AN EXAMINATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS
FOR SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE POSTMODERN CHRISTIAN WOMAN

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Doctor of Ministry

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Examining Committee
ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE POSTMODERN CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Barbara A. Neumann

Readers: Sue G. Edwards, Lynn Etta Manning

The Christian church has historically valued mentoring relationships and the part they play in developing the faith of the next generation. Christian women in particular have understood mentoring functions to be inherent in the mandate of Titus 2:3-5. As a result, formal mentoring programs have been organized to teach and train young women. Many of these traditional mentoring programs, though effective in the past, no longer meet the needs of postmodern women. This qualitative research project focused on selected postmodern women and addressed the manner in which their unique worldview has shaped their mentoring preferences. Thus the problem this study seeks to address is how to provide mentoring opportunities that meet the needs of young women.

As part of the research report, current literature on the postmodern worldview is reviewed and related to the practice of mentoring. The case study research design is also detailed and three case study sites described. The cases chosen represent a traditional approach to mentoring, a postmodern approach to mentoring, and a hybrid approach to mentoring. The data collected from in-depth, one-on-one focused interviews is presented and evaluated according to three hypotheses: postmodern women prefer to choose their own mentor, postmodern women prefer an organic schedule, and postmodern women prefer a mentoring relationship where life experiences are mutually shared and processed. Though these elements are not the only ones necessary in a mentoring relationship, they are established as foundational to the process.

The report concludes with suggestions for mentoring opportunities that meet the needs of postmodern women and proposals for further research.
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# ABBREVIATIONS

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Ralph, who believed in me before anyone else, cheerfully wrote years of tuition checks, found typos and sentences that did not make sense, formatted the charts, and patiently stood by me throughout the demanding process. There is not a finer man on the earth.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

We must think through the ramifications of the phenomenal changes occurring in Western society for our understanding of the Christian faith and our presentation of the gospel to the next generation.

—Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*

**Importance of the Study**

Students of the social sciences generally agree there has been a recent and significant epistemological shift in the Western mind.¹ This new pattern of thought, generally referred to as “postmodern,” was birthed in the 1930s but took root in popular culture between 1960 and 1990.² People born during and after this time often have a worldview and preferences that do not fit comfortably with traditional ministry methods. In March 2000 Barna Group released results of research on Christian women and warned of low levels of church participation among women who are members of the Buster generation—those age thirty-four and younger. Barna indicated, “…thus far it appears that the Church has not adequately addressed the needs of this generation.”³ Nine years later *Rev!* Magazine’s research, “The State of the Church,” discovered that younger

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women are not attending women’s events. The current absence of younger women in traditional church ministries indicates that current ministry methods do not appeal to or are not meeting the needs of many postmodern Christian women.

Rationale for the Study

Titus 2:3-5 charges older women with the responsibility to teach and train the younger ones, and many churches seek to carry out this responsibility through a mentoring program. However, most traditional church mentoring programs are modern in character and though effective in the past, they are now failing to attract or engage postmodern women. These young women are anxious to be mentored but because they have a significantly different worldview, the traditional mentoring model may not meet their needs, and churches may lose the opportunity to grow them through a mentoring relationship.

As the Apostle Paul traveled widely in the service of the gospel, he encountered diverse cultures and worldviews. He made it his habit to read the culture and present the gospel in a way that met the needs of his audience (1 Cor 9:19-23). To minister in a rapidly changing culture, ministry leaders would do well to follow Paul’s example: understand the worldview of the next generation, identify the needs and preferences that arise from that mindset, and then develop effective ministry methods. This study sought to discover essential elements for a mentoring program that would engage and meet the needs of postmodern Christian women.

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Research Question and Hypotheses

Development of the Research Question

For a number of years, I have been formally and informally teaching a group of young women who often want to talk with me one-on-one about personal experiences. As my ministry eventually developed a regular mentoring component, these young women would occasionally ask if I could meet with one of their friends. It was not long before I was doing as much mentoring as teaching. Over time I observed a hunger for mentoring in these women but a reluctance to participate in church mentoring programs. This D.Min. project allowed the examination of current mentoring practices to determine what elements are necessary to meet the needs of young women today.

Research Question

A survey of research and literature indicates that women under age forty have been raised in a postmodern culture and have distinctly different preferences than the previous generations. The central question addressed in this study is, “What are the elements of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman?”

Subquestions formulated to narrow the focus are as follows:

1. How do postmodern women want to be paired with a mentor?
2. How do they want to schedule the relationship?
3. What is the preferred nature of the mentoring interaction?

Hypotheses

The directional hypotheses address three trends recognized by students of postmodernism. Previous research finds mutual attraction, flexibility, and shared experiences to be prominent concerns for postmodern women. At the core of all three is a desire for an organic mentoring relationship instead of a formal, structured approach to mentoring. The hypotheses tested in this research are as follows:

1. The first element of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an opportunity to choose her mentor.
2. The second element of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is a flexible schedule.
3. The third element of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an informal relationship where life experiences are mutually shared.

Potential Benefits of This Study

There is a renewed interest in mentoring as both business and Christian leaders recognize its unique ability to develop people. Since many postmoderns desire mentoring relationships, an effective mentoring program can become a strategic tool for developing young women as disciples of Christ. Corporate mentoring consultant Lois Zachery comments, “Gen-Xers and Gen-Yers clamor for mentoring, and it is a drawing card for organizations looking to recruit them.”

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mentors but Christian programs are not drawing them as they once did. This study will help ministry leaders in the following ways:

1. It identifies the characteristics of postmodern women so ministry leaders can understand the nature of the problem and why it exists. Many dedicated leaders see the decline in interest on the part of postmoderns, but they are at a loss to explain it. Current mentoring models have worked well in the past and the cool response on the part of young women is puzzling to the older ones. This dissertation explains how postmoderns are different from moderns.

2. It identifies several reasons why young women do not find traditional mentoring programs attractive. Some of the practices valued by modern leaders are a hindrance to postmoderns, and this study will help leaders evaluate an existing mentoring program and assess its effectiveness for younger women.

3. Mentoring has been practiced in the world’s cultures since ancient times. This study examines how some mentoring practices have changed to meet needs common to the twenty-first century. It explains what these practices are and why they are effective.

4. It offers a new worldview related to mentoring based on the needs and preferences of postmodern women, and it provides leaders with a model for mentoring young women. This model can renew the younger women’s interest in mentoring opportunities available through the church or other Christian ministries.

**Definition of Terms**

**Modern**

For the purposes of this study, “modern” refers to a worldview based on the Enlightenment principles that emphasize autonomy of the individual, trust in the power
of reason, conviction that human reason is objective, and truth can be discovered by the rational human mind.\textsuperscript{8} Moderns hold such confidence in human ability to discern objective truth that when it is discovered, all else must conform to its propositions. Predictable rules, principles, and logic regulate modern life. Moderns tend to embrace a mindset that values scientific investigation, continual progress, absolute truth, logical and pragmatic organizations, and orderly surroundings.\textsuperscript{9}

\textit{Modern Christian Woman}

The modern Christian woman was born before 1970, and the tenets of modernism have shaped the way she practices her faith. Christian women with a modern worldview hold a high view of the Bible and tend to emphasize biblical thinking formed by logical analysis, propositional teaching, and literal interpretation of Bible passages.\textsuperscript{10} Theological and moral absolutes form the foundation of their faith, and they often separate themselves from those who do not fully agree with their doctrine. They tend to believe that right teaching produces a right experience with God.\textsuperscript{11} They prefer organized programs and consider church a place to worship and gain knowledge. Modern sermons often focus on proving the existence of God or the authority of the Bible and tend to emphasize belief over practice.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{10} Webber, \textit{The Younger Evangelicals}, 51. Webber contrasts this logical, analytical approach with an artistic approach that includes symbols, rituals, and imagination.

\textsuperscript{11} Dan Kimball, \textit{The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 188.

Postmodern

Earl Creps posits that due to its absence of a central, unifying trait, trying to define postmodernism “is like nailing Jell-O to the wall.”\textsuperscript{13} Stanley Grenz gives this broad but workable definition: “Postmodernism refers to the intellectual mood and cultural expressions that are becoming increasingly dominant in contemporary society.”\textsuperscript{14} For the purposes of this study, “postmodern” refers to both a distinct worldview and to the generation of people born between 1970 and 2000.\textsuperscript{15} During this time the Internet and advanced technology became widely available to the general public and gave rise to a new way of thinking and being. Gradually this generation began to question and then reject the foundations of modernism: “Often conceived as a protest to modernity, the postmodern view, though variously understood, tends to tilt away from the rational toward the experiential, away from the individualistic toward the communal, and away from the scientific toward the artistic.”\textsuperscript{16} Postmoderns find the influence of art, stories, experiences, and relational communities more persuasive than science and logic.\textsuperscript{17} Instead of organization and structure, they prefer freedom, flexibility, and options.\textsuperscript{18} Knowledge and truth are often seen as social constructs and are therefore somewhat relative. While

\textsuperscript{13} Earl G. Creps, “Moving Target: Reframing Discipleship for Postmoderns,” \textit{Enrichment Journal} (Winter 2008): 68, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200801/index.cfm (accessed August 30, 2009). Creps discusses the challenges of attempting to definitively categorize this group. He encourages a perspective that will recognize how postmodernism impacts different communities in various ways, and that young people will differ in the extent to which a postmodern worldview influences them. Emergent pastor Tony Jones says the difficulty in defining the movement has to do with its open-source ethos that encourages churches to adapt postmodern preferences according to their own needs. Tony Jones, \textit{The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier} (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 181.

\textsuperscript{14} Grenz, \textit{A Primer on Postmodernism}, 13.

\textsuperscript{15} Dan Kimball argues that because we are still a society in transition and some feel the impact of postmodernism more than others, it is impossible to say there is a postmodern generation that has been born between certain years. Kimball, \textit{The Emerging Church}, 61.

\textsuperscript{16} White, \textit{Postmodernism 101}, 188.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{18} Huntley, \textit{The World According to Y}, 103-109.
most postmoderns do not reject all absolute truth,¹⁰ many of them embrace the idea that people have the right to choose which truths they will consider absolute. In their thinking, truth is somewhat fluid and flows more from one’s personal experiences than propositions, and it can therefore change from person to person. For example, it is not unusual for postmoderns to embrace “truth” from a variety of religions and design a faith that is absolute for them but also acknowledge their truths may not work for others.

Postmodern Christian Woman

The postmodern movement has influenced the way this woman, born after 1970, prefers to practice her faith. She desires a more organic, less structured environment. She is often open to a variety of Christian traditions and practices. Christian postmoderns think church should be a place where lives are transformed through participation in a believing community and a place where they will experience God. This young woman values simplicity, relational community, authenticity, and meaningful spiritual events that advance the kingdom of God.

¹⁰ Most postmoderns readily accept absolute truth in the hard sciences. Dan Kimball remarks, “I am finding that emerging generations really aren’t opposed to truth and biblical morals. When people sense that you aren’t just dogmatically opinionated due to blind faith and that you aren’t just attacking other people’s beliefs out of fear, they are remarkably open to intelligent and loving discussion about choice and truth.” Kimball, The Emerging Church, 76.
**Mentoring**

The concept of mentoring is as old as civilization, but because it means different things in various contexts, a precise definition is challenging.\(^2^0\) It is most simply defined as a relationship in which a less experienced person learns from a more experienced person. For the purposes of this research, “mentoring” will indicate an intentional, psychosocial, learner-focused relationship for the purpose of facilitating the growth and development of one desiring to acquire particular knowledge and skills possessed by another. Therefore, mentoring is more than a supportive friendship; it is a growth-producing experience. Mentoring goes beyond support and the transfer of knowledge and seeks to promote a significant movement in a person’s perspective, understanding, and behavior.\(^2^1\) This definition reflects the mandate of Titus 2:3-4 where older women are instructed to teach and train the younger ones.

