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The application of learning organization principles to church growth

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2009

ABSTRACT

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M.Ed., George Mason University, 1986
B.A., Eastern Nazarene College, 1980

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Psychology

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ABSTRACT

While many studies showed evidence of the use of learning organization theory in a variety of venues, these theories have been studied in a limited capacity in church settings. This research attempted to substantiate the presence of learning organization principles in churches experiencing growth, and to refine a tool to measure these characteristics in churches. Relationships and strengths of association between and among 3 learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and degrees of growth defined as negative, plateau, and positive growth were examined in a sample of Nazarene churches via a revised survey completed by senior pastors. Pre and post survey analyses were employed, resulting in stronger reliability and validity outcomes for the instrument and contributing to a significant gap in the literature. Correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA methods were used to assess relationships between the 3 learning organization principles and 3 levels of church growth. Outcomes did not show significant substantiation of these relationships, except for slightly higher evidence of leadership in the positive growth group. This study adds to the scientific knowledge of church growth via the creation of a new survey instrument for church use. The promotion of social responsibility and professional application of knowledge to church venues is an important tenet of this study, and lends valuable insight and knowledge for church leadership to engage in strategies that lead to social change.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family for their patience, their love, and their support of my educational pursuits. My parents, Cliff and Gladys Hersey, always encouraged my educational endeavors and pursuits, and believed in the importance of higher education. To my son, Steven; daughter-in-law, Emily; and daughter, Amber, thank you for allowing me to commit myself to this work, and for being gracious during times when it took precedence over spending time with you. I will be forever grateful for your tolerance and encouragement. And to my husband, Glenn: You have been my fortress and my source of strength, especially on those days when I was absolutely sure it was time to quit. All I can say is thank you.

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Finally, I must acknowledge the quiet and sacred presence of a God who loves me more than I deserve, and to whom I devote my life. May the days ahead be truly reflective of my devotion and my commitment to Jesus Christ.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

During the past 20 years, learning organization theory's strategies and modes of conduct have entered through the doors of every size and type of organization, from large corporations to educational venues and other academic and business settings. In more recent years, these same tactics have been investigated in a number of environments such as schools (Friedman, Friedman, & Pollack, 2006; Kezar, 2005; Wai-Lin Lo, 2005; White & Weathersby, 2005), the medical field (Albert, 2005; Mohr, 2005), and the military (Anderson, Dare, & Stillman, 2004; Rushmer, Kelly, Lough, Wilkinson, & Davies, 2004). As a result, these studies provide ideas on how to apply the concept's most basic principles in ways that promote growth, stamina, financial stability, and team empowerment abound.

However, the specific variables of learning organization theory and practice need to be researched more comprehensively in quantitative terms, and studied more extensively in not-for-profit settings. A significant growth pattern in not-for-profits of almost 30% over the past 10 years (Wirtz, 2006) lends itself to increased opportunities for the study of learning organization principles in an environment of growth and change. In addition, learning organization principles and practices have been studied in a limited capacity in churches

(Piercy, 2007; Wilson, Keyton, Johnson, Geiger, & Clark, 1993). In this context, church is a common, nonspecific term that refers to a body of worshipers and/or a denominational structure with varying degrees of affiliation, formal governing bodies, and other common characteristics (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1982). Churches are one entity that comprise nearly one-fourth of all not-for-profit organizations in the United States, and are an example of one organization that is underserved in the context of not-for-profit research in general, and in learning organization research in specific (Saxon-Harrold, Weiner, McCormack, & Weber, 2000).

The impact of this lack of research and study is vast, as it potentially affects not only church growth or decline, but other contributing variables as well, such as leadership within the church, job structure and performance of those who work in church settings, and development of programs to meet the needs of both congregants and the community at large. The intent of this study was to tie basic learning organization principles and strategies to a quantitative understanding of church growth, measured for purposes of this study as a numerical change in Sunday morning attendance figures, as reported by select churches in a specific denominational structure. Church leaders, employees, and congregants might then use the results of this study as one way to more clearly define future practices, goals, and plans for their church and community.

Background of the Problem

In 1973, Beckford declared religious organization as a new field of study, believing that theories involving organizational examination, “could be applied to the analysis of various kinds of religious organizations, including specific congregations” (Wilson et al., 1993, p. 259). Since then, the study of church growth has resulted in numerous articles investigating communication, commitment, mobility, membership, friendship formation, and resources, among others (Applebaum & Reichart, 1997; Boraas, 2003; DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000; Dudley & Roozen, 2001; Iannaccone & Everton, 2004; Olson, 1989; Perrin & Mauss, 1991). Many of these concepts correlate with the most basic premises of learning organization theory as ascribed by Senge (1990) which included the elements of personal mastery, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and systems thinking.

It also has been acknowledged that some forms of religion are flourishing, while others appeared to be weakening in terms of attendance (Iannaccone, Olson, & Stark, 1995; Jarvis, 2004; Perrin, 1989; Perrin, Kennedy, & Miller, 1997), and research has been brought forth on patterns of growth and decline related to a host of variables (Iannacone & Everton, 2004). Since the 1980s, for instance, research on church growth has shown steady increases in membership among more conservative denominations, although reasons for such growth remain unclear (Perrin & Mauss, 1991). Congregational membership roles and attendance numbers have also become somewhat increasingly unstable due to the geographic mobility found in current congregants (Perrin et al.).

One approach to church growth is found in the suggestion that baby boomers in particular seem to be church-shoppers. This term refers to Christian individuals who actively search for a church which best meets their needs (Roof & Johnson, 1993). The application of learning organization theory in contemporary church settings could assist in identifying some strategies that will meet the needs of baby boomers, while not ignoring the needs of the bedrock of the church (the elderly), and the future of the church (the young). According to Saxon-Harrold et al. (2000), this is a critical generational and demographic concern related to the work of the church.

One of the largest denominations in the Wesleyan-Armenian theological tradition is the Church of the Nazarene, whose tenets are influenced by the works of Wesley (Crow, 2004). One characteristic of Wesley's early teachings is evidenced historically in the size distribution of congregations in the Church of the Nazarene, and showed some confirmation that small groups were an important concept of Wesley's traditions. As a result, the average congregational size of a Nazarene church today continues to lend applicability to this emphasis on evangelism in small circles (Crow).

A number of Nazarene churches, however, have grown beyond what Wesley identified as ideal congregational size, and this trend has resulted in additional points of study. One study (Crow, 2004) showed that there are a number of growth barriers or choice points in congregations that determine their desire or ability to grow. These are points of membership or attendance growth that covertly maintain or change the nature of that particular congregation. Conceptually, choice points is not a new term, although it has not been studied in relation to the topic of congregation size (Crow). Thus, this combination of knowledge of why churches are in states of positive or negative growth, coupled with an understanding of choice points that are evidenced in one particular denominational structure provide background for this current study. Those factors that are contributors to church size, as well as the demographic nature and historical insight of the Nazarene church are further delineated in the literature review in chapter 2.

Statement of the Problem

Research on the characteristics of learning organizations has primarily focused on large corporations, education venues, and other academic and business settings. However, this issue has not been as significantly researched in not-for-profit settings in general, and has only minimally been applied to church settings in specific. The research problem being addressed in this study involves the need for evidence that learning organization principles can be applied to church settings, as churches are one of the largest social environments in existence with approximately 300,000 local churches in the United States in the early 1990s (Bedell, 1993), and increasing to over 353,000 religious congregations by 1997 (Saxon-Harrold et al., 2000). In response to this limitation of the research literature, this study explored the evidence of learning organization principles in a denominational church setting, and the degree of growth experienced in those churches over a select 3-year time period. The intent of the study was to examine what relationships, if any, exist between learning organization capacity and its principles, and the growth in Sunday a.m. attendance figures in a particular denomination.

The three learning organization principles, measured by a learning capacity instrument completed by senior pastors, provided evidence of the existence of learning organization capacity and serve as the nonmanipulated independent variables. The growth evidenced in a sample of select churches as measured by Sunday morning attendance figures (further measured as positive growth, plateau growth, and negative growth) serves as the dependent variable. These variables are illustrated in Figure 1.

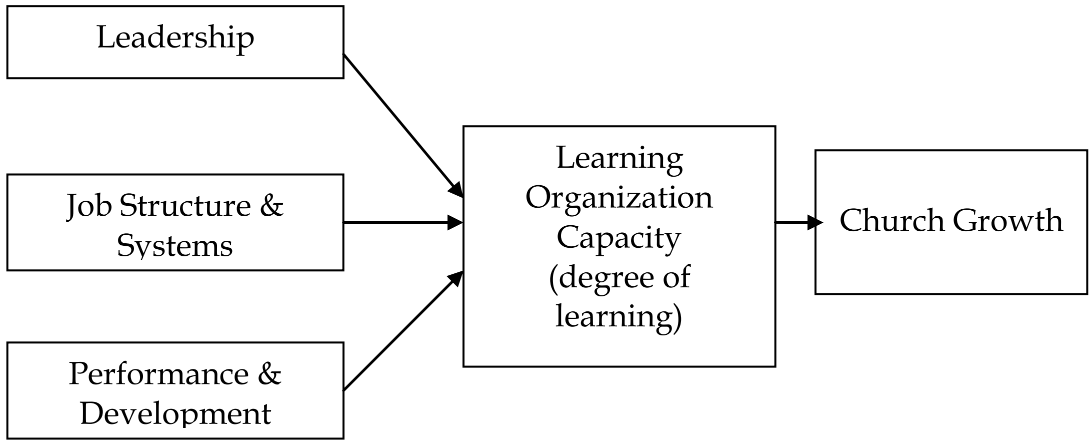

Figure 1. Flow of learning organization variables as indicators of learning capacity of churches which ultimately lead to church growth.

Learning Organization Characteristics

Several variables arise from the literature as characteristics often found in learning organizations, and include evidences of leadership, confirmation of job structure, and support of performance and development strategies as significant contributors to growth. The role of leadership is mentioned in most articles on learning organization theory as an important ingredient in fostering a learning climate. It is particularly evidenced as part of the early models of learning organization thought (Agashae & Bratton, 2001), and those in positions of leadership use their influence to achieve goals, direct performance, and foster achievement of organizational strategies (Agashae & Bratton). They do so by demonstrating new learning by communicating with others as they learn (Wilhelm, 2006).

In most studies on church growth, leadership becomes an essential contributor to success, particularly when examining the maintenance of church programs and the, "overall delivery of services" (Wilson et al., 1993, p. 269). In relationship to church practices and service delivery, senior pastors must move towards a more consistent acknowledgement of staff, volunteers, and congregants as active participants in shaping future goals and strategies (Jarvis, 2004; Senge, 1990; Drucker, 2001). Jarvis (2004) stated, "all members…are equal participants in this process – in both policy and action" (p. 146).

Second, complex issues affecting contemporary decision-making, such as globalization, knowledge, and information technology can be more easily integrated into an organization if there is a significant understanding of job structure and systems within that organization. The types of issues that can affect the way work is done is constantly encroaching on workforce strategies, requiring the need for an organization to first identify how it currently learns before attempts are made to move forward (Jenlink, 1994). The church is no exception to these changes, particularly in reference to how church employees participate in the process of learning and change. These issues should, "concern the church, especially in a society where work is no longer a permanent phenomenon for many people" (Jarvis, 2004, p. 141). The stressors and burdens of the workplace change continuously, and organizations (including churches) are beginning to understand the important roles that employees play in the context of commitment; as a result, more attention is being paid to job satisfaction strategies, leveraging of assets, and involving employees in improving their knowledge base (Dirani, 2006).

Finally, in the midst of these ever-changing conditions, businesses have discovered the need to adapt to unforeseen circumstances, which often requires an unexpected shift in thinking and responding (Rowden, 2001). These issues involving performance and development are at the heart of what it means to be a learning organization and, "may be the only true source of competitive advantage" in organizations (Rowden, p. 12). Learning is one of the primary keys to remaining competitive (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997) and learning better and faster is acknowledged as an essential core competency (Sugarman, 2001).

Because churches need to learn and respond in new and fresh ways, an increasing number of consultants have been used by churches and other faith-based organizations to assist in strategic planning, marketing, knowledge management, and other contemporary forms of maintaining and managing growth patterns (Ritschard, 1993; Vokurka & McDaniel, 2004). It is necessary for churches to become willing to support and reward what it means to become a learning organization as part of their long-term strategic plan (Bartell, 2001). While churches are not often likely to describe themselves in competitive terms, it is widely acknowledged that denominations in general (and churches, in specific) keep track of membership, attendance, financial giving, budgets, outreach, and a host of other variables that are then used as indicators of growth or success, and used as indicators of potential future success of the launch of new programs that a church might be considering (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004). A more detailed examination of these characteristics of learning organizations mentioned above is found in chapter 2 which provides a review of the literature, and will support the research study as illustrated in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to advance the knowledge base of the application of specific learning organization principles to churches as a not-for-profit entity, and to explore the relationships between and among these learning organization principles and church growth. To achieve this purpose, the study employed a quasi-experimental, three group design involving positive, plateau, and negative growth groups which involved the dissemination, submission and quantitative review of a learning organization instrument that had been specifically edited for use in church environments. The instrument's purpose was to measure the existence of specific learning organization principles (leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development) and to determine the relationship between these three leadership principles and levels of church growth.

Theoretical Basis for the Study

The concepts of learning organization theory are most clearly understood through the perusal of studies in personal mastery, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and systems thinking as first described by Senge (1990). Since his work in the 1990s, much additional research has been done on (a) the influence of these variables on the growth of learning organization capacity in organizations, (b) the development of additional variables that appear to lend credibility to the knowledge base of learning organization thought, and (c) the collective influence of learning organization strategy on growth and change in organizations. However, as stated earlier, very little empirical research has been done that provides the kinds of tools and/or knowledge of measurable outcomes to advance these theoretical and foundational models.

While almost every definition of a learning organization evolved from the idea of creating or acquiring knowledge, which can then be transferred in ways that help individuals and the organization to modify behaviors (Garvin, 1993; Senge, 1990; Sugarman, 2001), the definitions are a starting point. Much needs to be done in order to explain how to become a learning organization (Goh, 1998), as becoming a learning organization is much more difficult then merely describing its concepts. Learning, in and of itself, is a capability, one which requires skills, along with a cohesive process of development, and a leadership team that values what it means to learn (Webber, 2000).

A church that ascribes itself to growth and change, therefore, must be willing to risk becoming, and must find ways to forge a higher level of thinking and acting. This study promoted the acknowledgement of churches as not-for-profit entities which could benefit from further research in a number of contexts in both religious and other not-for-profit circles. Since very little research has transpired on the use of learning organization strategies in churches, an additional goal is to provide advances in the foundational knowledge of both of these areas of study.

Definition of Terms

The vocabulary described below are used throughout this study and, while not exhaustive, describe some of the more familiar terminology associated with this study. Several resources were used in compiling and completing this list, including dictionary sources, journal articles, and church growth literature.

Attendees: refers to individuals who are present and participatory in a function or a meeting (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1982). In this study, attendees refers specifically to presence as part of a group of individuals in common religious worship, known as congregants or congregations.

Church(es): a common, nonspecific term that refers, in this study, to a single body of Christian worshipers and/or Christian denominations (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1982). For purposes of this study, the term refers distinctly to churches in North America and Canadian provinces. The classification, however, can be generalized to some other religious institutions with degrees of affiliation, formal governing bodies, and other common characteristics as well.

Church year: refers to the 12-month professional reporting time period for churches in a denomination to document all statistical data with the denomination's headquarters.

Denomination(s): refers to particular religious congregations who share a common faith, a common name, and some form of administrative hierarchy (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1982). For purposes of this study, the primary denomination of study is the Church of the Nazarene.

Growth: can be defined as a degree of increase (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1982), as in size, number, value or strength. For purposes of this study, growth is defined in both positive and negative terms; thus, a positive growth indicates an increase in the number of individuals attending a specific church over a three-year span; a negative growth indicates an increase in the number of individuals no longer attending a specific church over a three-year span.

Learning Organizations (LOs): As stated by Pearn (1994), "It seems that there [is] no shortage of definitions…to become a learning organization" (p. 10). However, for purposes of general clarity, two similar definitions of learning organization from among a number of eligible options are those extracted from the works of Senge and Garvin. Senge (1990) stated that the term learning organization is, "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" (p. 14). Garvin (1993) built off of that definition to encompass both thinking and behavior: "A learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (p. 80).

Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP): refers to the original learning capacity instrument developed by O'Brien (1994a; 1994b) for use in a number of organizational settings.

Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches (LOPP-C): refers to the revision of the Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP) (O'Brien, 1994a; 1994b) that has been developed specifically for use in churches and expanded for use in this study.

Not-for-Profit Organizations (NPOs)/nonprofits: Not-for-profit organizations play a vital role in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in modern society. *Webster's Dictionary* (1982) defined nonprofit as, "not intending or intended to earn a profit" (p. 968). It is a tax-exempt organization whose purpose must be to serve the public interest in a variety of endeavors, such as those exclusively created for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes (Nonprofit Resource Center, 2005, para. 2). Rather than having shareholders, the corporation of a not-for-profit organization is usually entrusted to a group of individuals who serve as voluntary members of a board of trustees, and who distinctly set the course for the organization and strive to help it fulfill its mission. A church falls under the auspices of all parts of this definition.

Not-for-profit and volunteer are not synonymous, although they are interconnected. The use of not-for-profit as a description of an organization's function simply describes the legality of operating and funding such an organization.

Research Questions

The intent of this research study is to provide evidence of the relationships that exist between learning organization capacity and its principles, and levels of church growth, measured in Sunday a.m. attendance data in a particular denomination. To examine these relationships, the following research questions are raised:

1. What relationship, if any, exists between learning organization capacity and church growth?
2. What relationship, if any, exists among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and church growth?
3. What relationship, if any, exists among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and each of the three levels of church growth, further defined as positive growth, plateau, and negative growth?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are presented which query the relationships that exist between the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the levels of church growth that may result from the presence of these principles in church settings. As is characteristic of research in the social sciences (Urdan, 2001), the hypotheses are written in null form, and suggest that there is no effect of one variable on another, that, "rejection of the null hypotheses leads to acceptance of the desired conclusion" (Churchill, 1991, p. 763). Additionally, since there is always some probability of error in accepting any hypothesis, testing of the hypotheses should lead to results that are statistically significant and are not due to mere chance, and keep the researcher from committing Type I (rejection of a true null hypothesis) and Type II (failure to reject a false null hypothesis) errors (Urdan). Thus, the following null hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis #1: There is no significant relationship between learning organization capacity and church growth.

Hypothesis #2: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and church growth.

Hypothesis #3:

H3a: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the level of church growth defined as positive growth.

H3b: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the level of church growth defined as plateau growth.

H3c: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the level of church growth defined as negative growth.

A more detailed discussion of the variables and conjectured relationships is presented in chapter 3 on the specific design and implementation of the research.

Nature of the Study and Objectives for Research

This quantitative study employs the dissemination and collection of a mailed survey, followed by an analysis of data using correlational, multiple regression, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques. The study initially examines the relationship between the construct of learning organization capacity and church growth by using correlation analysis to examine a simple linear correlation. The study then investigates the relationships between three principles of learning organization practice: leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and three levels of church growth: negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth.

These principles are measured through the use of a learning capacity instrument that is specifically designed for use with churches. Following a noteworthy process of using factor analysis to further develop and validate the revised instrument before its formal use, the questionnaire is then administered by mail to a sample frame of senior pastors from a database of Nazarene denomination churches in North America whose average Sunday morning attendance in 2004 was 150 attendees or more. The sample frame are stratified according to three levels of growth (positive, plateau, negative) from church years 2004 to 2007, as measured by Sunday morning attendance.

A multiple regression model is used to regress three independent variables on church growth. Further, three one-way ANOVAs are examined for additional understanding of the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. It is anticipated that a more specific view of the factors that influence levels of church growth will also be revealed, leading to a more robust study and additional areas for future research.

Assumptions of the Study

For purposes of this study, the author assumes the following:

1. Churches, like all organizations, operate at a variety of levels that include individual, group, and organizational patterns.

2. Churches, like all organizations, assume characteristics of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development that affect the outcomes and assessment qualities of those outcomes.

3. Those who are participating in this study, as senior pastors, have a specific knowledge base from which to draw, based on their own experiences and understanding of the variables presented in the survey instrument. As such, it is assumed that they will answer the questions in the survey in ways that are sincere and truthful, but perceptual in nature, even in the context of the confidential nature of the study.

4. While acknowledging that the events of September 11, 2001 created a, "religious boom throughout America [and] was widely reported in the media" (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004, p. 202), attendance polls eventually revealed that the boom's profile encompassed approximately three weeks' time (Iannaccone & Everton), and do not affect the scope of this study. Seasonal effects, spikes that correspond to special events such as Christmas and Easter, and other variables can also be accounted for over time (Iannaccone & Everton).

5. Some measures of church growth and learning capacity as measured in this study by a denomination's church leaders may also be predictors of growth capacities of churches within other denominations, if extenuating variables reminiscent of varying denominations are taken into account. This assumption provides elements for further study and research, and in future studies might also be considered a limitation, depending upon the specific denomination and other significant variables.

Limitations of the Study

Foreseen limitations to this study are threefold:

1. The study limits its sample frame to the North American/Canadian region of one church denomination, and does not generalize its findings to include other denominations on a local, national, or global scale.
2. The surveys are completed by senior pastors of churches from the sample frame, which reflect their own perceptions of church practices, and may not reflect actual practices. Since the statements on the questionnaire are perceptual in nature, are measured on a six-point Likert scale and request perceptions of current practices, these perceptual responses may result in responder bias. Cautionary notation of this possibility is addressed in the cover letter and instruction sheet that accompany the survey instrument.
3. The survey instrument being used has limited information on reliability and validity assigned to its pre-revised, former use. While early measures of

reliability and validity were established in very limited form on the original instrument, the instrument has been rewritten, and terminology is minimally changed for use with church organizations. This results in a need to acknowledge the limited nature of reliability and validity for this instrument and, while additional validation measures are used in this study, the results are presented in a way that acknowledges the limitations of these factors.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The scope of relevance and applicability of this study are limited to one denomination (Nazarene), using data from North American and Canadian Nazarene churches with average Sunday morning attendance at 150 congregants in the 2004 church year, and variations of positive growth, negative growth, or plateau growth of attendance figures at these churches using 2004 through 2007 Sunday morning attendance data. Senior pastors are surveyed, using the Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches, a learning organization capacity instrument originally developed by O'Brien in 1994, but modified by this researcher for purposes of this study by using terminology more suited to church environments. Therefore, the outcomes of this study apply only to an understanding of this specific denomination in relation to data collected on growth and decline of formally-reported Sunday a.m. attendance figures over 3 years' time, from the church years 2004 to 2007.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the scientific knowledge of the application of learning organization principles to churches in a number of ways. First, learning organization thought and strategy is significantly advanced by exploring its application to churches as a venue not formally or consistently being studied. Its outcomes can then be used to more clearly articulate the variables that encourage or deter growth, particularly as related to leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development.

Second, by using an instrument that not only measures learning capacity, but has also been written specifically for use by churches, some generalization of not-for-profit or organizational understanding that results from a more generic instrument is sidestepped. In future studies, the reliability and validity of the instrument can continue to be shaped and sharpened for even more effective use in a variety of churches, denominations, and congregations. As it stands in current practice, very few tangible measures exist in relation to knowing how learning organization concepts actually work, and, "little is known about how to implement the learning organization abstract ideas across national or local cultures and in different kinds of organizations" (Dirani, 2006, p. 557).

In addition, the Church of the Nazarene, as part of its historical and denominational past, has been a faithful practitioner of research and a keeper of records since its inception, with data going back to the earliest days of the denomination's existence (Jones, 2001). It also has a long history of data analysis on a number of variables, some of which contribute heavily to the current understanding of church growth and decline in the Church of the Nazarene (Jones). With such a strong emphasis on empirical research and study, this researcher is confident in the expertise of the researchers at the International Headquarters of the Church of the Nazarene, and is profoundly grateful for their support.

This study contributes to the professional application of knowledge in the scientific and religious realms in a variety of ways. The church is in need of qualified, professional researchers whose knowledge of theory and application can advance the plans and purposes of church denominations around the world. If an increasing number of established churches are relying on consultants and psychologists to develop strategies (Ritschard, 1993), broaden marketing thinking (Vokurka & McDaniel, 2004), and formulate plans for community concerns such as mental health services (Edwards, Brian, Lim, McMinn, & Dominguez, 1999), then the promotion of health, growth, and social responsibility can be augmented by further professional application of services to these areas. This can be achieved with the contribution of knowledge to the development of new churches, and to help these new starts to understand and prepare for the challenges of each stage of church growth (Filby, 1996).

Finally, further study of this social dimension of church worship and fellowship lends great contribution to social change. For instance, this study can provide valuable insight to district or regional management in particular, regarding the variability and similarity of responses from pastors, staff, and congregants that would assist in the development of learning organization strategies for growth and development in churches. It can easily be applied to other denominations, even with different hierarchical structures and membership requirements, although some questions on the survey instrument might need to be rephrased for purposes of other denominations, districts, or regions.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the need for application of learning organization concepts and strategies in the church is greater than ever before. The church as a not-for-profit affiliate is ready for the study of not only its status as a not-for-profit entity, but for the potential application of learning organization principles that can contribute to an increase in growth measures and attendance factors in church settings. As indicated in the problem statement, churches have not been studied as significantly in relation to the use of learning organization principles and their contribution to growth. These principles are especially relevant for academic study in regard to the need to acknowledge the role of leadership in the church, the creation of jobs and the performance of both employed and volunteer individuals, and the church's strategy for future development and growth.

This introductory chapter provides a brief background and theoretical rationale for such a study, and presents the framework for the remainder of this research study. Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the literature related to the relevant variables associated with this study, using Senge's (1990) learning organization theory as the foundation upon which contemporary study and principles are based. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this study, including information on the sample frame and selection criteria, creation and use of the survey instrument, data collection steps, and steps in the analysis of data. Chapter 4 presents the formal analysis of data and results of this study, while chapter 5 encapsulates, in summary form, the conclusions garnered from this study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter focuses on a review of the dynamics and theoretical concepts of learning organization theory as related to churches, in order to provide a thorough examination of materials related to the problem statement and hypotheses for this current study. Because the concepts are being considered in relation to churches and not-for-profit organizations, the chapter also reviews the literature on church growth practices and patterns, including background information on the Church of the Nazarene, followed by a brief introduction to the field of not-for-profit status. From there, the concepts derived from learning organization theory are described, and further applied to church growth strategies, particularly as related to the concepts of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development within the church. The chapter concludes with an explanation for why churches are the ideal setting to study and implement the strategies as outlined in learning organization theory.

Source Analysis

A number of venues were used for compiling information for the literature review. A thorough search of information and academic databases, using the key words of learning organization, church growth, leadership, job structure, performance, development, nonprofit, and not-for-profit was completed and often cross-referenced; and journal articles, books, and various articles were excised from a number of databases and library search engines. From there, the most relevant articles from primary and secondary sources were compiled, and a collection of quantitative research and informational strategy articles from the past 10 years were reviewed.

Next, a search and review of completed dissertations was completed through ProQuest, using combinations of learning organization, church(es), and ministry as key word indicators. ProQuest identified approximately 15 dissertations whose abstracts, titles, and citations included these key words. However, a more thorough review revealed that a number of these dissertations were ministry-focus papers for Doctor of Ministry degrees from seminaries, or dissertations that were qualitative in scope and used learning organization as background material for other studies in subjects such as coaching of pastors, training of Sunday school teachers, pastoral behaviors, and lay-ministry projects. Others were case studies or comparisons of two or more churches, journal narrations of experiential study, or multi-week group studies with parishioners or church members, with no quantitative perspective. One dissertation completed in early 2007 was the first quantitative dissertation found to compare learning organization dimensions and performance outcomes in churches (Piercy, 2007), but its results were not tied specifically to one denomination and particular church levels of growth, and did not measure the same outcomes as this current study. Finally, specific articles and data were compiled from the Web sites and through personal correspondence with researchers at Nazarene headquarters, who maintain a significant website and archive of articles and data for public use. As a result of this thorough source analysis, particular attention was then given to books and articles written in the past five years, although it appears that a significant amount of applied research in learning organization theory has only begun to transpire during that time (Dirani, 2006); hence, the usefulness of this current study. A minimum number of older materials are used throughout, primarily for historical purposes of relevance as related to the topics of this chapter.

With this understanding of the need to apply learning organization concepts to the not-for-profit venue of churches, a thorough review of the literature begins with discussions of church growth, Nazarene denominational background, and not-for-profit status. A historical understanding of learning organization theory, as well as a review of the experts in the field is provided, along with descriptions of three primary variables studied in learning organizations: leadership characteristics, job structure, and performance and development issues. In conclusion, a description of the church as an ideal setting to apply learning organization research is revealed.

Church Growth Literature

This review of church growth literature provides background on the historical understanding of church growth, as well as a review of contemporary church growth practices. It concludes with a study of future issues that may transpire in the church of the future.

Historical Review of Church Growth

There is much about the spiritual and religious teachings of the church which correspond in consistency with concepts and strategies of learning organizations such as teamwork, development of human talents and gifts, participation among members, and maintaining vision (Porth, McCall, & Bausch, 1999; Ritschard, 1993). These concepts not only align themselves with contemporary ideas of strategy and growth, but at least three research studies (Angone, 1998; Iannaccone & Everton, 2004; Jarvis, 2004) surmise that the early Christian church also showed strong evidences of being a learning organization, with its emphasis on shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking in particular.

In relationship to the Greek Testament church, Jarvis (2004) described a historical development of ekklesia, or a network of people who, through the process of learning to be Christians, were bound together by a common faith as part of their learning process. In this process, the ekklesia was seeking to respond to societal questions regarding Christianity, not unlike learning organization processes of seeking to provide answers to others' questions regarding confusion and change (Jarvis). The nature of this new approach to ministry was to, "take on an identity that was unique…unprecedented…with no other model other than discipleship" (Angone, 1998, p. 5).

In other organizational contexts, the practice of examining and analyzing attendance and other factors in Christian circles dates back in Greek Testament history to documentation from the biblical book of Luke and other disciples of the addition of new converts during Pentecost that increased the church to about 3000. Ensuing works in the Greek Testament attributed to Peter number the church in the range of 5000 members (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004). The early Christian church is an early example of a learning organization, not because it was a planned and contrived way to begin a climate of change, but because it had no other choice because of its rapid growth (Angone, 1998). Those of the early church understood how to handle the waves of change that were part of a fast-changing world, as they were, "survivors who learned how to survive by working together" (Angone, p. 121). Contemporary churches should seek wisdom from the examples that the early church provided in relation to learning organization principles, and reestablish themselves as the learning organization they once were (Angone).

Contemporary Church Growth Practices

In parallel to the practices of the early church, the contemporary church needs to keep abreast of environmental and societal changes. If this does not occur, the church will be asking the wrong questions and giving the wrong answers to the religious questions of the day (Jarvis, 2004). Some of those questions surround the sustainability of churches (via size and function) in more contemporary terms. However, as is the nature of a reflexive, impulsive, and spontaneous society (Jarvis), the church today is also confronted with questions for which there are usually no simple and spontaneous answers. This supports the need for the use of learning organization practices in contemporary church settings, as a learning organization church would encourage congregants to engage in the learning process in an effort to collectively find answers to some of the ontological questions often presented, instead of assuming that the church must provide an answer for every problem or question.

From this contemporary perspective, a number of individual belief systems are, "diverging from the institutionalized systems of religion as people learn about life's verities from a wide variety of learning situations" (Jarvis, 2005, p. 56). This counteracts the collective nature of the learning organization process mentioned above and, as a result, the church must also continue to be empathetic, evangelical, and educational to its community. While studies on church growth abound, the commitment of individuals to church membership and attendance is bleak, as evidenced in a 1992 U.S. Department of Commerce statistic. The figure shows that approximately 80% of all persons in the United States in 1992 cited themselves as Christians; however, only about 25% of respondents acknowledged weekly attendance at church (Baard, 1994). Analyzed from this perspective, churches can view non attendees' existence as a mission field, ready to be tackled, or as a denomination-wide crisis in states of demise. The drop-off of attendance rates is not worldwide or widespread, according to Baard. Within denominations defined as Christian, many are thriving, accounting for, "somewhere between 25% and 28% of the U.S. population: Roman Catholicism; mainline Protestantism (including Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians); and evangelical Protestantism (including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Nazarenes)" (Baard, p. 20). Similarly, evangelical Protestant churches as a group are prospering (Baard).

