software. The responses of the focus group participants were examined and coded by themes. This step allowed for greater ease in observing the multiple themes that emerged from the focus groups.

In the following chapters, I present general and specific observations on the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative. After compiling the results, I contrasted and compared them with the information about the Echo Boom Generation presented in the review of literature.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings of the Study

Three research questions guided this study: What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report as the distinctive characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and values of the Echo Boom Generation? What do current youth ministers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report to be important elements in church life and ministry in order to work effectively with the Echo Boom Generation? What do the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church have to say about their own characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and values?

To examine the findings of the study, this chapter is divided into the quantitative findings for the first two research questions and the qualitative findings for the third question.

#### Findings From Research with Youth Ministry Workers

One of the most readily available measures of the distinctive qualities of the Echo Boom Generation, in particular of United Methodist Youth in the Arkansas Episcopal Area, are the insights of current youth ministry workers. The purpose of this research was to gain insight from the youth ministry workers concerning the unique characteristics of the Echo Boomers they work with on a regular basis. The quantifiable responses of the youth ministry workers were used to answer the first two research questions.

### Profile of the Subjects

The questionnaires were mailed to all United Methodist youth ministry workers in the state of Arkansas. The sample for this study was fifty subjects. Thirty subjects returned the completed questionnaire for a 60 percent return rate. Of these thirty subjects, twenty were male and ten were female. The ages of the respondents ranged from twenty-one to fifty-two years of age; the average age was 24.52 years of age. The average tenure in youth ministry was 2.3 years.

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) used for this study was a researcher designed instrument made up of six sections. These sections were developed based on the research reported in Chapter 2.

Respondents rated each questionnaire item on a four point Likert scale representing the responses of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Negatively worded items were reverse scored to correspond with the positively worded items in the appropriate scale.

### Descriptive Data

The descriptive data or summary statistics give feedback concerning the youth ministers' understanding of Echo Boomers' characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, values, and life situations. These statistics answer research question one: What do current youth ministers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church report as the distinctive characteristics of the Echo Boom Generation? These

statistics also answer research question two: What do current youth ministers report to be important elements in church life and ministry in order to work effectively with the Echo Boom Generation?

The findings were analyzed by using a multinomial, goodness-of-fit test to compute the chi-square calculated value for each one of the items of the questionnaire. This test assisted the researcher in finding out what responses indicate significant implications for ministry to Echo Boomers. (For a glossary of statistical terminology see Appendix C).

Concerning the first section of the questionnaire the null hypothesis or opposite of my research hypothesis was that the respondents were no more likely to hold that Echo Boomers could be described by one of the characteristics in the list than another. The alternate or research hypothesis was that significant responses would be found and the theory supported. Support for the theory happens when chi-square calculated is greater than chi-square critical.

For each one of the ten characteristics of Echo Boomers taken from the review of the literature found in section one of the questionnaire, the youth ministry workers responses indicated confirmation of the characteristics by rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternate or research hypothesis. In other words chi-square calculated was found greater than chi-square critical as shown in table 4.2. In this case, the Echo Boomers were found to be trusting, self-reliant,

motivated, visually oriented, narrative thinking, spiritually open, believe truth is relevant, open to technology and desiring deep relationships.

Youth Ministry Workers' Perceptions of Echo Boomers  
Table 4.1

	$\geq \chi^2$ Critical	df
Characteristics of Echo Boomers	7.81	3
Spiritually open	37.19	
Optimistic	32.40	
Trusting	31.89	
Self-reliant	31.59	
Motivated	26.79	
Believe truth is relative	25.19	
Open to technology	25.19	
Narrative thinking	23.86	
Visually oriented	22.79	
Desiring deep relationships	20.39	
Qualities important to ministry	7.81	3
Being incarnational	24.66	
Being indigenous	23.06	
Customized ministry	22.52	
Characteristics of worship services	7.81	3
Contemporary music	45.46	
Use of media and technology	34.26	
Narrative preaching	17.46	
Laid back atmosphere	13.46	
Liturgy	-19.32	
Strongest Life Influences	7.81	3
Friends	34.26	
School	19.59	
Most Likely Family Situation	7.81	3
Parents divorced	27.06	
Single parent	-18.79	
Raised by guardian	-38.52	

Important issues for churches to address to be perceived as relevant	9.48	4
Family issues	9.64	
Sexuality	-22.64	

\*p < .05

The second section of the questionnaire dealt with qualities important for ministering to Echo Boomers. The null hypothesis was that none of three qualities tested would be more important than any other quality when ministering to Echo Boomers. The research hypothesis was that a significant response to these qualities of ministry would be found and the theory supported. Each of the three qualities tested received response rates that calculated as being significantly higher than chi-square critical. The null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis confirmed. These findings are exhibited in Table 4.2. The findings indicate that being incarnational, being indigenous and customizing ministry are significantly important in ministry to the Echo Boomers or the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.

In response to the questions of section three of the questionnaire concerning characteristics of worship services that would be important to Echo Boomers, the responses each calculated as being higher than chi-square critical (see table 4.2). In particular, use of contemporary music and media and technology at 45.46 and 34.26 respectively scored high in comparison to other characteristics of narrative preaching and laid back atmosphere. The test showed uses of formal liturgy in worship to be



significant on the lower end of the scale. Thus, the null hypothesis that none of the characteristics for worship would be any more important than another was rejected. The research hypothesis that some of the qualities of worship services would be significant was confirmed.

Section four of the questionnaire addressed the strongest life influences of Echo Boomers. The null hypothesis was that none of the life influences would be any more significant than another. The research hypothesis was that some of the life influences would be of significance. Two of the categories were found statistically significant in comparison to chi-square critical. The influence of friends was greater at 34.26 and the influence of school was greater at 19.59 (Table 4.2). The categories of family and media and technology tested low as life influences.

Section five of the questionnaire asked the respondents to define the most likely family situation for Echo Boomers. The null hypothesis was that the Echo Boomers were no more likely to have one family situation characterize them than another. The research hypothesis was that some of the family situations would be found significant. Three family situations were found to be statistically significant. Having parents who are divorced was the most likely category for Echo Boomers at significance level of 27.06. The responses of the respondents also indicated most of the Echo Boomers considered were unlikely to be raised in a single parent household or by a guardian at 18.79 and 38.52 respectively (Table 4.2).