**Mentor**

The mentor is one who has knowledge, insight, or skill and is willing to advise, guide, encourage, support, and facilitate the growth of another. According to

\(^{2^0}\) Bozeman and Feeney note that relatively few scholars give a precise definition of mentoring and offer thirteen definitions that various researchers posit. Barry Bozeman and Mary K. Feeney, "Mentor Matching: A ‘Goodness of Fit’ Model," *Administration & Society* 40, no. 5 (2008) 465, http://aas.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/40/5/465 (accessed June 1, 2010). Sharon Heron discovered this to also be true in the Christian context and argues that “…there is not an overarching definition of Christian mentoring.” Sharon Jane Susanne Heron, “Mentoring in Christian Community: Issues of Definition and Evaluation” (Ph.D. diss., The Queen’s University of Belfast, 2008), 4. Hansman sees this as a result of the complex nature of these relationships and the increasingly important role mentoring partnerships have played in education and the market place. Catherine A. Hansman, “Diversity and Power in Mentoring Relationships,” in *Critical Perspectives on Mentoring: Trends and Issues*, ed. Catherine A. Hansman, Information Series No. 388 (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2002), 39-48, http://www.calpro-online.org/eric/docs/mott/mentoring1.pdf (accessed August 9, 2010).

Popp and Portnow, most adults gradually develop through a life-long process. However, “societal roles and task demands on adults frequently outpace their developmental capacities.” When this is the case, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual development can be slowed or stalled, especially if the person is in an unsupportive environment. Growth is most likely to occur when a mentee is both supported and confronted with a moderate challenge to her limited understanding by a woman who has a larger perspective. A mentor can be an effective resource at this time because she is able to interface with the actual situational experience. The overall goal of the mentor is to facilitate growth in the mentee; therefore the mentor provides not only support but helps a mentee develop a larger interpretive framework and a new capacity for appropriately responding to the tasks and demands of life. Since this study concerns the growth and development of Christian women, it is understood that the mentor will also seek guidance and counsel from the Holy Spirit as she engages in this process with the mentee.

Mentee

At the most basic level, the mentee is a learner. She is one who has a desire to learn and grow through a relationship with another who possesses a particular quality, knowledge, or skill. The mentee must have some awareness of her own limitations and a growing sense there may be a different way to think and respond to events, but she does not quite know how to go about doing this. To be a candidate for mentoring, the mentee must see value in knowing another woman for the purpose of expanding the mentee’s

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22 Ibid., 49.

23 Ibid., 53.

24 Ibid., 65. Popp and Portnow contend that an overly supported person will often feel bored by the absence of challenge and can tune out of the process.

25 Ibid., 62.
knowledge and understanding. For the purposes of this study, “mentee” will refer to the postmodern woman who desires a mentoring relationship.

**Traditional Mentoring Program**

Traditional programs refer to formal, structured programs that are organized and overseen by one or more women. The basic unit of this program is a one-on-one mentoring relationship between an older and a younger woman. These relationships are usually one-directional in that wisdom and direction flow from the older mentor to the younger mentee.\(^{26}\) The mentor’s task is to develop her younger charge through teaching, correcting, or solving problems.\(^{27}\) These programs contain some or all of the following elements:

- Those who are interested in mentoring become part of an organized program.
- There is an official sign-up period, a sign-up table, and sign-up coffees.
- Based on a profile both women provide, a person or committee prays for God’s guidance and pairs mentor and mentee.
- They are paired for a specific period of time, usually six months or a year.
- They agree to meet at least once a month and to speak by phone once a week if there is no personal meeting that week.
- They agree to pray regularly for each other.
- There is a recommended or suggested curriculum that often emphasizes the domestic role of women.\(^{28}\)
- The purpose of the relationship is encouragement, support, and prayer.


Mentor and mentee are encouraged to do things together to further develop their relationship.

The mentoring leadership periodically checks on the relationship to see if it is successful. Comments made by the mentor or mentee are kept in a file for future reference.

At the end of the mentoring term, there is a celebration tea or dinner that features a speaker and a testimony from a mentor or mentee.\(^29\)

**Limitations**

*Limitations of Qualitative Research*

Since case study research seeks to understand a particular social phenomenon in the natural world, it is by nature a somewhat subjective endeavor. Though this project was carried out according to systematic research protocol and sought to build in validity, qualitative research cannot be entirely without bias. The researcher is the main instrument of measurement, and it is incumbent upon her to collect, analyze, and interpret the data.

This research was carried out by asking postmodern women questions, and the researcher then made observations and conclusions based on their answers and demeanor. Only open-ended questions were used. When this method is employed the data collected is more variable and difficult to code.\(^30\) The goal of qualitative research is to understand a situation from the subject’s perspective, and it is possible for people to hear and understand the same event differently and draw different conclusions. Because this research narrowed the focus to three areas of inquiry, it is also possible to oversimplify

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answers to fit the categories. Furthermore, since personal experiences are complex, it is possible to miss other variables that are responsible for a particular perspective.\footnote{31}

**Personal Limitations**

All three cases in this study were carried out in Dallas so there may be regional and cultural variables unique to this study. Since the researcher’s personal situation also presents a potential bias, I will mention that I am currently involved in mentoring young women and made some observations about the process prior to this research.

**Preview of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 2 presents a summary of previous research and current literature pertinent to the research question. It first examines the characteristics of postmoderns to establish a theoretical foundation for evaluating the needs of postmodern women. The second part of the review analyzes traditional and current mentoring practices and evaluates their effectiveness for postmodern women. This section is organized around three hypotheses. The biblical base for the study is integrated into the body of the review.

Chapter 3 details the research method used in this applied project. The primary research method was case studies of selected mentoring programs for women. These case studies employed one-on-one in-depth interviews to explore the preferences of fourteen postmodern women in three different mentoring programs. This chapter gives details on the research subjects, how the research was carried out, the data collected, and how the data was analyzed.

Chapter 4 reports the results of the field research. Each case is treated separately and the findings analyzed according to each hypothesis. The data from all...
three cases is then triangulated and patterns compared across cases. Finally, a rival explanation is discussed.

Chapter 5 tells the story that emerged from the data. Three pivotal postmodern distinctives and their relationship to mentoring are discussed, suggestions for a mentoring model that meets postmodern needs is presented, five recommendations for further research are given, and final conclusions are drawn.
CHAPTER 2
PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

Today’s religious and secular scholars agree that there is a significant cultural and epistemological shift in progress. The current debate does not question whether or not this shift from modernism to postmodernism is happening but instead concerns how the Christian church should respond.¹ Any appropriate response, whether it be accommodating or oppositional, must arise from a thorough understanding of the phenomenon. Everyone from politicians, educators, employers, marketers, and the military to social scientists, pastors, and bewildered Baby Boomer parents notice the differences in worldview, trends, and preferences of the younger generation. This has given rise to a substantial amount of research on the characteristics of those who are considered postmodern. This study endeavors to create an effective mentoring program for Christian women under the age of thirty-five, the women who are most likely to seek a mentor. Since the women in this age group are considered postmodern and are likely to exhibit postmodern characteristics, this will affect any mentoring relationship of which they are a part. The research question for this study is an “applied question” in that it asks

¹ One such scholar is Gene Edward Veith, who remarks, “Many people today are sensing that the modern era is over. In nearly every sphere, from academic fields to new social phenomena, the assumptions that shaped twentieth-century thought and culture are being exploded. As we enter the twenty-first century, it seems clear that Western culture is entering a new phase, which scholars are calling ‘postmodern’. What is less clear is whether the change is good or bad.” Gene Edward Veith, Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), xi.
What must we understand before we know what to do?\textsuperscript{2} For the purposes of this study, we must initially understand the postmodern woman so the problem comes into focus. This literature review will first examine the research and literature that address what it means to be postmodern.

The second part of this literature review examines the nature of mentoring and how it may be tailored to meet the needs of postmodern women. The practice of mentoring can be traced back to ancient times.\textsuperscript{3} From the earliest times of human existence it has been recognized that people grow gradually, and the guidance and oversight of a mature helper proffers various benefits. Many in the current younger generation seek mentors to help them navigate the complexities of twenty-first century life. The church has historically recognized the importance of guiding and developing young believers and has addressed this in a number of ways.\textsuperscript{4} For several decades formal, well-organized mentoring programs for women have been in place in many churches. The effectiveness of these programs is a matter of record as many older women point to their participation in a mentoring program as life changing. However, these once vibrant programs are now struggling to attract young women. If the desire for mentoring is still present, perhaps even stronger than ever before, and church mentoring programs are failing, a problem exists, and new solutions must be sought. Therefore, this literature review examines the research and literature on postmodernism and mentoring to provide a framework for the study and its conclusions.

\textsuperscript{2} “Often, we know we must do something to solve a practical problem, but before we can know what that is, we must do research to understand the problem better.” Kate L. Turabian, \textit{A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers}, 7\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 9.

\textsuperscript{3} Homer’s \textit{Odyssey}, c. 700-800 BC, contains the first written record of a mentor. However, predating this work the Bible speaks of Moses’ guidance and training of young Joshua (Exod 24:13; Num 27:18).

\textsuperscript{4} The church has sought to mature new believers by religious instruction through catechism, Scripture memory programs, Bible studies, youth programs, and discipleship programs.
Brief Overview of Postmodernism

A Reaction to Modernism

Many of the tenets of postmodern thinking can be seen as a reaction to or rejection of the modern worldview. Postmodern thinkers challenge assumptions and principles that were forged and widely adopted in the Western world during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. Some contend postmodern thinking is a new and unique worldview while others maintain it is the predictable extension of the modern worldview. In either case, modernism must be seen as an integral part of the history of postmodernism. As D. A. Carson observes, “...it is difficult to imagine postmodernism without modernism.” Since postmodernism is best understood against the backdrop of modernism, a brief review of modernism is in order.

Characteristics of Modernism

Modernism is a movement that pushed Western society out of the inherited authority and superstition of the Middle Ages into a “modern” era that elevated autonomous human reason and scientific discovery as the sole basis for authority. The sixteenth century Renaissance initiated this shift in worldview, which prompted a return to classical Greek thought and stimulated curiosity about the nature of the physical world.


During this time inherited or revealed knowledge was discarded in favor of knowledge gained through the scientific method and the powers of the human intellect. Modern thinking was further developed and refined over the next two centuries by the period of the Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason. Enlightenment principles emphasize knowledge gained through objective investigation carried out by the rational human mind. The autonomous thinking self is considered capable of discovering objective and absolute truth. “The idea is that one began with appropriate and convincing foundations, added carefully controlled methods, and then turned the crank to generate truth.” What science or well-reasoned analysis cannot prove is generally suspect.

The elevation of human reason also elevated the human being. The ability to discover and gain knowledge meant individuals had the ability to make their own reasonable decisions and manage their own lives well. The pursuit of reason and knowledge is fundamental to modern thinking because it allows humans to arrive at absolute truth and universal reality, make continual forward progress, create ideal societies through rational planning, and bring order to a chaotic world. In this worldview there is an emphasis on proven principles, rules, and step-by-step logic. Because autonomy is the goal, modernism places a high value on individualism, individual rights, and independence. Emotions and mystical or supernatural events are

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7 Defining the beginning or end of an age is a subjective endeavor due to the gradual nature of change, even marked change, and scholars differ when it comes to pinpointing dates for the beginning of modernism (e.g., Veith places the inauguration of modernism at the Enlightenment). Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 31.