In a study by Wilson et al., (1993), two concepts were emphasized as essential to the success of any organization: member commitment, and member identification. The church must ask, What is the source of commitment to church attendance and dedication and to what do members and attendees identify? One trend begins to provide some response to these questions. For over a decade, research on the subject of positive and negative church growth has provided evidence that most liberal or mainline Protestant denominations have actually experienced little or no growth in the past 40 years (Perrin & Mauss, 1991).

However, a stream of more conservative denominations has experienced steady growth during that same time frame (Perrin & Mauss). This has caused some denominations to grow rapidly, while causing others to lose individuals from membership (Iannaccone, Olson, & Stark, 1995).

Several factors are contributing to these evidences of growth and decline, although there is still little consensus on actual reasons why some of these trends are occurring. First, a theoretical model that positively correlates the input of time and money to the increase in new members appears to demonstrate, "empirical power of this approach" (Iannaccone et al., 1995, p. 705). Churches who invest substantive amounts of time and money into those things which seekers identify with in a church see increases in church participation, membership, and attendance.

Second, there have been questions raised about whether some denominations, "have become weak in the doctrinal and other demands made on their members, and less 'serious' about their teachings" (Perrin, 1989, p. 75). The inference here is that if members become dissatisfied with liberal church teachings, a generated pocket of individuals become the target audience from which more conservative churches can recruit new members (Perrin). Third, the desire for social connectivity appears to play a significant role in churchgoers' decisions regarding participation and membership (Olson, 1989). Church friendships play a unique responsibility in assuring greater satisfaction with church in general, and attendance in particular, and so much so, that a person with many church friends is less likely to leave a church if he or she becomes dissatisfied with other church-related aspects.

Therefore, if belonging is important to church attendees, then churches who intentionally expend resources that provide for fellowship, socialization, and sharing of individual concerns should have, "greater success in attracting and retaining new members" (Olson, 1989, p. 432). Church attendance makes some activities, such as socialization, childcare, friendship development, advice-giving, and even professional networking easier to pursue (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004). This social exchange process gives some evidence that churches have opportunities for growth, decline, or stabilization of membership based on, "(a) differences among churches in the number of church friends that members desire; and (b) variation in the number of opportunities church members have to make friends" (Olson, p. 433).

This same theory supports the idea that the more demands a denomination places on its members or congregants, "the more committed and enduring they seem to be" (Perrin & Mauss, 1991, p. 99). Friendship formation and socialization opportunities become a link to potential church growth. However, some earlier studies (Schaller, 1975) argued that there are natural limits to a church congregation's ability to incorporate new members, and that as current members attract and retain more and more friends, which is more likely in larger churches, there are actually fewer opportunities for newcomers to develop friendships.

In light of these three contributing factors to growth and decline, from where do congregations solicit new memberships? One study suggests that newcomers can result from three primary sources (Perrin et al., 1997). First, the children of both current members and current attendees can be an important source of new members. Depending upon the congregation, children can become part of the membership rolls at birth, or as teenagers (Perrin et al.). Therefore, the number of births in a particular church, as well as in an overall denomination, can have a significant impact on membership rolls for decades to come.

Second, some newcomers are referred to as switchers (Perrin et al., 1997). These individuals are transferring their membership from a parallel church congregation (i.e., Nazarene church to Nazarene church), or are re-affiliating their religious commitment from one denomination to another similar, or acceptable denomination (Perrin et al.). Many societal factors contribute to this pattern, including mobility of families on local, national, and international scales; job changes or transfers; and families seeking a healthy and continual connectivity to a familiar church environment.

Finally, a third group of newcomers are those described as converts, or individuals who do not fit in either of the first two categories, as he or she has never been a member of a church and/or has never ascribed to a particular religious teaching. They are true newcomers to the church (Perrin et al., 1997), and there are two scenarios which describe their attendance patterns. First, a number of baby-boomers, particularly from liberal Protestant backgrounds, entered into a reduced commitment to church attendance and participation as teenagers, and did not continue in their attendance patterns at the same rate as their parents. "It is now firmly established that the prime source of membership losses sustained by the liberal denominations is the failure of the offspring to affiliate with a liberal religious body" (Johnson, 1985, p. 42). These individuals stepped away from their commitments to and affiliations with church for a number of years as teenagers and young adults.

At the same time, evidence showed that individuals in some categories appear to be returning to church in record numbers, and high on the list includes married men with young children who are deciding that church involvement provides support to their family life that is both symbolic and practical (Wilcox, 2007). These individuals cite reasons for returning to a church affiliation or commitment as being strongly tied to their desire for their marriages to be strengthened by a commitment to church attendance and participation, and for their own children to grow up within the context of a participatory church environment (Wilcox,). Perhaps those churches that provide programs for newlyweds and families would see increases in church membership roles, especially when those programs are tied back to the need for socialization and friendship formation as previously discussed.

The church, then, is full of lifelong attendees, switchers and converts (Perrin et al., 1997). A significant practice would be for churches to find ways to tap into the energetic resources of all church population groups in order to attract and retain all individuals to their membership and attendance roles. Because churches often do not intentionally operate in a learning organization context, they become an ideal setting for research into whether learning organization capacities might be useful for churches who desire to meet the needs of congregants and experience growth in numbers.

Future Issues for the Church

In addition to studies on membership and attendance, a historical study by Kelley (1972) implied that the more liberal churches have become less serious, and weaker, in their teachings of doctrine; yet congregants are flocking to their counterpart conservative churches in large numbers. Thus, contrary to the notion that congregants would prefer to have fewer demands and less doctrinal accountability placed on them and, therefore, would stay enmeshed in their current congregations, Kelley presumed that many people left the more liberal churches in search of conservative churches that were more serious in nature (Kelley; Perrin et al., 1997). If Kelley is correct, this explains, in part, why some churches grow and others do not, and lends explanation for why conservative churches seem to be quite successful in preserving their membership roles (Perrin, 1989).

A similar stratum of thought believed that Kelley's theory helped to explain some of the switching patterns mentioned above that sees the more conservative denominations, "attracting more committed switchers" (Perrin, 1989, p. 87). Either way, one dynamic that churches committed to growth must consider is the teaching of doctrine and church policy as an expectation of congregational membership, and as an attractive practice for committed Christians. This approach, in turn, leads to a preparation by congregants to play a variety of roles within the context of the organized church, and to enter into organized lay training and development of other human resources in response to church needs and other empathetic undertakings (Jarvis, 2005).

This is not to say that theological differences are in any way unnecessary, or suspect in their use to retain and attract individuals of like mind and belief. It appeared that it is not always a theological difference which accounts for growth or decline, but rather an organizational approach perhaps more characteristic of one denomination than another (Baard, 1994). As a result, churches are discovering the importance of shifting from a top-down to a flat organizational structure, and a move away from what has been called an absolute hierarchy (Hall, 2001).

At the same time, “religious and military systems are possibly the slowest to develop in this realm” (Hall, 2001, p. 19), and institutions like “universities….the military, and the church are historically old, large, and universally common institutions [that] have been rigidly hierarchical [and] resistant to change” (White & Weathersby, 2005, pp. 294-295). This amount of flexibility or rigidity becomes a challenge of growth to consider. This type of shift moves the focus first from competition to innovation, or an understanding that growth perhaps is not all about rivalry with another local church, but how this church can be novel in its approach to congregational need. It also requires an elevation of difference (both difference in congregation and congregants) as an asset rather than something that is problematic. As a result, churches must move to an intentional partnering with each other, which assumes a much more systemic form of operation. Above all, this results in a growing shift in power to the consumer or, in this case, the members of the congregation who are intentional in their vocalization of wants and needs (Hall).

Another dynamic to consider is that memberships are being strongly affected by the increased mobility of persons residing in the United States who are more likely to move and relocate than ever before. Combined with a highly individualistic mentality already prevalent in this culture, and distinctly prevalent among baby boomers who at the same time are returning to church in record numbers (Roof, 1993), congregants are more likely than ever to, “shop around for a congregation" and, "move freely in and out, across religious boundaries" (Roof, p. 5). It is affecting the, "social, economic, and ascriptive nature of American religion" (Perrin et al., 1997, p. 75).

Parallel to this mobility is another factor affecting church growth. No organization can grow and thrive without sufficient resources, and the church is no exception. From the perspective of church growth, these resources (primarily time and money) come from the commitment of church congregants and members who give of their resources beyond what is necessary to maintain current operations (Iannaccone et al., 1995). Additional resources are needed in order to maintain physical structures, and to contribute to other programs and commitments offered by the church, but which go beyond operational responsibilities (Iannaccone).

In addition, much of this additional commitment of resources must come from an influx of newcomers and others who basically compensate for memberships that are lost to death or departure (Iannaccone et al., 1995). And it must be stated that resources do not constitute money or financial gain alone; commitments of time and energy prove no less important than donations of money (Iannaccone et al., 1995). If the social connection of congregants is as vital as suggested earlier, then individuals likely will be naturally drawn to churches whose members display energy and excitement in their commitment to the church. At the same time, all of these things require a tremendous amount of effort, time, and money, in order to assist in the process of attracting and retaining new members (Iannaccone et al.).

Finally, the dynamic of personal motivation as related to church attendance, commitment, and involvement must also be considered. The psychology of motivation, for example, provides insight into the characteristics more often found in growing evangelical Protestant churches than with Roman Catholics or mainline Protestants (Baard, 1994). If one considers the intrinsic motivation that promotes personal efforts involving volunteerism, helping behaviors, and even attendance at church, then attendance and membership is affected by the numbers of opportunities individuals have to engage in intrinsically-motivated activities. In a study by Baard, it was hypothesized that, "churches providing an atmosphere more conducive to intrinsically-motivated behavior would enjoy increasing membership and higher levels of attendance and giving" (Baard, p. 24) and that intrinsic motivation, "seems particularly salient in matters pertaining to the volunteering of time that church attendance and participation entails" (Baard, p. 28). While this was a correlational study where causal relationships cannot be known, it appears that people are affected by, "the atmosphere in which they are embedded" (Baard, p. 28).

This concept of intrinsic need appears to be true across denominations, especially as related to the cost of time as a motivator of church attendance: weekly attendance patterns leave little doubt that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of time and effort. This, in turn, influences religious observance patterns (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004). Since intrinsically-motivated behaviors are intertwined with many of the concepts of learning organization, but particularly the emphasis on personal mastery, it seems relevant to consider intrinsic motivation as an outgrowth of the development of learning organization practice.

What does this mean for the church? Intrinsically-motivated individuals, in a church environment, might be described as those who look forward to attending services each week, thoroughly enjoy the practices of church worship, expect to learn something new as a result of their involvement, and anticipate association with other members of the congregation. They give self-determined reasons, such as personal sense of value, or importance, for their church-going commitment (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993). This means that in a strong self-determined condition, a person may involve themselves in church attendance, "because it starts my day out right" (Baard, 1994, p. 11). In a less self-determined state, one might attend church because of an obligation to someone else, or from having been urged by others to do so (Baard).

All of this necessitates, in each person, a different motivational system than, for example, one's motivation to go to work each day and receive pay for a job well done. Charitable and religious initiatives of involvement simply engage the use of personal resources, such as time, energy, and money, in ways that are different (Baard, 1994). They also make room for other self-deterministic qualities often associated with intrinsically-motivated individuals. Church attendees want to experience autonomy, and be self-sufficient in their management of church events and time commitments. They desire competence, particularly in the pursuit of religious growth and learning new things related to the pursuit of their religious beliefs and practices. There is an intrinsic need for relatedness, including caring for others, and being cared for.

All of these dynamics that include doctrinal issues, organizational structure, mobility of congregants, the need for resources, and personal motivation, are facets affecting the growth and decline of church membership and attendance. These same factors contribute to our understanding of the church as a part of a community and on a global scale as well. In their proper context, the church becomes a safe place where transformation of individuals and the church at large can occur.

The Church of the Nazarene

Although a long history of congregant unions preceded its formal beginnings, the Church of the Nazarene was officially organized in October 1908 in Pilot Point, Texas (Manual, 2005). The church's International Center, or headquarters, is now located outside of Kansas City, Missouri. In 1998, church membership stood at 1,304,009 individuals worldwide and was registered as a religious denomination in 126 world areas. In 2005, membership numbers grew to 1,496,296 in 13,600 churches worldwide (Manual), although many more individuals attend a Nazarene church without committing to membership. In the Church of the Nazarene, membership involves the profession of a belief that a person has been rescued from sin, a delineation of the understandings of church membership, and an understanding of the privileges and responsibilities of active membership (Manual).

While membership in the church is seen as a significant expression of one's commitment to a local church, it is not a barrier to participation or attendance at church events or functions in the Church of the Nazarene. The exceptions involve voting functions, reserved for active members who have reached their 15th birthday, and special church meetings (Manual, 2005). As a result, attendance figures, rather than membership roles, have taken on meaning as an indicator of congregational size, and two particular categories of congregational size have elicited notice. The fifty barrier and two hundred barrier, in the context of congregational size, have received attention, and refer to two levels of size at which congregations must decide the level of growth to which they are willing to commit (Crow, 2004). Both barrier levels become choice points for a congregation, because distinct kinds of fellowship options, accountability processes, and other dynamics are possible for congregations below that particular size, and are different from the options available for congregations above those choice points. These decisions are not overt, carefully considered, formal choices or resolutions, but rather occur because of informal choices made in a more tacit fashion (Crow).

Most Nazarene congregations have fewer than 100 worshipers in an average Sunday a.m. service, and in 2004, 39.5% reported 50 or fewer worshipers on an average Sunday (Crow, 2004). This characteristic is not unique among Nazarene congregations as compared to other Protestant denominations; data from 2000 indicated remarkable similarities in average congregational size (Crow). For purposes of this study, however, a choice point of Nazarene churches whose Sunday morning attendance figures average 150 has been identified as the minimum acceptable standard of inquiry for data collection, and was selected for four specific reasons.

First, while most denominations keep track of attendance statistics, counting procedures vary greatly between denominations, and even between churches within denominations:

> "The problem starts with the very act of counting…counters seek to do their job as quickly, quietly, and inconspicuously as possible [in a] room that is often large, full, and dimly lit…making it easy to count a couple as one, or overlook a small person" (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004, p. 205).

As a result, "most counts fall well short of actual attendance" (p. 192). Fortunately, weekly counts, even when imperfect, can still represent good indices of tendencies in attendance (Iannaccone & Everton).

Second, tracking a percent change over time, especially in light of the aforementioned issues with counting, while statistically consistent regardless of congregation size, is easier to note in a larger congregation than in a smaller one. For instance, a 10% decline in a congregation average size of 60 over 3 years would be a loss of six attendees, or two per year. For a congregation of 600 to experience a 10% decline in average congregation size over 3 years, a resultant loss of 60 (or 20 attendees per year) might be easier to see in the data, and might be less likely the result of a counting error (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004).

Third, some churches between 150 and 200 members are beginning to experience the benefits and detriments to reaching that 200-choice point, and are making decisions that will begin to determine whether growth beyond the 200 level will occur, or whether the church elects to remain at its current size. It is the desire of this study to capture some of that struggle by including churches that fall slightly below the 200-choice point. Finally, larger churches are more likely to have paid staff, including a full-time senior pastor, rather than a bi-vocational senior pastor as often found in smaller congregations. Since quantitative data is derived from the senior pastor, the data will remain more consistent in terms of likely full-time status.

Not-for-Profit Literature

A general description of not-for-profit organizations is given below, along with some distinct characteristics that are found in typical not-for-profit organizations. These characteristics include specific forms of leadership and governance, strategic approaches and their effectiveness, and actual performance and outcomes that result from a not-for-profit governance. The church as a not-for-profit entity is also described.

Not-for-Profit Descriptions

As noted in chapter 1, not-for-profit organizations are vital to community and quality of life in modern society, and have numerous variables that affect status, financial viability and recognition, and impact on the interplay with other organizations in the community. The not-for-profit venue is a large sector and is growing rapidly, with the number of registered not-for-profit organizations in the United States growing by 30% between 1996 and 2006 (Wirtz, 2006). The scope of not-for-profit work, as well as its contributions to American society has also developed and matured (Drucker, 1998; Drucker, 2001). At the same time, the number of public-sector jobs, which includes federal, state, and local government jobs, also grew rapidly during the 20th century (Rotolo & Wilson, 2006).

Comprising three groups of status (that of public charities, private foundations, and noncharitable organizations), all not-for-profits are eligible for federal and other tax exemptions. Contributions to public charities and private foundations are hence deductible under 501(C)(3) status, which is not true for contributions to the third status group, noncharitable organizations (Wirtz, 2006). However, the face of these three groups has, in turn, changed the face of not-for-profits in recent years. The number of public charities grew by approximately

60% in the last 10 years, and foundations grew by approximately 70%. On the other hand, noncharitable organizations decreased by almost 7%; it is likely that most not-for-profits are looking to provide tax deductions to contributors (Wirtz). The not-for-profit sector, then, is highly diversified and is made up of an assortment of types that include the charitable and religious organizations that are usually associated with the term non-profit or not-for-profit. It includes those organizations that serve a public need through advocacy, labor organization, education, medical and health care, and other organizations whose goal is not to make a profit but to turn assets back to the mission of the organization (Rotolo & Wilson, 2006).

Characteristics of Not-for-Profit Organizations

Several characteristics invade the viability and effectiveness of not-for-profit organizations in ways that parallel other business ventures, but are often more central, or core, to the not-for-profit organization. These include particular leadership needs, strategy and effectiveness standards, and an increased emphasis on performance and outcomes. Each of these characteristics is described below.

Leadership and Governance

According to Drucker (1990, p. 181), "In no area are the differences greater between businesses and nonprofit institutions than in managing people and relationships." This is especially true because of the number of volunteers, or unpaid workers, found to more heavily populate the not-for-profit industry. As a result, a not-for-profit organization's leadership group has several tasks that are central to the organization's viability.

First, because not-for-profits are mission-central, leadership becomes responsible for making sure that everyone in the organization understands and lives out the mission (Drucker, 1990). This includes the need to provide proper, regular, and effective channels of communication with significant stakeholders (Herman & Renz, 2004), as well as leading a much-greater group of volunteers. Here, a not-for-profit leader must find ways to change an unpaid, well-meaning amateur who often has no knowledge of the organization into a trained, professional, unpaid staff member. It is this characteristic of professional volunteers that will have, "the most far-reaching implications" in the not-for-profit sector (Drucker, 1998, p. 138).

Strategy and Effectiveness

Strategy begins with knowing the market of the not-for-profit institution: its customers, its mission, and its performance and outcome goals (Drucker, 1990). Since mission is a core component, most research into strategy begins here, and to know strategy means to do research (Drucker). As the face of not-for-profits continues to change, government sectors are becoming increasingly more aware of their presence, and therefore more demanding of knowledge regarding their plans, policies, and approaches to their mission.

Therefore, better and better economic data on not-for-profits will become more and more important for a number of reasons. Initially, good data will satisfy stakeholders' questions regarding effectiveness and efficiency. Eventually, the organization can continue to demand good data because it will provide intrinsic value in identify and understanding trends and staying ahead of ongoing developments (Drucker, 1998; Wirtz, 2006).

Performance and Outcomes via Governance

The last several years have witnessed a growing body of research on not-for-profit performance, outcomes, management, and other matters of relevance to the missional strategy of the organization (Wirtz, 2006). Performance is, "the ultimate test of any institution" (Drucker, 1990, p. 139), but is particularly relevant to the not-for-profit institution for one simple reason: if a business does not produce results, it is losing its own money. If a not-for-profit cannot account for its effectiveness and outcomes, it is someone else's money that is wasted (Drucker). Therefore, not-for-profits are under increased pressure to account for performance. At the same time, the strategy of the not-for-profit is not based on money, and the plans are not centered on income or profits, even though they remain money-conscious because funds are so hard to raise. It becomes a cyclical process to remain accountable to the mission, while preserving the need to know where dollars are spent.

As a result, not-for-profit organizations rely on good leadership strategies as mentioned above, coupled with a functioning governmental board, to whom the chief executive officer is accountable (Drucker, 1998). Board members and other stakeholders have begun to take a devoted interest in the efficiency of the organization, its outcomes, and its general effectiveness (Wirtz, 2006). Most of this interest has focused on improvement in the tracking of outcomes, so that the target population can be better served (Herman & Renz, 2004). As a result, a well-defined mission serves not only to identify clientele and general consumer population groups, but also to define measures of success for the organization. These, in turn, can dictate board governance, fundraising efforts, tracking of charitable giving, leadership effectiveness, and other characteristics important to stakeholders (Wirtz).

A cautionary note is also necessary. As the number of not-for-profit organizations continues to increase, and additional measures of performance and outcomes become status quo, there are two extremes that might result. First, the not-for-profit claims that results can be downplayed, for the simple reason that, "we are serving a good cause" (Drucker, 1990, p. 99). In such a case, the cause becomes more important that the outcomes. On the other extreme, obsessions with economic and financial measurement result in forgetting or ignoring the noneconomic contributions that are the heartbeat of not-for-profit institutions, those things that provide quality of life to individuals, and service to communities (Wirtz, 2006). Similarly, if the plight of costs and administrative efficiency becomes paramount, without looking at the short-term and long-term gains, it is easy for board members, stakeholders, and other constituent groups to presuppose these types of costs as wasteful. Instead, it is, "a good administrative infrastructure that is essential to good programs" (Wirtz, p. 45).

The Church as a Not-for-Profit Entity

In the words of Drucker (2001), one of the most prolific writers on management and not-for-profit organizations, pastoral churches are one of the not-for-profit organizations that are becoming, "America's management leaders" (Drucker, p. 39). This is due to their use of strategic planning, effective board policies and procedures, and motivation of workers. Churches fall under the auspices of all parts of a not-for-profit definition. They are a face that is quite often the face of a nonprofit: one that is, "more than likely a face drawn from the compassionate history of charities" (Wirtz, 2006, p. 29).

At the same time, many churches are steadily losing members (Drucker, 2001; Iannaccone et al., 1995), at a time when volunteer opportunities in churches abound. "In a church, there are a very small number of people who are ordained, but one thousand people who work and do major tasks for the church who are not ordained, never will be, never get a penny" (Drucker, 1990, p. 49). Yet questions remain on all levels of not-for-profit activities (including churches) about training and professionalism. It appears that what churches do, they do well. However, they also face several challenges, not the least of which is to provide a sense of community to those who gather for the common purposes of worship and service (Baard, 1994). Churches as a not-for-profit entity must enter into observances of strategy that allow them to organize themselves in ways that identify what is working, what no longer contributes to the mission, and what is not providing service to its constituent groups. Because of this commitment to the ideal of community, issues such as leadership, strategy, and performance have only recently begun to be studied in not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations like the church (Wilson et al., 1993).

Learning Organization Literature

A review of the literature on learning organization thought revealed three specific areas for review. First, an understanding of early theory and research in learning organization thought is presented. Second, the five specific disciples of learning organization theory as ascribed by Senge (1990) are presented. Finally, the application of learning organization thought to present-day issues and challenges is given.

Early Theory and Research

A number of authors, strategists, and theorists have influenced the creation and development of learning organization theory and research. Taylor began the first inquiry into how individuals and organizations need to learn in his development of scientific management (DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000; Luthans, Rubach, & Marsnik, 1995). He believed that change in an organization could not survive without changes in thinking for both management and labor (Luthans et al.) through experimentation and teaching which are both espoused in contemporary learning organization thought. In the early 20th century, Weber proposed a bureaucratic organization based on efficiency and rational thought (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1997). Simon's bounded rationality in the 1950s implied that organizations (not just individuals) learn under certain conditions associated with rational decision making (Kezar, 2005). Drucker then introduced the idea of performance-based organizations that would result in efficiency and effectiveness (Appelbaum & Reichart). But it was the early works of Argyris & Schon (1978), Senge (1990), and Garvin (1993) that most distinctly popularized the early concepts of organizational learning and learning organization as two streams of study and application for companies and organizations that were eager for change and an increase in productivity and profits. Their concepts evolved because companies and organizations were finding it difficult to respond to outside challenges, because internal bureaucratic structures had resulted in inflexibility and a lack of creativity (Kezar).

Argyris and Schon's (1978) descriptions of the learning process of individuals, through what is described as single-loop and double-loop learning, were their greatest contributions to the fields of management and leadership (Sun & Scott, 2003). Single-loop learning referred to finding errors in association with the environment at hand, and therefore results in step-by-step changes in process and procedure (Kezar, 2005). Senge (1990) eventually went on to describe this concept as adaptive learning (Luthans et al., 1995), implying adaptation to the given environment. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, requires that existing beliefs are challenged in order to align the organization to the environment at hand, which results in a much more transformative process of change (Kezar), a process that Senge ultimately coined as generative learning (Luthans et al.).

Some researchers, like Garvin (1993) believed that an additional change needed to be evidenced in organizations, a change in behavior that is required in order for learning to occur. He premised that many organizations have managed to create new knowledge, but have not learned to apply it to the activities in the organization, and, "without accompanying changes in the way work gets done, only the potential for improvement exists" (Garvin, p. 80). Garvin's model of behavior change links back to the works of Argyris and Schon with its emphasis on systematic problem solving to resolve the underlying causes of issues. It similarly relates to both Argyris and Schon's single- and double-loop learning as paralleled with Senge's adaptive and generative learning concepts described above.

As a result of much of this early inquiry and dialogue, Senge's five disciplines of personal mastery, mental models, team building, shared vision, and systems thinking were the springboard for more contemporary paths of inquiry that emphasized a thorough understanding of cooperation as a fundamental tenet to relationship development and team building (Yeo, 2005). Theorists have since taken the concepts of Senge's model and have critiqued and constructed similar or alternative models that either parallel or run counter to his learning organization structure. Similarly, many have drawn correlations between individual, team, and organizational learning as also proposed by Senge (Yeo). This collective influence on the field of learning organization theory and practice has begun to result in the development of tools that could support both practical theory and specific application (Yeo).

These authors and theorists, despite their contrasting views on learning organization theory, viewed the role of individuals and their cognitive approaches to situations as, "the critical source of leverage for creating more effective organizations" (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1998, p. 16). In other words, human cognition has a significant persuasive role in both interpretive outcomes and organizational influences. For Senge (1990), these outcomes involve individuals in strategy; for Argyris and Schron (1978), the intent was to assist individuals in developing critical thinking skills (Edmondson & Moingeon).

More contemporary study into the application of learning organization in a variety of settings has led to an understanding that competitive advantage in this new century continues to be distinctly aligned with an organization's learning capacity, and must be acknowledged as a strategy in church environments as well. However, many involved in church leadership are still caught in a readiness-focus mindset, where they are ready and willing to make strategic change happen, but never being able to get past the planning, and forgetting that people need to be a part of the readiness, as suggested in the learning organization literature (Rowden, 2001). Often, congregants and those involved in the outcomes of change have not been sufficiently readied for change, and then resist when church leadership begins to insist on moving forward with new strategies and ideas.

The Five Disciplines of Learning Organizations

By the time Senge (1990) completed his process of describing learning organization theory, his vision of a learning organization was, "neither novel nor original" (Jackson, 2000, p. 194). However, the concepts related to learning organization theory took a leap of learning (Fulmer, Gibbs, & Keys, 1998) when it was published, because Senge continued to push the need for dialogue and openness (concepts articulated by Argyris and others) as necessary in order to define workers' and companies' learning deficiencies (Fulmer et al., 1998). It is a collective belief that this best-selling book has been instrumental in launching learning organization theory into business thinking (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1997). Senge's five disciplines, so pervasive in learning organization content, are as follows.

Personal Mastery

Personal mastery is identified as, "the learning organization's spiritual foundation" (Senge, 1990, p. 7) and is the phrase used to describe the discipline of personal growth (Applebaum & Goransson, 1997; Lo, 2005). It involves intensive commitment to clarifying, "the things that really matter to us [and] living our lives in the service of our highest aspirations" (Senge, p. 8). This foundational discipline precipitates itself in numerous forms within a learning organization, but basically integrates the notions of self-discovery, vision, and improvement in all facets of work and life. It consistently requires one to ask such questions as: What is my personal vision for myself and for my work? What is really happening in our organization? Am I focusing my energies in appropriate places and in useful ways? (Applebaum & Goransson; Senge). All of these questions resulted from an attempt to continually clarify what is important, and to see current reality more clearly (Applebaum & Goransson; Kezar, 2005).

Others described personal mastery as, "the ability to create desired results through an ongoing journey of self-discovery and a genuine commitment to connect learning to organizational work" (Bartell, 2001, p. 356). Peters (1996) equated personal mastery to, "learning about your job in the organization" (p. 5). But this discipline is truly more than that. Personal mastery requires a deep understanding that what affects me in some way affects the organization as well. Because it is so personal in nature, some organizations (while intrigued by the concept) believe it is not appropriate or applicable to business settings (Nuer, 1999).

The result of the development of high levels of personal mastery, as related to organizational commitment and goals, is a, "reciprocal commitment between individual[s] and organization[s], and [a] special spirit of an enterprise made up of learners" (Senge, 1990, p. 8). Sadly, few people work on developing the skills necessary to achieve their own personal mastery (Senge), and the result is that organizations suffer, because individuals, "do without this feeling of purpose, so we do not have fun at work; we fragment our life. Work is work, and fun is fun, and we play outside, so life becomes shrunken" (Nuer, 1999, p. 13).

Yet what happens if individuals commit to the development of skills in personal mastery? There is collective agreement that it is a critical skill that individuals must have if the organizations they serve want to address the needs of this century (Nuer, 1999; Senge, 1990). Individuals with high levels of mastery not only can tolerate high levels of creative tension (Pascale, 1994) but, in fact, relish in it. So, while many organizations dismiss personal mastery as being too personal, others are finding that it is a tool, or skill, which works in tandem with the current reality of rapid change, quick decision-making, and creative versus reactive viewpoints, while generating results that are effective and desirable (Kurtz, 1998; Nuer).

Effective personal mastery involves (a) taking stock of the past, (b) creating goals for the future, and (c) taking action in the present (Nuer, 1999). On both a personal and professional/organizational level, individuals must be willing and able to look back and make an accounting of significant events, and identify what worked and what was not so successful. This is not meant to be a judgmental step, but simply an analysis of "what took me [us] in the direction I [we] wanted to go, and what pulled me [us] away" (Neur, p. 10) from personal goals, and the collective goals of the organization. It entails looking for patterns, costs (energy, time, productivity, trust, relationships), and awareness of one's informed and uninformed choices. It involves asking many of the hard questions mentioned above, which also include the tough questions related to communication (or lack thereof), honesty, safety in sharing, and acknowledgement of times when individuals have been shut off from learning (Nuer) by being punished for taking risks or trying new things.

Only by experiencing this first difficult step in the process of developing personal mastery can a person or organization then move forward to create goals for the future and take some measure of action in the present. There comes a time when declaration of and commitment to goals, based on this analysis of the past, and moving forward becomes the means by which the most desired results are created, both personally and professionally (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1997). The result is a band of professionals who can, "consistently realize the results that matter most deeply to them" (Senge, 1990, p. 7). And organizations become places where employees can practice new ideas (without punishment); let go of the outcome; define a new idea as an experiment (Nuer, 1999); and learn, deeply and profoundly, "how to do a great job within that organization" (Peters, 1996, p. 5).

> If we each become aware of our individual dysfunctions and their impact on our lives and decide to change, we can be the starting point for a collective shift in our businesses, our families, our communities, and the world…[and] as long as we do not bring the resources of our true selves forward on a daily basis, we cannot build the companies that are truly different. Personal mastery is about becoming aware of that 85% (the stuff that lies unseen beneath the surface), and tapping into the total human, not just the tip of the iceberg (Nuer, 1999, pp. 10-13).

Personal mastery, then, is vital, because organizations cannot truly become learning organizations without individuals who learn, as "the capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members" (Senge, 1990, p. 7). It is, in every way, an "essential cornerstone" (Senge, p. 7).