Section six of the questionnaire asked respondents to consider what issues are most important for the church to address in order to be perceived as culturally relevant by Echo Boomers. The null hypothesis was that no one issue was more important for the church to address than another in order to be perceived as culturally relevant by the Echo Boomers. The research hypothesis was that one or more of the issues would be found significant for the church to address to be considered culturally relevant by Echo Boomers. Of the five choices offered family issues was the only one considered significantly high at 9.64. Relationships as an issue was close to significance at 9.30. Sexuality at 22.64 achieved significance as the least important topic for churches to address to be considered relevant (Table 4.2).

#### Summary of Significant Findings from Research with Youth Workers

1. The responses of the youth ministry workers confirmed the following characteristics of Echo Boomers in Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church as they observed them: trusting, self-reliant, motivated, visually oriented, narrative thinkers, spiritually open, believe truth is relative, open to technology, desiring deep relationships and optimistic.

2. Being incarnational, being indigenous and customizing ministry were affirmed as important qualities of ministry to Echo Boomers in Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.

3. Contemporary music and use of media and technology were observed to be important components of worship services for Echo Boomers in Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church, while liturgy was not.

4. The significance of friends and school as the strongest life influences of Echo Boomers in Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church was observed, as opposed to media reported in the review of literature.

5. It was observed that Echo Boomers in Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church are most likely to come from a family where their parents are divorced.

6. The category of family issues was considered the most important issue for United Methodist Churches in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church to address to be considered culturally relevant by the Echo Boomers of the area.

#### Findings From Research with Echo Boomers

The other most readily available measure of the distinctive qualities of the Echo Boom Generation, in particular United Methodist Youth in the Arkansas Episcopal Area, are the Echo Boomers themselves. For this reason three focus group sessions held during July and August of 1999, sought the insights of Echo Boomers concerning the unique characteristics of their generation. The qualitative responses of the Echo Boomers who participated in the focus groups were used to

answer research question number three: What do Echo Boomers have to say about their own attitudes, beliefs and values?

### Profile of Subjects

Focus group participants came from three different United Methodist Youth groups in the Arkansas Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church. Each group was comprised of four participants ranging in age from 13 to 18 years of age. One group was from a rural setting, another group was from a suburban setting, and the third from an urban setting. Of the subjects participating in the three groups, five were male and seven were female. The Echo Boomers' youth ministers selected each of the participants for the focus groups.

Each focus group participant was selected by his or her youth ministry worker based upon a perceived ability to be able to articulate his or her attitudes, values and beliefs. Each participant was described as active in the youth ministry program of his or her church at the time of the focus group interview.

### Focus Group Format

Each of the focus groups took place around a table in a youth room at the participants' home churches. Each group session took approximately one hour to complete. A researcher-designed focus group format of multiple questions (see Appendix B) elicited the responses of the participants concerning their views on church, family, friends, school, culture, and themselves. Although open-ended to allow the

researcher the freedom to pursue any unanticipated responses by the participants, the focus group format was followed for each of the three groups.

Three sections of questioning were used in the focus group format. Each section went toward correlation with the responses of the youth ministry workers in the quantitative portion of the research. The first section of questions address important qualities of worship services and important issues for the church to address to be perceived as culturally relevant. The second section of questions address finding out the characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, and values of Echo Boomers and the most likely family status for Echo Boomers. The third and final section of questioning utilizes two different scenarios as another way of eliciting information about the attitudes, values and beliefs of the Echo Boomers.

#### Observed themes from the focus groups

After the focus group transcripts were analyzed and coded using ethnographic computer software, several overarching themes emerged from the responses of the participants. The most notable themes were relevance, self-reference point, openness to technology, influence of friends, family issues and desire for relationships.

To illustrate these findings, theme observations are presented below and then followed by response samples of direct quotes from focus group interviews addressing the theme. The response samples are meant

to exemplify the three groups' responses on the whole. Each set of response samples are followed by summary statements on the theme.

Relevance. Perhaps the strongest theme to arise out of the focus group coding process was relevance. For coding purposes, relevance was defined as practical applicability or pertinence to matters at hand. The two places where relevance emerged strongest was in indication of what they look for in a church and why they would return to a church after visiting. Listed below are some sample statements on the theme of relevance.

Prompt "If you were to go to visit a church next Sunday and the only way you had to determine where you would go was the name of the church, where would you go and why? Your choices are St. Matthew's, First Church, Calvary Chapel, Christ Community Church, The Orchard and New Age Fellowship."

Response "I would probably go to New Age Fellowship because it sounds like it is more focused on youth and it would be more about things that I could understand."

Response "I would go there. It probably has more to do with youth and what is going on in today's world. They would talk about a lot of things that apply to my life and there would be a lot of other people there who are like me."

Response "Yes, and they would talk about problems that we have and how we could get through them. They would show us how

having Christ in your life would help you in your everyday life.”

Response “And the music wouldn’t be old and tired. It would be like what I listen to on the radio. They would sing about stuff that matters to me, not a bunch of words I don’t understand.

Response “If they had a church like that I would want to go. I wouldn’t just be there because my parents make me show up.”

Prompt “What would they be talking about at church?”

Response “They would talk about gun control because that is a big issue now after the Columbine shootings. They would talk about stuff like that, things that are in the headlines that everyone else is talking about. Things people deal with everyday.”

Relevance is the lens through which most of life is viewed by the Echo Boomers. For Echo Boomers relevance seems to be one of the key determinants when considering if they desire to hear what another person has to say or not. Relevance also appears to determine willingness to participate, rather than participating out of a sense of obligation. If relevance to their lives is proven, then Echo Boomers are likely to be enticed to participate and become involved.

Self-reference Point. Another prominent theme of the focus groups was the self as the main reference point for life. This is distinct from, but closely tied to, the theme of relevance found in the focus group

responses. The self-reference point was defined for coding purposes as a person seeing the desires, wishes and wants of himself or herself as the defining filter for how decisions are made and truth is defined. Below are some sample statements of self-reference point.

Prompt "What is the music like at the church?"

Response "It is my kind of music. It isn't old stuff like the hymns they sing here. It sounds like the CDs I buy or the stuff I listen to on the radio in my car with my friends."

Prompt "What would the youth group be like?"

Response "They'd be fun and want to do whatever the youth wanted to do. They wouldn't care what it was as long as we had fun."

Response "If it was what I was expecting, if it was really like what I thought it would be like. I would go to it. If not, then I wouldn't."

Prompt "What would you do if you found out you were pregnant? How would you make your decision?"