9 Carson, *Becoming Conversant with Emerging Church*, 94.

10 Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 42.
considered illogical, and since religion embraces the supernatural and divine revelation, it often lacks credibility in a modern context.

*Modern Influence on the Practice of Christianity*

Evangelicalism was born in modernity when religious scholars began to question the practices of the Roman Church. The Reformation that followed offered Christians a new way to practice their faith. The distinctives of modernism already widely embraced in the culture also influenced the newly developing Protestant faith. Christian leaders began to see the need to educate their people in the Scriptures, so worship services were restructured to include a significant segment of didactic teaching. Preachers began to interpret the Bible in ways similar to the scientific method: the content was broken down to its most elemental part and examined in detail to determine the exact nature of the information. The meaning of individual words, phrases, and verses were often emphasized. Linear thinking, literal interpretation, and rational arguments dominated sermons that often focused on proving the existence of God or the authority of the Bible by offering objective evidence for the veracity of divine revelation. The increase of one’s knowledge became an important goal, and the church began to take on the culture of a school. A prevailing thought in modernism is that if you listen and learn you will grow. In this teaching culture, the emphasis often has been placed on correct belief over relationship or practice while worship, the sacraments, and ecclesiology have

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11 Ibid., 161. Crystal Downing gives a convincing example of this tendency. In the 1640s James Ussher wrote *Annales Veteris et Nove Testamenti*, in which he proposes a biblical chronology based on the Bible’s use of the words “begat” and the recorded ages of the Old Testament patriarchs. Taking this information literally, he calculated that the world began on October 23, 4004 BC at 9:00 a.m. Crystal L. Downing, *How Postmodernism Serves (My) Faith: Questioning Truth in Language, Philosophy and Art* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 64.
become secondary in importance.\textsuperscript{12} Theology tends to emphasize God’s holiness and man’s sin, guilt, and need for justification.\textsuperscript{13}

In a quest for absolute biblical truth, as modern Christianity continued to develop, there was an endeavor to fully define correct doctrine, and conservative Christians began to separate from those who were not in complete agreement with their position. The result was a proliferation of denominations that all claim to have the truth and exist in spiritual isolation from each other. To become a recognized part of the body of Christ, one must attest to a salvation experience and affirm a particular church’s doctrine. Tony Jones refers to this as “layers of bureaucracy, institutionalism, and dogma.”\textsuperscript{14} Unfortunately, this highly public and sometimes acerbic disagreement and separation within the Protestant church caused the Christian community to be seen by many outsiders as judgmental, intolerant, and competitive.\textsuperscript{15}

The modern emphasis on individualism led to a view of salvation that some consider too narrow. Though salvation of individual people is paramount and the heart of the gospel is a personal encounter with Christ, the modern view of salvation tends to ignore the potential of God’s redemptive power for creation, cultures, and communities. The stress on individualism also allows many believers to exist in spiritual isolation. It is not unusual for moderns to attend a Sunday service to satisfy an intellectual goal and leave afterward without any engagement in the believing community, another reflection of modernism’s individualistic and information-based world.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 17.


\textsuperscript{14} Tony Jones, \textit{The New Christians: Dispatches From the Emergent Frontier} (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 36.

As moderns began to discover the benefits of order and control, church ministry became further organized and structured with trained clergy taking on more of the work to be efficient, effective, and attractive to more people.\textsuperscript{16} About thirty years ago many pragmatic or seeker-sensitive churches began to lean toward a more efficient business model to run and grow the church, a choice which seems to be influenced by modernism’s belief in continual forward progress.

The modern church also tends to see itself as distinct and separate from the culture, which is perceived as a negative influence. Unsaved people in the surrounding culture are usually viewed as outsiders, and modern Christians often avoid contact with them.\textsuperscript{17} Leonard Sweet describes this church as a garden with a protective wall around it so that undesirable elements cannot come in.\textsuperscript{18} Most of the modern church’s ministry is focused on meeting the needs of their own people or on foreign missions. The clergy are seen as role models for the flock as they live obediently and are victorious in temptation and overcoming sin.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Leonard Sweet refers to this as “the hogging of ministry by professionals.” Leonard Sweet, \textit{Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 58.

\textsuperscript{17} Rod MacIlvaine argues that Evangelicals resisted the missional movement of the early twentieth century for theological and cultural reasons. “From the 1920s through the mid-1940s evangelicals, especially in the United States, were placed on the defensive. Confronted with problems such as denominational liberalism, the Fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and the Scopes trial, many Christian leaders led their flocks into a shell of legalism and cultural isolation that lasted well into the 1970s. During this time, in some traditions, radical separation from culture was seen as evidence of true spirituality.” Rod MacIlvaine, “Selected Case Studies in How Senior Leaders Cultivate Missional Change in Contemporary Churches” (D.Min. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2009), 19-20.


\textsuperscript{19} An example of modern expectations of the Christian can be found in a sermon the late Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached, “I do not care what the circumstances may be, the Christian should never be agitated, the Christian should never be beside himself, the Christian should never be at his wit’s end, should never be in a condition in which he has lost...It implies a lack of trust and confidence in Him.” Martyn Lloyd-Jones as quoted in Robert J. Morgan, \textit{The Red Sea Rules: 10 God-Given Strategies for Difficult Times} (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 54.
In summary, modernism has made some valuable contributions to historical Christianity. Moderns treasure God’s Word and value serious Bible study as a way to know and serve God. Many Bibles have been placed in individuals’ hands and many life-changing Bible studies have been written and distributed. As a result of the church’s commitment to teaching, many moderns, including those outside the church, are familiar with the Bible’s content and message. Well-organized church and parachurch programs have met the needs of many Christians and helped them to grow strong in Christ. The modern commitment to truth fueled many scholastic endeavors and contributed a remarkable body of scholarship to the Christian community.

However, modernism also influenced the church in a negative way, including an emphasis on rational thinking and minimization of the supernatural, confidence in the power of knowledge to transform, intellectual worship, a weak ecclesiology that resulted in the loss of community, and failure to be salt and light in the culture. A. K. M. Adam encourages the Christian community to recognize where elements of modernity have been assimilated into the theology of the church, albeit unconsciously, and respond by making the needed corrections.  

Many in the younger generation have rejected modernism as a way of life, and as a result they have moved away from the traditional church. Those who want to reach the next generation must now ask, “What are we obligated to do in order to bring postmoderns back into the Christian community?”

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Postmodern Characteristics

In his book, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, Stanley Grenz remarks, “Our society is in the throes of a cultural shift of immense proportions.” This recognizable movement away from patterns of thought that have dominated thinking for the past five centuries has led many young adults to a different understanding of the world. While not every young adult embraces a postmodern way of thinking, the increasing prevalence of this worldview is having an impact on the church and its ministries.

Who Is Postmodern?

The generation considered postmodern includes people born between the mid-1960s and 2000. During this time two distinct groups emerged but both have postmodern characteristics. Though exact designations vary, people in the earlier group, commonly referred to as Gen X, were generally born between 1964 and 1984. This generation has been characterized as streetwise, pragmatic, skeptical, melancholy, confused and has somewhat of a negative reputation. “Gen X delivered grunge music and a slacker attitude.” This generation was born after *Roe v. Wade* and many of their numbers were.


22 Michael Horton points out that there are two types of postmodernism: academic and popular. Horton, *Church in Emerging Culture*, 106. To consider the prodigious academic perspectives on postmodernism is beyond the scope of this study. Since the enhancement of ministry methods is the purpose of this work, popular postmodernism will be the focus.

23 Postmodernism influences the younger generation to varying degrees. In Earl Creps’ opinion, modernity’s hold is weakening, but postmodernism has not eliminated it completely. He compares the effect to a black hole—the closer one is to the center, the more he or she is pulled in that direction. Those farther from the center are influenced to lesser degrees. Earl G. Creps, “Moving Target: Reframing Discipleship for Postmoderns,” *Enrichment Journal* (Winter 2008), http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200801/index.cfm (accessed August 30, 2009).


aborted, making them the smaller of the two generations. They are the generation with the highest percentage of divorced parents and typically grew up as latch-key kids who learned to be independent and take care of themselves.26

Gen Y, also referred to as Millennials, includes those generally born between 1984 and 2000 and is the largest generation now living. This generation is characterized as optimistic, idealistic, empowered, ambitious, confident, committed, and technologically savvy.27 Most of them were “wanted” children raised in the self-esteem movement, and many carry a sense of entitlement. Because of these characteristics, Rebecca Huntley argues, “Gen Y represents a sharp break from Gen X.”28

Jean Twenge refers to both generations as Generation Me and sees many common traits in the two groups.29 Stanley Grenz’s gold standard, A Primer on Postmodernism, was published in 1996 and is more characteristic of Gen X. When his book is compared with Rebecca Huntley’s The World According to Y, published in 2006, some differences can be seen in the generations but it is also apparent there are strong similarities in epistemology because they both have a postmodern worldview. As is always the case, people do not fit neatly into one category or another, especially when only about ten years separates these two age groups. Though there are some distinctions


28 Ibid., 14.

between these two postmodern generations, they resemble each other much more than they resemble those in the previous modern generations.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{General Characteristics}

Howe and Strauss in their book, \textit{Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation} characterize the Millennials in a strongly positive light.\textsuperscript{31} This book was published in 2000, the year the first of the Millennials reached college age.\textsuperscript{32} As they see it, the youngest of the postmoderns are optimistic, ethnically diverse, and team players. They accept authority, follow rules, believe in the future, are smarter than most people think,\textsuperscript{33} and are already reversing negative youth trends.\textsuperscript{34} They believe this generation will put America on a more positive course, and the modern generation has a responsibility to “set goals big enough to engage the imagination of this generation of achievers.”\textsuperscript{35} They also note that these kids are the most sheltered and “watched” generation, and their lives are so ordered by their parents that there is almost no free time or unorganized activity in their day. It is interesting to evaluate this in light of their distaste for structure when they get to be teens and young adults. Greenberg and Weber further celebrate this generation and go so far as to say they are potentially the greatest

\textsuperscript{30} Gravett and Throckmorton comment, “Gen Ys are very similar to Gen Xers, but they are also very different, based on the research we did.” Gravett and Throckmorton, \textit{Bridging the Generation Gap}, 55.


\textsuperscript{32} Most of Howe and Strauss’ research was carried out when these kids were in their teens and under the care of their parents.

\textsuperscript{33} University Professor and Director of Research and Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts, Mark Bauerlein, challenges this estimation of young adults with statistics from numerous government sponsored studies that indicate American youth are in intellectual decline. Bauerlein, \textit{The Dumbest Generation}, 4-7.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 7-17.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 365.
generation ever, they are in many ways more mature than their parents, and they will be society’s saviors as they inherit a world with problems of crisis proportions. This estimation is based on research that shows them to be well educated, highly self-aware, smart about technology, collaborative, connected globally, responsible, innovative, civic-minded, and tolerant.