Mental Models

A mental model gives insight into how each person in an organization views the world, and therefore, how he or she acts within that context. It is another word for, "worldviews, narratives, organizational Gestalts, or organizational cognitive structures" (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997, p. 121) or, "an internal representation of the world" (Yeo, 2005, p. 371). All of these descriptors refer to those deeply-held, profoundly-entrenched assumptions that shape and mold one's understanding and interpretation of the world, and affect one's actions. Mental models include pictures, images, perceptions, metaphors, and other tools of the mind that influence our most widely-held beliefs, and our most likely actions. They are basic constitutive structures of our personality (Kofman & Senge, 1993) or the cognitive, sense-making maps that we use to direct our opinions and beliefs (Albert, 2005). "For all intents and purposes, most of the time, we ARE our mental models" (Kofman & Senge, p. 19).

The application of mental models to an organizational setting means that individuals must reflect on and continually clarify their internal pictures of the world (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1997) because this clarification becomes a means by which decisions and actions are shaped and altered. In truth, however, individuals are not often consciously aware of their mental models (Senge, 1990), or their effects and, as a result, the day-to-day operations of organizations can be significantly affected by a lack of commitment to this discipline.

Mental models becomes another significant step in the transformation to learning organization thought, as members begin to change their thought processes and allow others to influence their thinking related to the organizations they serve (Sugarman, 2001; Lo, 2005). By appropriately using mental models, individuals cultivate opportunities for others to question beliefs and practices in, "hospitable spaces in [our] conversations" (Fleischer, 2006, p. 109). The reason for this transformational use of mental models is that those mental images, those views of what one sees and how one behaves, affect how individuals act in the work environment. Similarly, because one's mental models reflect one's view of the world, it is no less likely that one's mental models reflect one's assumptions. These assumptions include ideas about why things should be done a certain way, or about how a person should respond, or even about when certain actions need to be taken.

Therefore, mental models play a critical role in an organization, as individuals, both singularly and collectively, acquire a set of deeply-focused underlying assumptions about how experiences within the organization are interpreted. These assumptions are always shared collectively, in teams, work groups, around the conference table, and provide a common knowledge base from which individuals draw (Jenlink, 1994). This ability to share, and to change mental models is a vital skill for organizations which are truly learning organizations (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997). It offers opportunity for a type of mental model that Fulmer (1994) calls a "forecasted future" (p. 23). In such an environment, individuals, either singularly or collectively, place themselves at a point of time in the future, and can describe what the organization then looks like, "after having totally succeeded" (Fulmer, p. 23). After doing so, these same individuals can describe how the organization landed at that point, and they end up adopting a "future-first perspective" (Fulmer, p. 24) which forces the organization to work backwards (from that future point) in order to take efficient and useful action today.

This particular discipline presents the greatest likelihood for change in an organization, because it requires reflection, and examining how we form our mental models; and inquiry, or requiring open dialogue where views are become public and communal (Kurtz, 1998). This, however, does not mean that it is an easy discipline to adopt or pursue because, as with personal mastery, it is a highly subjective and intensely personal process. It starts with, “turning the mirror inward, [and] learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them to scrutiny” (Senge, 1990, p. 9). In general, individuals do not joyfully enter into such personal examination and inspection, while at the same time being expected to then share those views in, “learningful conversations” (Senge, p. 9) with others in a way that allows for both inquiry and personal advocacy for one’s views.

However, if an organization, and the individuals within that organization, can effectively develop a system of mental modeling, the process of understanding its world through appropriate frames of reference becomes a catalyst for change (Jenlink, 1994). These systems essentially provide frameworks that can facilitate the analysis of routine events by drawing on active memory, or the recovery of information and experience, to shape future decisions (Jenlink; Peters, 1996). Mental models, then, “affect what we see, and how we behave” (Kurtz, 1998, p. 69). Thus, corporately embedded into the vision of a learning organization, mental models bring people together in ways that can create the types of mental models that result in the "best possible solutions for dealing with current issues and future challenges" (Kurtz, p. 69).

Team Learning

This discipline evolves from the concept of synergy, or the idea that people working effectively together can produce greater results than individuals working alone. Team learning involves individuals learning together (DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000), and is critical to the growth and viability of learning organizations. The discipline of team learning builds on the two disciplines previously mentioned, those of shared vision and personal mastery (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997; Lo, 2005).

This type of learning starts with dialogue, a significant component of the discipline of team learning. Dialogue is the ability of members to enter into a genuine pattern of thinking together (Senge, 1990) by suspending assumptions and judgment, and exploring different ideas together (Applebaum & Goransson, 1997; Senge). It derived from the Greek word dialogos, denoting a free flow of ideas, concepts, and thoughts that, by participation in such a construct, allows a group to discover insights that cannot be attained on an individual basis (Senge). Dialogue, from the perspective of learning organization thought, becomes a, "critical element of any model of organizational transformation" (Schein, 2003, p. 27).

A second component is that the level of involvement necessary for team learning can only occur, in an environment that is perceived to be emotionally safe and of reasonable organizational risks" (DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000, p. 48). This trust factor becomes essential, for two reasons. First, if there would be no need to communicate with others to achieve goals, then dialogue would be unnecessary. Second, it is fundamentally impossible to deny that we live in a multifaceted world where the skill of dialogue is vital in order to solve complex problems and resolve conflict.

Dialogue, then becomes, "one of the most fundamental of human skills" (Schein, 2003, p. 28), but most often does not occur effectively if a climate of trust has not been fostered and cultivated. In a study conducted by DeVilbiss and Leonard (2000), there were two primary contributing factors that were reported as necessary for employees who work at the "number two best employer to work for in the United States in 1998" (p. 47). Those two factors were: "(a) an absolute commitment to servant leadership; and (b) high levels of trust throughout the company culture" (p. 47).

Thus, by combining the concepts of synergy and dialogue, in an atmosphere laced with trust and truth, the power of working together and learning to cooperate with other individuals begins to emerge (Bartell, 2001). Teams at this level of learning organization understanding tend to develop transformative conversational and collective thinking skills (Appelbaum &

Reichart, 1997), and learn from both individual and collective experiences that are shared (Jenlink, 1994). They also develop, “extraordinary competencies for coordinated action” (Srikantia & Parameshwar, 1995, p. 211), and understand that productive partnering becomes the foundation for good learning organization strategy (DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000).

This discipline, however, also involves developing perceptions of practices, policies, and procedures that hamper or undermine dialogue (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997; Senge, 1990). By doing so, organizations increase opportunities to learn how to avoid wasted energy, create effective results, and how to be present for another, even in the midst of conflict, and to be a productive partner (DeVilbliss & Leonard, 2000). The challenge is that individuals’ awareness of situations that evoke change, conflict, and controversy most often involves, “practicing your interactions from a competitive orientation: ‘This approach makes sense, but I don’t really trust that I am safe from loss.’ “ (DeVilbiss & Leonard, p. 50). These patterns of defensiveness are often deeply ingrained in the formula of most team operations, so much so that only time and trust can facilitate a needed change in perspective. At the same time, this defensiveness is not necessarily a bad thing. If recognized and permitted to surface creatively, it can actually accelerate learning (Senge).

Such a change, from competitiveness to trust, must happen, or learning is underminded. There comes a time within every organization where individual effort simply is not enough, or becomes irrelevant to the task at hand (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1997). Teams are so essential in learning organizations because they are the fundamental learning unit where individuals engage in constant dialogue, interact on common tasks or goals, and become the place where the rubber meets the road (Senge, 1990). They play a major role in learning organizations because they become a safe haven for individuals to take on a behavioral mindset of constant dialogue that forces connectivity and effective reflection (Appelbaum & Reichart). Senge was insistent on the critical nature of team learning as the most effective method for organizational action and learning, if coupled with intensive listening, and suspension of personal viewpoints (Fleischer, 2006). "Unless teams can learn, the organization cannot learn" (Senge, p. 10).

Team learning, then, involves partnering with others in the organization within a climate of dependability, responsiveness to others, conflict resolution, and faith (DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000). In an effort to move in the direction of becoming a learning organization, the one reality that all organizations share is this: "the need for everyone to get there together. You must partner across the board: leaders with employees, employees with each other, businesses with clients and suppliers" (DeVilbiss & Leonard, p. 54). If honored and followed in demonstrative ways, team learning always produces positive outcomes (DeVilbiss & Leonard). As noted earlier, teams in church congregations are often the bedrock of development and ministry, as they are the principal place where shared and collective action begins to take place (Fleischer, 2006).

Shared Vision

Vision has been described in a multitude of ways, but all descriptions seem to point to futuristic ideals and planning for that future. One author defines vision as, "a commitment to establishing rethinking, and reviewing who we are and what we are here to do" (Allen, 1995, p. 39). It is, "an ideal and unique image of the future" (Kouzes and Posner, 1987, p. 85).

Shared vision takes the inspiration of vision, and adds in the capacity of those within a learning organization context to agree on a collective picture of the future (Senge, 1990). It involves the alignment of one's own personal visions in a way that shared values and beliefs of the organization are created (Jenlink, 1994). However, vision, in a simplistic context, is highly personalized and individualistic and because of this, a number of personal choices are required of those involved in order to translate private commitments into shared visions (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997). It involves a tremendous sense of commitment from members to work at developing that shared image of what the future will look like, and designing that commitment (through principles and guiding practices) in ways that will bring people together to achieve future goals. It is a, "collective will to learn that emanates from a conviction, and a commitment to a common cause" (Bartell, 2001, p. 356).

What is often lacking is that set of principles and guiding practices to teach individuals how to take a host of personal visions and translate those into a shared vision for the company (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997; Senge, 1990). While over 1,000 articles and books have been written on vision (Testa, 1999), much of our understanding of vision encapsulates vision at the leader level (i.e., vision is identified as a trait found in effective leaders), or as part of the research involved in developing mission and vision statements (referred to as research and commentary) (Testa). Neither of these concepts translates into what Senge and others described as shared vision. Instead, according to Senge, the "all-too-familiar vision statement" (p. 9) often does not evolve from genuine or shared vision. Instead, many leaders in our organizations have wonderful personalized visions that never get transformed or converted into the kinds of visions that move organizations forward (Senge).

Visions have been described as concepts that inspire and motivate, provide direction, and enable organizations to chart progress and outcomes (Allen, 1995). However, shared vision requires additional layers of effectiveness: the vision must be coherent enough that individuals can see what the future will look like. It must be powerful enough to convince individuals to commit to its outcomes, and it must be realistic (Allen). As a result, shared vision within learning organizations produces values that are clearly articulated and believed by those in the organization (Peters, 1996), which in turn results in both job satisfaction and better efforts in producing service quality (Testa, 1999).

If a shared vision provides energy and focus for future growth, it seems likely that those variables would be compounded if those invested in future outcomes were involved in the creation of the vision, because this involvement provides a sense of community (Porth, McCall, & Bausch, 1999). Therefore, leaders must prompt joint action between themselves and other stakeholders such as employees (Gold, 1997), and may have to work much harder at becoming better story-tellers. Story-telling becomes an integral part of the development of shared vision, because it begins to require a deeper level of commitment and community. This does not mean that individuals with different stories cannot work together. In an effective shared vision context there will always be enough concurrence that conflicts can be appropriately channeled in ways that produce a larger view of the future than the minute differences that tend to promote divisiveness (Pascale, 1994).

Two things can happen that tend to dissuade organizations from developing shared vision. First, rather than encouraging this extended view of what the future could hold by painting a picture of collaborative outcomes, leadership often, "calls for breakthroughs, asks for sacrifices, and imposes hardships, but does so in a context where its vision of the future is seen by employees as phony or uninspiring" (Pascale, 1994, p. 14). This is because employees often have not shared in the creation of that future vision. Instead, when leaders bring together a core group of people in the organization for dialogue about vision, there is likely to be a significant amount of astonishment at how little agreement is present among them regarding vision for the future (Allen, 1995). Thus, if that vision never becomes shared, but is merely fed to employees and never embraced, it eventually results in persistent and chronic doubt (Lee, 1993). It is imperative for leaders to be accountable to others by becoming a steward of the vision for that organization (Mohr, 2005).

Second, regardless of how hard the organization tries to develop a shared vision among most employees, some individuals prefer to maintain status quo and resist any efforts that might require a change from normalcy. In the words of one author (Anderson, 1997), "a stable community can be a serious liability when things need to be changed" (p. 29). The difference is in whether those who have unique interpretations of how visions should be translated into policies and procedures can still learn to combine those differences into a collective, shared vision for the organization, one that often requires a postponement of gratification and enduring near-term sacrifices and concessions (Pascale, 1994). Regardless of the strength of one's belief or the merit of one's argument for or against a particular part of the vision, without commitment to working through that process, coordination becomes next to impossible (Gold, 1997).

Some individuals cannot, or will not, agree to such a process, and at that point, those in leadership positions have difficult choices to make. "In an organization serious about its values, those who do not buy into them should be rehabilitated…and if that will not work, [should be] asked to leave" (Peters, 1996, p. 6). Being a learning organization that is intent on this step of developing shared vision means learning to honor those who believe in the process, while at the same time weeding out those who are, "sabotaging the effort" (Peters, p. 7).

It is next to impossible to think of any organization that has succeeded in their efforts toward greatness without having a set of goals, values, and missions in place, which are deeply shared throughout the organization (Senge, 1990). "Few forces in life and the business world are as powerful as shared vision. It is vital for learning organizations that want to provide focus and energy for its employees. In fact, you cannot have a learning organization without shared vision" (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997, p. 122).

Systems Thinking

This final discipline is most often perceived as the key discipline that collectively ties the first four together (Jenlink, 1994). Systems thinking is the "conceptual glue that binds the other elements together" (Easterby-Smith, 1997, p. 1104), by promoting a way for both individual and collective thoughts to be integrated and interconnected within organizations. It is a framework, a body of knowledge and tools (Senge, 1990), which helps to bridge an often unintended but frequently-present gap between individual thinking and organizational objectives (Selen, 2000). Because of the need for this integrated and interconnectivity process, "it is no wonder Senge places systems thinking as his fifth discipline" (Yeo, 2005, p. 379).

The defining characteristic of a system is that a system simply cannot be viewed or understood as a cluster of isolated mechanisms that are functioning as separate entities. Components within systems are always interacting with other entities, and are always a part of a larger arrangement (Kofman & Senge, 1993). Good systems thinking also understands that, while it is important to put the pieces together to form that unified entity, it is constantly necessary to recognize that distinctions between and among the pieces of the puzzle make the system more operational. "The whole may be more fundamental, but it is unmanageable" (Kofman & Senge, p. 13). Otherwise, the ways in which each discipline affect and influence other disciplines becomes muted and jumbled, with each set of disciplines existing autonomously and true learning being abandoned (Yeo, 2005).

While systems thinking is a binding force in learning organization models, it should be noted that Senge (1990) identifies systems theory as a key foundation first, one that is necessary for an entity to exist as a learning organization at all (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997). While it appears that this discipline is one that brings the others into focus, it is also the discipline that organizations must primarily initiate in their efforts to become true learning organizations. Systems thinking also requires new language and new thinking in ways that describe and help everyone involved to understand the actions and motives that shape the organization (Appelbaum & Goransson). By being systems thinkers, individuals and organizations can understand the big picture and, "have much more of a chance of getting decisions right" (Peters, 1996, p. 8).

This idea does not presume that the development of a systems thinking mindset develops naturally or easily. The reason that this foundational skill is seen as so significant is because it is so difficult to implement. A true systems thinking mindset literally requires a, "shift of mind – from seeing [onself] as separate from the world to connected to the world…from seeing problems as caused by someone or something 'out there,' to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience" (Senge, 1999, p. 13). It requires that individuals understand clearly how they are often part of any problem that the organization is attempting to solve (Fleischer, 2006). Therefore, one's behaviors and one's state of mind affect the entire system.

Yet systems thinking also provides ideas for how to change a system effectively (Appelbaum & Goransson, 1997). By viewing systems thinking as the premise for building learning organization thought, and by succeeding at challenging individuals' behaviors and mindsets, organizations can begin to view all of these disciplines as part of a larger system. Further, by recognizing the interrelatedness (connectivity) and interdependence (reliance) of these disciplines, it becomes clear that a variety of possible actions or answers to any issue can be generated which, in turn, makes clear that there is no single, right answer (Kurtz, 1998). Finally, as a variety of possible solutions are generated, there may be a number of eventual outcomes as well, all of which can contribute to the intended goals and objectives of the organization.

The application of the discipline of systems thinking creates wide ramifications for organizations and individuals alike. Similar to the disciplines of team learning and shared vision, the issue of trust as applied to systems thinking once again emerges as a contextual unit to be acknowledged. Since systems thinking requires that individuals within the organization establish a collaborative mindset, it only seems natural that employees expect to have a substantive opportunity to participate in decision-making. The art of systems thinking includes the need for managers and leaders to recognize that what they are asking for also involves some consequences and exchanges in both thinking and action (Kurtz, 1998).

Trust is an entity upon which learning organization theory and its models are built, yet trust is not likely to emerge unless individuals believe that they will be entrusted with substantive participation in decision-making, that their jobs will be secure, and that a share of the economic and professional opportunities will be afforded to them in return for their collaborative efforts (Porth et al., 1999). At the same time, the only ways in which these system-wide efforts at trust-building and collaborative thinking can happen are if three particular philosophies permeate the organization. First, everyone must be welcomed and encouraged to participate. Second, it must be assumed that new ideas are highly encouraged, even if the effort might fail, or even if the same idea has failed in the past. Finally, individuals are encouraged to become engaged and active at their own pace (Wilson et al., 1993). These three philosophies, combined with a collective set of values and ways of thinking, merge to secure meaningful participation by all stakeholders who are involved with the organization.

Systems thinking as applied to the church provides ample evidence of how this foundational discipline can encourage constituents to work together and achieve appropriate and identifiable outcomes. It is not enough for church constituents to know the church's philosophies of outreach, worship, or service, or even to be able to inform others through the use of slogans, or mission statements. This connectivity of words does not contribute to the likelihood of participation required of learning churches. Instead, individuals become participating members in churches, and become part of the system, because of their voluntary membership in smaller groups that make up the larger church (Wilson et al., 1993). This is not unlike the concept that Wesley advocated for at the outset of his ministry (Crow, 2004).

The staff, then, intentionally creates a system by which these smaller groups are tied together through common activities, corporate information sharing, and communal worship. In this way, congregants become active in the church in their own time and in their own way, but also become heavily influenced by a behavior pattern and a mindset that emulates systems thinking (Wilson et al., 1993). Without this pattern of systems thinking, the church and its programs begin to look like nothing more than a church with many new programs, none of which are designed to promote learning or change (Angone, 1998).

Present-Day Issues and Challenges

Senge's (1990) groundbreaking work on learning organization theory became the impetus for other contemporary developments, but his work stands alone in its influence on theoretical models of understanding in this field. The characteristics of a learning organization, within a framework of systems thinking, advocate for the following patterns of behavior and mindset (Senge; Selen, 2000):

1. Everyone within the organization agrees on a shared vision, one that requires individuals to put aside self-interests and work against fragmentation in order to achieve visionary organizational goals.
2. Individuals discard old ways of thinking, and the way things have always been done.

3. Constituents acknowledge that everything within the organization – all decisions, ways of operation, activities, and conversations – are part of a system.

4. There is no fear of punishment or criticism in one's communications with others.

Without these interrelated patterns, it becomes difficult to see consistent patterns of change, first, because we are part of that interconnectivity ourselves, and second, because one's humanness tends to encourage the focus to be on isolated pieces of the system, rather than the whole. In so doing, we "wonder why our deepest problems never seem to get solved…[We] can only understand the system…by contemplating the whole, not any individual part of the pattern" (Senge, p. 7). So, Senge's work, in simplistic terms, requires the following:

> …that in learning organizations, managers should put aside their old ways of thinking (mental models), learn to be open with others (personal mastery), understand how their company really works (systems thinking), form a plan everyone can agree on (shared vision), and then work together to achieve that vision (team learning) (Dumaine, 1994, p. 148).

More contemporary research and study on learning organization theory involves case studies of organizations which have both succeeded and failed in their efforts to use the concepts of learning organization thought to manage growth and change. While useful, these case studies are obviously so specific to a particular organization that to implement learning organization methods and study things such as job satisfaction on a wider scale is often a roadblock to advancement of learning organization practices (Dirani, 2006). Thus, a new practice is the use of action research, where the consequences of change and initiatives that employees themselves have a say in generating and initiating, are studied extensively by consultants (Easterby-Smith, 1997).

A small amount of more recent empirical literature on learning organizations also involves the actual creation of several profiles, assessments, and instruments which attempt to define learning organization practices, principles, or potential in a number of ways. Researchers have only recently begun to garner empirical data from these instruments that can then lend support of their application to actual practices within organizations. In education circles, it has been postulated that most of the research in the field simply advocated for learning, but did not provide the practical, experimental data about how it happens, giving anecdotal evidence regarding its existence. This leaves a tremendous need for future research and writing in this area (Kezar, 2005). Collectively, the use of case studies, action research, and assessment tools all continue to lend themselves to more qualitative field work (Easterby-Smith, 1997), as well as measurement tools designed to express, quantitatively, both successes and failures. Moilanen (2001) provided a fairly extensive list of those learning organization assessment instruments which includes an instrument developed by O'Brien (1994), and which was revised and used as part of this current study.

Learning Organization Issues and Church Growth

The literature and subsequent model of learning organization theory, as applied to not-for-profit and church-related settings can then be characterized by some specific factors that might affect church growth or decline. These involve features such as leadership initiatives, job structure and systems-related concerns, and performance and development issues. Each of these factors can be measured and correlated in any number of venues and become formative measures in this dissertation study.

Leadership Studies

As stated in a chapter 1, the topic of leadership is a primary focus in almost every article related to learning organization theory, primarily as a key ingredient for fostering a learning climate (Wilson et al., 1993), and as one of the most notable distinctions of organizational leaders (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998; Lo, 2005). Its broad definitions include descriptions of individuals who are in positions of power, responsibility, and/or executive status who are also charged with providing direction, influencing others, and serving as role models to those who report directly to him/her – and whose purpose is to achieve specific organizational goals (Agashae & Bratton, 2001; Burke & Litwin, 1992).

Effective leadership is fostered through social relationship with others, in some form. In learning organizations, these forms take on the characteristics of three types of roles that leaders often play. They must first design a system by which learning can be effective by putting policies, channels of communication, and structure in place. Leaders must also, “naturally see their organization as a vehicle for bringing learning and change into society” (Senge, 1990a, p. 346). Thus, they become stewards of the mission to which the organization has committed. In addition, good leaders must also be teachers, who influence others in defining reality for this particular organization’s vision and purpose (Senge, 1990).

Outstanding leaders fulfill these roles as designers, stewards, and teachers through three venues. First, leaders constantly seek out information in a number of individual and corporate ways that might include informal conversations, focus groups, surveys, committees, meetings, grievance groups, social events, and various reporting systems (Waldersee, 1997; Wilhelm, 2006). Second, they promote learning by seeking feedback from others (Wilhelm, 2006), admitting to error, remaining open to correction and criticism, and authorizing subordinates to take some risks and take charge of decision-making (Garvin, 1993; McGill, Slocum, & Lei, 1992).

Finally, good leaders are prepared to take risks, and those risk often require them to improve on their own styles of communication and conduct that will foster continuous learning in themselves and others (DeVilbiss & Leonard, 2000). Leaders must attempt to fulfill all of these roles and take on all of these tasks because the ultimate responsibility for setting the pace of and direction for organization-wide learning resides with those who have comprehensive strategic leadership skills (Richardson, 1995). In the context of church leadership, it has been suggested that if the leader of the church (specifically, the senior pastor) is afraid of risk, the church will be at risk of never having opportunity to become a learning organization (Angone, 1998).

While these general activities and characteristic traits are important, it is equally valuable to focus on the types of relationships that must occur between leaders and followers. As Kleinman (2004) states, "the one thing that all leaders share in common is that they have willing followers" (p. 19). The end product, then, involves knowledge of why the actions of leaders have such a profound effect on subordinates.

In one analysis of effective leader acts and accomplishments, five target areas emerged: effective maximization of message reception; creation of an intellectual workforce transformation; managing motivation; raising self-confidence of subordinates; and facilitating the route down a path of change (Waldersee, 1997). First, while leaders are often a major information source, the message is only deemed effective if the characteristics of credibility, attractiveness, and power are embedded in the message and/or message source. Second, leaders must present a vision for the future and dispel any confusion about what that future will look like. Third, effective leaders will provide both intrinsic and external reward systems, and will encourage employees to enter into satisfying and trustworthy relationships with peers, other employees, and the leadership team. Fourth, leaders must not ignore how difficult it is for employees to begin a new process or redefine what the future will hold; therefore, a primary responsibility is to reduce anxiety and structure experiences so that success can be attained. Finally, leaders determine the path down which employees will set goals and obtain feedback on their performance as they navigate this new path (Waldersee).

Visioning: Why Don't We Have What We Want, Today?

Issues of leadership pose substantive problems which often result in a lack of forward motion in organizations. Most of the problems tend to involve a disconnect between those in leadership positions in the organization, and those whom they serve in some capacity (other employees, customers, colleagues). In analyzing this issue from a shared (communal) leadership perspective, several topics of relevance rise to the surface.

First, those in positions of leadership often believe that only they can make decisions (Honold, 1991), and that any other way of thinking somehow disrupts routine. The better emphasis is on, not the abandonment of routine, but the establishment of a routine that allows those in positions of leadership to lead more effectively, and thereby permitting others to have an effective voice that lends credibility to the discussion. Second, many organizations have long relied on what a good leader should know (a product) instead of how a good leader knows what he/she knows (a process) (McGill et al., 1992). Yet the establishment of an effective routine, as mentioned previously, is all about process. Third, organizations tend to become excessively dependent on a specific member, usually someone in a position of leadership; when this happens, an organization becomes stifled in its learning attempts (Appelbaum and Reichart, 1997). In consideration of these three issues of decision-making, process, and dependency, the key ingredient becomes the ways in which organizations teach their leaders to process their leadership and managerial experiences by developing an awareness of the quality of the experience, the patterns that evolve, and the consequences of their actions at the time of the experience.

Analysis from a more individualistic perspective provides even more evidence of why leaders in organizations often lack the ability to move the organization forward. First, many subordinates and leaders alike often view inquiry and dialogue as threatening (Gratton, 1993). When individuals ask questions that cannot be answered immediately, perhaps because the organization itself lacks a vision of the future, or if their inquiries begin the process of identifying issues that are multifaceted, their actions are not likely to be rewarded (Gratton). Instead, those in positions of leadership often become reactive, and turn this lack of vision into yet another problem that needs to be solved. The result is yet another new set of vision statements and mission statements that attempt to provide solutions.

Second, many organization members are disheartened by a lack of imagination, passion, and trust in their leaders (Anderson, 1997). These are key factors that link people to organizations in subtle but significant ways. In the opinion of McGill et al. (1992), learning leaders will increase their imaginative thinking skills, develop passions, and promote trust by exhibiting the following organizational and leadership behaviors:

1. openness to a wide range of perspectives and abandonment of the need for control;
2. systemic thinking that results in synergy;
3. creativity, the outcome of which evolves personal flexibility, a willingness to fail, and an understanding that taking prudent risks is completely acceptable;
4. personal efficacy which is evident in self-awareness and proactive problem-solving; and
5. empathy, which transcends all other characteristics, leads to an ability to repair relationships, and forces the suspension of personal motives (pp. 88-93).

These characteristics become the foundation for true "learning" leaders to effectively exhibit behaviors that subordinates would be willing to emulate.

Third, a transcending factor of poor leadership is ignorance, which can be identified in many forms. Sometimes, ignorance results from a collective sharing of false ideas or initiatives. Other times, ignorance stems from times when decisions must be made without the certainty of knowledge that can be acquired in time to make a quality choice, and individuals become self-serving in their assumptions and choices. The result, in all cases, is an unceasing blame-game in times of failure, and credit-taking in times of success (Wagner & Gooding, 1997).

Therefore, organizations often do not have what they want today, because those in positions of leadership have, intentionally or unintentionally, alienated and frustrated those who must be involved in the growth process. Sometimes this happens because the organization is experiencing success, and sees no obvious reasons to continue the learning process; at other times, a lack of continuity in learning results from leaders choosing to see their world as they would like it to be rather than as it really is (Wilhelm, 2006), and assuming that their organization's products or services are ideal and perfect and therefore are not in need of change.

Instead, those who follow a pattern of learning organization leadership need to be involved in the well-being of those in the organization (Knutson & Miranda, 2000). "Managers don't need to provide security and a safe haven, but they do need to provide answers to questions like, 'What should I do; what is important; why; what are the consequences of my actions beyond financial rewards; and are these consequences predictable?' " (Anderson, 1997, p. 39)

Leadership as Related to Learning

There has been little practical or experiential attention given to the role that leaders actually play in a learning organization setting (Agashae & Bratton, 2001), which is surprising, considering the substantial attention that Senge and others have given to the subject. In a somewhat cyclical pattern, it appears that one of the greatest barriers to the fruitful design and implementation of effective learning organizations is a lack of effective leaders (Murrell & Walsh, 1993). Thus, a shortage of effective leaders leads to a lack of understanding of the role that effective leaders should play; and without that understanding, good leaders cannot be developed.

Senge (1999) suggested that extraordinary anxiety is what is most often seen and felt among top leaders. The anxiety stems, not just from external stressors, but from the internal responsibilities of decision-making and other tasks related to effective leadership. Leaders often make intentional efforts, for instance, to push decisions downward, "but when things get tough, they pull them right back" (p. 13). In such a state of indecision, then, other members of the organization who are looking to their senior management to provide direction and set precedence either become suspicious, or simply ignore the directives, and leaders find themselves caught between control and direction (Webber, 2000; Wilhelm, 2006).

True learning organizations find ways to correct for these deficiencies – those that include leadership development, leadership roles, and the feelings of anxiety and concern that arise from being placed in these positions. This is accomplished in a number of ways. First, a true learning organization requires a fundamental rethinking of leadership by fostering an ability to coach and teach, rather than demand and direct (Kerka, 1995). Senge (1999) likens this role to that of a teacher, by urging leaders not to be an authoritarian expert, but to assist employees in seeing beyond superficial expectations and immediacy of events to identify underlying problems (Jackson, 2000). Learning organizations leaders then become responsible for learning by building the type of organization where people continually enlarge their abilities to share in the learning process (Senge, 1990). Senge and others identify this role as that of a designer – one who builds a foundation, develops policies and strategies that give direction to the organization, and creates processes related to learning organization thought, where these ideas can continually be improved upon (Jackson, p. 200). Subsequently, leaders produce an environment where the enactment of both large and small strategies, "creates a mosaic of change" (Waldersee, 1997, p. 262), most often through the opportunity for individuals to begin applying a collective understanding of the role and vision of the organization.

This establishment of internal conditions for learning must also happen by design, rather than by random chance (Goh, 2003), through leaders' intentional intervention and establishment of the right conditions for learning to occur. Fulmer and Keys (1998) identify this as "leadership ecology: [identifying the] conditions in the organization that permit the growth of different types of leaders, conditions that are conducive for leaders to do their work, and to bring about new realities" (p. 39). These conditions must be identified, developed, taught, and actively managed (Garvin, 1993), so that individuals can be directed toward an optimal image of the future, and it must be something exciting enough for people to say, "I'd be willing to sacrifice to achieve that" (Senge, 1999, p. 13). In Senge's terms, the learning organization leader takes on the most subtle role – that of a steward, whose attitude is one that constantly cares for the people being led, and for the larger purposes of the organization (Jackson, 2000). Most authors agree that leadership, even within learning organizations, is not an intrinsic capacity found in just one person, nor is it found only within one position in the company. It is instead a characteristic, or a distinguishing feature that should be developed in all organization members and fostered in all ways (Kofman & Senge, 1993; Senge, 1993).

At the same time, a more contemporary practice related to leaders in learning organization settings involves the creation of the position of "Chief Learning Officer" (Phillips, 2004b, p. 50), or one who creates the kind of action in appropriate ventures that will add value to the organization's efforts (Phillips, 2004a). This type of position allows for one leader to direct other leaders in their facilitation of activities, while being significantly responsible for the control of covert maverick groups who appear to buck the system, but in a majority of cases, "have the organization's welfare at heart" (Richardson, 1995, p. 33). The benefits of this type of position, from a more contemporary or current-day perspective, involve the realization that initiation of change in organizations is difficult. At the same time, that initiation must begin with top-level executives who have authority and political enforcement power (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1997). In church settings, that individual is often identified as the senior or executive pastor.