Response "I would probably first tell one of my friends, and I would probably be really scared about telling my parents. But I would want to keep the baby. I believe in adoption and everything, but my family could take care of the baby. Adoption or abortion might be right for someone else, but not for me. And if it was my choice to make the baby, then I think I should make the decision about keeping the baby."



Prompt “How would you make that decision?”

Response “I know what is right for me. I’m the only one who can make that kind of call. Just because it might not be what someone else thinks I should do doesn’t mean that it isn’t the right decision to make. I have to make the decision based upon the way I see the situation.”

The self-reference point tends to be the first frame of reference these Echo Boomers rely upon in making their decisions. It was also observed that the self-reference point as the defining criteria for how truth is discerned prompts their relative thinking on a variety of matters as well as being a major contributor to how decisions are made by Echo Boomers. This was not necessarily the case for other generations such as the builders who seemed more likely to exhibit a greater concern for how a decision might effect others.

Openness to technology. For purposes of the study, openness to technology was defined as acceptance or eagerness to embrace technological advances in the capacities of computers, audio and video because of how these advances could enhance their lives. Below are some samples statements concerning openness to technology.

Prompt “What is the worship service like at the church you selected?”

Response “Modern. Like lots of media and stuff. They would use computers and have really good sound like the Dolby surround sound at Tinsletown.”

Response “It would be up to date. I think it would be contemporary like she was talking about, you know? They would be up to date with the rest of the world.”

Prompt “What do you like to do with your free time?”

Response “I like the Internet. I like to be on the computer. I like looking up bands and stuff. And I like talking to people on the web.”

Response “It is fun to look at different chat rooms and meet people. If I get any free time, I’m usually on the computer.”

Response “My computer is usually on. I surf the web a lot. If I’m bored I always have my computer to fall back on for some fun.”

Although there was never a question asked during the focus groups sessions concerning technology or use of technology, I repeatedly observed that the Echo Boomers who were interviewed were extremely open to technology. They saw technology not as a threat, but as a friend.

Technology was observed as almost being a companion of sorts, especially when it came to the use of computers. When there seems to be no other option that excites an Echo Boomer they can always retreat to the internet for some stimulation. Technology seemed to give them a

sense of greater connection with their world. It was also observed that Technology seemed to indicate being up to date or progressive to the Echo Boomers interviewed.

Influence of friends. For purposes of the study the influence of friends is defined as being the power of select peers to exert, affect or alter the attitudes, values and beliefs of the Echo Boomers by indirect or intangible means. Listed below are some sample statements concerning the influence of friends.

Prompt "What kinds of music do you like to listen to?"

Response "Whatever my friends are listening to at the time."

Prompt "How would decide if you went back to that church?"

Response "I would go back if my friends were there. I want to be wherever they are at. I would want them to be at church with me."

Prompt "Tell me about your best friend. What do you do together?"

Response "We talk a lot. I think it's easier to talk to someone my age about, like problems I have, you know, like if I have a fight with my mom or I'm having guy troubles or, you know, things like that. My friends can usually help me out more."

Prompt "What makes someone popular?"

Response "Like what I think is popular... Like, these people over here, they think what you wear and how you do is popular and

everybody should be like that and that's how popular should be. That is just how it is.”

Friends are a powerful influence in the lives of the Echo Boomers interviewed in the focus groups. Other than the usage of a self-reference point in decision making, the influence of friends was observed as being the next greatest factor. The influence of friends was observed to be much greater than the influence of family upon their lives. The Echo Boomers seemed much more likely to go to a friend for advice, counsel, or wisdom than to a family member.

Family issues. For coding purposes, family issues is defined as matters the Echo Boomers have to deal with because of the unique nature or composition of their family units. Examples of these issues might be divorce, blended families from remarriage of parents or strained sibling relationships. Below follows some sample statements on family issues.

Prompt “What makes you cry?”

Response “Well, lately, usually, it's been because my mom wants to move to Oklahoma. I've been crying about that a lot. It means I would have to leave my friends here in Arkansas and my dad and step-mother too.”

Prompt “What are your friends families like?”

Response “Divorced. I would say about 80 percent of my friends parents are divorced or remarried. Like, maybe even divorced again.”

Response “Our one friend, her mom is divorced and her dad lives, like, in Texas, and they never get to see him. And she’s, like, had a lot of problems with her mom and she’s had a lot of problems. And so, she couldn’t just deal with it all. I think that, like, the divorce just messed her up. She is having a lot of problems.”

Response “And it’s like they have to go see their dad and they, like, want to see their dad but they also miss out on camps and school activities that we do during the summer here.”

Prompt “Why would you be scared to tell your parents if you were pregnant?”

Response “Because, I mean, because they don’t know things and stuff like ... I mean, they don’t like, I don’t know. Their generation and our generation, they’re just different. And they don’t ... I don’t know. They just don’t understand us sometimes.”

Most of the peers of the Echo Boomers participating in the focus groups came from families where the parents were divorced and in many cases the parents remarried, placing the teen in a blended family situation. The Echo Boomers cope with a great deal of stress because of

the amount of family break up they experience. It seems to create for them a feeling of being emotionally pulled in many directions.

The Echo Boomers were reluctant, in most cases, to discuss thoughts, feelings, or experiences with their parents or family members because of a general feeling that their families do not understand them or the world in which they live.

The desire for relationships. Desiring relationships is defined as the Echo Boomers longing to be connected to other people in deep and meaningful ways. In many cases this longing appears to be stimulated by the fractured nature of family relationships. Listed below are some sample statements on the Echo Boomers' desire for relationships.

Prompt "What would make you want to go back to a church after you had been to visit?"

Response "If there were people like me there I would go back. If the people there, like, really understood who I am and like, wanted to get to know me for who I am and like not for what I look like or what I can do I would keep going."

Prompt "What are you looking for in a friend?"

Response "Just, like, being able to share feelings knowing that whatever you say's okay because they're, like, in tune with your feelings."

Response "Because, like, if you tell them something and you say its' a secret, most people that you'd think would be your friends,

sometimes they won't be. They'll just go out and say it or exaggerate it or something. You just want their trust to be able to say what you want to say and you know they won't put you down or anything."

Prompt "Tell me about your best friend."

Response "If I have a problem that I can, like, call him up and no matter what he's got going on, he can usually get out of it and talk to you about your problem."