Jean Twenge, a postmodern herself and writing from a secular perspective, refers to all those born between 1970 and 1990 as “Generation Me” and is not as positive about her generation. She introduces the idea that since they were raised in the self-esteem movement, they have been taught that they are special, to put their own needs first, and that they can be anything they want to be. As a result they are self-important, have unrealistic expectations, and tend to blame others for their problems. In contrast to Howe and Strauss, she believes they have been taught to freely question authority and prefer to function on the same level as everyone else. Writing six years later than Howe and Strauss and from a postmodern perspective, she puts forth the argument that “Gen Me are often woefully unprepared for what we encounter in the ‘real world’ of the marketplace.” In her experience, things begin to fall apart for Gen Me in early adulthood when their unrealistic expectations cannot be met. The lofty dreams and optimistic goals of their youth often precipitate a mid-life crisis at age thirty. They have been told to follow their dreams but find it is hard to make that happen, resulting in a

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37 Ibid., 21-32.

38 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 130.

39 Rebecca Huntley puts this emotional breakdown in the mid to late 20s. “Many Yers, used to the direction, drive, and support offered at school and at home, are floundering amidst a sea of choice, opportunity, and reality.” Huntley also writes from a secular perspective. Huntley, *World According to Y*, 184.
generation that lacks direction and struggles with anxiety and depression. Of particular interest to this discussion, she observes that many postmoderns abandon organized religion because of the restrictive rules that are often imposed. Rebecca Huntley introduces the idea that “choice, options, and flexibility are the buzzwords for this generation.” This implies that structure-heavy programs are not going to work for them.

This is a generation facile with and driven by technology. They are entrepreneurial, and innovation comes naturally as the result of their comfort with technology. This may be one reason traditional programs are not appealing to them—they find them predictable, routine, and outdated. Technology allows them to have information constantly at their fingertips and according to Leonard Sweet, postmoderns are drowning in an avalanche of information. In contrast to the modern generation, they are not attracted to programs that are information-based. Technology also allows them to be constantly connected with each other, their business, their outside interests, and the world. Mark Bauerlein bemoans the constant contact of postmoderns and believes they have an unhealthy aversion to exclusion.

The digital age has embroiled the young in a swirl of social gatherings and contests, and it threatens their intellectual development…A different social life and a different mental life have formed among them…The founts of knowledge

40 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 212. Mark Bauerlein discovered that five years after graduation these young adults have “success on their minds and anxiety in their hearts.” He attributes this to parents who have hovered over these children and scheduled them down to the last minute. “They can’t relax, they can’t play. It’s killing them, throwing sensitive and intelligent teenagers into pathologies of guilt and despair.” Bauerlein, The *Dumbest Generation*, 2.

41 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 34.


43 He also refers to this as “IFS (Information Fatigue Syndrome).” Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 57, 117.

44 Rebecca Huntley would agree. She sees postmoderns’ strong desire to conform and fit in as their fatal flaw. Not only does it consume large amounts of time, their thoughts turn dark and depressing when they do not find acceptance in a group. Huntley, *World According to Y*, 20.
are everywhere, but the rising generation is camped in the desert, passing stories, pictures, tunes, and texts back and forth, living off the thrill of peer attention.\textsuperscript{45}

He goes on to say that constant social networking exposes them to a large amount of peer influence and diminishes much needed adult input. In any case, it is apparent this generation prefers to communicate electronically and those who don’t will be left out of their world.

A repeated theme in the literature emphasizes that at their core postmoderns are relational people who long to belong to an authentic community. Relational issues are critical for them and drive many of their choices. In an ironic twist, because they communicate electronically, they experience a larger measure of relational isolation and are hungry for genuine friendships. Rebecca Huntley addresses the nature of postmodern relationships and advances the argument that parental divorce has had a major impact on this generation, and as a result they have shifted from family to friends as their primary community. For many of them, the family is not meeting their need for community; family has become a place of non-stop activity, a place of relentless pressure from parents who are convinced that the more activities their children are involved in the more successful they will be.\textsuperscript{46} This generation is deeply hungry for a place where they can be accepted as they are, which is perhaps a backlash from the constant activity and pressure to achieve what is expected at home.

Sexual relationships or experiences come early in their lives, and the majority considers premarital sex normal. An increase in the popularity of hooking up with casual acquaintances for a sexual experience points to a growing disconnect between sex and affection. Romantic relationships are often seen as time-consuming and demanding.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} Bauerlein, \textit{The Dumbest Generation}, xii, 10.

\textsuperscript{46} Huntley goes on to observe that postmoderns have been overly nurtured and protected while at the same time subjected to intense pressure from parents and school to succeed. Huntley, \textit{World According to Y}, 184.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 27.
According to research carried out in 2001, 72 percent of postmodern couples cohabit before marriage due to fear of making a mistake. This trend has changed things for women in particular as they often enter into long-term relationships and expect to maintain their separate identity and independence. It also means they are marrying and bearing children later, a choice that will significantly impact the direction of their lives. Sexual boundaries are almost non-existent with this group, and Dan Kimball recommends that pastors and mentors frequently address biblical sexuality with this generation.

Jimmy Long documents the struggles of postmoderns from a Christian perspective. For all their emphasis on community and friendships, he observes that their music is dominated by feelings of loneliness and alienation as they struggle to connect in significant ways. It is estimated that one-third of postmoderns have been physically or sexually abused in childhood, and this may be one reason they tend to trust friends more than family members. The meaninglessness of existence plagues many of them, and they seem to lead empty, bewildered lives: “Confusion is a major force in the lives of younger generations.” Long describes postmoderns as riding a fast-moving train with nothing to hold on to. Because many feel confused by the mixed messages of their culture, they identify stress and anxiety as their primary problem. This confusion and anxiety may be what prompts them to seek mentors and presents a strategic opportunity for the church. When they enter a mentoring relationship, they are by definition open to possible biblical solutions a Christian mentor might suggest.

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48 Ibid., 84.
51 Ibid., 165.
52 Ibid., 51.
The late Christian scholar Stanley Grenz gives another broad overview of postmodern preferences: they tend to reject the modernist preference for formulas, structured programs, and the rational management of life. As a result, they have an aversion to anything that appears or feels institutional, and this affects their opinion of the church and its organized programs. The church’s claim of absolute truth is also a problem for many of them. They embrace a relativistic view of truth and tend to see it as socially constructed preferences. For them, truth is not so much stated or defined, but discovered through experience. They prefer to think in terms of “personal truth.” This flexibility toward truth enables them to be tolerant and accepting of other’s preferences and choices and skeptical of any dogmatic claims of absolute truth. Heath White identifies this lack of a core concept of truth as the source of their “nagging angst.” Since absolute truth is the foundation of the Christian faith and message, postmoderns’ perspective on truth is a particular challenge for the church.

The postmodern generation is a markedly spiritual generation. While it is true they are abandoning organized religion, they have not given up on spirituality and remain

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53 Postmodern author Margaret Feinberg registers her objection to formulas and “clever one-liners.” These phrases get under her skin because they do not require reflection. Margaret Feinberg, *The Organic God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 78.


55 Gene Edward Veith reports that 72 percent of young adults believe there is no absolute truth. Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 16.

56 This truth is understood and embraced as a result of one’s personal experiences and owes its genesis to Richard Rorty’s pragmatic approach to truth. Postmoderns do not reject all truth. They are open to various “truths” and decide which ones are absolute for them. Earl Creps remarks that the first commandment of postmodernism is “Thou shall not place any limit on what can be true for awhile.” Earl G. Creps, “Moving Target: Reframing Discipleship for Postmoderns,” *Enrichment* (Winter 2008): 73.

open to spiritual input. They often consider themselves “spiritual but not religious” and will incorporate various spiritual beliefs into their lives. Another repeated theme in the literature both Christian and secular authors put forth concerns the postmodern’s ongoing search for meaning and direction. On the topic of spirituality the observations of secular author Rebecca Huntley are particularly poignant:

Society has not yet come up with anything adequate to fill this void left by organized religions. But the void still exists and its persistence explains in part the interest amongst Yers in spirituality…Spirituality is a really, really interesting subject…They have drifted away from religion but still understand the need to be part of a spiritual group that helps us create meaning in life…For Yers, something is missing, namely more effective ways to work out the big questions is life. How do I live? How do I make decisions? What’s it all about?

Leonard Sweet evaluates this void from a Christian perspective and introduces the idea that postmodern culture has the flu—the morals flu. He sees a moral vacuum at the core of the postmodern soul that cries out for filling. Though Huntley’s perspective is secular, she would agree:

Whilst their parents have given them enough education and opportunity to open up a hundred options in terms of their careers, they haven’t provided the tools or guidelines via which Yers can forge a clear path towards happiness and fulfillment. No wonder they are searching around, like magpies, picking up a disparate collection of truths and rituals in order to find some kind of ethical and emotional state of peace…The majority of young people have been left on their own to sort out life’s bigger questions. As a consequence they are taking a DIY approach to spirituality, adopting and discarding a variety of practices and beliefs in the process.

58 Huntley attributes this to the fact that because they grew up in a time of widespread corruption in the organized church they distrust church hierarchy, and their tendency to be tolerant causes them to object to the church’s treatment of women and gays. Huntley, World According to Y, 164-165.


61 Sweet, Soul Tsunami, 133.

62 Huntley, World According to Y, 175.
Their distaste for organized programs but openness to spirituality indicates postmoderns may be more open to mentoring than attending a church. This is a door of opportunity for the Christian community as we offer mature and godly mentors to spiritually hungry young souls. Mentoring may even be a new way to evangelize this age group.

Another trend among postmoderns is the tendency to be more influenced by experiences than knowledge or logic. Postmodern author Margaret Feinberg eloquently expresses her desire to go beyond knowledge and experience God himself. She sees the role of knowledge or wisdom as only a tool to go deeper into a relationship with God: “God’s voice requires more than just my ears; it requires my eyes, my mind, my spirit, my entire being to recognize God’s nudges in my life… I had read about God’s power but I longed to experience it.”63 This movement away from logic means most postmoderns learn more through stories, experiences, and lived-out truth than didactic teaching. This preference is particularly troubling for moderns who are convinced that didactic teaching is the only way to learn. Chris Marshall reminds readers that Jesus used stories when he taught through parables. He did this because they had a unique power to provide a new framework for reality for those stuck in a particular way of thinking.64 The corporate world has discovered that stories help people find common ground that is not possible through normal dialogue, and many companies are now incorporating stories into their ethos65: “Life experiences are rinsed and renewed and reproduced in the waters of storytelling. Telling stories gives meaning to the suffering of our lives and the seeming randomness of existence.”66 This observation is particularly important to the concept of

63 Feinberg, Organic God, 85, 100.


66 Sweet, Soul Tsunami, 424.
mentoring; as mentor and mentee share life experiences or stories, the absolute truths of God find receptive ears and can be passed from one generation to the next.

A final and significant characteristic of postmoderns is their demand for authenticity. They are hungry for their own authentic inner life, and they look for it in others. In spite of their intergenerational and collaborative tendencies, there is a layer of mistrust beneath the surface, and they are suspicious of anyone who is not transparent or claims to have it all together. They are open about their experiences of doubts, struggles, and failures and expect others to do the same. This requirement for authenticity is so strong that they will not trust someone they know nothing about. Only those who are real, who are willing to admit their own weaknesses, failures, and struggles will be able to speak into their lives. This trait runs so deep that Daniel Egeler posits that mentoring the next generation must include a combination of speaking the truth, being transparent, and living an authentic life before the mentee.

Christian Responses to the Postmodern Shift

Though there is general agreement concerning typical modern and postmodern characteristics, there is hearty disagreement concerning how the Christian community should respond.