Leadership in the Church

Many unique perspectives of learning organization theory arise when these concepts are applied to leadership in the church, and particularly as the roles of the senior or executive pastor are considered. Probably the most sensitive issue of clergy leadership surrounds a religious draw to servanthood and leadership within the church, and whether that one's calling can and should become a determination of effective leadership potential in the context of a church setting.

At present, most religious institutions such as churches, ministerial review committees, governing bodies require some form of psychological evaluation of clergy, but agree with and affirm a contention that dates back as far as the works and writings of James in 1903: that it is not the role of a psychologist or other personnel involved in leadership evaluation to determine whether an aspiring church leader or clergy has actually received a call from God to "become clergy" (Maloney, 2000, p. 522). There is agreement that the determination of calling can be left to others who are more intimately involved and versed in an intimate understanding of the role of divine inspiration, calling in an individual's pursuit of career and identity, and most religious institutions have governing bodies such as ministerial review panels, district or regional ministerial licensing boards who play such a role. However, calling does not automatically presume success in leadership roles within the church, so the practice of assessment of interests and personality traits as predictors of success in ministry is well-received (Maloney).

Several criteria are used as forecasters of potential achievement in the clergy professions. First, there is often an assessment of interests and personality traits that are considered well-suited for those who are entering a profession that is human-services-oriented, as the clergy professions are. Measures of interest in working with people, tools which define satisfaction within religious or spiritual realms, and those which can identify the absence of "overt psychopathology" are often used (Maloney, 2000, p. 523). Such instruments include the Strong Interest Inventory, the Inventory of Religious Activities and Interests, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI); and the 16 Personality Factors (16PF) (Maloney). High scores that indicate social interaction and warmth, openness to social interaction, general intelligence, and religious interests are obviously most favorable.

These psychological evaluations of clergy are not usually aligned with the strict validation processes that are usually used and recommended in personnel selection in other non-religious, professional or secular organizations. The most contiguous approach to some sort of parallel of standard validation was in a study conducted by Majovski and Maloney (1986) over a ten-year period, where a psychological battery of instruments were measured against other assessments of success in pastors, parishioners, and supervisors. The results indicated that, "none of the vocational interests, personality traits, or measures of psychopathology predicted hard or soft measures of clergy effectiveness" (Maloney, 2000, p. 523). So, while measures of personnel selection are often used in clergy evaluation of perceived future effectiveness and success, the issue of calling becomes re-elevated in a prominent position of importance in the appraisal process, along with other contributing characteristics.

Another defining characteristic, then, is the concept (notion) of charisma. The word charismatic actually evolved from the church, and means gifts (Fulmer & Keys, 1998, p. 39). In the framework of leadership skills and characteristics of clergy, then, personnel and ministerial licensing boards alike would presume satisfactory answers that identify which gifts/charismas are important in leading this church, or in leading in this capacity at this time. As noted before, leadership has become an essential contributor to success in studies on church growth, especially when the delivery of services and the maintenance of programs is examined (Wilson et al., 1993), and it is not a factor that can be taken lightly in any organization (religiously-affiliated or not). Personality traits, characteristics of social interaction, charisma, and calling all matter in the selection of effective clergy, for a number of reasons.

First, a significant amount of informal learning occurs in a church setting, and is a dynamic process that becomes an outcome of leader-follower interactions (Agashae & Bratton, 2001). Second, there is the important issue of maintenance, and the fact that the ongoing success of programs, processes, and the culture of the church environment itself are maintained by those in numerous and varied forms of leadership roles. Such forms of leadership play a valued function in the expressions of appreciation and support, in the recognition of the value of these roles in the delivery of services, and in member identification and commitment indicators back to the church (Wilson et al., 1993). Finally, because of the uniqueness of the church environment and its religious overtones, the use of personnel and psychological evaluations at the expense of recognition of calling is unwise, and at all costs, the integrity of clergy candidates should be closely guarded and motivations should be highly respected (regardless of the outcomes of evaluation) (Maloney, 2000).

As much as churches and clergy are often paralleled with human service organizations and professions, they are not part of the collective body of such organizations. Instead, churches and their clergy are uniquely set apart in their roles, responsibilities, and service obligations or preferences in relation to personnel selection and assessment. Therefore, many believe that psychologists involved in the administration of personnel selection assessments and who assist in identifying criteria for selection should not be on committees that are charged with approving or disapproving candidates for ministry (Maloney, 2000).

In sum, as many authors often emphasize in their teachings and writings, whether they ascribe to learning organization theory or not, the relationship between leaders and followers is vital, because nothing works without willing followers (Kleinman, 2004). From the perspective of good learning organization leadership, many significant goals, characteristics, traits, and behaviors emerge, as summarily emphasized by Kleinman (pp. 20-22):

1. Be a good steward – make sure your campfire is in better shape than how you found it.
2. Build enduring greatness by blending humility and professional will.
3. Do not confuse growth with success.
4. Look horizontally, not vertically; globally, not locally.
5. Do not attempt to compartmentalize leadership.
6. One’s greatest legacy is determined by whom one develops.

While not an exhaustive list, the generic assumptions of good leadership characteristics is evidenced in the emphasis on stewardship, humility, clarity of thought, and universal outreach to others.

Job Structure Studies

The study of learning organization theory includes the study of how changes in workforce environments, such as company organization, environmental complexity, and globalization, continuously affect how jobs are structured within those environments. Since individuals spend a significant portion of time involving themselves in the pursuits of numerous organizations in the course of their days and lifetimes it becomes necessary, in the study of organizations, to take a noteworthy look into the makeup of these environments (Srikantia & Parameshwar, 1995). This is done in an attempt to understand what individuals are looking for in the types of jobs and organizations that they pursue.

Characteristics of Job Structure

First, the diverse levels of complexity within various types of organizations must be acknowledged and supported. What is required for one type of business or organization might not be required in a different business environment. At a minimum, each organization must evaluate their own particular requirements in relation to needs, by first defining current practice and future goals (Appelbaum & Reichard, 1997). Garvin (1993) believed that this evaluation involves three specific steps: a cognitive assessment of how members are exposed to new ideas and begin to think differently; a behavioral evaluation of internalization and changes in actual practice; and an evaluation of performance improvement that showed whether any behavioral changes actually lead to the attainment of future goals.

Second, the ability to transfer knowledge, both within the walls of the organization and outside its parameters is, "by far the most consistent managerial practice that is observed in learning organizations" (Goh & Richards, 1997, p. 578). Such transfer of knowledge encompasses a conveyance of knowledge between and among employees; across departmental boundaries; and between and among those in the external environment (customers, suppliers, and other constituent groups) (Goh & Richards). This, in turn, results in the creation of new ideas, the solving of problems on multiple levels, and the capacity to learn from failures (Goh, 1998).

This need to transfer knowledge effectively is only possible through an emphasis on teamwork, cooperation, and group problem-solving. Such an emphasis is, "a key strategic building block for a learning organization" (Goh, 1998, p. 18). In successful learning organizations that use flourishing team production processes, all had a specific set of employment practices that utilized assurances and vows of employment security, conditional types of pay opportunities that were linked to specific outcomes measures, and occasions for essential training and development (Porth et al., 1999). At the same time, if organizations want to utilize the expertise of their employees in productive ways, reciprocity demands that employees be rewarded for the efforts that they put forth (Gardiner & Whiting, 1997). This mutual interdependence (Gubman, 1995) exists within the key ingredients of trust, honesty, and openness (Gardiner & Whiting).

Finally, globalization is becoming an increasing entity that influences job structure. The complexity of organizations on a global scale certainly has been impacted by growth in the field of information technology, the arrival of the knowledge era, and the ease with which globalization has settled into the mainstream (Srikantia & Parameshwar, 1995). The most contemporary coping efforts in a global market include the need to anticipate megatrends, especially those, "affecting the organizational architecture of the society in which we conduct our practice" (Srikantia & Parameshwar, p. 202).

The need for future planning in relation to globalization and job structure is not lost on the church, as the more contemporary megatrends of church growth, post-modernism, worship styles, and other related topics descend on the church's ways of planning and producing quality programs and outreach. Globalization, in any context, can be seen as a source of provocation or inspiration (Bartell, 2001). It all depends on how willing the church is, "to step up to the world playing field" (p. 355). It cannot be the exception to the rule in relation to these changes, and in fact, these issues should, "concern the church, especially in a society where work is no longer a permanent phenomenon for many people" (Jenlink, 2004, p. 141).

As in all arenas, the issue of job structure has its own set of problems and issues, particularly as related to learning organization theory and practice. Bridges (1994, p. 62) "prophecies major changes in the way work is organized and predicts the end of the job -- implying that the organizational world will no longer be constructed by a pattern of jobs but by a multitude of part-time and temporary positions" (Srikantia & Parameshwar, 1995, p. 207). Only time will tell whether this characteristic of the structure of jobs in the future is merited.

Job Structure as Related to Learning

As stated before, each organization approaches issues such as job structure in different ways; therefore, developing a learning organization in these arenas is not just a matter of adopting practices and procedures used by other organizations. That, in itself, runs contrary to learning organization theory (Garavan, 1997). Instead, learning organization practices as related to job structure can occur through the creation of a learning culture, through issues of structure, and over time (Garavan).

Take the area of training and personal competence-building in employees. Learning organizations would likely invest in the types of training opportunities that develop teams in their entirety, in order to emphasize the development of common experiences and frameworks fore action (Goh, 1998). In turn, this best happens when the organizational design and framework is flat and decentralized, and with information systems that encourage effective feedback between and among the teams and those in leadership positions (Goh; Gardiner & Whiting, 1997; Kezar, 2005). In such an environment, training becomes a learning process that "helps people not only to understand their experience but to create a new vision for their business" (Webber, 2000, p. 280). Thus, rethinking an organization's capacity to learn, and focusing on how to create such an organization means challenging what currently exists in training, in feedback, in leadership, and in the structure of jobs, at a level that is substantive and rich (Dirani, 2006; Jenlink, 1994).

There are inherent problems with this approach if not handled carefully and slowly. Even in the learning organization literature, frequent reference is made to the organization, without much emphasis or mention of who makes up that organization (Garavan, 1997). It is much more useful to reverse that approach and focus on individuals and groups first, in order to examine the ways that learning facilitates change in the organization. To do so, there is clearly a need for reflective and psychologically mature individuals found within the organization who can facilitate this type of process; yet, "the potential to develop these and other attributes in employees is significantly ignored" (Garavan, p. 26). General themes in research on learning organization as related to job structure and processes included the desire to work without close supervision; the opportunity to solve problems; the need for adequate sharing of skills and resources with others in the organization; the belief that opinions count; the desire to experience satisfaction and to feel valued; the desire for effective and constant feedback loops; and the need for leadership to continually articulate the vision of the organization's future to its employees (Gardiner & Whiting, 1997; Goh & Richards, 1997; Wilhelm, 2006).

Job Structure in the Church

The church has a bit of an advantage as related to job structure; for instance, Bridges (1994) suggested that traditional job-based structures in this contemporary climate, "are being replaced by people working on constantly shifting clusters of tasks in a multiplicity of locations" (p. 62). At the same time, because of the voluntary nature surrounding much of the work in a church environment, the usefulness of pitching in and doing whatever is necessary (i.e., volunteerism) readily encompasses an environment where clusters of tasks might shift to several individuals and/or several locations. Much has been written, for instance, on the concept of volunteerism, particularly within the not-for-profit sector and, more specifically, within religious organizations, to which approximately 34% of all volunteers contribute the most hours (Boraas, 2003). The contributions made by this large number of individuals who volunteer their time to worthy causes every year are tantamount to the success of these organizations, including the church.

About 50% of adults in the United States spend an average of four hours per week as unpaid volunteers for a variety of service organizations (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). This does not include those who perform volunteer services on a more informal basis and not connected to a particular organization (i.e., planning a neighborhood picnic for local children every Friday). If the two categories of formal and informal volunteering are combined, it is estimated that 109.4 million individuals performed volunteer services in 1998 (Brudney & Gazley, 2006). For a number of different reasons, individuals find it personally fulfilling to actively seek out opportunities to volunteer. Therefore, because of the more informal, less complex nature of these types of experiences, the structure of work and the expectations of performance must be adapted to understand the unique needs and desires of those in volunteer service (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998).

Similarly, other lessons from the study of organizations indicate many variables that many churches already practice. Churches, for instance, place high value on individuals and departments within the church working together, and on enhancing services and impact by using congregants as resources. Similarly, churches tend to involve congregants in ways that are meaningful to them and in ways that add value to what the church is doing. One test of involvement, particularly in church settings, might be the extent to which church activities would be affected if congregants were not involved (Kurtz, 1998). Churches tend to be safe and nurturing environments, as reflective of their calling and their communal care for others. Individuals learn best, and work best, in arenas like churches where they feel secure, where they have opportunity to learn new skills and gain greater knowledge, where they can develop a support network, and where their spiritual nature is rekindled (Kurtz). Regardless of the particular settings where learning organization strategies are employed, the trends that are shaping these future organizations, including churches, are significant.

Performance and Development Studies

A third characteristic of learning organizations as noted in literature involves a significant understanding of the actual performance and development of organizations. Aside from the obvious needs to establish daily routine and advance the objectives of the organization, there is an increasing need to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. This ability to respond with a rapid shift in ways of thinking, and resultant behaviors, is a capacity of strong learning organizations (Rowden, 2001), as described below and consequently applied to churches.

Core Competencies and Performance Objectives

The development of competencies and abilities to perform as cultural conditions dictate is vitally important in both public and private sectors, as the pressures of shorter time frames for performance, competitive advantages, workplace diversity, and the need to do more with less abound (Goh & Richards, 1997). Therefore, those who develop core competencies that result in quicker responses to unpredictable circumstances are the ones who may have the greatest competitive advantage (Rowden, 2001). These companies are also developing the likely ability to improve work conditions, as well as product or service development (Goh & Richards).

In most cases, the concept of learning is vital, then, to higher levels of performance and development, because it helps to tie together the past, present, and future. When an organization develops knowledge and insight of past actions, and can associate the effectiveness of those actions with future knowledge and behaviors, it begins the learning process (Appelbaum & Gorannson, 1997). And while learning relies on knowledge of past actions, it also avoids, "narrow and rigid dependence on precedence" (Anderson, 1997, p. 28). As a result, organizations can adjust more quickly, learn from past experiences, develop and quickly alter the commonalities of a shared mindset, change strategies, and refuse to depend on a narrow and rigid status quo (Anderson).

In addition, a culture of learning that leads to quality performance and development has built an infrastructure that supports all of these demands by utilizing the very building blocks upon which learning organization theory is structured. These building blocks include the promotion of inquiry and dialogue, the use of experimentation and risk-taking, the view that mistakes are not punishable offenses, and above all, adopting a view that the well-being of employees is vital (Bartell, 2001). This last concept is particularly relevant to performance and development issues. If an organization has, at the heart of its mission, the sustainability of its focus and the heartbeat of its existence, it must recognize that committed and qualified employees who also believe in that mission and vision are central to its inception and continuation (Porth et al., 1999). This critical juncture requires opportunities for dialogue that promotes exploration and change, if necessary, or even change to the mental models regarding important organizational concerns (Albert, 2005).

Barriers in Performance and Development

There are several obstacles that can prevent true advances in performance and development from a learning perspective. First, organizations fail to recognize the value structures of their own employees, and merely assume that "our values are your values," rather than helping employees to see the values of the organization in the context of their own values. If this dynamic does not happen, "employees will never commit to the organization's values" (Hall, 2001, p. 30).

Second, many organizations simply never build a system of trend recognition, through strategies in employee training, development of the organization, or use of human resources, that can identify issues that will be affecting the organization in the future (Srikantia & Parameshwar, 1995; Wilhelm, 2006). As a result, when organizations continue down the path of adapting present-day practices to past experiences, there develops an inability to meet today's needs (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1997). This focus on the past, instead of providing guidance and direction, results in a number of barriers to learning that include limited information, inaccurate or confusing feedback, the need to enter into a defense mode in order to attempt to achieve some measure of success, and/or the inability to implement plans successfully (Agashae & Bratton, 2001). In one study (Albert, 2005), the most successful result of a learning organization change policy was the creation of more formal collaborative processes that allowed for problems to be diagnosed, followed by collaborative plans for actual change.

Third, the fear of personal retribution significantly inhibits performance and development, and results in a host of issues that create barriers to learning. Some individuals cling to a view of the world in linear, rather than systemic terms. They confuse their jobs with their identities ("I am my position.") They find someone else to blame when things go wrong ("The enemy is out there.") Some will attempt to take charge of a problem, but their attempts are often a reactive measure against someone else. Finally, they become engrossed and absorbed in events that keep the organization from being able to see things long term – events such as enrollment numbers, or budgets, or the adequacy of personnel (Jarvis, 2004).

When these dynamics occur between and among employees, barriers and resistance abound. Employees cannot view the organization in systemic terms in order to address problems or discuss new opportunities (Marsick & Watkins, 1994). Yet research shows that, "a culture oriented towards supporting learning can lead to improved performance" (Marsick and Watkins, 2003, p. 142). While individuals often understand their daily tasks, they do not see the need to take any responsibility for poor results because they are not thinking systemically. Their actions have no affect beyond their own boundaries, because that would require being proactive first, and seeing the error of their own ways before seeking to blame others (Appelbaum & Gorannson, 1997).

Others will retreat and develop a type of learned helplessness, as they become convinced over time that whatever they do will not matter, and that they have no control over the consequences (Marsick & Watkins, 1994). This does not presume that a performance improvement path is easily taken. Instead, there is likely to be ongoing stress and pressure resulting from attempting to empower an organization's members while also reminding them of the need for their cooperation and effort in order to move forward (Dymock & McCarthy, 2006).

The balance between cooperation and competition is also a fine line that many organizations have not yet learned to maneuver. While competitiveness is highly reliant on quality learning processes, and has been further affected by technological advances that provide even more of that sustainable advantage (Applebaum & Goransson, 1997; Mohr, 2005), an excess of competition also upsets that balance at a time when cooperation is vital and, "reinforces a fixation on short-term measurable results" (Kofman & Senge, 1993, p. 9). This results in organizations that rely on cost-cutting, new marketing strategies, or extensive turf wars that, "make looking good more important than being good" (p. 9).

The end result is a cultural fragmentation within organizations that do not effectively use learning strategies as a foundation for performance and development. Instead of developing a systems mindset and finding ways to use learning strategies effectively, fragmentation has resulted in specialization instead (Kofman & Senge, 1993). Complex situations are fragmented into smaller and smaller parts, with specialists who only take care of one minute piece of the puzzle and, "rarely inquire into the deeper causes of problems: how we learn and act together with a sense of shared aspiration" (p. 8). However, in an effort to maintain an appearance of unity, many individuals within the organization will conceal any disparities, and, "will come up with a watered-down decision that everyone can live with" (Appelbaum & Gorannson, 1997, p. 120). It is almost as if the sharing of information between and amongst all levels of the organization makes some individuals (particularly those in positions of authority) feel like the status and authority of their position is being compromised (Friedman et al., 2006).

Performance and Development as Related to Learning

The key to developing a culture of learning in relation to performance and development is to be willing to ask, and attempt to answer, the question "Why?" This relates back to an organization's understanding of vision as delineated earlier in the chapter, and a desire embedded deeply in learning organizations to ask "Why don't we have what we want, today?" Organizations are reluctant to even ask the question because of the likely responses, particularly as related to any less-than-favorable results that tag guilty parties, dwelling on negativism, or rehashing old history (Webber, 2000). Instead, organizations need to make changes that clearly define success in tangible ways, eliminate the fixation on immediate events and results, rid the organization of practices of blame and turf-war fixations, and honor learning above blame (Mohr, 2005).

Performance and Development in the Church

Churches are not exempt from these same barriers to performance and development and may experience an increased emphasis on the development of commonly-held values and vision. As noted earlier, churches are not likely to describe themselves in competitive language, but the requirement by most denominations to keep track of membership numbers, attendance figures, financial giving, and budgetary requirements all contributes to a strategy of performance and development that results in church growth or decline. This is because a review of the time series of attendance counts for any given congregation can give vital knowledge about members' attendance habits, the health of the church in general, the cost of time as related to church attendance, and other methods of understanding church congregants and their religious habits (Iannaccone & Everton, 2004).

As with other organizations, churches are facing increasingly complex issues of performance at a higher level and consequences for not being able to resolve issues, and must require individual and corporate change from its employees (Nuer, 1999). The understanding of daily tasks is not enough if it does not contribute to systemic change; instead, a higher level of consciousness regarding accountability and performance are necessary. On every level, it is clear that until employees embrace the need for collective systems thinking, organizations including churches, "will not reach the kind of performance our changing world demands" (Nuer, p. 9).

For churches that find it difficult to break the habit of relying on past performance to predict current adaptability and future growth, the old ways of thinking and performing actually impede success and create obstacles to transformation. This is particularly prominent in organizations, including churches, who in the past enjoyed prominent positions in the cultural context of success and growth (McGill et al., 1992). It appears that old patterns of achievement are successful as long as any traces of competition among like churches remains fixed or static (McGill et al.)

However, much of this chapter has been devoted to the understanding that change is rapid, fluid, and constant and that organizations, including churches, must be ready and willing to examine new ways of thinking and learning. Churches can articulate goals and describe visions, and spend a great deal of time trying to do so, when the more effective strategy would be to return to the why question: Why don't we have what we want today? (Webber, 2000). The time has come for churches to become more adept at translating new knowledge into new ways of behaving (Garvin, 1993).

Churches: The Ideal Setting

Based on the information presented above, the study of church attendance and other variables that contribute to church growth provide opportunity to study learning organization strategies in a new and unprecedented setting for a number of reasons. These reasons include consistency in thought between the church and learning organization theory, as well as the unique culture and climate of church settings.

Consistency in Teachings and Models

Given the nature of the various topics discussed within the learning organization literature on leadership, job structure, performance, a church environment becomes the ideal setting to discover and implement learning organization strategies. From a Biblical context, much of this appears to be true: the importance and priority that learning organization theory places on the dominant ability of human intellect to produce enduring improvement has many likenesses with social teachings from both Christian and Judaic teachings (Porth et al., 1999). There are themes about the social dimension of work, and about labor as a co-creative activity, where employees are equally-productive partners with rights to assist in the making of decisions and to share in the outcomes (Porth et al.). These spiritual traditions are deeply consistent with learning organization practices that emphasize the importance of teamwork, and that strive for the development of human talents and communal participation in outcomes (Porth et al.).

Just like with any true learning organization, the nature of the commitment required for church growth and successful church initiatives goes beyond people's typical commitment to their organizations (Kofman & Senge, 1993). Both venues (learning organizations and churches) require a commitment to view necessary change through a bigger lens, and to use these venues as vehicles to bring about that change (Kofman & Senge). It involves an exercise in both community building and individual/selective commitment by those involved. This, in turn, produces transformation, but the only safe place for such a change is a learning community, and the process becomes cyclical (Kofman & Senge).

Thus, the importance of values, as embedded in the culture and climate of learning organizations applies to the development of learning organization churches as well. Culture, as explained through the organizational history of a company, or church, involves how things are done (Burke & Litwin, 1992). It is seen as, "the ongoing process of organizing and negotiation meaning" (Hawkins, 1997, p. 424), and entails a deep set of values, beliefs, overt and covert rules of operation, and enduring principles, all of which provide norms for behavior (Burke & Litwin; Slater & Narver, 1995).

Churches as Organizational Cultures and Climates

In a historical study of organizational culture by Hawkins (1997), four types of organizational culture were described, some of which clearly manifest the concepts of culture and climate, and others of which are distinct characteristics of churches and church-related service organizations. To understand these concepts allows the church to be seen as a culturally-sensitive institution that understands how individuals react to fad and trends, and how some cultural situations respond more quickly or more appropriately to those trends (Kezar, 2005). It is important here to define the types of cultures in which churches would thrive, and to further embed the concepts of culture and climate into the decision-making of those types of cultures.

According to Hawkins (1997), in a control culture, the emphasis is placed on reality, actual experience, practicality, and utilization of resources, which are all processes that appear to be reality-based and impersonal. A second type of culture is the collaboration culture, which pays a great deal of attention to the same matters of reality, experience, and practicality, but with a significant emphasis on decision-making that is informal and people-driven. A third organizational culture is one that is described as a competence culture, where substantial attention is paid to creativity, potentiality, alternatives, and theoretical possibilities and where decisions are detached, analytical, and scientific. Finally, a fourth type of organizational culture is the cultivation culture, which pays a great deal of attention to the same matters of creativity, potentiality, alternatives, and theoretical assumptions but with a people-driven, open-minded, and subjective approach to decision-making.

The second and fourth types of organizational culture (collaboration culture and cultivation culture) suit the decision-making approaches and potential for learning found in church climates. Collaborative cultures are suited to many organizations that are highly people-focused (Hawkins, 1997) and are created to assist others. Cultivation cultures, "flourish in religious and therapeutic organizations where there is a strong emphasis on personal development" (Hawkins, p. 422).

In order for culture to facilitate a longstanding and viable climate, several characteristics must be present. First, individuals must have sensitivity to potential changes in the culture and environment of the organization. They must also possess a steady degree of cohesion and consistency, and the presence of values within the organization is often found to be the cornerstone of this cohesion. Individuals must also have a significant tolerance for thinking out of the box, and for being willing to try new behaviors (Fulmer, et al, 1998). Thus, the culture of an organization must place a high value on the process of learning, and not just pay lip service to it (Luthans, Rubach, & Marsnick, 1995).

In church environments, culture is often dictated in part by the auspices of a governing body and historical roots seeped in tradition; however, each church congregation will, in turn, create and support its own distinct culture. The climate then becomes the means by which an organization or church equips others, and facilitates the ability for desired behaviors to be accomplished (Slater & Narver, 1995). The two concepts of culture and climate must be complementary (Schein, 2003), and churches are uniquely the type of settings in which these two complementary processes naturally and innately occur. However, just as in other venues such as education, the military, and business, these strategies require a calling in the church for, "transparency, cooperation, and egalitarianism instead of secrecy, competition, and elitism. We need these voices if we are to develop vibrant, progressive, learning communities" (White & Weathersby, 2005, p. 297). It is the true nature of what Senge (1990) attributes to learning organization practice, and the true calling of a church who is seeking to provide ministry and develop faith communities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a historical and theoretical analysis of church growth, not-for-profit status, and the church as a not-for-profit entity. In addition, descriptions of the denominational underpinnings of the Church of the Nazarene were provided. The concepts of learning organization theory were also described, and a present-day focus on leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development issues developed into the focus of this current study. Relationships between learning organization characteristics and church growth were further expressed, and churches were characterized as an ideal setting for the study of learning organization principles, because of the consistency found between many church practices and climates, and learning organization theory. This approach advances the knowledge base and further fills the gaps in research found between the study of church growth, not-for-profit entities, and learning organization theory. Chapter 3 presents the methodology for determining the relationship found between and among these variables, followed by a thorough examination of results in chapter 4, and significant conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methodology that determines what relationships, if any, exist between the characteristics of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development principles, and the evidences of levels of church growth in a stratified random sample of Nazarene churches in North America. As outlined in chapters 1 and 2, the perceptions of senior pastors, as leaders in church settings, contribute to a unique understanding of the presence or absence of particular practices of learning organization strategies in churches, but strategies have not been researched or applied in church environments as variables that influence or lead to church growth. This chapter addresses the specific components of this research study, and contains the following: the research design, a description of the population and variables regarding the sample, an overview of instrumentation including explanations of reliability and validity, and procedures for collection and analysis of data.

Research Design

This study involves a quasi-experimental, three-group design utilizing the dissemination, submission, and quantitative review of a self-completion, mailed questionnaire that is specifically edited for use in church environments. A revised version of a published survey instrument developed by O'Brien (1994a; 1994b) was piloted, and subsequently administered to senior pastors in an effort to garner data to determine the relationship between three leadership principles and 12 subcategories, and consequent levels of church growth. Questionnaire surveys are one measurement tool that is likely to provide information on organizational learning (Luthans et al., 1995); they can provide vital information and insight into the topics being researched (Litwin, 1995), both conveniently and affordably. Therefore, a quantitative survey approach is used in an effort to generalize, from a sample population of churches in a select denomination, the level of learning organization characteristics most frequently attributed to church growth, from the perception of senior pastors.

Survey research is more appropriate than observation or other direct measurement options for this research study, for a number of reasons. First, the time and cost of observing actual learning characteristics being learned and practiced over time is both cost-prohibitive and impractical for this study, and would not tie those practices to measures of church growth. Second, as mentioned earlier, only one quantitative survey instrument designed to measure learning organization characteristics has been empirically studied in church environments (Piercy, 2007); other, similar instruments can provide supplementary ways to fill the gaps in additional research areas.

Following a formal pre survey distribution and analysis to establish reliability and validity of the revised instrument, a packet of survey material was mailed to all senior pastors in the stratified sample. The packet included a copy of the survey, along with a cover letter which acknowledged the support and approval of the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene, who must approve all release of pastors and church names/addresses from Headquarters' archives. (See Appendix A). Additionally, the letter also included a statement of support from the Vice President of University Relations from a sister university of the Church of the Nazarene, acknowledging this researcher's position as a faculty member at the Nazarene university and indicating the institution's support of this project as well. The cover letter also included information on why this survey is being conducted, how the data is coded, the confidentiality of data, and how the data will be used. The instructions particularly specified the address to which all completed profiles must be sent, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope was included in the packet.

Increasing the likelihood that the packet is received by the senior pastor was important, and the database of mailing addresses at Headquarters includes the most up-to-date information on the names of senior pastors at each church. The packets, therefore, were addressed in this personalized form. However, additional instructions made note that the survey should be filled out by the senior pastor, regardless of the correctness of the name on the envelope.

Approximately 4 weeks were assigned to the dissemination, completion, and return of the mailed surveys. A reminder postcard was sent to nonrespondents approximately 14 days after the first mailing, and a second survey was administered to remaining non-respondents after a 22-day total response time had elapsed. The collection of data concluded after a one-month collection time, and analysis of the data using correlation, ANOVA, and multiple regression techniques followed. Walden University's Institutional Research Board approved the conduct of this research, as designated by Walden IRB number 01-17-08-0005477.

Population, Methods, and Sample Size

In this section, information on the target population is presented. This review addresses the characteristics of senior pastors in North American churches in the Church of the Nazarene denomination. Additionally, a review of the sample frame and sample size is given, including rationale for the baseline used as a starting point, the exclusion of some churches from the data base, and the assignment of churches to growth group.

Target Population and Its Characteristics

The population of this study consists of senior pastors serving in the North American churches in the Church of the Nazarene denomination, which includes Canadian churches. In this denomination, most senior pastors are ordained, and most are male (Crow, 2006b), although the denomination does not exclude females from positions as pastors (Manual, 2005). The educational achievements of senior pastors are varied: approximately 50% have Bible College or seminary education; 30% achieved a masters degree and 6% attained the doctoral degree (Dudley & Roozen, 2001). While the Nazarene church's denominational population is worldwide and culturally and ethnically varied, a significant percentage of the Nazarene membership in the North American region is white (Dudley & Roozen).

Sample Frame and Sample

The sample frame for this study included senior pastors from a database of Nazarene denomination churches in North America and Canada whose average Sunday morning attendance in 2004 was 150 attendees or more. This sample frame was drawn from a worldwide database from the International headquarters of the Church of the Nazarene in Kansas City, MO, which not only can identify churches by Sunday morning attendance, but can differentiate Nazarene churches by the amount of growth or decline in the past 30 years. The study is purposefully limited to the North American/Canadian region, although the Nazarene church is international in scope, in order to control for international demographic variables that might also be affecting church growth or decline.

Most congregations in the Church of the Nazarene have fewer than 100 worshipers in a Sunday morning service, and about 40% of churches have fewer than 50 worshipers (Crow, 2004). As noted previously, this distribution is, "not unique among protestant denominations" (Crow, p. 6); however, small congregation sizes can substantially affect the ability to perceive positive or negative growth in this study, particularly if the church is pastored by a bivocational pastor whose full-time job is outside of the church. In addition, the learning organization practices explored through this research, and as related to growth characteristics and the choice points described in chapters 1 and 2, require the exclusion of churches whose Sunday a.m. attendance figures fall below 150 on average. Therefore, this study begins with a baseline of all churches with Sunday morning attendance of 150 or more in church year 2004 and, in so doing, 913 churches in North America and Canada were extracted from the Nazarene church database as baseline candidates.