These Echo Boomers desire to find people who are like them and understand them, as well as accept them for who they are. These Echo Boomers possess a high desire to have someone with whom to share their feelings without feeling judged or looked down upon. They also seem to desire deep relationships so that they have someone with whom to discuss their problems and search for resolution of their issues.

#### Summary of Important Findings from Echo Boomers

1. The observation process highlighted the need Echo Boomers have to understand how something is relevant to their lives as a major theme of the three focus group interviews.

2. I observed use of the self as the major reference point for making decisions and defining truth. Relative thinking on the part of the Echo Boomers was also observed as a by-product of this theme.

3. I also observed openness to technology by the Echo Boomers although no direct focus group questions were specifically asked concerning technology.

4. The significant influence of friends upon Echo Boomers was noted, while also noting the lack of influence by parents of Echo Boomers.

5. Family issues, such as divorce and blended families, are common factors in the lives of Echo Boomers.

6. The Echo Boomers also spoke of a strong desire for deep relationships with other people where they could find acceptance and openness.



## CHAPTER 5

## Summary of Major Findings

The beginnings of this research project are linked to a personal concern on the part of the researcher over the future of the United Methodist Church in the state of Arkansas, specifically as it relates to the Echo Boom Generation (representing those who were born after 1977). This research project does not respond only to the concerns of the researcher, but attempts to form a vision of how ministry to the Echo Boom Generation needs to be enacted in the future.

The quantitative results of this study demonstrate that within the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church there is significant support from the information concerning the Echo Boom Generation that is presented in the review of literature. With little exception, the results of the questionnaire completed by youth ministry workers confirmed that United Methodist Echo Boomers in the state of Arkansas are much like their counterparts throughout the United States. Living in the Arkansas Area and being a United Methodist seems to cause little or no differentiation in how this particular group of Echo Boomers can be characterized as opposed to their counterparts in other regions of America.

Concerning their personal attributes or characteristics, the youth ministry workers found the Echo Boomers they work with to be spiritually open, optimistic, trusting, self-reliant, motivated, open to

technology and visually oriented. Their responses also supported the idea that Echo Boomers find truth to be relative, think in a narrative manner, and desire deep relationships.

Amongst qualities important to ministry, youth ministers found it most important to be incarnational and indigenous, and they believed it necessary to customize their ministry for the Echo Boomers. Concerning characteristics important to worship services the youth ministry workers supported the use of contemporary music, use of media and technology, narrative preaching, and creating a laid back atmosphere. They rejected the importance of liturgy as it relates to the idea of formality or high church styles of worship.

The results do not confirm the findings in the review of literature that media is the strongest life influence. Friends are the strongest life influence. The results also confirm the most likely family situation for Echo Boomers is that they come from a home where their parents are divorced.

In this study the most important issue for the church to address in order to be perceived as culturally relevant by the Echo Boomers was reported to be family issues. Going against the information found in the review of literature the youth ministry workers responses indicated that addressing the issues of sexuality and sexual awareness is of little or no significance in helping Echo Boomers to see the church as culturally relevant.

Based on focus groups of actual Echo Boomers from the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church, several self-descriptive themes of importance with this group emerged from the qualitative research. The most notable themes were relevance, self-reference point, openness to technology, influence of friends, family issues, and desire for relationships.

### Evaluation and Interpretation of the Data

At this point, it becomes necessary to address what these findings mean for the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. The study has taken on the challenge of Francis to do the hard work of listening to the world around us (11). This portion of the study seeks to reflect upon the findings in the light of God's word and then, as a result, to engage the culture (11). What follows is a "fleshing out" of the findings and recommendations and to recommend how to proceed from this point.

The statistically significant responses of the youth ministry workers to the questionnaire and the complementary themes discovered in the focus group sessions serve to enlighten and inform on ministry to and characteristics of Echo Boomers. Combined with DeBrosse's projection that this generation at the height of their teenage years will be the largest teen population in history, one begins to understand the impact this generation will have upon the future of society and the church (1). Thus, the increasing necessity as to why the Echo Boomers

need to be approached in a manner different than that used with their predecessors becomes clearly evident.

Barclay contends, “The man who can never see anything but his own point of view and who never makes any attempt to understand the mind and hearts of others, will never make a pastor or an evangelist or even a friend” (83). To reach the Echo Boomers we have to be willing to lay aside our own point of view in order to understand their point of view. As Bell says, although we of the present generation have obligations to both the past and future generations, our obligations to future people are far greater than are our obligations to past people (38).

This study gives us information that helps the United Methodist Church in the Arkansas Area understand who the Echo Boomers are in order to offer them needs based ministry. The importance of these findings is that they help us as Sertin put it, “create church in such a way that it serves what’s coming next – not what has been” (17).

Thus, the question becomes what does it mean to effectively minister to a generation that is trusting, self-reliant, motivated, visually oriented, narrative thinkers, spiritually open, open to technology, desiring deep relationships, optimistic and believe that truth is relative? The importance of this question is heightened by the fact that one of the most prevalent self-descriptive themes to come from the focus group sessions was that Echo Boomers use relevance to self and what appeals to the self as the major reference point for how they make decisions.

Buckeridge contends that these traits tell us that Echo Boomers do not process information the same as previous generations, as well as doing many other things differently (“Millennials Commitment”). The indication for the church is that ministry will have to be adapted for processing and filtered through these traits and characteristics, which differ from the characteristics of their predecessor generations.

These findings form a connection to the words of Jesus found in Matthew 9:16-17 where he spoke about how it would be unthinkable to sew an old patch to a new piece of clothing or to place new wine inside old wine skins. Barclay contends that this passage of Scripture gives us a theological grounding for change. Barclay suggests that Jesus held a keen awareness which he brought with himself in the expressions of new ideas and certainly a new concept of truth. He believes that Jesus knew the difficulty of getting people to accept new ideas so he used pictures the Jewish people would understand such as that of filling wine skins (337).

The findings of my study are in direct support of Jesus admonition to place new wine in new wineskins. A new generation may need to hear an age-old message, but it will require new forms in order to get the message across with effectiveness. This is underscored by Davis’ admonition that we waste time when we use inappropriate models simply because they are available (194). The Echo Boomers are like new wine

and are much too valuable to be entrusted to patched or old wineskins that many in the church use to minister.

Barclay also believes that Jesus' example calls us to be flexible enough to receive new ideas. At the same time, he decries the church's multiple attempts to pour new things into old molds. Pouring new attempts into old molds will not work with the Echo Boomers of the population studied. New methods and ways of doing things are required. We have to be, as Hoy suggested, "students of people and trends, constantly updating ministries to be effective" (1).