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67 Ibid., 129. Leonard Sweet defines authenticity as real, true, and sincere as opposed to imitative, contrived, or phony. This preference for authenticity can easily be seen by looking at the wide selection of reality programming on TV, all targeted at the 18-34 demographic.

68 Daniel Egeler, Mentoring Millennials: Shaping the Next Generation (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003), 68.
Preserve Historical Methods

One outspoken advocate of this position is professor and Reformed theologian Michael Horton. He describes popular postmodernism as sloppy thinking, a brief moment in history, a temporary fad, and a child who refuses to grow up. In his understanding, Scripture speaks of only two ages, “this passing age” and “the age to come.” He suspects that the thinking and preferences of postmoderns is in reality an example of being pressed into the world’s mold (Rom 12:2). He denies there is an epochal change in progress and that there should be any change in the faith and practices of Christians. God has blessed the historic practices of the church, and these practices will continue to work for people who are responsive to him and should therefore be vigorously preserved.

Abandon Modern Methods

Based on recent research on postmoderns, George Barna comes to a different conclusion: “Our projections are that unless things change significantly in the church and the culture, people in the emerging culture are less likely to accept Christ as their savior than prior generations…These are the first generations raised without the assumption that Christ is the starting place for religious expectations.” Postmodern leader Jonathan Nelms is convinced that, “It is difficult to meet the emerging needs of a postmodern age within the bounds of a modern institution.” Professor Leonard Sweet takes the church to task for failing to read and respond to the postmodern culture. Because postmoderns are skeptical of formal institutions and are angry over church professionals dominating

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ministry, he believes the traditional church will die if it does not change. In *Total Truth*, author Nancy Pearcey warns that because the postmodern generation places a high value on authenticity both in life and in relating to God, it will not take churches seriously unless they do the same. This group of culture warriors suggests that Christians are obligated to change ministry methods if they want to pass the faith to the next generation. The current trend shows that young people are abandoning the traditional church and its programs, therefore change is not optional but required if the church wants to remain relevant in the coming years.

Tony Jones of Emergent Village represents the position that Christians need to scrap traditional, modern methods altogether. He declares that postmoderns are disillusioned with religion as usual and are looking for a new way to follow God. He does not see this group as being less religious, but differently religious. For this generation, God is not dead; it is the church that is dead. These believers reach back to pre-modern practices and center their faith on Jesus instead of doctrines. For them Christianity is a shared journey that accepts the contributions of all Christian traditions, the biblical call to community is placed above individual rights, and the church is called to connect with the culture and live authentically among all people. In a movement toward authenticity, they embrace the messiness of life and church. In their estimation, this type of comprehensive change is necessary and the most effective way to reach postmoderns.

72 Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 73.


74 Those who hold this position see a difference between method and message. Stanley Grenz summarizes this position as one where Christians must stand their ground when it comes to orthodoxy but must also abandon Enlightenment-based epistemology that elevates human autonomy and reason. He cautions against an unthinking “move with the times,” and calls on believers to critically engage postmodernism to bring the orthodox Christian faith to the next generation in a way they can understand. Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 161-174.

Design a Culturally Relevant Historic Approach

In his recent book *Deep Church*, Jim Belcher points out that the evangelical church is deeply divided over the postmodern issue and puts forth a third option. He believes postmodern church leaders have a valid point about the influence of modernist thinking on the traditional and seeker-sensitive church. However, he also thinks emergents have moved too far from revealed truth. He believes that many people, both young and older, want more depth in worship, a stronger sense of belonging, and their faith to make a greater impact on the world. Belcher recommends taking the best from both camps and moving forward with a culturally relevant but historically centered faith that is neither postmodern nor modern.76 This would mean keeping some practices while changing others.

Unwilling to Face the Challenge

Earl Creps mentions another group—ministry leaders who feel they just cannot relate to the changing culture. They see only two options: to keep going as is because it is the only thing they know, or make radical changes to catch up with the culture. Many ministry leaders simply feel too old to make needed changes or are unwilling to face the challenges of redevelopment.77 As a result they choose to ignore what is happening in the culture and continue with methods they find comfortable.

Paul’s practice was to accommodate, to some extent, the preferences of various groups of believers (Jews, Gentiles, the weak). He was willing to give up his own inclinations to meet the needs of others and encouraged the Corinthian believers to do the same:

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those

76 Belcher, *Deep Church*, 12.

under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings (1 Cor 9:19-23).

Through his personal example, Paul established the principle of mature believers willingly sacrificing personal preferences to minister to others. Kenneth V. Neller notes that at the heart of this action is the decision to voluntarily give up certain freedoms so others might be saved, and this decision “is at the core of Christianity.”

D. A. Carson finds a difference in the way Paul approached the faithful Jews in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14-41) and the Greek intellectuals in Athens (Acts 17: 16-34). Since the Jews had background knowledge of God as revealed in the Old Testament, Paul’s message elaborated on the meaning of the Law and Prophets and how these documents pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. In Athens he chose a different starting point, God as Creator, since his audience had no knowledge of God as revealed in Jewish Scripture. Instead of referencing the Law and Prophets, he discussed the Greek culture’s fascination with gods and eventually introduced Jesus not as the Messiah but as ultimate judge and one raised from the dead. Both messages pointed to Christ, but the two distinctive cultures prompted different approaches as Paul recognized that what worked in one would not work in the other:

Just as the apostle understood that his moves from culture to culture brought implications for how he went about his preaching (even though his constant resolution was to preach Christ crucified, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5), and just as thoughtful missionaries learn the same lesson as they step from one culture into another, so also must the church of God when it stays home and the culture in which it is embedded changes.

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79 Carson, *Becoming Conversant With Emergent Church*, 46-47.

80 Ibid.
Conclusion

Both secular and religious scholars agree that the tenets of postmodernism have significantly influenced Western society. Women who were born and raised during the last thirty to forty years are likely to hold a worldview that reflects the influences of postmodernism more than modernism. The research shows that many in the postmodern age group, including those who are Christian, resist formal, structured programs, learn through authentic relational experiences, prefer flexibility, are technologically advanced, and struggle to manage internal turmoil. These characteristics mean most postmoderns choose not to participate in programs that are based on modern preferences, indicating some amount of change is necessary if mentoring programs are to reach the next generation.

The research also shows that these young women are desirous of mentoring relationships: “Most Gen Xers know they need to be mentored.”\textsuperscript{81} Earl Creps’ experience with young women who described themselves as living in a “circus” corroborates this: “Yet amid the many pressures of living in a circus, our new friends expressed the wish of their generation for mentors: ‘Always, always, always …there is that longing for an adult.’”\textsuperscript{82} A review of the literature suggests several related factors:

- Things change rapidly in their world. Social scientists Nancy Popp and Kathryn Portnow point out, “Human beings naturally strive for both order or organization and stability or a sense of balance and equilibrium—a kind of constancy in the context of change and growth.”\textsuperscript{83} Christian author David Stoddard puts it this

\textsuperscript{81} Valerie and Dieter Zander as quoted in Webber, The Younger Evangelicals, 52.


way, “Never has the need for mentoring been greater. Constant change in our society has spawned constant uncertainty. And this constant uncertainty creates a yearning to connect with someone who can provide comfort as well as answers.”

Apparently the rate of change in postmodern society is not just a challenge for the older generation but is also responsible for a loss in equilibrium in the young ones, prompting them to seek mentors for needed balance and perspective.

- There is a need for unconditional acceptance and support in a culture that values achievement and success. Weary of living under pressure to succeed, much of it coming from home, postmoderns want a relationship where they can relax and be themselves.
- Isolation related to technology has created a desire for relational connections.
- A mentoring relationship provides an opportunity to experience the authenticity they value.
- They feel a need for transformation but do not know where to start.
- They are confused by the mixed messages of the culture and seek deeper answers.
- They are not prepared to deal with life’s realities and struggle with anxiety.
- They are searching for direction and meaning in life.
- They learn truth through shared experiences.

It is now incumbent upon the Christian community to respond wisely to this opportunity through an examination of traditional mentoring practices and evaluation of their effectiveness for the younger generation of women.

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The Case for Mentoring the Next Generation

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84 David A. Stoddard, The Heart of Mentoring: Ten Proven Principles for Developing People to Their Fullest Potential (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009), 22.
The Uncommon Individual Foundation, an organization for mentoring research, reports that after marriage and the family, “mentoring is the third most powerful relationship for influencing human behavior.”\textsuperscript{85} After quoting this statistic, Larry Kreider goes on to describe how failure to mentor the younger generation leaves them on their own for discovering what really matters in life, something they may never do adequately.\textsuperscript{86} In Psalm 145, the last psalm attributed to David, the apparently aging king had similar thoughts. He speaks about the greatness and goodness of the eternal King, his gracious and merciful character (5-9) and his faithful acts (14-20). As he reflects, the great human king charges each generation with the responsibility to make the greatness of the eternal King known to the next, to tell others about his character and deeds: “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts (Ps 145:4).” Thijs Booij sees a connection between these late words of David and his life as described in 1 Chronicles. In these biographical chapters, as David walked with God and spoke of the things he was learning about God, he actively led his own generation to love and praise him.\textsuperscript{87} David encourages this practice to continue throughout the generations. When it comes to the postmodern generation, it has been established that they find examples of godly living more convincing than lectures.

After David declares God’s goodness and greatness (Ps 145:1-9), he goes on to reveal important ways God cares for and intervenes in human lives: he upholds those who are falling (14), gives food in due season (15), satisfies the desire of every living thing (16), is righteous and kind in all his ways (17), is near to those who call (18), and hears the cry of those who need to be saved (19). James Boice observes that the acts of

\textsuperscript{85} Larry Kreider, \textit{Authentic Spiritual Mentoring: Nurturing Younger Believers Toward Spiritual Maturity} (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008), 12.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 14. The research establishes that postmoderns are confused about many things in life.

\textsuperscript{87} Thijs Booij, “Psalm cxlv: David’s Song of Praise,” \textit{Vetus Testamentum} 58, nos. 4-5 (2008): 634.
God recited here occur only in human lives and can be known only when one person tells another what God has done for them. This psalm tells God’s people that he expects them to communicate their personal experiences of him to the next generation to help younger believers better understand the infinite God. John Ortberg encourages churches to be clear about who has this responsibility, which he calls “the monkey.” “God’s plan is that wisdom, and love, and especially knowledge of him be passed from one generation to another. That means the church needs to recognize which generation has the monkey of faith transmission. The monkey rests with the older generation.” Donna Otto remarks that this passing on of the knowledge of God and behavior that pleases him is done most effectively through mentoring. She believes young women do not need input from someone with impressive credentials as much as they need to be around vibrant, contagious faith.

In this psalm the described communication is verbal and takes place as one speaks and another listens. Reuven Kimelman notes that the acrostic structure of the psalm suggests it was used for recitation in Sabbath services to literally teach the next generation about their sovereign and caring God. Kreider suggests that Jesus’ genealogy shows he was raised in an earthly family that valued the legacy of generational faithfulness and training, and this eventually impacted his own ministry. When he eventually chose his own disciples and shared his life with them, he continued to carry

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91 The psalmist uses the words “declare” (4), “speak” (6), “pour forth”, “sing aloud” (7), “tell” (11), and “my mouth will speak” (21).
out the exhortation of Psalm 145, and the legacy handed down to him. One way to carry on this tradition today is through mentoring. The mentoring environment creates an opportunity to speak of personal experiences with God, and as these experiences are shared, a deeper understanding of God and his ways often results.