Sixty-three of these churches at the time of this research were without a pastor, and were therefore eliminated from the study, as the intent was to receive perceptual input from the senior pastor, and not from an interim pastor. Fifteen additional churches were indicated as having co-pastors; in some cases, two senior pastors and, in at least one case, the pastorate was shared by six co-pastors. These were also eliminated from the study so that the researcher would not be forced to select a senior pastor as the foremost (or only) recipient of the survey. Three churches in the database reported conflicting or highly uncharacteristic data changes from 2004 to 2007 or did not report data, and were also eliminated. One survey was returned, indicating that the pastor was on an extended sabbatical, and the substitute pastor was not comfortable in completing the survey. Finally, one survey was twice returned as undeliverable, despite assistance from International Headquarters and a web search for a more definitive mailing address. The resulting database, then, consists of 830 churches with Sunday morning attendance of 150 or more during the 2004 church year.

From there, a 3-year increment of positive growth, plateau, or negative growth was selected for two reasons. First, the most recent Sunday morning attendance data available can be captured. Second, the average tenure of a senior pastor among all Nazarene churches is 4 years, 5 months; however, pastors of larger congregations tend to commit to longer pastorates (Crow, 2006a). Therefore, working a three-year increment of growth and/or decline might result in fewer attendance issues related to pastoral changes.

The sample frame were stratified according to the following criteria: those who experienced a greater than or equal to 10% negative growth in attendance from 2004 to 2007 (equal to a minimum decline of at least 15 attendees); those who experienced a 0-9% decline OR increase in attendance from 2004 to 2007; and those who experienced a greater than or equal to 10% positive growth in attendance from 2004 to 2007 (equal to a minimum increase of at least 15 attendees). The 830 churches that comprise the sample frame were stratified to create three groupings representing levels of church growth. The group whose Sunday a.m. attendance is in a negative growth pattern contains 273 churches;

the plateau group contains 341 churches; and the group whose Sunday a.m. attendance is in a positive growth pattern contains 216 churches. These three groups represent the final sample frame of churches.

A stratified random sample was conducted to ensure equal representation among the churches within each of the three groups. To maintain a 95% confidence level with a 5% sampling error for the entire sample size of 830 surveys, 263 surveys are desired from the entire group (31.68% return). However, to maintain a 95% confidence level with a 5% sampling error, the following sample size is desired from each group: churches in negative growth group = 160 responses; plateau group = 181 responses; churches in positive growth group = 138 responses. Table 1 illustrates the sample frame and confidence interval needs by level of growth.

Table 1

Number of Churches and Estimation of Responses Needed by Levels of Church Growth

Level of growth	Number of churches in sample frame	Responses to maintain 95% confidence level with 5% sampling error
Negative Growth	273	160
Plateau	341	181
Positive Growth	216	138

Instrumentation

A revised Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP) survey was created for purposes of this study, and renamed as the Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches (LOPP-C). While the original instrument contained measures to identify capacities within organizations, its use was not specifically designed, in wording or in content, to reflect specific terminology more suitable to church environments. Both instruments, and the resulting revisions to the LOPP-C, are described below.

The Learning Organization Practices Profile

The original LOPP was created by O'Brien (1994); its purpose was to assist organizations in taking, "a diagnostic snapshot of [an] organization's learning capacity" (O'Brien, 1994a, p. 1) by looking at where the organization is right now, and more clearly prioritizing goals and developing a plan of action for the future. Using 12 subsystems that affect organizational learning (Bennett & O'Brien, 1994), the original LOPP was further inspected and analyzed, and these 12 subsystems were compiled into three systemic profile areas (leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development) as predictor variables of future growth or decline. Table 2 shows the three learning organization profile areas as defined in the LOPP, and the 12 subsystems of learning that became the focus of the survey statements used in the LOPP.

Table 2

Twelve Subsystems Comprising the Three Learning Organization Principles

Learning Organization Principle	Subsystems
Leadership	Vision and strategy
	Executive practices
	Managerial practices
	Climate
Job structure and systems	Organization and job structure
	Informational flow
	Individual and team practices
	Work processes
Performance and development	Performance goals and feedback
	Training and evaluation
	Rewards and recognition
	Individual/team development

Note. From "Learning Organization Practices Profile: Guide to Administration and Implementation."

Reliability and Validity Measures of the LOPP

The original Learning Organization Practices Profile has several types of direct validity, as outlined below. As an initial step, experts in organizational theory and practice made independent judgments in selecting, first, the 12 factors of measurement, and then the appropriateness of the items found in each factor. This provided assurance from these experts that the items, and therefore, the LOPP, were measuring what it was supposed to measure. The original sample set of items numbered over 200, with the final 60 items resulting from repetitive consensus from a panel of experts (O'Brien, personal correspondence, March, 2005).

Initially, content validity was achieved through the use of this same panel of experts who judged the 60 items in the LOPP to be an adequate sample of the known universe of relevant content (O'Brien, personal correspondence, March, 2005). Content validity, while subjective, assists in measuring the appropriateness of the items as related to the subject matter, and, "is presented as an overall opinion of a group of trained judges" (Litwin, 1995, p. 35) rather than in statistical form. Content validity provides a healthy foundation for a more thorough assessment of an instrument's validity (Litwin, 1995).

Next, face validity was experienced when these same experts and approximately 1000 human resource professionals completed iterations of the survey (primarily at professional conferences). The instrument appeared to measure factors contributing to organizational learning (O'Brien, personal correspondence, March, 2005), and while the least scientific measure of all validity measures it, "provides a causal assessment of item appropriateness" (Litwin, 1995). Finally, some basic tenets of construct validity were attained through the sifting of items through a screen of systems theory, social and team learning theories, motivational and attitude change theories, and organizational learning theories; all items were then evaluated as appropriate for use in the survey by the same panel of experts (O'Brien, personal correspondence, March, 2005). However, true construct validity will require more extensive use of the instrument in a variety of settings and with a number of different populations over time, so that significant levels of convergent and discriminant validity can be traced.

From the original creation of the LOPP in 1994, to its current rewrite for churches, no validity data based on empirical and correlational evidence of reliability and validity has been derived, for two reasons. First, the LOPP was the first instrument of its kind, created to profile an organization's attempt at learning organization practices, and to promote dialogue for change – and therefore, there were no other comparison instruments to provide concurrent or predictive validity opportunities. Second, since its inception and original use, Dr. O'Brien's practice has turned in other directions that do not result in the use of the LOPP for professional purposes. Therefore, out of necessity to create new and updated evidences of reliability and validity, the following methods were followed for this current study.

The Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches

With permission from O'Brien (see Appendix B), a modified "Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches (LOPP-C)" was designed for this research. It also uses a six-point Likert scale, as with the original instrument, but uses terminology more suited to churches and senior pastors than to organizations and those in management positions. The process of establishing reliability and validity of the new instrument is described below.

Validity Measures of the LOPP-C

The new LOPP-C questionnaire was administered to several experts for content and construct analysis in a manner similar to O'Brien's original validation of the instrument. Ten individuals whose background and experience include extensive time devoted to church environments were targeted, and include: (a) the North Central Ohio (NCO) district superintendent in charge of 66 local Nazarene congregations; (b) three administrators or faculty at a local Nazarene university with a master's or doctoral degree in mathematics or statistics; (c) one Ph.D. faculty member at a local Nazarene university with educational and professional backgrounds in the Nazarene church; (e) two administrators or faculty at a local Nazarene university with extensive experience in survey construction; (f) two vice presidents at a local Nazarene university with research design experience and extensive knowledge of church practices, and (g) the original creator/author of the Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP), whose permission was received to rewrite the original instrument. Included in the packet to these individuals was a cover letter, a copy of the adapted LOPP-C, and a validation questionnaire/instruction sheet (see Appendix C), with six open-ended questions designed to solicit specific data about the content and construct of the LOPP-C, particularly the simplicity of use of the instrument and the ease of interpretation of the survey statements. The individuals were instructed to respond to this request within the week.

Of the 10 surveys, 9 were returned with comments and suggestions for revision and minor re-wording of the statements in the LOPP-C. Their comments, along with actual changes made to the LOPP-C are found in Appendix D. Thus, additional changes to the LOPP-C were made based on suggestions from the expert opinion of these individuals. The changes were primarily suggested word choice changes for purposes of clarification, and an additional important suggestion that the survey would only take about 30 minutes to complete (rather than a 60-minute time frame that was originally proposed in the instruction sheet). The survey was finalized and readied for a second pre-survey distribution.

Reliability Measures of the LOPP-C

Next, a pre-survey pilot test was administered to 25 local individuals with church-related responsibilities that closely align to those of senior pastors, and with priority given to those who are serving or have served in a pastoral capacity. Their responses were used to examine the instrument for further clarity of survey items, as well as to provide data for preliminary analysis before the formal study data was collected. The packets contained a cover letter requesting their assistance in this project (Appendix E), the instruction sheet as revised using comments from the previous validation step, and a revised LOPP-C. The individuals were asked to complete the survey as soon as possible, and a suggested 2-week time frame was given as a target date for distribution of the actual survey to senior pastors in the database. A self-addressed, stamped return envelope was provided for convenience.

In the first week, 15 surveys were received; on the eighth day, a reminder email was sent, yielding an additional seven surveys by the end of the second week. The survey collection remained open for an additional week, and yielded no additional surveys. Thus, of the 25 surveys, distributed, 22 were returned, for a response rate of 88%.

Preliminary Cronbach's alpha tests were run to determine internal consistency reliability of the LOPP-C. Scale reliability was examined by measuring the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the three primary learning organization measures of Leadership (questions 1-20), Job Structure and Systems (questions 21-40), and Performance and Development (Questions 41-60). In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficients provided information on low-coefficient alphas on the 12 subscales of the LOPP-C. The intent was to look for low-coefficient alphas that indicated that a survey item performed poorly in capturing the construct that motivated the subscales of the instrument.

The overall Cronbach's alpha for Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development was .914, .909, and .916 respectively, which affirmed and established the instrument's overall reliability. Subscale alphas ranged from .672 to .909, and are noted in Table 3.

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability on Pre-Survey of LOPP-C

Measure and Subscale	Alpha
Leadership (Questions 1-20)	.914
Vision and Strategy	.860
Executive Practices	.800
Staff Practices	.699
Climate	.866

(table continues)

Measure and Subscale	Alpha
Job Structure/Systems (Questions 21-40)	.909
Church and Job Structure	.672
Information Flow	.716
Individual and Team Practices	.805
Work Processes	.750
Performance/Development (Questions 41-60)	.916
Performance Goals and Feedback	.773
Training and Education	.909
Rewards and Recognition	.830
Individual and Team Development	.716

According to Nunnally (1967), reliabilities of .50 to .60 suffice for early stages of basic research. However, according to Tabachnick & Fidell (2001), reliabilities of approximately .70 or greater are considered acceptable. For purposes of this study, ideally, reliabilities of .70 are considered sufficient; however, with little internal consistency reliability ascribed to the original LOPP instrument, it is important to note that this current study is using an early-stage instrument that is still in progress.

Further, a review of the Cronbach's alpha data from the two subsystems whose alpha coefficients were less than .70 (staff practices at .699, and church and job structure at .672) revealed that alphas were not improved by the deletion of any of the five statements within that subsystem. It was subjectively determined that the subsystem items be further studied for purposes of clarity prior to the formal survey distribution, by consulting with some of the original content experts for advice and supplementary input. Via this input, it was determined that no further clarification of items was necessary, as both subsystem measures were significantly close to .70 – and further keeping in mind that reliabilities of .50 to .60 do suffice for early stages of research (Nunnally, 1967). Therefore, revisions to scale items 11 – 15 on staff practices, and 21 – 25 on church and job structure were further reviewed for clarity and word choice but no further changes were made from the comments of the original content experts.

Formal Survey Distribution

The final cover letter (Appendix F), instruction sheet (Appendix G), and final survey (Appendix H) were distributed to 830 senior pastors, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for ease of return. The surveys were addressed individually to each senior pastor, using that pastor's name, church name, and formal church address. Only one survey was returned as undeliverable as addressed; a second mailing to that church yielded the return of the survey again. A three-wave mailing process was followed: the original packets were mailed on day one, followed by a reminder postcard on day fourteen. On day 22, a direct email was sent to all non-respondent senior pastors that included three attachments: the original cover letter, instruction sheet, and a second copy of the survey, with instructions to return the survey within the next seven days. 443 surveys were returned, yielding a 53.37% response rate.

Completion of the LOPP-C by Senior Pastors

The respondents were instructed to allow approximately 30 minutes for completion of the survey. The instructions indicated how to respond to the actual survey statements, and gave a clear description of the Likert-scale response categories, as well as instructions for the demographic and descriptive responses. A majority of the survey data on the LOPP-C asked for responses on a Likert scale from 1 - 6, with 1 = almost never and 6 = almost always, and indicating level of agreement for each of the 60 statements on the instrument (Agashae & Batton, 2001). Answers to a series of demographic and descriptive questions which allowed for voluntary, open-ended responses or comments were also solicited, and included general information related to length of tenure, basic demographic data on each church, number of paid staff, and other characteristic variables.

The LOPP-C contains 60 questions, with responses on a Likert scale from 1-6. Questions 1-20 on the survey measure the learning organization principle of leadership, and result in a score of 20 to 120 for this principle. Questions 21-40 on the survey measure the learning organization principle of job structure and systems, and result in a score of 20-120 for this principle. Questions 41-60 measure the learning organization principle of performance and development, and result in a score of 20-120 for this principle. A total learning organization capacity score, per pastor/church on the LOPP-C, ranges from 60-360. From these capacity scores, a number of other measures and analyses resulted. These additional measures address the hypotheses as restated below, and support the proposed analysis of data.

Data File Preparation

After data were collected, the responses from each survey were entered into a data file using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The survey values, in columns, were coded by each of the 12 subsystems, and by question number. For example, subsystem number one involved statements on vision and strategy, and the first five statements on the survey were about this subsystem. Therefore, VS1 through VS5 became the first five survey values respectively in SPSS. A similar code was created for each of the remaining subsystems and survey statements. Second, each survey was coded by negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth groups. Third, categorical information regarding the senior pastor's age, gender, Sunday morning church attendance figures, and number of staff were also numerically coded by selected groupings. The number of years as senior pastor was coded by number of months in the pastorate. Raw data from two open-ended questions were compiled using verbatim wording, and categorized by subject area and additionally by growth group. Finally, total scale scores for Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, Performance and Development, and an overall LOPP-C score were calculated for each survey response, and were created in column form in SPSS.

Screening and Cleaning Data

The final data set was thoroughly checked for errors and missing data. First, a statistical program was run which indicated the minimum and maximum values for all 60 statements on the survey. Since the survey provided a Likert-scale value from 1 – 6, no values should be below 1 or above 6. Seven separate errors were found in the data set, which were checked against the original surveys and corrected. After correction, minimum and maximum values were calculated again, and mean scores were confirmed as falling within acceptable ranges.

Analysis of Data

For purposes of review, the following hypotheses that are proposed in chapter 1 are referenced here:

> *Hypothesis #1:* There is no significant relationship between learning organization capacity and church growth.

Hypothesis #2: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and church growth.

Hypothesis #3:

H3a: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the level of church growth defined as positive growth.

H3b: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the level of church growth defined as plateau.

H3c: There is no significant relationship among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the level of church growth defined as negative growth.

Analysis Overview

Following data collection from senior pastors, the first step in the analysis of data was to perform a scale validation by analyzing internal validity and internal reliability of the instrument. This analysis was necessary to continue the development of the questionnaire and to create a significant foundation for additional research. Individual assessment of each of the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development was assessed using factor analysis, as well as examining the data set for suitability of data.

Hypothesis #1 was studied using a simple correlation analysis that examined the relationship between learning organization capacity and the overall construct of church growth. Hypothesis #2 was examined using multiple regression analysis, where leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development defined the measures of the independent variable, and church growth defined the single dependent variable. Prior to this regression analysis, other demographic variables were also regressed on church growth to check for any extraneous variables that may show significant influence on growth. Such variables included: pastor's tenure, pastor's age, pastor's gender, and number of paid staff. If a variable was found to be significant, it was included in the full regression model used to examine the remaining hypotheses.

To examine hypothesis #3, the church growth data were separated into groups of positive growth, plateau growth, and negative growth, and a simple clustering technique was used to create data-defined groups for both the dependent variable and independent variable data sets. Following this clustering technique, hypothesis #3 and its sub-hypotheses examined both a multiple regression model and a one-way ANOVA for each of the three levels of growth. The use of these two analyses allowed for interpretation of how the independent variables may change and influence across the three growth groups.

Scale Validation

As a preliminary step in beginning the analysis of data, the survey instruments received from pastors in the data set were analyzed for reliability and validity purposes. First, an exploratory factor analysis was run to validate the leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development scales of the LOPP-C by examining how the individual items grouped together to support the 12 subscales which comprise the three independent variables. Factor analysis is useful for validating multidimensional scales such as those found in the LOPP-C (Spector, 1992), but also provides for the researcher to make informal inferences regarding the constructs of the survey instrument (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2003). It analyzes the pattern of correlation among items in the survey, and, "groups of items that tend to interrelate with one another more strongly than they relate to other groups of items will tend to form factors" (Spector, p. 53). If all items correlate strongly with one another to a significant extent, a single factor is produced, and this suggests that, "a single construct is being measured by the scale" (p. 54).

The final scale items produced from the factor analysis were the ones then used in the remaining analysis of data. Internal reliability are assessed on these final scale items using Cronbach's alpha as previously described in the preliminary stages of the survey's creation. Since the LOPP-C is still in the early stages of development, it remains important to consider these measures of reliability and validity as consistent with an early-stage instrument.

Correlational Measures of Analysis

The general goal of a correlation study is to explore how two variables are related to each other, and is one of the most basic measures of this type of association (Urdan, 2001). The direction and magnitude or strength of the relationship between learning organization capacity as measured by an overall score on the LOPP-C, and the level of church growth is assessed. T tests were conducted to check for statistical significance between the two variables.

Use of Multiple Regression Analysis

The general function of multiple regression is to explore relationships between several independent variables, in this case, the principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and a dependent variable of church growth. Its use allows researchers to estimate the value of that dependent variable from the values of several independent variables, rather than just one (Churchill, 1991). The greatest strength of multiple regression is the opportunity to explain variations in the dependent variable that would not be explained if a simple regression model is used with only one independent variable. By adding appropriate additional variables, the standard error of the estimate should be reduced (Groebner & Shannon, 1987). Thus, the ability to examine both the combined and autonomous relationships among independent variables and a dependent variable, "is the true value of multiple regression analysis" (Urdan, 2001, p. 131).

For this particular study, then, a multiple regression approach was ideal because it could be used to determine if the overall model is significant; that is, whether several learning organization principles, both autonomously and collectively, contribute to church growth. The approach allowed for an explanation of how much the three independent variables of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development were related to church growth by assessing the variables in a number of ways (Groebner & Shannon, 1987; Urdan, 2001):

1. by analyzing whether the three independent variables of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, *combined*, are significantly predictive of church growth;
2. by assessing the relative strength of each independent variable and how it is autonomously significant in its contribution to church growth;
3. by analyzing whether *each* of the independent variables is significantly related to church growth when controlling for the *other* independent variables; and
4. by analyzing the interactions between the three independent variables.

These assessments, then, further contributed to the body of knowledge regarding the significance of this model, as well as the independent and collective contribution of each of the variables to the measure of church growth.

R values were computed to collectively measure the strength of association between the three independent variables of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the dependent variable of church growth. An R^2 value was then conducted that indicated the proportion of variance in church growth that could be explained by the set of the independent variables in the model. This was, in essence, a measure of how good a prediction of church growth could be made by knowing the independent variables (Urdan, 2001). The R^2 value also determined goodness of fit of the regression model, and helped to test for multicollinearity among the independent variables (Allen, 1997).

Regression coefficients were examined to determine the relative contribution of each of the independent variables on church growth, and to find the optimal combination of independent variables that lead to the greatest levels of church growth. Regression coefficients measure how strongly each independent variable influences the dependent variable in regression analysis (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2003). Finally, the statistical significance of the model was examined using the *F* test and *t* tests. The *F* test was used to determine whether the overall regression model was statistically significant; *t* tests were used to determine whether each independent variable was statistically significant related to the dependent variable.

The Use of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The purpose of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) is to compare the means of three or more independent variables on one dependent variable, to see if the group means are significantly different from each other or, in other words, to show statistical significance (Urdan, 2001). This was accomplished by looking at the amount of variability or differences between the means of the groups compared with the amount of variability among the individual scores in each group (Kranzler & Moursund, 1999). In a one-way ANOVA, the purpose is to divide the variance in a dependent variable into (1) a variance attributable to between-group differences, and (2) a variance attributable to within-group differences. This allowed the researcher to see if the average amount of difference between the scores of members of different samples was large or small, compared to the average amount of variation within each sample (Urdan).

Assessing between-groups variability reflects differences between groups, but is not sensitive to variability within groups (Kranzler & Moursund, 1999). At the same time, calculating within-groups variability can tell the researcher the extent to which mere chance caused individual scores to differ from each other, and further to estimate, "the extent to which chance causes group means to differ from each other" (also known as "error") (Urdan, 2001, p. 81). The two together involved assessing main effects, or the independent effect of a particular factor, and interaction effects, or the combined effect of the factors (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2003).

For this study then, three one-way ANOVAs were conducted. First, a one-way ANOVA compared the means of (a) leadership across the three growth categories of positive growth, plateau growth, and negative growth. Similarly, second and third one-way ANOVAs respectively compared the means of (b) job structure and systems and (c) performance and development across these same three growth categories. *F* ratios were calculated to see if the group means were significantly different from each other, and to analyze any significant differences in the between-group and within-group outcomes. After three one-way ANOVAs were calculated, post-hoc analyses were run if F ratios were found to be statistically significant, and to determine which groups differ from each other significantly (Kranzler & Moursund, 1999; Urdan, 2001). All data analysis was completed using programs included in SPSS Version 16.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained a specific plan by which to research the learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development as indicators of church growth. A sample frame was created using the North American database of Nazarene churches from the church years 2004 to 2007, and stratified the sample to differentiate between positive growth, plateau growth, and negative growth as measured by Sunday morning attendance. Confidence intervals for the three groups and the overall data set were established.

The plan for further validation and reliability of the Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches was presented, as well as instructions given to senior pastors. The chapter concluded with a plan for analysis of the data using correlational, multiple regression, and ANOVA techniques as tools to provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses as presented. Chapter 4 reflects the results that transpired, including response rates, initial screening of data, and more extensive analysis using correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA techniques. From there, chapter 5 reveals the summary of the data analysis, as well as conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to advance the knowledge base of the application of specific learning organization principles to churches as a not-for-profit entity, and to explore the presence of these learning organization principles as predictors of church growth. This chapter presents the results of the study of these relationships, and the analysis of the data collected for this study. The first section contains information on the formal response rates received from senior pastors. Second, a thorough overview of the data received from a series of qualitative questions on the survey is presented and analyzed. Third, preliminary analyses and descriptive statistics on the overall data set are presented. Next, factor analyses are performed on the items in the LOPP-C, and results of these analyses are given. Finally, each research hypothesis is presented, accompanied by an exploration and analysis of the data and a description of the findings from the data for each hypothesis.

Response Rates, Sample Size, and Confidence Intervals

Following presurvey testing of the LOPP-C for use in this study, the survey packets were mailed to the senior pastors as listed in the stratified random sample. The response to the initial mailing of the LOPP-C to senior pastors yielded 246 surveys after 12 days, or 29.63%. After a reminder postcard was sent on day 14, an additional 85 surveys were received, for a total of 331 surveys (39.87%) after 22 days. Following the third contact, and 31 days after the original mailing, the data collection phase was closed; 443 surveys were received, resulting in a 53.37% response rate.

The obtained sample size of 53.37% far exceeds the sample size of 263 surveys (31.68%) necessary to achieve a 95% confidence interval with a 5% sampling error for the entire population group. Similarly, the sample sizes needed to maintain a 95% confidence level with a 5% sampling error are only slightly removed from the desired sample size for each group. Table 4 shows the resulting margin of error of the actual sample size for each group when a confidence level of 95% is maintained.

Table 4

Actual Response of Churches by Levels of Growth

Level of Growth	Sample Frame	Sample Needed[a]	Sample Received	Margin of Error When 95% Confidence Level is Maintained
Negative	273	160	140 (87.5%)	5.79
Plateau	341	181	189 (104.4%)	4.77
Positive	216	138	114 (82.6%)	6.32
	830	479[b]	443 (53.3%)	3.18

[a]To maintain 95% confidence interval with a 5% sampling level from each level of growth. [b]263 responses are required for the entire sample size of 830.

After checking the final data set for errors and missing data, and making corrections to the data set, it was determined that mean scores fell within acceptable ranges. Total surveys = 443, with valid N surveys = 414, with 29 surveys missing at least one unit of data (6.54% of the total survey response set). The final data set of 443 surveys was prepared for further analysis.

Qualitative Analysis and Church Profiles

Formal analysis of the data received from senior pastors in all three growth groups began with a significant analysis of a set of administrative and demographic information about the senior pastors, as well as information about pastors' perceptions of issues that have transpired in the church over the past 3 years, and congregation and staff willingness to do things different. Instructions in this section of the survey stated that responses are not required, but would be appreciated. It is important to begin with a thorough review of this data in order to provide important background information for the quantitative analysis and results to follow. Much of what is revealed in this first analysis provides some explanation for the outcomes revealed in the quantitative data by growth group, especially in the responses provided to two open-ended questions discussed later in this chapter.

Demographic Information

Question 1 asked survey respondents to identify their official title at this church. Of the 443 surveys, 11 did not respond (2.5%). Of the remaining 432, over 95% identified their title as Senior Pastor (64.7%), Lead Pastor (15.3%), Pastor (13.3%), or Lead/Senior Pastor (2.2%), lending clear credibility to their role as the primary pastor at that church. Three respondents (2.1%) identified themselves as Interim Pastors. A review of the LOPP-C responses from these three individuals indicated answers that are reflective of their expertise, time, and knowledge of that particular church; for instance, one interim pastor had been at the church in a different capacity, and as interim pastor for over a year. His tenure as interim superseded the time spent by a few pastors of other churches as official, senior pastors. The remaining 2.4% of respondents' titles are all variations on similarity to the three primary titles mentioned above: as Administrative Pastor, Senior Minister, Teaching Pastor, Vision Pastor, or Senior/Vision Pastor. Therefore, based on the identification of themselves as the primary, senior pastor at that church, the response surveys from all 443 pastors were kept in the data pool.

The next two questions asked respondents to provide an age category and a gender category. Both responses were categorically coded in SPSS, with age coded as "under age 30, age 30 to 60 and over age 60. Results of age and gender are presented in Table 5; a majority of the total respondents (83.7%) are between 30 and 60 years of age, and not surprisingly, 98% of total respondents are male. It should also be noted, however, that a significant number of total respondents (80, or 18%) did not respond to the question regarding gender. It is likely that this is the result of a flaw in the creation of the raw data sheet on the survey, as this question was off-set (to the right) from a question on age, and was likely missed by some.

Table 5

Comparison of Age and Gender Categories of Respondents, by Growth Group

	Negative Growth (N = 140)	Plateau Growth (N = 189)	Positive Growth (N = 114)
	Age		
Under 30	0	0	1 (.9%)
30-60	115 (82.2%)	156 (82.5%)	100 (87.7%)
Over 60	23 (16.4%)	33 (17.5%)	12 (10.5%)
Missing	2 (.4%)	0	1 (.9%)
	Gender		
Male	111 (79.3%)	158 (83.6%)	91 (79.8%)
Female	1 (.7%)	1 (.5%)	1 (.9%)
Missing	28 (20.0%)	30 (15.9%)	22 (19.3%)

Three questions asked respondents to provide categorical information about Sunday morning attendance in all services combined, the length of service of the pastor at this church, and the number of paid staff members, excluding the senior pastor. Table 6 provides information from this demographic piece.

Table 6

Attendance, Pastor's Length of Service, and Number of Paid Staff by Growth Group

	Negative Growth (N = 140)	Plateau Growth (N = 189)	Positive Growth (N = 114)
	Sunday a.m. Attendance		
Under 100	3 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
100-199	71 (50.7)	56 (29.6)	11 (9.6)
200-299	29 (20.7)	57 (30.1)	34 (29.8)
300-399	18 (12.9)	27 (14.3)	23 (20.2)
400-599	8 (5.7)	30 (15.9)	18 (15.8)
600-more	7 (5.0)	19 (10.1)	27 (23.7)
Missing	4 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (.9)
	Pastoral service		
Range	2 mo. – 35 yrs.	3 mo. – 38 yrs.	3 mo. – 30.1 yrs.
Mean	77.98 months (6.5 years)	114.89 months (9.8 years)	109.80 months (9.1 years)

(table continues)

	Negative Growth (N = 140)	Plateau Growth (N = 189)	Positive Growth (N = 114)
		No. Paid Staff	
None	5 (3.5)	6 (3.2)	1 (.9)
1-2	34 (24.3)	32 (16.9)	10 (8.8)
3-5	70 (50.0)	85 (45.0)	51 (44.7)
5+	25 (17.9)	63 (33.3)	50 (43.8)
Missing	6 (4.3)	3 (1.6)	2 (1.8)

Question #1: Issues Within the Church

The final section of the LOPP-C contained two open-ended, short-answer questions designed to encourage pastors to present their view of the current climate of the church. Both of these questions were designed to capture additional information about the specific issues transpiring within their church setting, but also allow for information to be presented regarding the external climate and demographic region surrounding the church itself. In acknowledging that the survey was distributed to senior pastors at churches in North America and Canada, it must also be acknowledged that within those distribution boundaries there are a number of demographic and regional characteristics that will also affect church size, income, church growth, religious principles, conservative vs. liberal practices, and worship preferences, to name a few. These questions were not created to capture all demographic representations of every church surveyed, or even to capture any specific regional demographic information, but to allow pastors a place to acknowledge some economic, cultural, social, and environmental influences that might be contributing to levels of growth and decline within their church.

The first question asked pastors to briefly describe if there are "any issues that have transpired in this church in the past three years that have affected Sunday a.m. attendance figures, either positively or negatively; and if 'yes,' please explain." The answers to this question are surveyed by growth group, to see if any patterns within the raw data could be explored as a result of a church's growth, plateau, or decline in attendance. Of the 443 surveys received, 331 (74.7%) responded to this question; a close review of their responses revealed four significant areas where both positive and negative issues are identified: relational issues, changes in the church, external circumstances, and management and operations.

Relational Issues

In the first area, broadly defined as relational issues, pastors described a number of communication, behavior, and interaction patterns between pastors, congregants, staff, and board members. Overall, the pastors whose churches show positive growth had the least number of comments in regards to relational issues within the church. The comments regarding these issues dropped from 22.1% of responses in the negative growth group, to 16.4% in the plateau group, and 10.5% in the positive growth group.

In churches that are experiencing a negative pattern of growth, a large number of negative comments were made about relational issues that are transpiring in the church: conflicts between pastor and congregants, conflicts between and among members of the congregation, or issues between the board, the pastor, and/or the staff. Those churches whose growth was plateauing noted the most significant number of relational issues between and among staff (pastor/staff, and staff/staff issues) at 5.8%. However, this plateau group also reported many more positive comments regarding relational issues than the other two groups. It seems that the kinds of things that are determining whether a church will grow or not affected relationships within the church, both positively and negatively. Thus, the ability to see the church through those issues might also impact whether the church grows from that point on, or not.

Two interesting relational concerns in these groups also warranted some attention: the reporting of several circumstances of moral failure that were disruptive enough for the pastor to believe the actions affected church growth; and the reporting of some doctrinal issues that disrupted the flow of stability. First, in the group with negative growth, 8% of pastors from this group reported circumstances, among both congregants and/or former staff, of pornography, affairs, conducting unbecoming a ministerial staff person, or affairs between congregants that disrupted relational flow within the church. This reporting contrasted to only 2.5% reporting from the plateau growth group, and 4% among the positive growth group. Thus, the presence of circumstances surrounding moral issues within the church body does play a part in the disruption of church dynamics, and is seen as a contributor to a negative growth pattern among some churches.