Futurist Joel Arthur Barker's work suggests that paradigms establish and define boundaries that tell us how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful (32). In this case, the findings of this study suggest that new paradigms are necessary for future effectiveness in ministry the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church.

The statistical significance of the responses of the youth ministry workers concerning qualities important to ministry with Echo Boomers highlights the need for the church to take new approaches in how it reaches out to this generation. This need coincides directly with Barclay's belief that Jesus would have criticized a church for saying, "We've never done it that way before" (338). The notion of patching up old ways of doing ministry becomes foolish in light of this information

about the Echo Boomers in comparison to what is known about past generations.

Barclay contends that this parable of the wineskins was Jesus warning for the church not to be the only institution living in the past (340). Churches in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church are going to have to ask themselves if they are living in the past or ministering to the present situation and preparing for the future. To not do so, as Zoba asserted leaves the Echo Boomers vulnerable to separation from the church as they become adults (5).

The self-descriptive themes that emerged from the focus group sessions with the Echo Boomers paint a vivid picture of this generation for the church. The youth ministry workers' responses provide a strong framework while the focus group information provides detail.

One of the practical findings of the study is that Echo Boomers prefer contemporary music, usage of media and technology, narrative preaching, and a laid-back atmosphere for worship. "Connecting with God" for the Echo Boomers takes on a different look than most churches are utilizing. In an effort to understand the world they live in Echo Boomers use such things as music, multi-media, and narrative images or forms as maps of reality for their lives ("Four Cries"). The church has the opportunity to utilize these means as a map to lead them into relationship with Jesus Christ.

However, these means do not have to be intimidating. Codrington reminds us that God chose to reveal much of himself in narrative story form. Narrative is the style of speaking with which the Echo Boomer population studied “connects” (5). In his own example, Jesus has already given the church a powerful example of how to communicate with this generation.

These characteristics do not describe the typical worship service being offered in the majority of United Methodist Churches in the Arkansas Area. Some churches are adding additional services as an alternative option so that these characteristics can be implemented. More often, this is the exception rather than the rule.

When it comes to the use of contemporary music, use of media and technology, and narrative preaching the statistical significance of the findings from the survey, as well as the themes of the focus groups resonate with Augsburg's comments. He affirmed that the challenge of new ideas is a call to objectivity which frees us from prejudice and opens the mind to the Spirit's guidance (123). Augsburg's comments also highlight Barclay's call to pray that God would deliver us from shut minds (340).

In looking to usage of these forms that connote relevance to the Echo Boomers, the church is faced with the call to free itself of any prejudice toward certain forms. Although certain forms have been upheld in the past, we must now look to the Spirit's guidance as to how



to use the forms that connect with this emerging generation. To do otherwise would be to ignore the most prevalent self-descriptive theme of the Echo Boomers focus groups: relevance.

One of the most affirmed attributes of successful ministry with the Echo Boomers was the application of an incarnational and indigenous approach. This affirmation came through strong and loud in the responses of the youth ministry workers and the comments of the Echo Boomers. The responses indicated that it is important for the church to be incarnational by finding ways to relate to the Echo Boomers on their own level. The responses also affirmed that it is important to address Echo Boomers in an indigenous manner that considers the local culture.

Scripture portrays this dramatically in John 1:1-5 and 14 where we are told of the Word made flesh. Fredrickson suggests to us that because God subjected himself to all the conditions of the human existence, we who make up the church need to open our eyes to the endless possibilities that God made flesh opens up to us. The problem is that those of us who make up the church are in a sense ignoring great areas of “fleshy” life that could be used to reach out to the Echo Boom generation (43).

The findings of this study call us to be God with flesh on in order for the church to reach this generation. Just as we find in 1 Corinthians that Paul was willing to become all things to all people in order that he

might win some, so we too have to be willing to become like the Echo Boomers in order that the church might reach their generation.

These findings also support Codrington's emphasis upon friendship evangelism as a lifestyle. His contention is that by showing others what it really means to live with Christ as our Lord and Savior by the way we live our lives is an effective way of presenting the gospel that will connect with Echo Boomers (2).

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul presents this picture of true incarnational and indigenous ministry. Those who want to reach out to others are required to become like the group they want to reach in order to win over as many as possible. Though Paul was not necessarily like the people he was trying to reach, he became like them anyway because he understood this was his best chance to break through with them. If it requires mastering the usage of media and technology to reach out to the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church, then we are called to do it if desire to follow Paul's example.

Chafin contends that other than Jesus, Paul is our truest role model of incarnational ministry. Because Paul was a lover of people, he did not let cultural or religious differences become barriers between him and persons for whom Christ died (119). We have to consider the possibility that to not implement the knowledge and information that we have about this generation into our ministry is to allow barriers to remain between the Echo Boomers studied and the church.

Despite the fact that what appeals to this group of Echo Boomers might not be what appeals to the rest of the church, we need to be willing to do it anyway in order that we might win over as many people as possible to Jesus Christ. In so doing, Chafin suggests that we allow for great flexibility because this passage of Scripture compels us to identify with people where they are (114). Flexibility in methods and means of ministry may become one of the great issues for the United Methodist Church in the Arkansas Area to grapple with as they strive to move forward into the twenty-first century.

The research findings characterize Echo Boomers as being most strongly influenced by their friends, while their most likely family situation is to have parents who are divorced. The Echo Boomers also display a desire for deep relationships. Both the youth ministry worker survey and focus groups with Echo Boomers affirmed this to be the case. These findings give credence to Martin's claim that Echo Boomers desperately desire to have significant adults relationally involved in their lives (2). As DeLashmutt note, we have to realize churches are not ministering to the same people or families they were in the past (1).

The opportunity before the United Methodist Church in Arkansas is to fill the void left in the lives of the Echo Boomers by the brokenness of their families and lack of deep relationships. If the strongest influence in their lives is their friends, then the church has the opportunity before us to fulfill that role and be their friends. If the greatest issue they deal

with is that of family, then the church has the opportunity to help create stronger families as well as to become a surrogate family to the Echo Boomers who are looking for deep and meaningful relationships.

How we go about doing this will be the key. As Barclay suggested earlier, we can never attain any kind of evangelism or friendship without speaking the same language and thinking the same thoughts as the other person. He suggests that one of our greatest needs is to learning how to get alongside people (84).