The practice of mentoring is woven throughout the Bible: Moses trained young Joshua to be a leader (Exod 24:13; Num 27:18); Eli raised the child Samuel to be a priest and judge (1 Sam 3:1); Samuel anointed and advised the future King David (1 Sam 19:18); Elijah mentored Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19-21); the priest Jehoida took responsibility for seven-year-old Jehoash and taught him how to be a godly king like his predecessor David (2 Kgs 12:2); Elizabeth encouraged young Mary, believed in her pregnancy, and blessed her (Luke 2:39-56). Mary’s great song of praise was apparently formulated in Elizabeth’s presence. Paul mentored several men during his lifetime: Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1), Timothy (2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1, 2:19-22; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:2; and Phlm 1), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), Silvanus (1 Thess 1:1), and undoubtedly several others who are not recorded.

Jesus also considered mentoring an important part of his ministry on earth. At the same time he was carrying out a formal teaching ministry for the Galilean crowds, he was also engaged in an informal teaching relationship with his disciples (Matt 13:10-23). This relationship included personal time with him (John 1:37-2:12), the modeling of what a relationship with God looks like (John 2:13-17, 4:31-38, 5:19, 13:1-17), teaching of scriptural truth (Matt 5-7), and opportunities to apply this truth under his supervision (Matt 10:1-42). Researcher Jean Lave documents that adults learn best through social relationships carried out in a real world context, and it would seem that Jesus agreed.94 One particular evening he challenged his disciples to meet the needs of a huge crowd of

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people by feeding them, showed them how it could be done, and then helped them carry it out in a real life context (John 6:1-13). As Jesus chose his disciples and shared his life with them, he was carrying out Psalm 145. At one of his last meetings with the men he mentored, he instructed them to also go about reaching a new generation (Matt 28:16-20). Author Sylvia Collinson argues that people in the believing community have always aided one another in the process of knowing God and how to follow him. 

Secular research documents the gradual cognitive and emotional growth of adults throughout their lifetime. Because mentees receive personal attention, mentoring is able to put them on the fast track to growth. Harvard psychologist Robert Kegan identifies distinct stages in this process, each one leading to a more complex or mature way of thinking and being. At each stage, the individual engages in an ongoing effort to understand and make meaning of the self and particular experiences that are encountered. In an important finding, this research has shown that the more an individual’s environment supports this process, the more development takes place. On the other hand, people can stall in their development when they function in an environment that restricts growth. The corporate world has taken note of this research, and it is now common for companies to invest substantial resources in assisting the growth of their leaders through

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mentoring. Therefore, both the biblical record and secular research agree that a mentor can be of valuable assistance in the adult growth process.

Carol Brazo articulates the importance of women mentoring women: “We are desperate for the love of other women. We are desperate for female voices, for that bond of sisterhood. We want friendships that last a lifetime. We want long-term love relationships within the body of Christ that begin here and continue into eternity.”

Titus 2:3-5 confirms the practice of women mentoring women. When Paul left Titus in Crete to oversee the development of the newly planted churches, trouble was brewing; the teaching of certain rebellious men was unsound and creating havoc in the church (1:10-11). As a result Paul was anxious for Titus to appoint elders to safeguard doctrine (1:5-9) and to teach the people how to live godly lives (2:2-10). After addressing older men (2:2), Paul turns his attention to older women. They are exhorted to be reverent in their behavior so they can teach and train younger women to do the same (2:3-5). This training is not limited to responsibilities in the home (2:4-5) but extends to a righteous way of life as women of God (2:11-14). “It is not only that the older women should show the younger mothers how to keep house, but that they put within their hearts and minds the right spiritual and mental attitudes.”

Arichea and Hatton point out that the Greek words for “reverent” and “behavior” are used only in Titus 2:3. “Reverent,” a translation of hieroprepes, means a settled conviction and commitment to correct belief and behavior. Katastema, translated as “behavior,” refers to a way of life. These two words indicate that mature women should teach the inexperienced ones not only about the home but how to put the principles of sound doctrine into practice as they go about life. Arichea further

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98 Carol Brazo, Divine Secrets of Mentoring: Spiritual Growth through Friendship (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004) 158.


concludes that because these two verses single out women, Titus is to delegate the teaching of younger women to the older, devout ones. This is noteworthy because, as McCallum and Lowery point out, women discipling other women was a practice unknown in Judaism at this time. Lea and Griffin argue, “The concept of spiritual mentoring is evident in this passage.” Formal and informal mentoring is one way to accomplish this woman-to-woman mandat e because, as Vivian Mott notes, women are more likely than men to recognize the great value of a mentor, and they are more likely to volunteer as mentors. One problem with traditional ministries to women is that they often focus on events and programs instead of the harder and deeper work of teaching, training, and mentoring.

In summary, mentoring has been around since people began encountering a difficult world because it meets a unique need:

There is a longing for spiritual navigation that broods in every Christian. We want to know the routes through the perilous courses of life…There is a yearning however, that isn’t satisfied by the normal fare of personal study, prayer, and worship. It is a desire for more, a “more” that is impossible to define or explicate; it is a longing to know the richness of “the deeper life” or “mature faith” or “spiritual power.” There are times we may simply try to increase our devotional disciplines to satisfy our longing by reading more or doing more but discover that the longing remains unsatisfied…We come to the realization that we need help, that we were not meant to make this journey solo.

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101 Ibid.

102 Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Disciplemaking: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2006), 27.


However, it is also clear that mentoring programs are in decline and need attention. David Stoddard sums it up this way:

Most of what takes place today under the guise of mentoring…typically takes a formal, programmatic approach. The mentor and the one to be mentored each submit an application. The mentoring program coordinator determines which mentor to match with which mentee …It’s time to bid a not-so-fond farewell to the old paradigm and move into the twenty-first century. We need to redefine what mentoring truly is and then redesign how we go about doing it.\(^{106}\)

**Effective Elements of a Mentoring Program for Postmodern Women**

*Hypothesis 1: Opportunity to Choose the Mentor*

As a result of his research on mentoring relationships, Ray Pawson discovered that the way in which a mentoring partnership is configured will have a significant influence on the outcome. Not all mentoring partnerships work or are beneficial for the mentee. He notes in particular that mentoring relationships cannot be forced.\(^{107}\)

**Selection of Mentor**

Many in the postmodern generation have a desire to connect with people in older generations. They want intergenerational relationships, community, and they search for direction, but that does not mean they automatically trust or respect an older person or one in authority. Jimmy Long relates how both Gen X and Gen Y have problems with trust and no longer unconditionally admire or accept public or authority figures. For this young group, respect is not automatic but must be earned.\(^{108}\) In the minds of many young women, just because a woman is older does not mean she is a candidate for a mentor. Due in part to their tendency to be skeptical, postmodern women prefer to learn from

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\(^{106}\) Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 23.


\(^{108}\) Long, *Emerging Hope*, 47.
someone they know, respect, and trust. They tend to avoid programs that pair them with a woman they know nothing about, even if others consider her wise and godly. One reason for the high failure rate in traditional mentoring programs may be the artificial pairing of mentor and mentee by program leaders. Postmodern pastor Matt Chandler makes this comment: “If you have people signing up to be mentored and then pairing them, the miss rate is really high. You cannot just throw people together who don't know each other and expect to see a deep bond form.” Postmodern women prefer to make a mentoring connection with someone who has consistently demonstrated genuineness in character, knowledge, and godly living instead of being matched based on personality traits or outside interests. For a match to be successful, the younger woman must first see the mentor as a person she can trust, a person of integrity and wisdom, and a person in whom she believes. Trust can be defined as a state of confidence in another, a necessary element for all relationships, but it is particularly essential in a mentoring relationship. The young woman is the only one who knows which older women meet her criteria for trust and respect.

Linda Phillips-Jones places the genesis of the contemporary corporate mentoring movement in the 1970s when corporations began to see mentoring as a valuable strategy to develop employees. Although a group of protégés who actively sought mentoring relationships initiated this movement, the mentor still led the relationship and determined the agenda. Recent secular literature aimed at the business


110 Egeler, Mentoring Millennials, 11-12.

world also recognizes that new mentoring practices are needed to meet the requirements of young employees. Phillips-Jones finds that one of the differences is that mentees now take a more active role and select their mentors themselves. The traditional model of a strong mentor who has an agenda for the mentee has been discarded, and the mentee is encouraged to carefully choose the mentor according to her own developmental needs and goals.¹¹²

According to J. R. Kerr, postmoderns are “open-source activists,” which means they expect to have a voice in what concerns them and want to be a part of shaping significant events.¹¹³ They live in a world that values their opinion and input, and they are used to giving it. As a result, they find hierarchical and structured organization controlling and stifling. The combination of general skepticism concerning those in authority and an expectation that they will have a voice in meaningful events indicates they will not respond well to a mentoring match that was instigated without their input.

**Attraction**

A common theme in the literature posits that mutual attraction is required for a successful mentoring partnership.¹¹⁴ Motivation is critical in mentoring relationships, and when the mentee experiences attraction she is naturally motivated to spend time with the mentor and learn from her.¹¹⁵ When this organic attraction is in place, the mentee will


¹¹⁵ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 62.
be open, ready to learn, and responsive to the mentor, a condition that is necessary for growth. Pawson’s research documents that studies have not been able to give the exact formula or discover the chemistry that makes for a successful match.\textsuperscript{116} “Good old fatal attraction is hardly something that can be predicted and encoded into programme planning.”\textsuperscript{117} Anderson and Reese advance the argument that attraction to a particular mentor is generated by the Holy Spirit and takes place when a potential mentee notices the integrity or skills of another person and is drawn to know more about her. Women often choose relationships with other women based on perceived similarities,\textsuperscript{118} and only a particular woman knows what in another is similar to herself. Committees can make some helpful observations based on profiles, but in the end, these observations can only be superficial and the pairing committee cannot know which similarities the younger woman will consider most important. In fact, even when matched according to profile similarities, the differences in two women may actually outnumber the similarities and cause an uncomfortable relationship.

Schools, churches, or other institutions sometimes implement programs by assigning each protégé to a mentor so that no one falls through the cracks. Invariably, these programs struggle for two key reasons: it’s impossible to prescribe a mutual attraction and to impose a teachable spirit. These two variables must be present and they cannot be programmed or taught after the fact.\textsuperscript{119} There is something inside a woman that draws her to another woman she admires—she wants what the other woman has, not information: “I believe we seek out mentors because they have in their lives an element we want…a quality we seek.”\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Pawson, “Mentoring Relationships,” 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Egeler, \textit{Shaping the Next Generation}, 76.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Brazo, \textit{Divine Secrets of Mentoring}, 21, 24.
\end{itemize}
On a more practical note, when program leaders match mentors and mentees based on a profile, the first mentees matched have the greatest possibility of being paired according to their needs. Initially the entire pool of mentors is available, and the most favorable match can be made. With each successive match, the pool of available mentors grows smaller along with the opportunity to coordinate preferences of mentor and mentee. When the last mentee’s match is considered, there may be only one or two mentors still available, resulting in a high likelihood that there will be few if any similarities between the remaining women. Therefore, when this system is used it is almost impossible to match all the women according to their needs.

Traditional program leaders will say they trust the Holy Spirit to make the appropriate matches, but the undeniable reality is that many of these matches do not work out for the mentee, and she subsequently drops out of the program. When a mentoring relationship takes place through mutual attraction, the relationship is more likely to benefit both parties. According to Mott, research has revealed, “Self-chosen mentoring relationships are the most valuable and productive.”