Second, four churches reported issues that challenged some of the doctrinal tenets of the congregation. One church accounted an issue involving the employ of a female evangelist; two other churches identified matters regarding the use of what the church identifies as spiritual gifts, or particular talents given to people by God. One church mentioned the use of women's participation in ministry (particularly that some congregants had difficulty with women in the pulpit, or as Sunday school teachers of adult classrooms). While the Nazarene church has accepted women in ministry from its inception, the subject still causes a distraction of sorts at times.

Changes in the Church

A second broad area related to this open-ended question involved any significant changes that have taken place in the church in the past three years. Change could involve a pastoral or staff change, a building relocation, or changes in worship style. It could also include scheduling and operations within the church, new strategies regarding vision for that particular church, or the addition or deletion of various programs.

Churches experiencing a negative growth pattern appeared to have a lot of difficulty in handling any kinds of transitions or changes that are a naturally-occurring part of church development. Thirty two churches (28.5%) in this group reported a pastoral change that contributed to a negative pattern of growth, contrasted with only 6.8% of churches in the plateau group, and 5.2% in the positive growth group. Similarly 14 churches (12.5%) in the negative growth group reported staff changes that disrupted attendance patterns, contrasted with 10.5% in the plateau group, and only 2.6% in the positive growth group. In these two categories of pastoral and staff changes, it seems clear that churches in the positive growth group have much more stability, not only in the amount of turnover that occurs, but also in the handling of these inevitable kinds of changes. This, in turn, could also be why they are seeing patterns of growth.

Other indicators of negative growth appeared to be building projects and/or relocations that disrupted the stability of church life (6.2%), the "worship wars" of contemporary vs. traditional formats (4.4%) and changes in schedules and operational aspects of church life (4.4%). Several pastors in the negative growth group spoke to the desire to cast a new vision for the church that had not resulted in an acceptance of that vision (8%), or changes in programs that were supposed to result from that vision (5.3%). Among those in the plateau and positive growth groups, many of these same issues were mentioned, but were not as significant as in the negative growth group. It remains clear that many different kinds of changes can disrupt the stability of church life that contributes to growth.

At the same time, many more positive comments about these same topics (building relocations or remodeling, worship styles, changes in schedules, vision-casting) were documented among the group experiencing plateau growth. These were also noteworthy positive predictors among the positive growth group. Building improvements and worship style were the two most frequented topics that pastors mentioned in a positive light as contributors to change.

All is not doom and gloom, however. Many pastors in the group experiencing negative growth also mentioned many positive changes in the church that were believed to be turning things around. Seven percent saw their current pastoral and staff changes as positive moves for their church. 4.4% saw their current building and remodeling projects as good investments for future church growth. And more than 12% of the pastors' comments in the negative growth group indicated that the casting of a new vision, the beginning of new programs, and the restructuring of some current schedules and operations were all positive elements to turning around the negative patterns of attendance.

External Circumstances

The third major area identified as having an impact on growth for churches was broadly defined as external circumstances, or things over which the pastor, staff, and board have no control. Two patterns appeared to emerge from the responses. The first was economic changes within the community that resulted in families leaving for new jobs, or having to transfer out of the community for economic or professional reasons (promotions, military transfers that lead to a lot of coming and going). The second pattern involved the changing demographic patterns both inside and outside of the church walls: aging congregant populations that resulted in deaths in an aging congregation; demographic changes in the community resulting in influxes of other ethnic and/or cultural groups; or the intentional influx of another church (different denomination) into the community.

Interestingly, there were 21 indicators of changes in community and deaths in an aging congregation (18.7%) among churches that were experiencing negative growth, and almost 14% among churches that were in the plateau growth group. In contrast, among churches experiencing positive growth, only 5.2% of respondents mentioned any economic or socio-cultural demographics having impacted the church negatively. This could be a significant indicator that many of our negative growth churches, those that have experienced declines in attendance in the past three years, are comprised of many who are elderly or, for a variety of reasons, are not attracting young families. In contrast, those churches that are growing the fastest are those that are catering to the needs of these young families with children, or have learned to adjust to the demographic realities of families that are coming and going from the area.

These same pastors in the negative growth group report many negative issues that arise from changes in staff as mentioned above, as well as a number of negative comments about management and operation listed below. It appears that these issues are all tied together. Without other families moving in and replacing those in transition, and without some significant preparation for pastoral and staff changes, many of these churches suffer.

Management and Operations

The final broad category of discussion involved management and operations within the church walls. About 8% of the respondents from churches experiencing negative growth mentioned the impact of significant financial constraints placed on their churches as a result of lack of growth, OR the fact that financial constraints actually impede their growth. About 2.6% of pastors in the plateau growth group mentioned similar financial concerns, and no pastors in the positive growth group mentioned any financial issues that inhibit growth. Other issues of management and operation of the church involved inadequate leadership by staff, and inadequate buildings and facilities. The pastors in both the plateau and positive growth groups remained fairly silent on these two issues, and tended to give more positive comments about the issues of leadership, buildings and facilities, and finances.

A final issue of management and operations within the church walls dealt more with the missional mindset of the denomination, that of the starting of new Nazarene churches in neighboring congregations where demographics and data show evidence of an area ripe for church growth. The churches in general seem to take a dichotomous approach to church planting; some see a church plant as negatively affecting their attendance, since families from the host church will often leave to assist the new plant. As such, even though a church plant might result in a net loss of attendees for their home church, most see it as a positive move forward. Along a different vein, some churches are taking a multi-site approach to these church plantings, simply becoming a home church that has expanded to a different location, and resulting in a multi-site campus rather than a church start. It will be interesting to see how the denomination as a whole addresses this issue in the coming years, as churches continue to make a distinction between starting a brand-new church (as in a church start), and having a multi-site ministry. It is also presumed that, of the churches that mentioned the church start as a reason for lack of growth, most still see it as a positive move for the church, and one that helps the church move forward, but simply indicating on the LOPP-C that the net loss for their own church is worth mentioning as a reason.

Question #2: Congregation and Staff Openness to Change

The second open-ended question asked pastors to briefly describe the extent to which your congregation and staff are open to change, willing to try new things, and receptive to ideas that are different from how things are normally done. Of the 443 surveys, 69 pastors (15.6%) gave no response to this survey question, leaving 374 surveys (84.4%) with varying degrees of response and examples. The overall response to this question from all growth groups indicated that 55% of pastors believe that their staff and congregants are very open, willing, and receptive to change. Another 38% described their church as somewhat ready, willing, and receptive to new things, but implied in their comments that there are often restraints or restrictions placed on the type or the pace of change. Of the three growth groups, not surprisingly, the pastors whose churches are experiencing positive growth over the past three years are most likely to strongly identify their staff and congregation as very open and receptive (51%), compared to 47% in the plateau group, and 42% in the negative growth group. Only 5.6% of all pastors stated that their staff and congregants are not at all open to change, willing to try new things, and/or receptive to new ideas.

Of those pastors who gave specific examples of purposeful, positive change, many included examples of changes in music style and worship style. This is not surprising, as the music venue has been a particularly unstable topic in the church wars of recent years. A second category of example involved specific changes to church programs: the addition of children and youth programs, the addition of a Saturday p.m. service, or the movement of Sunday school/Biblical instruction time to Sunday p.m. from its more traditional Sunday a.m. format. A small number of churches identified building relocation and/or building projects, such as additions to current buildings, or upgrades, as critical examples of their staff and congregation's commitment to investing in the maintenance of property and financially supporting the external structures that make missional and discipleship efforts viable and possible. This support would also include upgrades in technological, hardware, and software services that ease some of the transition to growth: use of email and website options for information flow; upgrades in sound systems and lighting systems in worship; and use of all forms of technology in worship services.

A final area that pastors spoke to specifically is the use of external resources to lend guidance and improvement to change within the church. In all three growth categories, pastors speak equally about the use of resources such as using external consultants to assist the staff and church board in establishing new understandings of vision and mission or attending conferences on church growth. Other examples include gathering information on church planting, or discipleship, and reading of significant book and journal resources on these subjects.

Expectation of Slow Change

In all three categories of growth, 26.7% of the respondents indicated that staff and congregants are open, willing, and receptive to change within reason. Most of these respondents identified issues of worship styles, changes in music style, pastoral changes, and other similar categorizations as reasons for why their staff and congregants are somewhat open, willing, and receptive. Many pastors spoke of some resistance, or the fact that change is occurring, but that it required the pastor and staff to move slowly with any significant changes in any of these areas.

Necessity of Resources

About 4% of respondents indicated that their staff and congregants are getting better in accepting the possibilities of change or of being willing to try new things, indicating a positive, future-forward process of thinking. Those in the negative growth group are more likely to place their churches in this category than those in the positive growth group, likely because those in the positive growth group tended to speak more strongly to the receptivity and willingness of their staff and congregation, as noted above. Similarly, a small number of pastors, similarly, more in the negative growth group than the others, believe that their staff and congregants are open, willing, and receptive to change, but that there is a strong need for resources in order for that to happen.

Qualitative Data Summary

Data received from the set of qualitative summaries by growth group provided important evidences of circumstances and opinions surrounding the reasons for the negative, plateau, and positive growth patterns of respondent churches. While the data was voluntarily provided, a large number of pastors elected to respond to these intentional opportunities for respondents to give explanation for unique circumstances and perceived causes of growth and decline. Their responses also lent some weight to the quantitative analyses and results to follow.

Preliminary Quantitative Analyses

Preliminary analyses of the data involved inspecting the data file, and exploring the nature of the variables in readiness for conducting more advanced statistical techniques (multiple regressions, ANOVAs, etc.) that will further address the research questions and proposed hypotheses (Pallant, 2007). With information from 443 respondents, the individual mean scores by survey statements 1-60 ranged from 3.1233 on statement number 48 (We have diagnostic tools for individual development and/or developmental planning processes available for everyone) to 5.3477 on statement number 54 (Staff members are not punished for making honest mistakes, for having tried something worthwhile and failed). Skewness values showed a somewhat negative skew on all but one statement item, indicating a slight clustering of scores at the high end of the scale. Kurtosis values varied by subsystem cluster, with a majority of subsystem statements indicating positive kurtosis. The exceptions were the subsystems of Church and Job Structure (statements 21 – 25) and Training and Education (statements 46 – 50). Both indicated negative kurtosis on all five statements, indicating a relatively flat structure with many cases at the extreme. However, with large samples (over 200), it is speculated that skewness and kurtosis do not substantively affect the analysis of data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

In analyzing the mean scores further, the average mean scores by subsystem, descending from highest mean to lowest mean and identified by both learning organization principle and subsystem, are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Average Mean Scores for 12 Subsystems of the LOPP-C from Highest to Lowest

LO Principle	Subsystem	Questions	Mean
Leadership	Climate	16-20	5.105
Leadership	Executive Practices	6-10	4.978
Job Structure/Systems	Information Flow	26-30	4.776
Job Structure/Systems	Ind/Team Practices	31-35	4.745
Performance/Dev	Rewards/Recognition	51-55	4.723
Leadership	Staff Practices	11-15	4.414

(table continues)

LO Principle	Subsystem	Questions	Mean
Job Structure/Systems	Work Processes	36-40	4.367
Leadership	Vision and Strategy	1-5	4.313
Performance/Dev	Ind/Team Development	56-60	4.248
Performance/Dev	Perf Goals/Feedback	41-45	4.175
Job Structure/Systems	Church/Job Structure	21-25	4.099
Performance/Dev	Training/Education	46-50	3.556

Overall, the mean scores for the data set showed evidences that support further analyses of the data by examining the descriptive statistics for each survey total score, as well as the mean scores by growth group and by learning organization principle. First, descriptive statistics were run by survey total score and by each learning organization principle total score for leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development. Histograms and box plots provided further information for examination, and a thorough and detailed inspection of the descriptives provided information on a small handful of outliers (Pallant, 2007).

By looking first at each of the four histograms and boxplots, no significant outliers were found that were substantially higher than others; however, two to four outliers were found in each of the four descriptives that were lower than other scores. The outliers, however, did not produce extreme points on the boxplots (more than three box-lengths from the norm) (Pallant, 2007), so further examination of the descriptives table was performed. Particular attention was paid to the 5% trimmed mean for the four areas of study, noted in Table 8. Because the mean scores in each category were very similar, and the data set was substantial with 443 total surveys, the cases in question were retained in the data file as having no significant effect on further analysis.

Table 8

Means and 5% Trimmed Means for the Three LOPP-C Sub-scores of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, and Total LOPP-C Score

Category	Mean Score	5% Trimmed Mean
Leadership	79.49	79.84
Job Structure and Systems	77.10	77.41
Performance and Development	71.50	71.66
Total LOPP-C	228.31	229.11

Following a review of the descriptive statistics for the data set in its entirety, the LOPP-C was additionally assessed for internal consistency reliability by re-verifying the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the three learning organization principles and each of the 12 subsystems. Table 9 shows the comparison Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the pre- and post-mailing results. All alpha coefficients on the second assessment were above .7, suggesting good internal consistency reliability (Pallant, 2007), with the two pre-survey subsystems that were below .7 at a more acceptable alpha above .7 in the post-survey analysis (Staff Practices now at .848, and Church and Job Structure now at .708).

Table 9

Comparison of Cronbach's Alpha Reliability on Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Analyses

Measure and Subscale	Pre-Survey Alpha	Post-Survey Alpha
Leadership (Questions 1-20)	.914	.915
Vision and Strategy	.860	.844
Executive Practices	.800	.759
Staff Practices	.699	.848
Climate	.866	.815

(table continues)

Measure and Subscale	Pre-Survey Alpha	Post-Survey Alpha
Job Structure/Systems (Questions 21-40)	.909	.916
Church and Job Structure	.672	.708
Information Flow	.716	.808
Individual and Team Practices	.805	.827
Work Processes	.750	.811
Performance/Development (Questions 41-60)	.916	.914
Performance Goals and Feedback	.773	.786
Training and Education	.909	.859
Rewards and Recognition	.830	.845
Individual and Team Development	.716	.705

Factor Analysis

Each of the 3 learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development were individually assessed using factor analysis, with 20 survey items originally aligned to each of the 3 principles. Prior to the analyses, the suitability of the overall data set for factor analysis was assessed. First, the overall sample size of 443 surveys was found to be more than adequate for factor analysis, according to Tabachnick and Fidell

(2001), who stated, "as a general rule it is comforting to have at least 300 cases for factor analysis" (p. 588). Comrey and Lee (1992) also stated that a sample size of 300 is good, and a sample size of 500 is very good; others explain the ratio of cases-to-variables as an adequate predictor of suitability, ranging from 5:1 to 10:1. In this study, with 433 total surveys (cases), and 60 variables, an approximate 7:1 ratio was achieved.

Second, the strength of the intercorrelation among items was addressed by inspecting a correlation matrix for all 60 items. A majority of coefficients were greater than .3, indicating suitability for factor analysis. More extensive preliminary analysis of the each principle's data set were addressed separately in the three individual factor analyses, described below.

Factor Analysis 1: Leadership

The first 20 items of the LOPP-C (1-20) were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS Version 16. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed a noteworthy number of coefficients above .3, and a Kaiser-Meyer-Oberlin value of .918, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Tabachnic & Fidell, 2001), with the consideration that values over .9 are considered superb (Field, 2005). Thus, preliminary analyses supported the factorability of this correlation matrix.

In the analysis, the presence of four components (factors) with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 explained a total of 61.496% of the variance (39.394%, 9.282%, 7.654%, and 5.166% respectively). To further aid in the interpretation of this decision, a Varimax rotation was performed, suppressing all values at .4 in order to account for a structure with simple properties (Kim & Mueller, 1978). An examination of this rotated component matrix revealed a simple structure with four components showing a significant number of strong loadings and with most variables loading substantially on only one component.

However, it was decided to exclude three variables (statements 6, 9, and 15 on the survey, notated as EP6, EP9, and SP15) to try and improve on the rotated component matrix, as the three variables loaded minimally on at least two components. With the variables removed, the presence of eigenvalues above 1.0 explained a slightly larger total variance of 64.237 on four components. More significantly, the rotated component matrix clearly indicated a four-factor retention, with all remaining variables loading on only one factor. These four factors corresponded to the four subscales of leadership identified in the original LOPP, Vision and Strategy, Executive Practices, Staff Practices, and Climate, and seem to support these subscales as key indicators of the principle of Leadership being measured by the LOPP-C. The analysis thus supported the retention of these four factors as adequate subscales for Leadership. Table 10 shows the rotated component matrix for the Leadership subscale with Varimax rotation indicating a four-factor retention, with variables EP6, EP9, and SP15 excluded.

Table 10

Rotated Component Matrix for the Leadership Subscale with Varimax Rotation, Retaining Four Factors, Three Variables Excluded

	Component			
Item	1	2	3	4
VS1	.740	.199	.098	.224
VS2	.780	.220	.230	.087
VS3	.729	.088	.204	.243
VS4	.757	.283	.069	.191
VS5	.592	.197	.297	.033
EP7	.304	.264	.203	.598
EP8	.251	.104	.197	.789
EP10	.106	.131	.285	.729
SP11	.206	.159	.715	.260
SP12	.238	.136	.817	.197
SP13	.190	.154	.808	.173
SP14	.119	.268	.699	.140

(table continues)

	Component			
Item	1	2	3	4
CL16	.045	.535	.175	.218
CL17	.149	.724	.206	.064
CL18	.263	.760	.094	.237
CL19	.283	.764	.094	.204
CL20	.242	.741	.187	-.100
Subscale Name:	(Vision/Strategy)	(Executive Practices)	(Staff Practices)	(Climate)

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Factor Analysis 2: Job Structure and Systems

The second 20 items of the LOPP-C (21-40) were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS Version 16. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed a noteworthy number of coefficients above .3, and a Kaiser-Meyer-Oberlin value of .932, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Tabachnic & Fidell, 2001). Again, preliminary analyses supported the factorability of this correlation matrix.

In this analysis, the presence of three components (factors) with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 explained a total of 53.025% of the variance (40.414%, 7.255%, and 5.356% respectively). To further aid in the interpretation of how many factors to retain, a Varimax rotation was performed, again suppressing all values at .4. An examination of this rotated component matrix revealed a number of variables that are loading across factors, and upon further examination of the scree plot, it was decided to retain only two components for further analysis. In the performance of a second varimax with Kaiser normalization screening, with suppression of values at .4, a significant number of strong loadings was noted, with most variables loading on one component.

Again, however, it is decided to exclude three variables that loaded minimally on both components (statements 30, 38, and 40 on the survey, notated as IF30, WP38, and WP40) in order to try and improve on the rotated component matrix. With these variables removed, the presence of eigenvalues above 1.0 explained a total variance of 47.953% on two components, but with this two-factor retention, all remaining variables loaded strongly on only one factor.

Because the analysis loaded most strongly with only two factors, the components in this section of the analysis did not correspond to the four subscales of job structure and systems as identified in the original LOPP (Job Structure, Information Flow, Individual and Team Practices, and Work Processes). Therefore, the variables in the survey were studied in depth in order to identify common themes of the variables as loaded on the two factors for Job Structure and Systems.

Those variables which loaded on component one appeared to measure the extent and effect of working with others: group and team problem solving, job rotation, avoidance of blame, healthy individual and group analysis of mistakes, and trying new ideas. This subsystem was therefore re-named as "Internal/Personal Work Affect." Those variables which loaded on component two appeared to measure the extent and effect of the external work environment on learning: the layout of work space, the appropriate and effective use of technology and sharing of information, and the availability of important data relevant to success. This subsystem was re-named as "External/Technical Work Affect." Therefore, for purposes of this second factor analysis, the four original subscales of Job Structure and Systems (Job Structure, Information Flow, Individual and Team Practices, and Work Processes) were realigned into two subscales: Internal/Personal Work Affect, and External/Technical Work Affect. Table 11 shows the rotated component matrix for the Job Structure and Systems subscale with Varimax rotation indicating a two-factor retention, with variables IF30, WP38, and WP40 excluded.

Table 11

Rotated Component Matrix for the Job Structure and Systems Subscale with Varimax Rotation, Retaining Two Factors, Three Variables Excluded

	Component	
Item	1	2
JS21	.588	.137
JS22	.618	.172
JS23	.225	.515
JS24	.622	.368
JS25	.458	.117
IF26	.297	.719
IF27	.161	.782
IF28	.131	.805
IF29	.299	.616

(table continues)

	Component	
Item	1	2
ITP31	.620	.214
ITP32	.650	.240
ITP33	.726	.202
ITP34	.728	.127
ITP35	.668	.299
WP36	.702	.244
WP37	.620	.265
WP39	.513	.330
New Subscale Name:	(Internal/Personal Work Affect)	(External/Technical Work Affect)

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Factor Analysis 3: Performance and Development

The last 20 items of the LOPP-C (41-60) were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS Version 16. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed a noteworthy number of coefficients above .3, and a Kaiser-

Meyer-Oberlin value of .924. Again, preliminary analyses supported the factorability of this correlation matrix.

The presence of four components (factors) with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 explained a total of 59.806% of the variance, suggesting preliminarily the potential of less than four factors. A Varimax rotation was performed, suppressing all values at .4. An examination of this rotated component matrix revealed only a few variables that are loading across factors, and upon further examination of additional factorial data, it was decided to first exclude the two variables that cross-loaded on more than one component (statements 44 and 59 on the survey, notated as PGF44 and ITD59), and one variable that loaded negatively on one component (statement 56 on the survey, notated as ITD56).

A Varimax with Kaiser normalization was performed again, suppressing values at .4. An examination of the rotated component matrix indicated a decrease of the factor loadings to three, but with all variables loading strongly on only one factor, suggesting that a three-component solution is appropriate. However, again in this case, the retention of three factors did not correspond to the four subscales of performance and development as identified in the LOPP: Performance Goals and Feedback, Training and Education, Rewards and Recognition, and Individual and Team Development. Thus, it became necessary again to study the variables in the survey to address common themes.

Those variables which loaded on component one are a combination of variables from the subsystems of Rewards and Recognition, and Individual and Team Development. In particular, it appears that respondents viewed the receipt of assistance in their own personal development as a type of “reward,” or benefit; therefore, this subsystem remained named as the subsystem of Rewards and Recognition, but now includes variables involving personal assistance in developing plans to achieve those entities. Variables which loaded on component two aligned with the already-established subsystem of Training and Education, and remained identified as such. Variables which loaded on component three were those that measured Performance Goals and Feedback, but also included one variable that measured the importance of taking responsibility for one’s learning and development, which is a component of goal-setting. Therefore, this component also retained the title of the subsystem Performance Goals and Feedback, but now included a measure of responsibility for that process to occur.

This third and final factor analysis resulted in the four subscales of Performance and Development being reduced to three subscales: Performance Goals and Feedback, Training and Education, and Rewards and Recognition. However, additional variables were realigned to two of those subsystems. Table 12 shows the rotated component matrix for the Performance and Development subscale with Varimax rotation indicating a three-factor retention, with variables PGF44, ITD56, and ITD59 excluded.

Table 12

Rotated Component Matrix for the Leadership Subscale with Varimax Rotation, Retaining Four Factors, Three Variables Excluded

	Component		
Item	1	2	3
PGF41	.230	.191	.533
PGF42	.233	.296	.666
PGF43	.195	.318	.685
PGF45	.224	.334	.660
TE46	.287	.738	.146
TE47	.240	.798	.156
TE48	.095	.800	.184
TE49	.215	.613	.369
TE50	.142	.712	.286

(table continues)

	Component		
Item	1	2	3
RR51	.706	.279	.171
RR52	.769	.320	.150
RR53	.773	.189	.243
RR54	.569	-.034	.312
RR55	.777	.130	.205
ITD57	.519	.325	.281
ITD58	.421	.341	.284
ITD60	.218	.037	.614
New Subscale Name:	(Rewards, Recognition, and Personal Assistance)	(Training and Education)	(Performance Goals and Feedback)

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Factor Analyses Summary

In sum, the three factor analyses helped to determine whether the LOPP-C was measuring the subsystems designated within the instrument, and to consider the exclusion of particular pieces of the data set in further analyses. The three analyses revealed several variables that did not contribute significantly to further analyses of data, and several variables that were more clearly aligned with other subsystems. Nine variables were eliminated from the data set, from six separate subsystems of the LOPP-C. In addition, the 12 subsystems of the LOPP-C were reduced to nine subsystems: four under the principle of Leadership, two under the principle of Job Structure and Systems, and three under the principle of Performance and Development. Table 13 shows the sum of changes made as a result of the three factor analyses.

Table 13

Changes to Data Set for LOPP-C as a Result of Three Factor Analyses on Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development

Original LO Principle	Variables Excluded		New Subsystem
and Subsystem	Identifier	Quantity	Name
	Leadership		
Vision and Strategy			(1) Vision and Strategy
Executive Practices	6, 9	(2)	(2) Executive Practices
Staff Practices	15	(1)	(3) Staff Practices
Climate			(4) Climate

(table continues)

Original LO Principle and Subsystem	Variables Excluded: Identifier	Variables Excluded: Quantity	New Subsystem Name
	Job Structure and Systems		
Church/Job Structure			(1) Internal/Personal
Information Flow	30	(1)	Work Affect
Individual/Team Practices			(2) External/Technical
Work Processes	38, 40	(2)	Work Affect
	Performance and Development		
Performance Goals/			
Feedback	44	(1)	(1) Performance Goals/
Training and Education			Feedback
Rewards and Recognition			(2) Training and Education
Individual/Team Development	56, 59	(2)	(3) Rewards/Recognition
Total Variables Excluded		9	

Note. Original subsystems = 12 variables. New subsystems = 9 variables.

New Cronbach's Alpha Scores, Post-Factor Analyses

Following the completion of the factor analyses on the three learning organization principles of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, the LOPP-C was again assessed for internal consistency reliability. This was done by analyzing the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the three learning organization principles and each of the (new) nine subsystems. Table 14 shows these results, with all alpha coefficients remaining above .7, and continuing to suggest good internal consistency reliability (Pallant, 2007).

Table 14

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability on Post-Factor Analyses of LOPP-C

Measure and Subscale	Number of Variables	Alpha
Leadership		.907
Vision and Strategy	5	.847
Executive Practices	3	.733
Staff Practices	4	.851
Climate	5	.817

(table continues)

Measure and Subscale	Number of Variables	Alpha
Job Structure/Systems		.897
Internal/Personal Work Affect	12	.882
External/Technical Work Affect	5	.758
Performance/Development		.912
Performance Goals and Feedback	5	.767
Training and Education	5	.860
Rewards and Recognition	7	.853

Hypothesis #1: LO Capacity and Church Growth

The purpose of Hypothesis #1 was to determine what relationship, if any, existed between the concept of learning organization capacity, and church growth. This exploratory approach to the data sought to investigate the relationship between a church's capacity for learning, and the amount of church growth that does or does not occur by examining a Pearson coefficient of correlation in order to measure the correlation between learning capacity as measured by total scores on the LOPP-C, and overall percentage of church growth. Additionally, the examination measured the correlation of total scores between and among its three subsystems of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, and overall percentage of church growth. Table 15 shows the summary of Pearson correlation coefficients extracted from this examination.

Table 15

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Percentage of Overall Church Growth and Scores on the LOPP-C

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Percent Growth	---	.215**	.230**	.210**	.132**
2. Total LOPP-C		---	.931**	.933**	.923**
3. Leadership Sub-score			---	.820**	.778**
4. JS/S Sub-score				---	.782**
5. Perf/Dev. Sub-score					---

** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

A second Pearson coefficient of correlation was examined to measure correlations between the three learning organization principles of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, and level of church growth (negative, plateau, positive). Table 16 shows the summary of Pearson correlation coefficients as garnered by this examination.

Table 16

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Percentage of Church Growth by Growth Group, and Scores on the LOPP-C

	1	2	3	4	5
			Negative Growth Group		
1. % Neg. Growth	---	.154	.152	.131	.083
2. LOPP-C Score		---	.929**	.929**	.928**
3. Leadership Sub-score			---	.811**	.795**
4. Job Str/System Sub-score				---	.782**
5. Perf/Development Sub-score					---
			Plateau Growth Group		
1. % Plateau Growth	---	-.007	.034	-.042	-.020
2. LOPP-C Score		---	.928**	.934**	.929**
3. Leadership Sub-score			---	.805**	.786**
4. Job Str/System Sub-score				---	.796**
5. Perf/Development Sub-score					---

(table continues)

	1	2	3	4	5
			Positive Growth Group		
1. % Positive Growth	---	.191	.244**	.198**	.085
2. LOPP-C Score		---	.929**	.928**	.897**
3. Leadership Sub-score			---	.834**	.720**
4. Job Str/System Sub-score				---	.729**
5. Perf/Development Sub-score					---

** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

A summary of the overall coefficients by growth group and by LOPP-C total score and sub-score is presented in Table 17. As can be seen, the relationships between church growth, as measured by percentage of growth, and learning organization capacity, as measured by the overall score on the LOPP-C and the three scores on the subscales of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, showed very weak correlations between the variables. The lowest correlation was between the plateau growth group and total scores on the LOPP-C, $r = -0.007$. The strongest correlation was between the positive growth group and total Leadership sub-score, $r = 0.244$.

Table 17

Summary of Pearson Correlation Coefficients by Total LOPP-C Score, Sub-scores, and Church Growth

	Total LOPP-C Score	Leadership Sub-score	JS/S Sub-score	Perf/Dev. Sub-score
Overall Growth Group	.215**	.230**	.210**	.132**
Positive Growth Group	.191*	.244**	.198*	.085
Plateau Growth Group	-.007	.034	-.042	-.020
Negative Growth Group	.154	.152	.131	.083

*p < .05, two-tailed. **p < .01, two tailed.

Hypothesis #1 Summary

The purpose of hypothesis #1 was to determine the relationship between learning organization capacity and church growth. The analysis of data for this hypothesis provided evidence that only very weak associations were found between overall learning organization capacity and overall church growth, as well as very weak associations between the three learning organizations principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the three levels of negative, plateau, and positive church growth. As such, hypothesis #1 is not rejected, as knowing the value of the scores on the LOPP-C provided little assistance in predicting church growth.

Hypothesis #2: LO Principles and Church Growth

While correlation is often used to measure the linear relationship(s) between two variables, regression is used to predict the outcome of one variable from knowledge of the outcome of another variable or variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The purpose of Hypothesis #2 was to determine what relationship, if any, existed among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and the resultant outcome of church growth. This hypothesis was examined using various regression analyses, where mean scores on the constructs of a total LOPP-C score, as well as total scores for leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development defined the measures of the independent variables, and church growth defined the single dependent variable.

Multiple regression makes a number of assumptions about data that need to be acknowledge prior to analysis. First, it is recommended that the overall sample size is large enough to generalize the findings to other samples (Pallant, 2007). A suggested sample equation by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) is $N > 50 + 8m$ (where m = number of independent variables). This data set [$443 > 50 + 8(3)$, or $443 > 74$] clearly meets this criterion.

A second criterion for adequate multiple regression analyses is the absence of singularity and multicollinearity in the data set (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). As evidenced in the first hypothesis screening, the data clearly shows the presence of multicollinearity among the independent variables of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development; therefore, its presence must be addressed at this point. A first suggestion to reduce multicollinearity is to obtain more information by increasing the sample size – a scenario which, in this case, was impossible. A second suggestion (Berry & Feldman, 1990) is to combine two or more independent variables that are highly correlated into a single variable; however, this is only appropriate, "when the variables combined into a composite are multiple indicators of the same underlying theoretical concept" (p. 48). Because the research already supports the configuration of the LOPP-C as a scale score with three unique sub-scores which theoretically support the measurement of three independent learning organization principles, this was also not possible. A third strategy is to delete a variable that is causing the problem, "unless each variable in the original equation is an indicator of a distinct theoretical concept, [at which time] it is a poor idea to delete any of the variables" (p. 48). The higher the correlation among the independent variables in a regression model, the greater the degree of estimator bias, and with coefficients ranging from .782 to .820 among the three independent variables, eliminating one of those variables as a problem was unwise. "The worst possible time to delete a variable from an equation is precisely when that variable is highly correlated with the other independent variables in the model" (p. 49).