To reach out to this generation and become their friends will require time and effort. This group of Echo Boomers will not easily give themselves over to others. We will have to find ways of relating to them on their own terms.

It becomes a matter of meeting this generation at the point of their individual need. Martin uses Galatians 3:26-29, "There is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female." (NIV) as the theological basis of his argument for needs-based ministry to Echo Boomers. Martin's suggestion is that the first century church was aware of the potential for alienation and found the inspiration of Jesus Christ to transform their culture. Martin contends that those in the early church sought to follow the lead of Jesus by seeking deep authentic relationships regardless of age, sex, race, class or language (3).

Martin believes, as do I, that this provides for the church of today a model for how to do ministry with Echo Boomers. We have to be willing

to do whatever it takes to be their church. If we have to be willing to sing their music, then we should sing their music. If it means forming deep relationships with them, then we should form deep relationships with them. If it means stepping outside of our own generational preferences then we should step out of our preferences. We who are the current adult generations of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church are called to do whatever is necessary to reach the Echo Boom Generation.

### Implications of the Findings

The results of this research can help those in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church to gain a perspective of ministry for the future with the Echo Boom Generation. This study demonstrates that the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area (as a generation) hold several distinct qualities, characteristics, and attitudes that shape their perceived needs as well as how they view the church.

Effectiveness in reaching this generation for Jesus Christ is essential to the future well being of the church. This generation can be understood as persons and approached in a manner that allows them to view the Christian faith and church as relevant to their daily living. To not reach out to them based upon their needs, paints a picture of the future for the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church where our membership becomes increasingly older and older until eventually many churches will be forced to close.

The youth ministry workers appear to have a solid grasp of the characteristics of the Echo Boomers. The responses of the youth ministers along with the findings from the focus groups, indicate that significant change in the way most churches minister in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church will have to take place as the Echo Boomers enter adulthood. Failure to do so means that the church risks being viewed as irrelevant and out of touch by an entire generation. So that this scenario does not become a reality, dialogue needs to take place between youth workers, pastors and church leaders.

A biblical message that fails to address the Echo Boomers through the filters of their personal characteristics, perceived needs and life circumstances will connote irrelevance to them. This study reminds the church that no two generations are exactly the same and that while the message of our ministry is unchanging, the forms that our ministries take on must constantly adapt to the context of the group to whom we minister. If keeping the United Methodist Church alive and well in the Arkansas Area is a goal of the church, this study stands as an admonition that current ways of doing ministry need to be evaluated and examined to see if they will meet the needs of emerging generations.

Church as my grandparents, parents, and I have experienced it will not be adequate in meeting the needs of Echo Boomers and other future generations. To be considered culturally relevant by the Echo

Boomers, the church will have to feel and look different than it does today in order to make it into tomorrow.

Based on the findings of this study, I would like to make the following recommendations concerning ministry to Echo Boomers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas:

1. I recommend the implementation of technology and usage of media and contemporary music into ministries and worship services. In addition, I recommend training on how to successfully implement these aspects into the life of a congregation.

2. It is also my recommendation to implement ministries that help to create stronger families such as seminars on how to parent teenagers, how to improve family communication and how to build stronger relationships.

3. I recommend the implementation of small group ministries where Echo Boomers have the opportunity to connect with their peers and adult leaders in real and meaningful ways. Strong consideration should be given to usage of the Internet as a possible outlet for support groups such as Wellman and Gulia suggested including groups for social, physical, and mental problems along with information about treatments, practitioners and other resources (5).

4. It is my recommendation to start a dialogue between youth ministry workers and church leaders so that this information can be processed and used in the local church.

5. I also encourage training opportunities for pastors and church leaders so that they can learn more about the Echo Boom culture in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church and they can be familiarized with qualities important in ministry to this group (i.e. learning to be conscious of preaching in a narrative style rather than in a linear mode).

If these recommendations are followed, I believe that a stronger United Methodist Church in the Arkansas Area will result. I believe that these steps will create a brighter future in a time that Strauss and Howe have described as being “a moment of turning and trial for Echo Boomers” (327).

#### Contribution to Research Methodology

One contribution this study makes to research methodology is the questionnaire used for assessing the opinions of the youth ministry workers. Previously no such tool was available for quantifying the opinions of youth ministry workers concerning their observations of the Echo Boom Generation. This questionnaire provides a way for other researchers to examine the opinions of other youth ministry workers; it can be used across boundaries of region, area of the country, or denominational context.

Likewise, the focus group format provides a tool for discovering the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the Echo Boomers themselves. It would be largely ineffective to use a quantitative method such as the



questionnaire used with they youth ministry workers on the Echo Boomers themselves. The focus group format furnishes a framework for getting behind the answers of the Echo Boomers to discover their unique identity based upon self-report.

It is my observation that the focus group format is consistent with what appeals to the Echo Boomers. Future research with this generation may need to incorporate more narrative, descriptive methodologies to keep the participants engaged.

These two tools together provide an excellent opportunity for another researcher to pursue further studies of the Echo Boom Generation.

#### Limitations & Weaknesses of the Study

This study is limited because of the narrowness of the focus upon Echo Boomers in the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. The limitations of a specific state area and denomination studied mean that the information cannot be generalized as necessarily being true for Echo Boomers in other states or attending churches of another denomination.

The nature of this study is a limited picture of a small population. It is essentially a sketch of this specific group of Echo Boomers at this given time in history. As the Echo Boomers continue to emerge as a generation, it is impossible to predict the defining moments still to take

place in their lives, defining moments that will shape and mold who they will become as they enter adulthood.

One of the weaknesses of this study was in the design of the focus group format for the qualitative research. Each of the Echo Boomers participating in the focus groups was aware that I am a United Methodist Minister. I have some concern that the responses I received during the focus groups may have been more guarded than they otherwise would have been because of my position as a minister. I wonder if someone who was not a known ordained minister could have received more candid responses.

#### Unexpected Findings

I was unprepared for one of the findings I made while conducting the focus groups with the Echo Boomers. In my attempt to find out about the qualities the Echo Boomers would look for in a church, I asked them the following question. "If you were going to go to church this Sunday and you had the following six churches to choose from which one would you select: First Church, St. Matthew's, Calvary Chapel, The Orchard, New Age Fellowship or Christ Community Church?"