**Constructive-Developmental Theory**

Mentoring is more than the passing on of knowledge or wisdom; it is an endeavor to promote growth in the mentee. The Bible assumes that a believer will grow. For example, Peter encourages believers scattered across Asia Minor to grow in the midst of their difficulties: “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation…” (1 Pet 2:2). He later exhorts his friends to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). Paul talks about the need to put off the old self that sin has corrupted and put on the new self that is righteous and holy (Eph 4:22-24). James celebrates the result of trials handled with the

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wisdom of God, as they will mature the believer (Jas 1:2-4). The writer to the Hebrews expresses disappointment that these Christians have not grown more (Heb 5:11-6:1). When the Bible speaks of growth, it does not refer to the accumulation of knowledge but to a process of transformation. Knowledge is integral to the process, but growth is recognized as a change in attitude and behavior (see Eph 4).

According to the constructive-developmental theory, growth in humans is prompted by a challenge to one’s way of understanding themselves or what is happening in their world.\(^{122}\) Circumstances develop that cannot be understood or explained by their current frame of reference. This disturbance in equilibrium causes them to seek new information that will help them make sense of their world. On the other hand, people tend to plateau in their development when life is even and routine or when their environment does not support growth. While it is true that some growth can occur through intellectual stimulation alone, it is critical and integrative thinking that moves a person from one level of development to the next. Unless this type of thinking takes place, the information garnered is stored in the mind as knowledge and no personal development results. Growth is more often precipitated by a change in environment or circumstances that put one off balance. This dissonance requires a person to sort out conflicting thoughts, think through various options, and create a new context for understanding what has happened.\(^{123}\) These are the mentoring moments; when this happens a mentee is ready to grow and will seek help.

The conviction that one needs to grow, if merely intellectual, is not enough to actually cause growth. As Daloz artfully remarks, “To push a person to change is about

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\(^{122}\) This theory, built on the foundational work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, explores adult cognitive, emotional, and social growth. It posits that adults continue to grow as they age and will typically move from a simple framework for making meaning to a complex integration of various considerations and points of view.

as effective in the long run as trying to pull a chain uphill.”124 When a young woman chooses her mentor, she takes the first step in critical thinking; she responds to self-awareness that signals she lacks something and will then typically be attracted to a woman who seems to know more about this. Through this process she will hopefully integrate what the mentor knows and arrive at a new way to understand and respond to her situation. In artificially paired mentoring relationships, this element can be missing, and the mentee is reduced to informational rather than transformational learning and may experience little growth.125

Christian professor and mentor extraordinaire, Howard Hendricks, affirms this mentee-initiated approach. In his opinion the mentee finds a suitable mentor by first knowing what she needs. A good mentoring match is made when the mentee is able to identify the ways a particular mentor would contribute to her growth. As she assesses her own needs, she knows what sort of mentor she should try to find.126

In its most basic form, mentoring is the integration of knowledge into life experience. It is the right information at the right time. Knowledge alone does not grow people. It may be given at a time when the learner is not experiencing anything similar to the event that is addressed and though it can be helpful information, it ends up being stored away for possible future use. Both secular research and Christian experience suggest that when the mentee selects her mentor, it indicates she has arrived at a teachable moment, and this creates the best environment for growth.


125 Popp and Portnow examine the basics of adult cognitive development and make a distinction between “informational” learning and “transformational” learning. Informational learning focuses on the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Transformational learning takes place when there is a shift in a person’s perspective and understanding that leads to different attitudes and behavior. Popp and Portnow, “Developmental Perspective on Adulthood,” 50.

126 Hendricks and Hendricks, As Iron Sharpens Iron, 35-36, 79.
Multiple Mentors

The traditional mentoring model pairs one younger woman with one older woman and expects all mentoring needs to be met in this singular relationship. But mentoring is a large and complex undertaking, and the expectation that one person can meet all the mentee’s needs is unrealistic and places extraordinary pressure on the mentor: “You may be seeking an ideal mentor who can fulfill the whole range of mentoring functions. You will rarely find one.” Kreider observes that God will often use more than one mentor in a person’s life and suggests a better model is one that allows multiple mentors to make contributions according to their giftedness. Several authors argue for the existence of different levels of mentoring that require different types of mentors. The different challenges of life call for multiple mentors since no one person has all the answers. Some mentors excel in practical skills areas such as parenting, cooking, or finances. Others offer insight into spiritual growth or the spiritual disciplines, while still others are gifted in listening and helping one to sort out options. Stanley and Clinton propose a “constellation” model that includes a range of mentoring relationships, each offering a different opportunity for development, motivation, accountability, and empowerment. In this way people are more naturally mentored within the framework of the body of Christ, and the task does not become overwhelming for the mentor.

Postmoderns love community with diverse people and are used to a variety of resources being available to them. A postmodern woman’s needs would be better met by an

127 McCallum and Lowery suggest this one-on-one model is a western, individualistic approach. McCallum and Lowery, *Organic Disciplemaking*, 40.

128 Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 42.


131 Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 163.
informal model of mentoring built on a natural flow of the community’s gifted mentors in and out of her life in response to her needs and interests.

*Hypothesis 2: Preference for a Flexible Schedule*

**Meeting Schedule**

Traditional mentoring programs usually require mentor and mentee to have some level of contact every week, the idea being this is necessary for mentor and mentee to build a relationship. Postmoderns live busy lives and tend to fill every hour with activity of some sort. Jean Twenge, a postmodern researcher, argues that her generation appreciates flexibility, does not respond well to micromanagement, and find rigid schedules stifling. Daniel Egeler offers that postmoderns prefer a learning environment that includes “agility.” Modern mentoring programs that require regularly scheduled meetings between mentor and mentee can seem like an artificial learning environment to young women. Though they are open to and even desirous of regular meetings, a weekly commitment seems large and impractical. When they are not able to keep to a weekly schedule, feelings of guilt and failure may bring negativity into the relationship. Postmodern women tend to reject overly scheduled programs and prefer instead a more flexible and organic learning environment. Depending on what is going on in her life, she may need to meet weekly, or she may want to meet occasionally. If there are multiple mentors in her life, she may want to meet with one regularly but another only when she has a particular problem. The commitment should not be to a weekly meeting but to the mentoring process. The requirement to meet weekly is what keeps many postmodern women from taking advantage of traditional mentoring opportunities. While Creps sees

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132 Twenge, *Generation Me*, 218.

value in setting a predetermined meeting schedule, he thinks it should be determined according to an ethos of informality and flexibility.¹³⁴

**Duration of the Relationship**

In traditional mentoring programs, mentor and mentee are paired for a specific period of time, usually a six-month or twelve-month term that the program leadership schedules. Everyone interested in mentoring begins and ends at the same time.¹³⁵ If a woman expresses an interest in a mentor between terms, she is usually asked to wait for the next term. Stanley and Clinton observe that though most people need direction throughout life, this rarely happens on a fixed schedule: “The length of mentoring varies depending on the issue in focus…the time may be as short as a few months or as long as several years.”¹³⁶ They go on to say that programs requiring everyone to keep to the same schedule fail to consider that people experience different levels of motivation, different abilities to process information, and learn skills at different rates.¹³⁷ McCallum and Lowery promote an organic approach to disciple making and posit that when it comes to mentoring, one size does not fit all, and the mentoring term will of necessity vary from person to person. When the program requires the relationship to take place within a set number of months, the focus is more on accomplishing the goals of the program than developing the mentee. These authors suggest the first part of a mentor and mentee’s time together focuses on friendship building and the amount of time required to do this will

¹³⁴ Creps, Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them, 162.

¹³⁵ Most programs allow a mentoring pair to continue on if they desire to do so. Most program leaders admit this schedule also allows a graceful end for pairs that are not working, a problem that refers back to how mentoring matches are made in the first place.

¹³⁶ Stanley and Clinton, Connecting, 66, 68.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 208-209.
vary depending on personal situations.\textsuperscript{138} Traditional programs attempt to do this by requiring a weekly contact, but relationships do not develop just because there is contact. Relationships develop when shared interests are discovered, meaningful conversations take place, support is given or received, and life is experienced together.

Anderson and Reese introduce the idea that mentoring does not proceed according to a schedule or series of steps but is a partnership with the Holy Spirit. Both mentor and mentee need to listen for the direction of God and respond accordingly. In other words, God sets the direction and pace of the relationship. It is not a schedule-driven event but a dynamic journey that proceeds according to God’s direction.\textsuperscript{139}

A predetermined schedule seems to be based more on a business model that values the transfer of information or the acquiring particular skills than on a biblical model that endeavors to develop the whole person. The mentee is not a vessel to be filled but a person to be developed. Recognizing when mentoring is complete is a subjective endeavor and that determination is best made by the people involved: “In our experience, the best and most common way to release disciples is by agreement.”\textsuperscript{140}

Predetermined mentoring terms may also promote unrealistic expectations. Stanley and Clinton identify expectations as the most common cause for disappointment with mentoring experiences. In a society that has come to expect instant results, it is difficult to accept that the process of learning and maturing takes time.\textsuperscript{141} Stoddard warns that mentors often expect to see rapid results in the mentee: “Unfortunately, when we think about mentoring, we often apply our microwave mindset and expect to reap instant

\textsuperscript{138} McCallum and Lowery, \textit{Organic Discipleship}, 66-80.

\textsuperscript{139} Anderson and Reese, \textit{Spiritual Mentoring}, 34.

\textsuperscript{140} McCallum and Lowery, \textit{Organic Discipleship}, 263.

\textsuperscript{141} Stanley and Clinton, \textit{Connecting}, 18, 207.
results.” He also believes young people have grown weary of programs that promise simple solutions for complex problems. A predetermined schedule indicates significant things can be accomplished in a set period of time, when in reality the relationship may just be getting started, and fruit may be down the road.

A predetermined schedule also fails to consider individual rates of growth. In their book *Organic Discipleship*, McCallum and Lowery describe the Christian mentoring relationship as a living organism, part of the larger living organism that makes up the body of Christ. As a living entity, it will grow, develop, and take on characteristics of its own over time: “Growth usually happens not with great speed but with great depth, not with hurried steps but with a deliberate gait.” Stoddard agrees and would further suggest that when mentoring becomes overly structured or restricted by schedules, new thinking or real learning is hindered. When growth is the goal, schedules should further growth, not the program.

**Commitment**

Traditional mentoring programs are built on a high level of commitment. The mentor and mentee make a commitment to each other; they commit to a weekly contact; they commit to a relationship for six or twelve months; they commit to pray for each other regularly; and they often commit to attend a celebration event when the term ends. Long encourages mentors to downplay commitment in the beginning due to the postmodern tendency to struggle with the idea of commitment. He believes that because commitment is a puzzling issue for this age group, it works better to build commitment as

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142 Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 49, 44.


144 Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 30.

145 Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 49.

146 Vickie Kraft, *The Influential Woman* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 188.
they go. It is more desirable to call postmoderns to commitment instead of demanding it up front. Stoddard recommends entering the relationship with no official level of commitment. Both parties should be free to leave if the relationship does not meet their needs. He sees the requirement for a twelve- or eighteen-month commitment as unnecessary pressure. In his thinking, it is up to the mentee to continue the relationship, and if it is valuable it will survive on its own merits and not as the result of an obligation. He suggests the relationship should last as long as the mentee keeps coming back, and the schedule only go as far as the next meeting. This type of freedom allows the relationship to develop naturally and to stop naturally. The commitment on the part of the mentee should be to the mentoring process, not the outward trappings. In summary, postmoderns belong to a generation that is not motivated by a sense of duty. They find formal, organized programs to be structure-heavy and unattractive. Instead they prefer informality, options, and flexibility. To better meet the needs of postmoderns, a mentoring relationship should not be required to fit into a predetermined block of time.