Thus, in a case like this data set, with no correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable, and multicollinearity among the three independent variables, it was necessary, "to recognize its presence, but live with its consequences" (Berry & Feldman, 1990, p. 49). Accepting that the available data does not contain sufficient information to obtain estimates about each individual regression coefficient obviously affects the perceived outcomes of the multiple regression model. However, it can still provide some predictive data of church growth to use in future research.

Prior to any further analysis, other demographic variables such as pastor's tenure, categorization of pastor's age, and categorization of the number of paid staff as garnered from the qualitative data set were first regressed on church growth to check for other indicators aside from the LOPP-C principles and subscales that may show significant influence on growth. None of the demographic variables correlated strongly with church growth. Similarly, none were significant influencers on correlation measures of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development when the ancillary variables of tenure, pastor's age, paid staff were controlled for using partial correlation analyses.

LOPP-C and Church Growth Regression Analyses

Bivariate regression was first used to assess the ability of a total score on the LOPP-C to predict church growth. Total LOPP-C scores, and percentage of church growth were entered into the model; preliminary analyses were conducted and showed no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, but violation of multicollinearity (r = 0.215, n = 417, p < 0.05) was evident as expected, based on previous correlation statistics. The resulting regression model explained only 4.6% of the variance in church growth: R^2 = 0.046.

Next, a standard regression analysis was performed to indicate how well the set of variables (leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development) was able to predict church growth, and how much unique variance of each of the sub-scores explained church growth (Pallant, 2007). Table 18 shows the results of the standard model of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development regressed on percentage of church growth. By using a standard regression analysis with the three sub-scores as independent variables, and with all entered into the equation at once, the model explained a slightly higher percent of the variance in church growth at 6.4%, $R^2 = 0.064$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 18

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analyses for Three Sub-scores on the LOPP-C Predicting Church Growth

Variable	N	*B*	*SE B*	β	Sig.
Total Leadership Score	432	.005	.002	.246	.006
Total Job St/Sys Score	431	.003	.002	.142	.117
Total Perf/Dev. Score	430	-.003	.002	-.171	.039

Note. *B* = unstandardized coefficient B. *SE B* = unstandardized coefficient standard error. β = standardized coefficient. Sig. = significance.

Finally, a stepwise regression was used to assess the ability of the three sub-scores of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development to predict church growth by defining, through statistical exploration, which of the sub-scores was the greatest predictor of church growth, and adds and deletes variables to and from the model until there are no variables left that meet the criterion for entry. The procedure attempts to find the best prediction equation for a dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) by using statistical criterion that is computed from the data set, to determine "which independent variables (sub-scores) enter the equation, and the order in which they enter" (p. 112). Stepwise regression is typically used as a model-building rather than a model-testing procedure, or one that helps to develop a subset of independent variables to predict church growth, and eliminate those which are not providing useful information for that prediction. This was a practical concept at this point in the model, knowing that multicollinearity exists and cannot be eliminated, and that the aim of the research becomes a prediction equation process in order to tighten up future research (Tabachnick & Fidell), rather than an assessment of how individual regressors or sub-scores are impacting the independent variable of church growth. In stepwise regression, it is suggested that more cases are needed, with a cases-to-independent variable ratio of 40 to 1 (Tabachnick and Fidell). With three independent variables, 120 cases are necessary; this data set contains 443.

In the stepwise regression model, leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development were entered into the regression equation and were eliminated one at a time until the elimination of a subscale produced a significant change in the variance of church growth. The resulting regression model had only one iteration containing Total Leadership Score and eliminating both the Total Job Structure and Systems Score and Total Performance and Development Score. The model, loading only Total Leadership Score into the equation as statistically determined by SPSS, still explained only 5.3% of the variance in church growth, $R^2 = 0.053$, $p < 0.05$. This variance was slightly higher than the variance of the total LOPP-C score on church growth at 4.6%, but less than the variance of the three independent variables collectively on church growth, at 6.4%. Table 19 presents the results of this model.

Table 19

Stepwise Regression with Three Sub-score Dimensions on Percentage of Growth

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE	Change Statistics				
					R^2	F	*df1*	*df2*	*Sig. F*
1	.230[a]	.053	.050	.212621	.053	23.309	1	419	.000

[a] Predictors: (Constant), Total Leadership Score

Hypothesis #2 Summary

The purpose of hypothesis #2 was to determine what relationships, if any, exist among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and church growth. The data analysis for this hypothesis provided evidence that none of the learning organization principles as defined by sub-scores on the LOPP-C had a statistically significant relationship to church growth. While the sub-score of Leadership provided the strongest predictor of church growth in the model, it was not a substantial indicator of whether churches were likely to grow if evidence of the characteristics of the Leadership principle were present. As such, hypothesis #2 also cannot be rejected, as the presence or absence of the three learning organization principles did not appear to affect the outcome of growth in churches.

Hypothesis #3: Growth Groups Across LOPP-C Subscales

The final hypothesis in this study sought to examine the data for statistically significant differences between the three church growth groups defined as negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth, across the three subscales of the LOPP-C. Using ANOVA procedures, comparisons of the variance between the three growth groups were compared with the variability within each of the groups (Pallant, 2007; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). Using church growth as the independent variable with three levels/groups (negative growth, plateau growth, positive growth), the variance of scores on leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development were compared for each of the three growth groups. Three ANOVAs were performed to answer the following questions: Is there a difference in mean leadership scores for negative, plateau, and positive growth churches? Is there a difference in mean job structure and systems scores for the same growth groups? And is there a difference in mean performance and development scores for each growth group?

As part of the analysis of this hypothesis, multiple regression procedures were also explored, regressing the variables of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development on each of the three growth groups separately (negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth), to assess the relationship between the variables for each growth group and to see if any predictive value could be appraised.

ANOVA Results: Leadership and Church Growth

A one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the difference in leadership scores for churches in negative, plateau, and positive growth churches, as measured by the Leadership sub-score on the LOPP-C. Churches were formerly divided into negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth churches as defined by the research parameters given earlier. Levene's test of the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated (sig. = .479), indicating that the variability of scores for each of the groups was similar. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ in the leadership scores for the three growth groups: F (2, 429) = 10.3, $p < 0.01$.

In light of reaching statistical significance, the difference in mean scores was further analyzed by calculating eta squared, and showing a medium effect at 0.05 (with 0.01 considered a small effect, and 0.06 considered a medium effect) (Pallant, 2007). Further, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD indicated that the mean Leadership score for the positive growth group (M = 83.28, SD = 10.33) was significantly different from both the plateau growth group (M = 78.08, SD = 10.44) and the negative growth group (M = 78.26, SD = 10.07). Thus, with a medium strength of association, it appeared that Leadership scores among the positive growth group differed significantly from the Leadership scores of both the negative growth and plateau growth group.

ANOVA Results: Job Structure and Systems and Church Growth

A second one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the difference in job structure and systems scores for churches in negative, plateau, and positive growth churches, as measured by this characteristic's sub-score on the LOPP-C. Again, churches were formerly divided into negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth churches as defined by the research parameters given earlier. Levene's test of the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated (sig. = .413), indicating that the variability of scores for each of the groups was similar. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ in the job structure and systems scores for the three growth groups: F (2, 428) = 8.5, $p < 0.01$.

As statistical significance was indicated, the difference in mean scores was further analyzed by calculating eta squared, and showing a small-to-medium effect at 0.04. Further, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD indicated that the mean Job Structure and Systems score for the positive growth group (M = 80.55, SD = 10.09) was significantly different from both the plateau growth group (M = 76.35, SD = 10.96) and the negative growth group (M = 75.27, SD = 10.30). With a small-to medium strength of association, it appeared that Job Structure and

Systems scores among the positive growth group differed significantly from the Job Structure and Systems scores of both the negative growth and plateau growth group, although the strength of association was not as strong as among the Leadership scores.

ANOVA Results: Performance and Development and Church Growth

A third one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the difference in performance and development scores for churches in negative, plateau, and positive growth churches, as measured by this characteristic's sub-score on the LOPP-C. Again, churches were formerly divided into negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth churches as defined by the research parameters given earlier. Levene's test of the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated (sig. = .387), indicating that the variability of scores for each of the groups was similar. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ in the performance and development scores for the three growth groups: F (2, 427) = 5.62, p = 0.004.

As statistical significance was indicated, the difference in mean scores was further analyzed by calculating eta squared, and showing a small-to-medium effect at 0.03. Further, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD indicated that the mean Performance and Development score for the positive growth group (M = 74.61, SD = 10.85) was significantly different from both the plateau growth group (M = 70.22, SD = 11.65) and the negative growth group (M = 70.71, SD = 11.37).

With a small-to medium strength of association, it appears that Performance and Development scores among the positive growth group differed significantly from the Performance and Development scores of both the negative growth and plateau growth group, although the strength of association was not as strong as among either the Leadership or the Job Structure and Systems scores.

In summary, the results of the three ANOVA measures indicated that the mean scores of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development showed significance among the positive growth group as compared to the scores of those in the plateau and negative growth groups. This indicates that, of the respondents in the total data set, the statistical significance of those in the positive growth group was slightly more consistent than those in the plateau and negative groups. Additionally, the strength of association indicated that the Leadership scores of the positive growth group were particularly steadfast.

Multiple Regression Analyses of Three Growth Groups

Three separate regression analyses were performed to indicate how well the set of variables of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development was able to predict negative church growth, plateau church growth, and positive church growth respectively. In addition, the analyses showed how much unique variance of each of the sub-scores explained that growth (Pallant, 2007). The results of these analyses are presented as follows.

Negative Growth Group

Table 20 shows the results of the standard model of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development regressed on percentage of negative church growth. Results show that none of the variables was a noteworthy contributor to the prediction of church growth in the negative growth group at the $p < 0.05$ level. Further, the model explained only 2.9% of the variance in negative church growth, and was not statistically significant: $R^2 = 0.029$, $p = 0.294$.

Table 20

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analyses for Three Sub-scores on the LOPP-C Predicting Negative Church Growth

Variable	N	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	Sig.
Total Leadership Score	134	.002	.002	.195	.244
Total Job St/Sys Score	136	.001	.002	.077	.637
Total Perf/Dev. Score	135	-.001	.002	-.132	.399

Note. *B* = unstandardized coefficient B. *SE B* = unstandardized coefficient standard error. β = standardized coefficient. Sig. = significance.

Plateau Growth Group

Table 21 shows the results of the standard model of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development regressed on percentage of plateau church growth. Results show that none of the variables was an important contributor to the prediction of church growth in the plateau growth group at the $p < 0.05$ level. Further, the model explained only 1.5% of the plateau variance in church growth, and was not statistically significant: $R^2 = 0.015$, $p = 0.434$.

Table 21

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analyses for Three Sub-scores on the LOPP-C Predicting Plateau Church Growth

Variable	N	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	Sig.
Total Leadership Score	185	.001	.001	.211	.127
Total Job St/Sys Score	183	-.001	.001	-.175	.215
Total Perf/Dev. Score	185	.000	.001	-.046	.734

Note. *B* = unstandardized coefficient B. *SE B* = unstandardized coefficient standard error. β = standardized coefficient. Sig. = significance.

Positive Growth Group

Table 22 shows the results of the standard model of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development regressed on percentage of positive church growth. Results show that none of the variables was a major contributor to the prediction of church growth in the positive growth group. The model only explained 7.8% of the variance in positive church growth, but was statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level: $R^2 = 0.078$, $p = 0.036$.

Table 22

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analyses for Three Sub-scores on the LOPP-C Predicting Positive Church Growth

Variable	N	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	Sig.
Total Leadership Score	113	.006	.003	.334	.063
Total Job St/Sys Score	112	.001	.004	.069	.701
Total Perf/Dev. Score	110	-.004	.003	-.206	.154

Note. *B* = unstandardized coefficient B. *SE B* = unstandardized coefficient standard error. β = standardized coefficient. Sig. = significance.

Hypothesis #3 Summary

In summary, the results of the three multiple regression analyses performed on the negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth groups respectively did not provide any indicators of whether variances in church growth were a result of scores on the Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development scales, as in no growth group were the results statistically significant. In consideration of the results of both the three ANOVA summaries of the three LOPP-C subscales, and the multiple regression analyses of those subscales on the three levels of church growth, hypothesis #3 cannot be rejected, as there were no major differences between the three church growth groups. The positive growth group showed slightly more consistency in its results as compared to the plateau and negative growth groups.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained an examination and analysis of the data received from 443 senior pastors on the LOPP-C, a survey instrument redesigned for use in church settings. Considerable review by content and construct reviewers, as revealed in the previous chapter, showed that the LOPP-C is a reliable and valid instrument, the results of which were further strengthened by detailed Cronbach's alpha testing and factor analyses. Strong analysis of demographic and open-ended qualitative responses revealed a number of issues, congregation characteristics, and patterns of handling growth and change that were likely further reflected in the quantitative analysis of data.

While correlation studies, multiple regression analyses, and examination of ANOVA data did not reveal any noteworthy or considerable relationships between the three subsystems of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development and the three levels of church growth (negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth), the overall creation of the LOPP-C and a review of the raw data (along with minimally significant effect from the quantitative analyses) revealed that the survey instrument is likely a better diagnostic tool than a predictor model, as will be further discussed in the chapter to follow. Chapter 5, then, will include a summary of this research design and its outcomes, several conclusions that can be drawn from the data, and a number of recommendations for further study that contribute to the advancement of research and the continuance of social change.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to advance the knowledge base of the application of specific learning organization principles to churches as a not-for-profit entity, and to explore the presence of these learning organization principles as predictors of church growth. It is also surmised that an additional tool, the LOPP-C, could be created and further refined in order to continue to apply the concepts of learning organization theory in church settings. One of the problems addressed in the study surrounds the absence of diagnostic and predictor tools within the social sciences dimension that can be used in churches, even though several exist and are used in organizations, schools, the medical field, non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and the military (Albert, 2005; Anderson, Dare, & Stillman, 2004; Friedman, Friedman, & Pollack, 2006; Kezar, 2005; Mohr, 2005; Lo, 2005; White & Weathersby, 2005).

This study was intended to answer three research questions, through the use of quantitative data analysis, and the creation of an appropriate survey tool for use in church settings. First, what relationship, if any, exists between learning organization capacity and church growth? Second, what relationship, if any, exists among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and church growth?

Finally, what relationship, if any, exists among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and each of the three levels of church growth, further defined as positive growth, plateau growth, and negative growth?

Through a quantitative study involving the administration and completion of a mailed survey specifically redesigned for this project, 830 senior pastors from a select denomination were mailed a packet of information and asked to complete the LOPP-C, and to provide additional demographic and explanatory information. The LOPP-C contained 60 statements that address issues related to the three independent variables described earlier. Categorized by negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth groups when the surveys were returned, 443 surveys were received, yielding a 53.37% response rate. These completed surveys provided the data used in correlation, multiple regression, and analysis of variance statistics to attempt to identify various relationships between the independent and dependent variables, and among the independent variables as related to the dependent variable of church growth.

Data relevant to the first research question identified that only very weak correlations exist between learning organization capacity, further defined by the subscales of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, and overall church growth in the data set as measured by percentage of growth and decline. In addition, the presence of multicollinearity among the three subscales further exacerbated the additional analysis of data, as this multicollinearity can sometimes interfere with the outcomes of a multiple regression model. However, it is assumed that acceptance of this data, particularly as related to the continued refinement of the LOPP-C, could still provide rich information for future research.

Data related to the second research question failed to identify noteworthy relationships between the three independent variables of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development, and the dependent variable of church growth. In a bivariate regression model of total scores on the LOPP-C and overall church growth, the model's 4.6% variance in church growth (as a result of total scores) was a weak predictor of its overall impact. Further, in a standardized regression model with the three sub-scores entered into the equation all at once, only a slightly higher percentage of variance in church growth was explained (at 6.4%) as compared to the comparison of total scores on the LOPP-C.

Next, the assessment of a stepwise regression approach, in an attempt to create a prediction equation for further use of the LOPP-C in future research, revealed that the Leadership score of the LOPP-C explained only 5.0% of the variance in church growth. Removal of the Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development sub-scores from the model did not significantly affect the outcomes.

Finally, data pertaining to the third research question involved the analysis of three separate ANOVAs, and three multiple regression analyses. The three ANOVAs involved the sub-scores of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development as variance scores across church growth as an independent variable with three levels: negative growth, plateau growth, and positive growth groups. With a medium strength of association in the first ANOVA study, Leadership scores in the positive growth group differed significantly from those in the plateau and negative growth groups. Similar results for Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development were found in the other two ANOVA studies, but with a small-to-medium effect for Job Structure and Systems, and a small-to-medium effect for Performance and Development. Thus, in all three ANOVA studies, the three sub-score principles of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development were most significant among the churches in the positive growth group as compared to the plateau and negative growth groups, but only via a medium to small-medium effect.

The three multiple regressions involved the analysis of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems as predictors of (a) negative church growth, (b) plateau growth, and (c) positive church growth. All three models failed to present the singular or cumulative effect of the sub-scores as noteworthy predictors of whether a church was declining, plateauing, or growing in Sunday morning attendance. However, as is evidenced in the data from the ANOVAs, even with the presence of multicollinearity among the three sub-scores, it does appear that the Leadership scores, in particular, provided the greatest evidence of the potential for church growth. Leadership scores consistently ranked as the highest marker, or predictor, of church growth, even though those predictors were weak, mildly significant, or had a medium effect on variance. Further, these Leadership scores were most high among all three groups, and highest among the positive growth group.

Conclusions

This section presents information on the conclusions derived from each of the three hypotheses explored in this research study. The hypotheses involve the relationships between three learning organization principles and three levels of church growth. A summary and discussion of these results as related to outcomes and future research is also presented.

Hypothesis 1

What relationship, if any, exists between learning organization capacity and church growth? The answers to this research question, according to the overall scores on the LOPP-C, showed no considerable capacity to use this score as a predictor of church growth. Thus, the most substantial conclusion to obtain from this outcome is the acknowledgement that the original LOPP was designed as a diagnostic tool used to provide a snapshot of where the organization is right now (O'Brien, 1994a). Similarly, acknowledging the original instrument in that form leads also to the conclusion that the LOPP-C is a better diagnostic tool than a predictor model of church growth.

However, while the instrument may not be effective in predicting changes in growth categories over time, this research certainly strengthened the limited reliability and validity capacity associated with the original instrument. In turn, the first noteworthy outcomes of several factor analyses on all scales and subscales of the LOPP-C, and resultant Cronbach's alpha scores, showed strong evidence of an instrument that is measuring what it was designed to measure, and is predicting what it was intended to predict.

These outcomes provided sufficient data to expect that the instrument itself can continue to be rewritten and refined for future use and further research. It is possible that some of the more specific wording, and potential use of jargon in the survey instrument, should be explored. Additional terms may need to be defined or some of the wording could be diluted. Also, in the possible use of the instrument in a single church environment, it may be useful to provide an explanatory discussion or workshop involving the instrument and its wording, prior to dissemination of the survey for data collection.

Hypothesis 2

What relationship, if any, exists among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and church growth? The findings associated with this second research question, likely in part because of the considerable presence of multicollinearity among the variables, failed to identify any combinations of Leadership, Job Structure and Systems, and Performance and Development as hierarchical predictors of church growth. As noted earlier, Leadership was the only variable that loaded significantly in the context of a multiple regression model, and then only as a weak predictor.

However, a second conclusion to make from this research is that, because the Leadership score of the LOPP-C was consistently identified as a primary predictor across all of the research components in this study (a concept further supported in hypothesis #3, below), a number of possible options for future exploration can be noted. The creation of the Leadership scale, and the four subscales of Leadership that comprise the first 20 questions on the LOPP-C are the statements that have the most clarity, or were most clearly understood by respondents. Second, pastors conceivably identify leadership qualities more easily than qualities pertaining to job structure and systems, or performance and development, which are concepts that might be unclear and less easily understood. Finally, pastors may be encompassing Leadership as a total quality that also affects other measures of the LOPP-C that include the outcomes of scores on the job structure and systems and performance and development scales. In essence, a senior pastor's ability to lead affects all that happens in a church environment, even in the minds of the pastors themselves.

Hypothesis 3

What relationship, if any, exists among the three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development, and each of the three levels of church growth, further defined as positive growth, plateau growth, and negative growth? The findings in this portion of the study reveal that the three sub-scores of the LOPP-C were slightly more statistically significant in the positive growth group than in the plateau and negative growth groups, but were not major predictors of whether churches were growing in Sunday a.m. attendance. However, in relation to many of the answers to the open-ended questions, it appeared quite evident that churches in the positive growth group (regardless of subject area, issue, outcome, or even size of church) were faring better than those in the plateau and negative growth groups. Positive growth churches had less difficulty with issues that have transpired in the church in the past three years, regardless of whether the explanation involved relational issues, staff changes, relocation, worship style, external circumstances, or management and operations within the church.

Further, pastors in the positive growth churches were most likely to identify a willingness of their staff and their congregants to be more open and receptive to change. If pastors are setting the stage, via their leadership abilities and their own receptivity to change, and if that was even mildly reflected in the Leadership scores on the LOPP-C, then there is something to be said for how leadership abilities affect a multitude of issues within the church. Leadership is not as strong a predictor of church growth as originally hypothesized, but a pastor's ability to lead becomes an important factor in the climate of organizational structure and change within the church.

Discussion

An analysis of the overall findings of this research reveal three important outcomes related to the analysis of participating churches in this denominational study. First, as noted before, the LOPP-C is likely a better diagnostic tool that describes what is occurring in this church, right now. There is some evidence to support, for instance, that certain learning organization principles are evidenced in churches that have grown over the past three years, but the overall score and the three sub-scores on the LOPP-C also give confirmation of the amount of a solitary learning principle that exists in a particular church (i.e., leadership). Because of this, it will be important to continue to improve on the creation of the LOPP-C for this use.

Second, one of the limitations of this study mentioned in chapter 1 noted that the surveys were only being completed by senior pastors from the sample frame, and that these scores reflected their own perceptions of church practices and not actual practices as might be noted by others in the church. Responder bias was a concern in this study that was identified early in the creation of the research. As a result, attempts were made to reduce responder bias by urging pastors, in both the cover letter and instruction sheet, to provide clear, honest perceptions of current practices, and not to be concerned with issues of confidentiality or perceptions of others as related to the outcomes of the study.

However, it is likely from the outcomes of this study that senior pastors, and particularly those in the negative growth group, entered into a considerable amount of responder bias, and tended to paint a picture of the practices being measured in the LOPP-C in highly positive terms for their church. If one believes in the overall view of learning organization theory as ascribed to in the literature review, and upholds the LOPP and LOPP-C as instruments that are both reliable and valid, it is difficult to accept that churches experiencing a significant negative growth pattern actually practice and lend ownership to strong learning organization practices. A church with a 50% decline in attendance over the past three years, for instance, will be struggling with many of the practices being measured in the LOPP-C, such as vision, accountability, freedom of cooperation, use of advanced technology, or team work that includes congregant participation. Yet the scores in the negative growth group, on every level, are not substantially different than those in the plateau or positive growth groups.

In contrast, pastors in the plateau group appeared more willing to rate their churches on the LOPP-C in slightly more moderate terms than the positive growth group. They were also more willing to admit to evidences of mistakes or the need for change in the future. This responder bias among the negative growth group suggests that future research must support the continued use of the LOPP-C that includes gathering data from staff members, board members, and congregants as well, and providing comparisons of the outcomes of that data.

An additional outcome of this study is the need to acknowledge that the generalizability of the conclusions to other denominations remains unclear. This study specifically focused on one denomination (Nazarene) in one sector of the denomination's base (North American and Canadian churches); however, there may be other noteworthy variables embedded within the tenets, policies, procedures, and practices of different denominations that would substantially alter the outcomes of such a study within a different denominational structure. Therefore, a substantial amount of advanced study and research into the background of a different select denomination should be practiced, as was done for the Church of the Nazarene in this study, prior to replicating this research with a different population group.

A final result of this study is that the field of learning organization theory, as well as strategies to measure its specific characteristics, have been advanced specifically by the creation of the LOPP-C for explicit use in churches. The church environment is a venue that has not been formally or consistently studied in learning organization literature or practice. As such, it is the desire of this researcher that future use of the LOPP-C eliminates this gap in research.

Recommendations for Future Study and Research

While this research attempted to provide evidence of church growth as related to data from a quantitative learning organization survey instrument, there are many implications for further research related to this particular research concept. In addition, several applications in other areas of study are noteworthy. Some of these areas and issues to be addressed are noted below.

Use of the LOPP-C in Research

This study suggested that the LOPP-C should continue to be refined as a diagnostic tool for use in church settings. While this research provided additional evidence of strong reliability and validity measures of the LOPP-C, it is still an instrument that is in the early stages of use and needs continual refinement and further collection of data for purposes of strengthening its reliability and validity. In addition, as the instrument's strength is refined, the LOPP-C should be used in other denominational settings as well, to provide further empirical confirmation of (a) the instrument's use in church settings, and (b) the existence of learning organization characteristics in church environments. Any data that can support the fact that churches and/or denominations function as learning organizations simply advances the research in this area, and one way to experientially test this concept is to expand this research to other denominations outside of the Church of the Nazarene.

In doing so, the LOPP-C can then be used as a part of the practice of consulting with pastors of individual churches from any number of denominations, where an entire review of church strategy, mission, vision, and function can be assessed. One important component of this type of approach, as part of an overall consulting effort, would be the dissemination of the LOPP-C not only to the senior pastor, but to staff members, board members, and the congregation at large, in order to provide comparisons between groups within a single church. These types of scores would likely be much more revealing than a self-report from senior pastors only.

As part of this approach, the LOPP-C then becomes a tool from which the results of data from these various groups develop into the basis for change within the church. This might involve the creation of new organization and structure, the development of new programs, or the preparation for necessary additions or deletions of staff. These kinds of changes, through the use of the LOPP-C can be more significantly defined by Senge's (1990) original model that includes personal mastery, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and systems thinking (Senge).

Change and Conflict Within the Church

The data received from this study, particularly as related to the growth patterns of churches in times of change, conflict, or revisitation of missional impact become a second focus for future research. An examination of the open-ended data, in particular, might offer more in-depth insight into how churches that are growing handle these changes and conflicts more effectively than those churches in decline. This can lead to the creation of specific tactics, strategies, or programs that plan more succinctly for change, both anticipated and unexpected, and for consultants to offer insight into how pastors and even district superintendents can improve on their strategies and plans for change.

A natural extension of this future strategy might also include several open-ended, qualitative interviews with several of the pastors in each growth group who responded to the LOPP-C, in order to garner additional feedback about the instrument itself. These interviews could also provide the researcher with more concrete information about the survey process, the data collected in qualitative terms, and the specifics of that particular church that continue to affect church growth.

The Study of Growth Points Within Church Denominations

A third area of future focus should center on the screening of this data set in a different manner; that is, returning to the concepts of choice points as described in the literature review (Crow, 2004). This concept speaks to the notion that churches begin to reach some major growth barriers or choice points that sometimes inhibit a church's ability or desire to grow, because growth beyond that point covertly changes the environment and strategy of that particular congregation. In order to control for some potential barriers related to choice points in this study, the data set was originally and purposefully limited to churches whose Sunday a.m. attendance figures were at 150 or more, because those that are approaching the 200 point would be struggling with some of the issues of growth. However, it would be interesting to divide the data set by Sunday a.m. attendance figures and, coupled with the knowledge of positive, plateau, and negative growth, to study the specifics of what is occurring in churches at the various choice points mentioned in the literature.

A similar future focus of research might involve a look at the quantitative data in a different demographic form. For instance, rather than identifying the data by church growth or decline, additional variations in church demographic (by state or region, or by particular economic status) could be retrieved from the database at international headquarters, or from publicly-available information sites. The study of this data could then be compared to the data retrieved and evaluated by growth group.

Advancement of Leadership Skills

Finally, in acknowledging the role of Leadership as a vital component of learning organization theory, combined with the data supporting the impression that positive growth churches show stronger evidences of Leadership principles on the LOPP-C, it seems likely that the development of empowered leaders within the church should be fostered and advanced in a number of ways. First, at the undergraduate level, colleges and universities need to infuse considerable requirements for all practicum-based religion majors to take coursework in leadership, management, and strategy. While these courses are most frequently supported by a business or business administration degree, it seems viable to cross-list the necessary courses for religion majors, and begin the process of instilling a basic knowledge of the church environment as a non-profit entity that requires skills in leadership, management practices, personnel, and strategic planning.

Second, as these future pastors and staff members often continue their training in seminary, it becomes important for these institutions to combine further academic training in learning organization theory with one or more components of experiential learning. Experiences might include a practicum with a church staff, an internship at the denomination's headquarters, or a summer experience with an international mission organization. In this context, it will be important to define those churches, organizations, and institutions that are successfully implementing and using effective leadership strategies and learning organization concepts to grow and change.

Third, as trained pastors and staff members begin to move into positions in churches, the church itself must continue this learning process by providing funding for further training in the form of worships, conferences, written materials, internet instruction, focus groups, board retreats, and accountability processes between and among staff. Two of the biggest complaints in relation to barriers that inhibit growth are usually a lack of time and a lack of resources, both of which must be provided to pastors and staff at the local church level. In addition, if true learning organization principles are to be embraced, a yearly congregation-wide planning and strategy session should be implemented that draws on the principles of learning organization theory and the strategies for change and development designed exclusively for church settings.

Finally, districts and denominations play an important role in these leadership strategies as well. District programs must continue the engagement of on-site experiential learning at the church level, but it should include a distinct and carefully-planned program of mentorship and accountability as well. Too many senior pastors are making note of a number of circumstances that leave them feeling abandoned, overwhelmed, and under-resourced, and yet the expectation for sound, professional leadership within the church is high. Too many are recounting incidences of moral failure, pornography, or inappropriate relationships that are severely disrupting the advancement of good, sound church programs and vision strategies. It seems that, in part, much of this is happening because a lack of leadership at the district level; instead, it is all left to the local pastor to handle and, because of that, the mentorship process needs to include not only all pastors on the district, but all staff members as well. It is not enough to provide accountability and mentorship to a senior pastor if the skills and capacity to lead a sometimes-varied and diverse staff are absent. This, then, becomes part of the team learning, mental models, and systems thinking suggested in Senge's work (1990).

As an umbrella to all of the levels mentioned above, the denomination's headquarters is ultimately responsible for providing considerable resources to secure success in these areas. It might also require that a skilled practitioner be assigned to implement many of the learning organization principles mentioned at every level of training. In this study's literature review, the position of Chief Learning Officer has been assigned to organizations that ascribe to learning organization practices. And while the title may not encompass the true spirit of the position in a church setting, the responsibilities to promote the important tenets of learning organization theory in churches at every level becomes the practice of that job. This would include interface at every level between pastors, staff, district superintendents, educational institutions and headquarters, as well as designing and fostering programs that truly promote the spirit of individual, team, and organizational learning. It seems likely that, as Leadership skills among pastors and staff are fostered and developed, many of the components suggested as relevant to jobs within the church, and performance and development of staff, board members, volunteers, and congregants will begin to improve as well.

Scientific and Religious Research

This study contributes to the advancement and the application of knowledge of learning organization theory in both the scientific and religious realms. The creation of a modified survey instrument for specific use in churches is an important contribution, as very few tangible instruments are available that recognize the unique characteristics of church organizations. Also, as the face of churches, denominations, and ministries continues to change, these groups and organizations will continue to seek out qualified, professional researchers who understand that changing face of ministry, and who can applying even the most basic learning organization principles in ways that will evoke growth and change. Established churches of all denominations are increasingly seeking out consultants and psychologists as external entities who can assist in the development of strategic plans (Ritschard, 1993), and devise concrete plans for church-based and community-wide services. Similarly, as more and more churches lean in the direction of new church starts or the expansion of their church through multi-site campuses, the significance of the principles of learning organization theory becomes even more vital. These new church environments must understand and prepare for the challenges of growth, change, and conflict.

Contribution to Social Change

This study is only the second quantitative project to address churches as learning organizations, and the first to research the effects of learning organization principles on church growth of a specific denomination (see Piercy, 2007). In exploring the connections between learning organization theory and churches and denominations as learning organizations, it is the desire of this researcher that the chasm between these two will close a bit. More importantly, the need to provide insight not only to pastors, but to district and denominational administrators is a major step towards acknowledgment of the need for training and resources that can advance future knowledge in this area. The ability to use the LOPP-C within the structures of different denominations and church hierarchies is a challenge that can be formulated and assessed as the instrument itself continues to be refined. Lastly, the promotion of social responsibility (as the role of the church in community continues to evolve), and the professional application of scientific knowledge to the church as a new venue of research creates an important number of avenues for future contributions to social change.