In my mind the names were of no significance. They were merely a tool to help the Echo Boomers begin to visualize or imagine a church they would like to attend. Two-thirds of the Echo Boomers interviewed for the focus groups said they would attend New Age Fellowship.

This unexpected finding creates some cause for concern. Although the churches the Echo Boomers described in no way reflected new age religion or spirituality, I worry that as a spiritually open and trusting generation the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church are vulnerable. My concern is that as the Echo Boomers grow up, leave home, and look for congregations of their own as adults they will be attracted to new age groups simply because of a title.

I also unexpectedly found that sexuality is not an important topic for the church to be addressing for the Echo Boomers of this population to find the church culturally relevant. The responses of the youth ministry workers did not support the findings of the literature review. The review of literature presented sexual awareness as an important issue in the life of Echo Boomers (Childress). However, the youth ministry workers did not validate this as being an important issue for the church to address in order to be perceived as culturally relevant by the Echo Boomers.

It seems almost as if those working with the Echo Boomers have turned the tables on the adults who have or are raising them to say “look at yourself.” They seem to be sending the message not to be concerned about their sexuality. With issues related to family being the number one issue to connote relevance, the implication seems to be that Echo Boomers need adults to work on getting their own relationships straightened out first.

### Recommendations for Further Study

The Echo Boom generation is a young generation. This study has taken a look at them as the first Echo Boomers are in their teenage years. A follow-up study to this research in perhaps five years or more would explore what differences, if any, exist in the Echo Boomers of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. The Echo Boomers could also possibly be tracked throughout their lifetime to see what if any effect their life stage has upon their characteristics, attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Other possible further study would be to take the questionnaire and focus group format used for this study and apply it to another population of youth ministry workers and Echo Boomers. It would be interesting to discover if in a different area of the United States or in a different denominational context what differences if any exist.

### Note of Personal Reflection

At the urging of my mentor, I include this note of personal reflection concerning what this project has meant to me as a researcher and pastor of a church.

As a researcher, my hope is that this project contributes to the developing field of knowledge that exists concerning the Echo Boom Generation, despite the narrow focus of this study. There is a great deal of readily available information about previous generations. I hope to see as much information made accessible concerning the Echo Boom

generation in the near future. It is my fear that if the church does not become serious about understanding the Echo Boomers at this time that they could easily become a lost generation to Christianity. My hope is that this body of work will contribute to the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church's vision for how future ministry will take place.

As a pastor, this project has meant a great deal to me because it is closely aligned with my heart for younger generations and my desire to see them come to know Jesus Christ. My fear is that future generations will begin to see the church as being culturally irrelevant to their lives. I already see this taking place in the lives of many United Methodist Echo Boomers with whom I have come into contact in Arkansas. My hope is that this study will contribute to the future growth and development of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas, and even more importantly to the building of the kingdom of God.

My hope is that pastors and laity will take this study to heart and begin to implement the principles that were discovered in their local churches of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. If taken to heart, it is my belief that the ministry of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church can be significantly enhanced.

## Appendix A

## Youth Ministry Worker Questionnaire &amp; Mailings

The following survey deals with youth workers perceptions of the Echo Boom Generation, those people who were born 1977-1995.

**RESPONDENTS PROFILE** (Circle the One Appropriate Response for Each Category.)

**Gender:** Male Female

**Age:** 22-32 33-52 53+

**Race:** African-American Caucasian Native-American Asian-American Hispanic Other

**Educational Level Completed:** High School College Masters Doctorate

**Tenure in Ministry:** 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21-25 years 26+years

**Tenure in Current Position:** 1-5years 6-10years 11-15years 16-20years 21-25years 26+years

**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

In general to what extent do you find the following characteristics true of the Echo Boom Generation? (Circle One Number Per Line)

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Trusting	1	2	3	4
Pessimistic	1	2	3	4
Self-reliant	1	2	3	4
Not Desiring Relationships	1	2	3	4
Motivated	1	2	3	4
Closed to Technology	1	2	3	4
Visually Oriented	1	2	3	4
Believe Truth is Absolute	1	2	3	4
Narrative Thinking	1	2	3	4
Untrusting	1	2	3	4
Spiritually Open	1	2	3	4
Dependent Upon Others	1	2	3	4
Believe Truth is Relative	1	2	3	4
Unmotivated	1	2	3	4
Open to Technology	1	2	3	4
Audible Orientation	1	2	3	4
Desiring Deep Relationships	1	2	3	4
Linear Thinking	1	2	3	4
Optimistic	1	2	3	4
Spiritually Closed	1	2	3	4

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following qualities are important in ministering to Echo Boomers? (Circle One Per Line)**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<i>Being Incarnational</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Being Indigenous</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Customized Ministry</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Relationship Building</i>	1	2	3	4

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following characteristics will be important for worship services to be effective in reaching Echo Boomers? (Circle One Per Line)**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<i>Contemporary Music</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Liturgy</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Laid Back Atmosphere</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Narrative Preaching</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>Use of Media &amp; Technology</i>	1	2	3	4

**Please rank order your responses to the following three questions, with one being the highest response.**

**Strongest Life Influence of Echo Boomers:**  
(Rank 1 through 4)

- Family \_\_\_\_\_
- Media/Technology \_\_\_\_\_
- Friends \_\_\_\_\_
- School \_\_\_\_\_

**Most Likely Family Situation for Echo Boomers:**  
(Rank 1 through 4)

- Parents Divorced \_\_\_\_\_
- Single Parent \_\_\_\_\_
- Raised by Guardian \_\_\_\_\_
- Parents Married \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you believe to be the most important issue for the church to address in order for Echo Boomers to perceive the church as being culturally relevant?**  
(Rank 1 through 5)

- Relationships \_\_\_\_\_
- Sexuality \_\_\_\_\_
- Family Issues \_\_\_\_\_
- Truth \_\_\_\_\_
- Salvation \_\_\_\_\_

September 25, 1998

Dear Youth Ministry Workers,

As you have already learned from Kissa Hamilton's letter, I am asking that you participate in a survey concerning youth ministry in the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. The study is designed to find out about needs based ministry to the Echo Boom Generation. Specifically, I am interested in youth ages 13-18. I believe this survey will be of great benefit to each of us as we try to further the cause of youth ministry.

Enclosed you will find a survey that takes about five minutes to complete and is self-explanatory. If you do not understand one of the questions, simply leave it blank. After completing both sides of the survey, I would appreciate you enclosing it in the provided pre-addressed and pre-stamped envelope and dropping it in the mail.