Conclusions of Study

While providing background and theoretical rationale for the importance of a study such as this one, the most important concept to keep in mind in research such as this is that religious practices in general inhabit such a noteworthy part of the lives and patterns of most individuals, and that the religious institutions that preserve and support those practices must continually learn to adapt to change. One way to do this is to continue to study the ability of learning organization principles that promote strong leadership qualities, successful job structure, and healthy performance and development strategies, and to use those principles to promote change in the church. As indicated by Jarvis (2004), the contemporary church is often confronted with issues and questions such as those framed in this research, and for which there are no simple and spontaneous answers. Jarvis's thoughts further support the need for pastors, staff, board members, and congregants to engage in learning organization processes that will sustain a church's desire to minister to the masses, as well as to meet the needs of as many as possible in ministry both individually and collectively.

The Church of the Nazarene had, as a distinguishing characteristic of its official formation in 1908, a mandate to serve the underprivileged and to enter into mission-minded practices as momentous themes of its existence. This mindset continues today, even though the practices and approaches of the contemporary church may be different than those 100 years ago. Drucker (2001) noted the considerable use of strategic planning, effective board policies and other practices characteristic of not-for-profit entities that also typify churches today, and which parallel much of the study and practice of contemporary learning organization theory. Thus, if these churches, Nazarene or otherwise, want to continue in the practice of mission, ministry, program development, and growth, then they must continue to address the doctrinal issues, organizational structure, mobility of congregants, resources, and personal motivation of attendees as facets that could be affecting the growth or decline of membership and attendance roles. Implementation of the suggestions revealed in this research may provide an impetus for churches to use these findings in ways that are beneficial to the church community, in order to elicit change in this new, early 21st century juncture, and in much the same way that the Church of the Nazarene sought to do exactly 100 years ago.

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APPENDIX A

Permission for Use of Database, Church of the Nazarene

----- Original Message -----
From: David Wilson
To: Colleen Bryan
Sent: Tuesday, October 02, 2007 2:17 PM
Subject: permission letter

International Headquarters, Church of the Nazarene
Dr. David Wilson, General Secretary

October 2007

Dear Ms. Bryan:

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "The Application of Learning Organization Principles to Church Growth, Using the Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches" using a data set of church contact information from the Church of the Nazarene. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite senior pastors, whose names and contact information we will provide, to participate in the study as interview subjects. Their participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
David P. Wilson
General Secretary / HQ Operations Officer
816-333-7000, ext. 2478
dwilson@nazarene.org

APPENDIX B

Permission From Author to Rewrite the Learning Organization Practices Profile

From: Dr. Michael O'Brien [mailto:michael@obriengroup.us]
To: 'Colleen Bryan'
Subject: RE: Use of the Learning Organization Practices Profile

Dear Colleen,
You have my permission to adapt and use the LOPP for your doctorate research. Your proposed study sounds very interesting! Unfortunately, I do not have any reliability or validity studies that I think are worth while. A number of graduate students over the years have conducted such studies and used the LOPP in their research, but none of it was very good work, so I didn't save any of it. Should you want to schedule an hour, please call Kathy in my office and schedule a call. Good luck,

Sincerely,
Dr. Michael O'Brien

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire and Instruction Sheet for Content Experts' Input

LEARNING ORGANIZATION PRACTICES PROFILE FOR CHURCHES ***Validation Questionnaire***

<u>DIRECTIONS</u>*: This survey was redesigned from an original survey instrument, and developed for use in church environments. To maintain the integrity of the original instrument, care has been taken to change as little of the wording as possible on this revised survey, while attempting to make the changes reflective of terminology more suitable to churches. For instance, the word "organization" might be changed to "church," or "employees" changed to "staff members."*

As a first step, please thoroughly study the survey instrument and instructions page before answering any questions. Make note of the instructions, layout, scales, content, and so on. After you are comfortable with its design and general content, please administer the survey to yourself by attempting to think as a senior pastor of a congregation would think about his/her church environment. Do not fill out the final page of the survey, as its content is demographic in nature. More than the outcomes of your answers, I am looking for your opinion on ease of use in interpreting questions and providing responses.

After completing the survey, please answer the following questions. I will contact you about returning the survey and questionnaire to me, to make this as easy as possible for you. Please feel free to use additional pages if necessary.

1. In your opinion, is the overall format of the survey acceptable? (font size, front-and-back copy, layout, readability) Why or why not?

2. Are the directions clear and concise? If not, what would you change for ease of interpretation?

3. Were any statements difficult to understand or to answer? Which ones? (be specific) How would you rewrite the statement for purposes of clarity?

4. Do you see any problem with the length of the survey? If yes, please explain.

5. How long did it take you to complete the survey? ________________________________

6. If you were randomly selected to receive this survey, is it likely that you would complete it? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D

Content Experts' Input, and Resultant Changes to LOPP-C

1. In your opinion, is the overall format of the survey acceptable (font size, front-and-back copy, layout, readability)? Why or why not?		
COMMENT	***ORIGINAL SURVEY***	***REVISED SURVEY***
O.K., very good	- -	- -
Yes, good sized font. I like the fact that you included the categories at the top of each column on each page.	- -	- -
Yes. One idea: could you put your scale in the empty box at top left? (Just wonder if having it in two places and where it is more readable. This may be confusing. Just a thought.)		Likert scale is already listed at the top of all pages with survey statements. Repeating the scale in the top-left corner of each page of the survey would be redundant.
Yes. You need to have a waiver printed somewhere on the instrument, probably on the inside of the cover sheet, that explains that this tool is revised, with permission, from the original LOPP, copyright 1994	No copyright/waiver	The following statement was placed at the top of the instruction sheet, and on the first page of the LOPP-C: *"The Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches (LOPP-C) is a tool that has been revised, with permission, from its original form and content – the Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP). Permission for revision was given by Dr. Michael O'Brien, author and originator of the LOPP. LOPP Copyright 1994"*
You might want to bold or underline "circle." It would help to have that direction repeated on the top of the survey.	No clear instructions given on the actual survey instrument	The following instruction line, in bold, was placed at the top of the first page of the LOPP-C: *"Instructions: Please read the SECTION TITLES CAREFULLY, so that you can respond to the five statements in each section with purpose and clarity. Then CIRCLE the number which corresponds to your opinion on these statements."*

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
Yes – very readable and organized in such a way to assist the reader in moving down the page in a clear and efficient manner.	- -	- -
Yes – easy to read. The grid lines help	- -	- -
2. Are the directions clear and concise? If not, what would you change for ease of interpretation? (note: "directions" include cover letter and instruction sheet)		
Line 1 of cover letter: Are you the church leader or is the pastor the church leaders? I think the pastor is the one you intend.	Line: "As a church leader, I am asking for your assistance in researching some of the significant challenges facing our churches today…"	Sentence rewritten: "I am asking for your assistance as a church leader in researching… some of the significant challenges facing our churches today…"
Third paragraph of cover letter: remove "select"	"…select Nazarene churches…"	Word removed
Fifth paragraph of cover letter: questioned "other" (churches)	"…respondents from other churches…"	"other respondents…"
No problems	- -	- -
Yes – excellent	- -	- -
Yes, but I would suggest underlining whether PAID or UNPAID	- -	Words underlined
Yes. In this form it should not take more than 20-25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. You might [also] consider using a professional-looking cover sheet	Instruction sheet: "…and should take you less than one hour."	Time frame shortened to "about 30 minutes."
Great instruction page – categories well defined, double-sidedness is noted. Good idea to encourage NOT to skip questions and use "hunch." Note a couple of extraneous commas; no other typos noted. (Note: comma after "worship" in third paragraph unnecessary; comma after "confidential" in fourth paragraph unnecessary).	- -	Extraneous comments removed

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
Very good. The only wondering I had related to the use of the word "honest." It carries some emotion/value. Perhaps "candid" gets at the desired communication without being as value-oriented. Just a thought.	"The most important thing is to be honest, and to state your perception of current practices and processes."	"The most important thing is to be candid…"
Yes	- -	- -
3. Were any statements difficult to understand or to answer? Which ones? (be specific) How would you rewrite the statement for purposes of clarity?		
The challenge may be that some will think of the church as a service organization rather than a learning organization. Do you need one paragraph of introduction to present this focus?	- -	It was subjectively determined that the cover letter and instruction sheet provide adequate explanation of "learning" organizations, and that the church is simply one organization where this study has not been well-served.
No…except demographic page…10-99…100-199, etc.	Scale of church attendance was 10-100, 100-200, etc.	Changed to 10-99, 100-199, 200-299, etc.
All looks o.k. to me	- -	- -
No	- -	- -
Specific questions on survey:		
Q.1. What does "continuously updated" mean?		Nothing changed (explain)
Q.6. Was a little vague – follow in what way? How would an adequate measure of this be made by a senior pastor? (Count new members brought in, recently saved in services or during personal visitation?) OR (just the pastor's hunch or perception that congregants are "following his lead"). OR is question asking if the pastor "tries to inspire"?		Nothing changed (explain)
Q.8. Speak "to who"? (staff or congregants?)	"I speak to my staff about connections between continuous learning, continuous improvement, quality, and results."	Removed "…to my staff…"

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
Q.11. Was not quite sure what question was referring to when it talked about pursuing "personal development?"		Nothing changed (explain)
Q.16. "People" unclear whom you refer to here (staff, congregants, everyone?)		Nothing changed (explain) Subheading indicates "In Our Church…" (implies everyone)
Q.16. "People" in the church in general?		Nothing changed (explain)
Q. 18. Was the "we/they" referring to within the staff itself, or between staff and congregants?		Nothing changed (explain)
Q. 20. "We are people who are interested in and care about one another." ("As a church, we are….as a staff we are…")		Nothing changed (again, "In Our Church…"
Q. 21. Really seemed a "stretch" for a church…		Nothing changed – staying true to the wording of the original LOPP; let the question flush out in alpha testing if necessary
Q.21. "Workforce" seems out of context here; maybe just "staff" flexibility or leave out word and just use "build flexible support" for the church.	"Job rotation, [etc.]…are used to build work-force flexibility."	"Work-force flexibility" changed to "staff flexibility"
Q.24. Again, workforce" maybe should be "church."	? This survey item did not have "workforce" in its content.	No changes
Q.26. Unclear how broad is the communication impact expected. Do you mean "staff utilize advanced technology to improve flow to other staff…" or to congregation?	"We utilize advanced technology to improve the flow of communication and to enhance our communication with one other…"	"…with one another" replaced with "…within the church…"
Q.27. Same comment as for #26. Also, do you need "business" in the sentence?	"We communicate key business information to all employees and congregants via church newsletters, a church website, and staff meetings."	Rewritten: "We communicate key information to all staff and congregants via church newsletters, a church website, and meetings."

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
Q. 28. For what purpose? Difficult to evaluate effectiveness if not specified.	- -	No changes (explain)
Q.29. From pastor, from other staff, constituents, etc.?	- -	No changes (explain)
Q.30. Why not just say "as volunteers" or "volunteer teams?" Unless you mean to include staff, in which case I would be specific and say "staff and volunteers."	"As our work groups or volunteer teams solve problems…"	Rewritten: "As our staff and volunteers solve problems…"
Q.38. "information that would be helpful to others" – Others who? Staff? Congregants? Both?	- -	No changes (explain)
Q.40. "Other denominations included" – inclusive, or limiting?	- -	No change (explain)
Q.54. Parallel construction in sentence is "failing" (i.e., goes with "making" and "having."	"We are not punished for making honest mistakes, for having tried something worthwhile and failed."	No change: "failed" relates to "tried."
54. "We…" (We who?")	"We are not punished for…"	Rewritten: "Staff members are not punished for…"
59. See comments on #30 above	"Work teams and long-term projects have specific learning agendas."	"Our staff and volunteer teams have specific learning agendas."
General comment: Would there be any way to use "I" (the senior pastor) throughout the survey and have the responses be phrases to complete the thought? The use of 1st person ("I" and sometimes "we") forces one to have to figure out relationships for each statement. You could have each section heading define relationship once and not repeat for each statement. Just a thought to save the reader's time and energy.	- -	No change: elected to stay true to the wording and format of the original LOPP

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
General question: was consideration given to the use of a "don't know" response?		(Note: former dissertation study experienced problems with a "don't know" or noncommittal response in pre-survey data collection. See Piercy, 2007).
4. Do you see any problem with the length of the survey? If yes, please explain.		
(4 non-responses)	- -	- -
It does seem kind of long to me (as far as number of pages and number of questions). I just know we're always told to keep it as short as possible to increase the chances that the person will complete it	- -	It was elected NOT to use a formal cover page for the LOPP-C, to save paper and to keep the number of pages to a minimum. In addition, the survey was double-sided (to give the perception of being less lengthy).
Yes, it is very long. It begins to seem redundant. Is there any way to condense it? My concern is that the answers to the beginning pages will be more reliable than the latter ones because the pastor will become tired and/or less interested and respond accordingly	- -	Elected to stay true to the original wording and construct of the LOPP, primarily for purposes of validity and reliability study.
No. Just when it started to feel long, I was at the end	- -	- -
No, [but] would not want it to be any longer	- -	- -
5. How long did it take you to complete the survey?		
(2 non-responses)	Original instruction sheet indicated "about an hour" needed to complete the survey.	Revised instruction sheet indicated "about 30 minutes" would be needed to complete the survey.
18 minutes (while watching or listening to TV)		
15 minutes. It didn't take as long as I thought it might		
35 minutes		
About 20 minutes		
20 minutes		

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
It took me about 18 minutes while watching TV. I think the statement of a one-hour completion time is too much. About 20 minutes? Will "that"…scare some recipients?		
6. If you were randomly selected to receive this survey, is it likely that you would complete it? Why or why not?		
(2 non-responses)	--	--
Completed it; but I would change the directions to give a shorter time expected		Directions changed to indicate approximate 30-minute completion time
It really would depend on how busy I was and how my schedule looked at the moment. Are you giving them a suggested time frame to return? (answer: yes)		Yes – 30 days
Are you going to include any kind of incentive? I remember once feeling "guilty" until completing a survey and returning it because they had enclosed 50 cents for coffee! [… it was a long time ago.]		No incentive. The prompting of support by the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene, and the VPAA of a supporting institute of higher education might solicit a greater response set.
As a pastor – probably not, because of length (detail – even 6-point scale makes answering a little more tedious). But, since I'm in [research], I would feel compelled to answer it!		- -
Yes – the cover letter is very persuasive. However, there are a lot of items on the survey that (I am guessing) do not consistently happen in a church. May feel discouraged and choose not to finish (feel inadequate or that I don't have important information to offer).	- -	- -
Yes – to help a colleague in ministry, and to be able to access the results	- -	It is suggested in the cover letter that results can be obtained in the summer of 2008 by contacting this researcher directly.

COMMENT	*ORIGINAL SURVEY*	*REVISED SURVEY*
OTHER, GENERAL: Maybe it's just because I'm not a staff member at a really large church, but some of the questions seemed definitely suited to some other sort of business. How large are the churches to whom you are sending this? What is it that you really want to find out from this?	- -	Survey being sent to churches with average Sunday a.m. attendance in 2004 at 150 or more. The purpose of the research is to see of LO principles have any impact on church growth in the time period 2004 to 2007.

APPENDIX E

Cover Letter to Pre-Survey Participants

Friends and colleagues:

I need your assistance in completing a survey instrument for my doctoral research in psychology to provide some "pre-survey" information on an instrument that I revised for dissertation research. You have been asked to participate in this step either because of your pastoral ministry background and experience, and/or because of your close ties to the Church of the Nazarene.

In a couple of weeks, this survey is going to be administered to the SENIOR PASTORS of approximately 900 Churches of the Nazarene in the United States. It is designed to measure some practices and provide some information on the characteristics of growth and development in churches. The survey considers a number of policies, principles, and practices that support improvement of the church's goals and mission, as perceived by one person in the church – the senior pastor. The instrument itself has been rewritten from an original survey measuring organizational and corporate data, and has been placed in a written form which is more useful to church environments (using terminology more suited to that venue).

As a pre-survey step, I am administering the survey to 25 individuals, so that I can set up an initial statistical database and check the statements on the survey against some important measures of reliability and validity. I am also testing a numerical coding sequence so that I can see how many are returned, and in what order; your name is not found on the survey in any form or fashion, so please do not add it to the survey. **If you would take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it to me in the enclosed envelope, I would greatly appreciate it. Because there are only 25 of you who are receiving the survey, I hope you will understand the need to receive as many of these back as possible.**

When you complete the survey, I would request that you fill it out AS IF you were the senior pastor of the church you are CURRENTLY attending. While I know that this is not an accurate representation of the perceptions of the actual senior pastor, the intent of this pre-survey step is simply to check my database and steps of statistical analysis for errors that might preclude me from capturing necessary data when the actual survey is sent to these 900 pastors.

An initial pre-validation step indicated that most participants completed the survey in about 30 minutes. There is also an instruction sheet closed. Again, it would be very helpful to me if you would complete and send the survey as soon as possible, so that I can initiate some much-needed work on this step as quickly as possible. Thanks for your help! If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (740) 398-0072, or email me at cbryan@mvnu.edu.

Sincerely,
Colleen Bryan
Associate Professor of Psychology
Chair, Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice
Mount Vernon Nazarene University
Mount Vernon, OH 43050

APPENDIX F

Final Cover Letter to Senior Pastors, to Accompany the LOPP-C (Revised)

May 2008

Dear Pastor:

I am asking for your assistance as a church leader in researching some of the significant challenges that face our churches today, in an effort to define more effective ways for pastors and staff to minister to congregational needs and see lasting improvement in attendance and participation. With permission from **Dr. David Wilson**, General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene; and with the support of **Dr. Keith Newman**, Vice President of University Relations at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, I am asking for your participation in this important project.

My name is Colleen Bryan, and I am an Associate Professor of Psychology at Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Ohio, as well as a doctoral student in psychology at Walden University. The enclosed survey is part of my doctoral work in researching some characteristics of growth and development in churches.

In the survey, you will be asked to consider a number of policies, principles, and practices that form the culture of your church, and to assess the extent to which that culture supports continuous improvement of its goals and mission. Collectively, I believe the data will provide some valuable information about current practices and perceptions in some of our Nazarene churches.

You have been randomly selected to participate in this study of Nazarene churches in North America. ***Because this survey is only being administered to a small population of churches, your participation is SO important***, and I hope that you will choose to assist me in this study. Also, IF YOU ARE NOT THE SENIOR PASTOR, please give the contents of this envelope to the person designated as senior pastor at this church.

The information you provide is completely confidential; your name or the name of your church is not found on the questionnaire and therefore is not disclosed in any written reports. The results are in summary form only as related to other respondents, to assure anonymity. However, your participation is completely voluntary, and I would be happy to provide an executive summary of my findings to you at the conclusion of this study in the summer of 2008. Simply email me at cbryan@waldenu.edu, cbryan@mvnu.edu, or write to me at the above address. Also, if you have any questions about the survey itself, please contact me at one of the email addresses listed above.

This project has been approved by the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene, and by the Institutional Review Board at Walden University, Minneapolis, MN (IRB # 01-17-08-0005477). The Research Participant Advocate for Walden University can be reached by calling 1-800-925-3368, x 1210. This research is being completed under the supervision of my dissertation chair, Dr. John Schmidt (jschmidt@waldenu.edu). Finally, I thank you in advance for your candid and thoughtful responses!

Sincerely,

Colleen Bryan
Associate Professor of Psychology
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APPENDIX G

Finalized Instruction Sheet to Senior Pastors, to Accompany the LOPP-C (Revised)

LEARNING ORGANIZATION PRACTICES PROFILE FOR CHURCHES (LOPP-C)

The Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches (LOPP-C) is a tool that has been revised, with permission, from its original form and content –
the Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP).
Permission for revision was given by Dr. Michael O'Brien, author and originator of the LOPP.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE LOPP-C

Thanks for taking the time to provide some information about your church culture, practices, and policies. Completing this questionnaire is simple, and should take you about 30 minutes. Each item asks you to consider the truthfulness of the statement for your church, on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 6 meaning "strongly agree." Simply ***circle*** the number corresponding to your opinion. The most important thing is to be candid, and to state your perception of ***current*** practices and processes. There are no right or wrong answers.

If you find an item difficult to answer, ***please do not skip it***; rather, ***circle*** the number that best represents your "hunch" or your perception. Please think in terms of practices that ***occur most often, with the most number of people*** (try to avoid answering based on a single circumstance or practice that comes to mind).

Some sections call for you to rate the church staff. Church staff are defined as people who are consistently responsible for supervising and helping to manage the performance of the programs and outreach of your church, ***whether paid or unpaid***. Similarly, the word "congregant" will be used at times in this questionnaire. Congregants will be defined as those who gather for common religious worship and does not imply membership in the Church of the Nazarene.

Remember that your answers are strictly confidential and will not be independently revealed in any report on the data. Therefore, please do NOT put your name anywhere on the survey, or identify the name of your particular church in any of your responses.

Finally, when you have completed the profile, please mail the completed survey in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible, but preferably within the next seven days. This is very important! If the return envelope is misplaced, the survey can be returned to LOPP-C Research, P.O. Box 309, Mount Vernon, OH 43050.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important project!

APPENDIX H

The Learning Organization Practices Profile for Churches (LOPP-C) Survey, With Final Revisions, for Distribution to Senior Pastors

(see next page)

THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION PRACTICES PROFILE FOR CHURCHES
Survey of Senior Pastors

***Instructions*: Please read the SECTION TITLES CAREFULLY, so that you can respond to the five statements in each section with purpose and clarity. Then CIRCLE the number which corresponds to your opinion on these statements.**

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	*DISAGREE*	*SOMEWHAT DISAGREE*	*SOMEWHAT AGREE*	*AGREE*	*STRONGLY AGREE*
A. VISION AND STRATEGY IN OUR CHURCH:						
1. The vision and strategy are continuously updated based on changes in the church's environment and the community's needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. People take into account the church's long-term goals and strategies as they plan and execute church projects.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. We discuss trends and future changes in the marketplace and industry as a normal part of our planning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. We have a vision of ourselves as a church in which learning and purposeful change are expected.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. People have a broad understanding of our church's structure, processes, and systems, and how they are interrelated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. EXECUTIVE PRACTICES IN OUR CHURCH:						
6. Congregants are inspired to follow the senior pastor and staff toward our church's vision.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The staff and I visibly lead and facilitate problem-solving efforts or special projects.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I speak to my staff about connections between continuous learning, continuous improvement, quality, and results.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I am proud of my church staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. As senior pastor, I hold staff members accountable for supporting the development of their volunteers and workers.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
C. STAFF PRACTICES IN OUR CHURCH:						
11. Staff members encourage others to pursue personal development as part of volunteer work, and to learn by doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Staff members help their volunteers integrate what they have learned in development or training programs by discussing how it applies to their volunteer role in the church.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Staff members communicate effectively with volunteers about the volunteers' developmental needs and progress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Staff members encourage people to contribute ideas for improvements through individual conversations and/or group meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Staff members admit their own mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. CLIMATE IN OUR CHURCH:						
16. People are not afraid to share their opinions and speak their minds.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. We have a healthy sense of "play" about our work; it's o.k. to enjoy our jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. We work hard to eliminate "we/they" mindsets; we cooperate and collaborate whenever possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. We treat one another as adults – as people who can think for themselves and be responsible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. People are interested in and care about one another.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
E. CHURCH AND JOB STRUCTURE IN OUR CHURCH:						
21. Job rotation, ad hoc assignments, and/or cross-training (for other jobs) are used to build staff flexibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. We utilize self-directed work teams that have responsibility for work processes from start to finish.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Our work spaces are designed to allow for easy and frequent communication among those who work together most often.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. We routinely modify work processes in response to changing circumstances or priorities, or to improve efficiency.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. We are reducing the number of rules, policies, forms, and procedures, allowing more individual judgment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
F. INFORMATION FLOW IN OUR CHURCH:						
26. We utilize advanced technology to improve the flow of information and to enhance our communication within the church (e-mail, cell phones, pagers, computers in offices).	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. We communicate key information to all staff and congregants via church newsletters, a church website, and meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. The staff have learned to use the church's computer system effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Staff receive quality, productivity, and budget data relevant to their jobs on a consistent basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. As our staff and volunteers solve problems or create new approaches, we communicate our learnings and results throughout the organization (through things such as memos, presentations, e-mail, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	6

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
G. INDIVIDUAL/TEAM PRACTICES IN OUR CHURCH:						
31. Individuals and teams are encouraged to identify and solve problems in their areas of responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. In conflict situations, blaming is minimized so that people can openly and honestly discuss the issues and work toward solutions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. People and groups are encouraged to analyze mistakes in order to learn how to do it better the next time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. We routinely ask one another for feedback on our performance so that we can continuously improve our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. We share our expertise and learn from one another through informal conversations and "storytelling."	1	2	3	4	5	6
H. WORK PROCESSES IN OUR CHURCH:						
36. We routinely and purposefully use systematic problem-solving techniques for solving difficult problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. We routinely experiment with new approaches to our work; we try out new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. When a staff member learns or discovers new information that would be helpful to others, that information is quickly disseminated throughout the church (i.e., through presentations, memos, e-mail).	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. When we engage in problem solving, we consider the "ripple" effect that various solutions or actions may have throughout the church.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. We learn from the marketplace through studies of local church success stories (other denominations included), and/or other church leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I. PERFORMANCE GOALS/ FEEDBACK IN OUR CHURCH:						
41. The satisfaction of our congregants is considered in our performance reviews.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. As appropriate, staff members periodically renegotiate their goals with me, as senior pastor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. Staff members routinely give individual feedback to other staff on the quality of the products and services they deliver to our church.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. We set our individual development goals during an annual goal-setting process, rather than during our performance appraisals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45. Individuals' performance goals are clearly aligned with the church's strategic goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
J. TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN OUR CHURCH:						
46. Educational programs include skill training on "learning how to learn" from one's own experience and from others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47. Educational programs include skill training on becoming more creative problem solvers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48. We have diagnostic tools for individual development and/or developmental planning processes available for everyone.	1	2	3	4	5	6
49. We assign special work projects in which people are given the time and support to learn new skills and knowledge, as well as do the work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
50. Formal training programs provide us with tools, job aids, or processes that enhance on-the-job performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
K. REWARDS AND RECOGNITION IN OUR CHURCH:						
51. People are recognized for being courageous; that is, for experimenting and taking appropriate chances.	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. Staff members are rewarded for supporting the development of their volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. Staff members share directly in the outcomes of their programs and services to others, and experience immediate rewards for their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
54. Staff members are not punished for making honest mistakes, for having tried something worthwhile and failed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
55. Staff members are recognized for solving business problems or successfully meeting challenges.	1	2	3	4	5	6
L. INDIVIDUAL/TEAM DEVELOPMENT IN OUR CHURCH:						
56. Much of our ongoing learning comes directly out of our work experiences rather than through formal training programs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
57. Teams are given appropriate assistance with their development (e.g., process facilitation, team-building support).	1	2	3	4	5	6
58. People have individual development plans that impact their performance in a positive way.	1	2	3	4	5	6
59. Our staff and volunteer teams have specific learning agendas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
60. Taking responsibility for our own learning and development is considered part of our jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6

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DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please provide some basic information about you and the church, to be used for general demographic purposes. Your responses are not required, but would be appreciated, and will help in compiling overall data for this study.

(a) *My official title at this church is:* ____

(b) ***My age is:***

_____ Under age 30

_____ Age 30-60

_____ Over age 60

(c) ***My gender is:***

_____ Male

_____ Female

(d) ***This church runs approximately _____ in attendance on Sunday morning (all services combined).***

_____ 10 – 99

_____ 100 - 199

_____ 200 – 299

_____ 300 – 399

_____ 400 - 599

_____ 600 or more

(e) ***I have been senior pastor at this church for ______ years, ______ months.***

(f) ***This church has ________ PAID staff members, EXCLUDING the senior pastor, but INCLUDING receptionists, secretaries, and part-time paid individuals.***

_____ 0

_____ 1 - 2

_____ 3 - 5

_____ More than 5

III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

(a) ***Are there any issues that have transpired in this church in the past three years that have affected Sunday a.m. attendance figures, either positively or negatively? If yes, please explain. Use additional paper if necessary.***

(b) ***In your own words, please describe the extent to which you believe your congregation and staff are open to change, willing to try new things, and receptive to ideas that are different from how things are normally done. Use additional paper if necessary.***

When you have completed this profile, please return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope that was included in the packet. Thank you so much for your participation and your gracious attention to this important project!

Curriculum Vitae

COLLEEN S. BRYAN

EDUCATION

Walden University, Minneapolis, MN **_2009_**
Ph.D., Organizational Psychology
Dissertation: *The Application of Learning Organization Principles to Church Growth*

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA **_1987_**
M.Ed., Counseling and Development

Eastern Nazarene College, Wollaston, MA **_1980_**
B.A., Social Work

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Mount Vernon, OH **_1989–present_**

Associate Professor of Psychology August 2002–present

Department Chair, Psychology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice August 2000–present

Assistant Professor of Psychology August 1993 – August 2002

Instructor of Psychology August 1989 – August 1993

Coursework taught includes general psychology, principles of counseling, organizational behavior, professional and career issues in psychology, psychology of health and wellness, psychology seminar, psychology of childhood and adolescence, field experience in criminal justice, business communications; internship coordinator

Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID **_1987 – 1989_**

Director of Counseling Services, August 1987 – July 1989

Resident Director, August 1987 – July 1989

MAXIMUS, Inc., McLean, VA **_1981 – 1987_**

Production Manager (1981 – 1985) and *Independent Consultant* (1985 – 1987)

HONORS, AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS

Co-writer, $500,000 appropriations grant to federal government for equipment to be used in Criminal Justice program, FA2005; met with Congressional representatives and House of Representative individuals in Washington, D.C., April 2006

"His Stories" – panel presenter with Carla (Fullerton) Swallow, Fred and Karen Fullerton, on personal and university responses to student issues, September 2006

Self-study, Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Criminal Justice; 6-year review of psychology and sociology disciplines, 1998 – 2005; completed FA 2006

"ATime for Everything" – Guest speaker, MVNU Mother/Daughter Banquet, April 2003

"Focus on Psychology and Sociology" – Teagle Foundation Grant workshop for prospective students interested in psychology and sociology, students and parents, April 2002

Excellence in Advising and Retention at MVNU, 2002 – 2003 academic year; awarded by the Registrar's office

"Careers in Psychology and Sociology" – FOCUS 2001 workshop leader, October 2001

"Conflict Resolution and Basic Counseling Skills" – lecture for Pastoral Care of Children and Youth class, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, May 1997, May 1998

"Intra- and Interdepartmental Communication in the Workplace" – workshop for MVNC faculty and staff; co-facilitated w/Dr. Randy Cronk, March 18, 1997

"Conflict Resolution and Crisis Intervention" – lecture for Social Work course, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, November 26, 1996

"Working Mothers and Managing Stress: A Profile of the World's Most Rewarding Profession" – workshop, Mental Health Association, Knox County, May 1996

"*Nonverbal Communication,*" Workshop for ENERAZAN staff, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, October 1995

"*Conflict Resolution and Crisis Intervention*", lecture for Leadership Skills class, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, March 1993 -March 1997 (yearly)

"*Nonverbal Communication in the Workplace,*" On-campus workshop for CORE employees, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, December 1991

"*Communicating in Business,*" On-campus workshop for CORE employees, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, January 1991

"*Time and Stress Management,*" On-campus workshops each term, Northwest Nazarene College, 1988 - 1989

"*Does NO Ever Mean YES?*" On-campus workshop on date rape; three separate sessions, Northwest Nazarene College, January 1989

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Member, *Alpha Chi* (Psychology National Honor Society), 2004 – present

Member, *American Psychological Association* (APA), June 1998 – May 2005

Member, *American Psychological Society* (APS), September 1998 – August 2003

Member, *American Counseling Association* (ACA), 1987 - 2004; co-member, *American College Counseling Association* (ACCA), 1992 - 1998

Charter Member, *American Association of Christian Counselors* (AACC), 1994 - 2004