After the results have been tabulated and interpreted, I will be sending you a synopsis of the study so that you can use it for your purposes. The study should be helpful in showing your church the unique needs and characteristics of this generation of youth. Once again, thank you for participating in the study.

Sincerely,

Lyndol Loyd





# Arkansas Area Ministries

The United Methodist Church

September 25, 1998

Rev. Lewis T. See, Jr.  
Director of Ministries

Rev. Guy M. Whitney, Jr.  
Minister for Evangelism

Rev. Kissa Hamilton  
Minister with Youth  
and Young Adults

Rev. Linda P. Fox  
Minister with Children  
and Their Families

Jane Dennis  
Director of  
Communications

Carole Teague  
Minister for Mission  
and Outreach

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(877) 646-1816

Dear Youth Ministers:

I hope this letter finds everything going well with you and your youth ministry. I am writing on behalf of Rev. Lyndol Loyd who is currently working on his doctorate degree and needs your help. Lyndol's dissertation is trying to anticipate the church needs of the echo-boom generation. This generation is composed of the very kids you are dealing with in your youth ministry. Hopefully, Lyndol's work will help us see how their needs might effect the future of the church and youth ministry.

Here's how you can help. Please take a few minutes (it really only takes about 5), fill out the survey that is enclosed and send it back to Lyndol. He will be happy to share a brief synopsis of his findings when he gets finished. This is an important study and could really give all of us some insight into what our youth want from the church and how our churches can better respond to the needs of this generation. Having this information could be invaluable to you as you design your youth ministry program and as your church makes decisions about how they will reach out to the echo-boom generation.

I look forward to seeing what Lyndol's work produces. So please take just a few minutes and fill out the survey.

Yours in Christ,

Kissa Hamilton  
Area Minister with Youth & Young Adults



Serving United Methodists in the Little Rock Conference and North Arkansas Conference  
Janice Riggle Huie, Resident Bishop

October 8, 1998

Dear Youth Ministry Worker,

A few weeks ago you received a letter from Kissa Hamilton and a letter from myself requesting your participation in a research study that I am conducting concerning the Echo Boom Generation. I have not received your completed survey as of yet.

I realize that you are probably very busy, but I would greatly appreciate it if you would take the time to complete this newly enclosed copy of the questionnaire and return it to me in the self-addressed, pre-stamped envelope that I am providing.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Lyndol Loyd

October 12, 1998

Dear Youth Ministry Worker,

I greatly appreciate your participation in my research study on the Echo Boom Generation. Your assistance has been invaluable to me. I will be sure to let you know when I have my results tabulated and ready.

Thank You,

Lyndol Loyd

## Appendix B

## Focus Group Format with Echo Boomers

This section of questions goes toward correlation with the questions asked of the youth directors concerning what aspects are important in a worship service and toward what the most important issues are for churches to be addressing in order to be perceived as relevant?

If your parents told you that you were going to go to church Sunday morning and they said you could choose which church you were going to attend which one of the following churches would you go to?

First Church  
The Orchard

Christ Community Church  
Calvary Chapel

St. Matthew's  
New Age Fellowship

What do you think the people are like who attend that church?

How would you describe the worship service?

What kinds of things are they talking about?

What's the youth group like?

Describe the pastor to me? Describe the youth director?

How is the music?

What would make you decide to go back there again?

*These questions go toward correlation with the strongest life influences upon echo boomers as indicated by youth directors and toward the most likely family status for echo boomers as indicated by their youth workers. This set of questions also goes toward correlation with the section which seeks to find out which characteristics are true of the Echo Boom generation as reported by the literature and the youth directors.*

Let's talk about friends for a moment:

Tell me about your best friend?

What do you like to do together?

Tell me about the other kids you hang out with?

What turns you off? What turns your friends off?

What makes you laugh? What makes you cry?

What are the labels of the different groups in your school?

Which group are you in? Which group would you never want to be in?

How do you like to spend your free time?

What is the most popular movie amongst your friends right now?

What is the movie about? What is the point of the movie?

What kind of music do you listen to?

What television shows do you watch?

Tell me about what kinds of families your friends come from?

Scenario One:

You find out that you are pregnant (or your girlfriend is pregnant). How do you feel about it? What do you do? How would you make the decision? How would your friends react?

Scenario Two:

You are given a million dollars in cash and you have to spend it immediately. How would you spend it? How do you make your decisions?

## Appendix C

## Glossary of Statistical Terminology

The definitions presented in this glossary are from Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Non-technical Guide for the Social Sciences, by W. Paul Vogt.

Chi-Square Test “A test statistic used to assess the statistical significance of a finding. It is also used as a goodness-of-fit test.

The most familiar use of chi-square test occurs when a researcher wants to see if there are statistically significant differences between the observed (or actual) frequencies and the expected (or hypothesized, given the null hypothesis) frequencies of two variables presented in a cross-tabulation or contingency table. The larger the observed frequency is in comparison with the expected frequency, the larger the chi-square statistic and the more likely the difference is statistically significant.

Critical Region “The area in a sampling distribution representing values that are ‘critical’ to a particular study. They are critical because, when a sample statistic falls in that region, the researcher can reject the null hypothesis. (For this reason, the critical region is also called the ‘region of rejection.’) If, for example, the mean of a sample falls within the critical region, then it is unlikely that the difference between the sample mean and the population mean is due to chance alone.

Degrees of Freedom - “Usually abbreviated ‘df.’ The number of values free to vary when computing a statistic. The number is necessary to interpret a chi-square statistic, an F ratio or a t score.

Many people find the concept of df difficult but the practical application relatively easy; that is, statistics texts contain clear rules for how to calculate and use the df to interpret a statistic.

P - “Probability value, or *p* value. Usually found in an expression such as  $p < .05$ . This expression means: ‘The probability (*p*) that this result could have been produced by chance (or random error) is less than (<) five percent (.05).’ Thus, the smaller the number, the greater the likelihood that the result expressed was not merely due to chance. For example,  $p < .001$  means that the odds are a thousand to one (one tenth of 1%) against the result being a fluke. What is being reported (.05, .001, and so on) is an alpha level or significance level. The *p* value is the actual probability associated with an obtained statistical result; this is then compared with the alpha level to see whether that value is (statistically) significant”.

Statistical Significance - "Said of a value or measure of a variable when it is ("significantly") larger or smaller than would be expected by chance alone".

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