*Hypothesis 3: Nature of the Interaction*

Once a mentoring pair has been established, the content or focus of the relationship must be determined. What will be the topic of discussion? How will information be passed from one to the other? How will the mentee learn from her mentor? There are generally two ways to approach the nature of the interaction: (1) a teaching focus where the knowledge of the mentor is prominent, or (2) a relational focus where shared experiences are prominent.


Mentee Focus

Traditional programs are typically mentor-focused; the relationship centers on what the mentor knows, her achievements, or her “wisdom.” The mentor is seen as the knowledgeable authority figure who takes the mentee under her wing for counsel and guidance. Donna Otto, founder of Mentoring for Mothers[^149] and author of *Finding a Mentor, Being a Mentor*, presents a mentoring model that represents the mentor focus. She describes the mentoring relationship as a deliberate transfer of wisdom from one person to another, and the mentee is seen as a receptacle into which the faith and wisdom of the mentor is poured[^150]. She encourages older women to seek a mentee to pass on the mentor’s godly convictions[^151]. This arrangement is heavily dependent on the knowledge of the mentor and has a high probability of failure if the mentor’s knowledge and passion does not match the mentee’s interests.

Otto offers a “30 Week Mentoring Guide,” or curriculum for developing young women according to the Titus 2 mandate. Mentoring programs such as this one have a teaching focus, the mentor essentially takes on a teaching role, and the program provides a suggested curriculum or materials for discussion. The goal is the transfer of important information from mentor to mentee. For many years mentoring has focused on the wisdom and agenda of the mentor; the mentee takes the position of a passive learner and absorbs the wisdom of the mentor as various topics are discussed. Though this proactive attitude on the part of mentors is to be admired and encouraged, young women tend to avoid what appear to be cookie-cutter programs.

[^149]: This mentoring program was developed in 1991, and its stated purpose is to “give younger women the opportunity to hear and be encouraged by an older woman’s godly perspective on life.” The program is built around a lead teacher who presents material to mentoring pairs, who then discuss the material. Otto, *Finding a Mentor*, 240-241.

[^150]: “Mentoring calls for the commitment, focus, and single-mindedness of a person willing to pour his or her life, faith, and knowledge of God into another person.” Ibid., 17-18.

[^151]: Ibid., 49.
Baron Friedrich von Hugel, a man committed to mentoring his adult niece in the early 1900s, warned against the tendency to grow people into a particular mold: “Souls are not dittos.”\textsuperscript{152} He instead felt the mentor should concentrate on developing the mind of the mentee so that thoughts, understanding, and perspectives are broadened and a love for Christ is encouraged. When a mentor is anxious to impart what they know to the mentee, there could be pressure, albeit unintentional, on the mentee to become like the mentor.

Keith R. Anderson, Academic Dean at Mars Hill Graduate School and Spiritual Formation Dean at Northwestern College, and Randy Reese, President of a Christian leadership foundation, introduce a new worldview of mentoring and represent the position of several authors who write after 2000 when they insist that mentoring is not about the mentor: “If there is a desire to instruct and tutor another in the ways that you have found useful, perhaps it is time to think again. Mentoring is not about telling. It is about listening—to the Holy Spirit and to the life of the other.”\textsuperscript{153} In reference to the mentor, people should not “assume the mentor’s task is to do something for the other person by teaching, correcting, or otherwise giving something the mentor possesses, something the mentoree lacks.”\textsuperscript{154} For Anderson and Reese, the goal is not to “pour into” another or copy a perfect plan but to listen and discern where this particular mentee needs to go. They identify several mentoring pitfalls and include the “assembly line syndrome” where the mentee is shaped into a predetermined form, and the “wisdom dispenser” approach that considers the mentee a receptacle to be filled. McCallum and Lowery agree and posit that there should be no curriculum or lesson plan but instead a creative and


\textsuperscript{153} Anderson and Reese, \textit{Spiritual Mentoring}, 28.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 51.
interactive process guided by mentoring principles. Also in agreement is David Stoddard, who believes that programs with a teaching focus tend to tell people how to carry out various responsibilities the right way instead of helping people solve their problems or reach their potential. He further believes people are tired of learning concepts that are not connected to real life. He suggests it is not the mentor’s job to give answers but to help the mentee to find answers because this approach is more likely to cause changes in the mentee’s thinking and behavior.

With the postmodern generation in mind, Lois Zachary, President of Leadership Development Services, gives advice to the business world in *The Mentee’s Guide to Mentoring: Making Mentoring Work for You* and best explicates the mentee focus. She argues that the mentee should take the initiative and drive the relationship. Mentor and mentee should form a reciprocal mentoring partnership where both have responsibilities. Zachary maintains that since the active participation of the mentee is crucial to the learning process, it is more appropriate to focus the relationship on developmental goals the mentee herself establishes. Instead of one pouring into the other, mentor and mentee work collaboratively to reach those goals. In this arrangement the mentor brings knowledge and experience to the relationship, but mentor and mentee learn and grow together as they share the journey. The mentor is not expected to “know everything” but to wisely guide, counsel, and encourage the mentee through the learning process. This takes the mentor out of the role of all-knowing authority and places her in the role of partner, and the mentee is able to make valuable contributions to the process. Zachery’s approach is in harmony with the constructive-developmental theory in that she


encourages the mentee to do an honest self-appraisal and identify what she needs to work on before the mentoring relationship begins:

In practical terms this means that as the mentee, you are in charge of your own learning. Together with your mentor, you define your specific learning needs, identify what it is you want to learn, formulate learning goals, identify relevant learning resources, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate the learning that results.

Professor, Researcher, and Business Consultant Norman H. Cohen supports the mentee-focused approach and adds that the mentor’s first responsibility is to discern and understand the mentee and her needs. He notes that in the original model of mentoring, more responsibility was placed on the mentor for constructive outcomes, but now more of the responsibility has shifted to the mentee. He sees the achievement of the mentee’s personal goals under wise guidance as the purpose of mentoring. When there is a mentee focus, the mentee is an active participant in the process, she is clear about what she wants to learn, and she has a vision for how she can change. Recent secular and Christian publications advance the argument that the mentee should determine the mentoring agenda instead of the mentor. Both report better results when the relationship is based on what the mentee needs to learn instead of what the mentor knows and wants to impart. This change in focus significantly impacts the nature of mentoring interaction.

Shared Experiences

As Daniel Egeler sees it, it is not enough for postmoderns to hear the truth; it must be presented in a believable format. They best understand and accept truth when it

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158 A discussion of this theory can be found on pages 53-54.

159 Ibid., 31.


161 Ibid., 33. The constructive-developmental theory of human growth also posits that the mentee must be an active agent in her own growth for development to take place. Popp and Portnow, “Developmental Perspective on Adulthood,” 52.
is enshrouded in personal stories that include practical applications.\textsuperscript{162} In other words, they are most influenced by lived-out truth. Christian postmoderns tend to see faith as more than belief; for them it is a way to live. They learn truth when the mentor shares openly about her own personal experiences or when the mentor and mentee examine together the mentee’s experiences. When the nature of the mentoring interaction is shared experience, the field is leveled and mentor and mentee find similarities, acceptance, and hope. As stories unfold, the mentee is able to evaluate her situation in light of the mentor’s experience and wisdom. Anderson and Reese include the autobiographical element, where the life of another is explored through the stories of daily living as an essential component of mentoring.\textsuperscript{163} It is here that life experiences are compared, and new understandings and a broader perspective becomes possible. Stoddard states, “Principles communicated through story have a more profound effect on people and their lives than ideas presented outside the scope of human experience.”\textsuperscript{164} Lutheran pastor Walter Wangerin Jr. believes this is because stories are able to convey the realities and relationships of the faith better than any other form of communication. Stories cause one to think, analyze, solve, remember, and have the ability to involve the whole self in the experience.\textsuperscript{165}

In an article oriented toward how corporate organizations can benefit from storytelling, Terrence Garguilo says, “Stories are fundamental to the way we learn and to the way we communicate. They are the most efficient way of storing, retrieving, and conveying information. Because hearing a story requires active participation by the

\textsuperscript{162} Egeler, \textit{Shaping the Next Generation}, 74.

\textsuperscript{163} Anderson and Reese, \textit{Spiritual Mentoring}, 37.

\textsuperscript{164} Stoddard, \textit{The Heart of Mentoring}, 24.

listener, stories are the most profoundly social form of human interaction and communication.\textsuperscript{166} Additional benefits of storytelling include the discovery of common ground, experiences take on depth, and feelings are more adequately expressed. Stories also help one to understand another’s perspective, heal, and develop personal bonds.\textsuperscript{167} The secular world has discovered how stories can help them transform their particular culture, make needed changes, and facilitate connections between people. Stories can lead to a new way of thinking about the company. Because of their unique ability to assist communication, many corporations now use stories as part of their management practices.

Research by psychologist James W. Pennebaker brings a fascinating element to the discussion. He discovered that “excessive holding back of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can place people at risk for both major and minor diseases.”\textsuperscript{168} Pennebaker used a number of physiological monitoring devices on his research subjects and was able to document that when people disclose their deepest thoughts or secrets, a number of immediate physiological changes take place,\textsuperscript{169} leading to the conclusion that it takes physical and mental energy to maintain inhibition. As a result, people who withhold important things often experience negative physical effects.\textsuperscript{170} Sharing traumatic events is a means of letting go so the body can heal. When people talk about upsetting events they often receive insight into the situation, learn more about themselves, and change the way they feel about a situation.

\textsuperscript{166} Gargiulo, “Power of Stories,” 5.

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 6.


\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 61.

\textsuperscript{170} In contrast, after disclosing a personal experience, research subjects showed changes in brain wave patterns, skin conductance levels, a drop in blood pressure and heart rate, and improvement in immune function. Ibid., 66.
David’s confession in Psalm 32 is an example of this phenomenon. When he kept silent about his sin he found himself groaning; he felt like his bones were wasting away; he felt the heavy hand of God upon him; and his strength dried up (32:3-4). Hiding his sin was definitely taking a physical toll. However, through confession he gained insight (8) and experienced relief (11). A mentoring partnership based on shared experiences allows this kind of healing conversation to take place. Sharing the struggles and failures of daily life with an accepting and insightful mentor could be what is needed to calm the anxiety many postmoderns experience. And, like David, as they discuss these things they can not only experience relief but gain insight into changes they might need to make.

The constructive-developmental theory of adult growth posits that people grow when they are able to understand and make new meaning of their life experiences.\(^{171}\) At about age twenty, the experiences of young adults become more complex, and in the years that follow many need help to make sense of their lives. They reach the limit of their understanding, and this is typically when mentors come into play. Developmental movement will more likely take place when the mentee shares a particular circumstance with the mentor, and they examine the limitations of the mentee’s thinking and explore a broader perspective. As a mentor shares her life experiences, how God was present or what she learned, the mentee is helped along in the process of critical reflection. In Christian mentoring, the mentor also introduces biblical principles for the mentee to consider. The mentee’s immediate and limited perspective is now stretched to include new possibilities and outcomes. As the mentee recognizes similarities and patterns that match, there is an opportunity to make new meaning of what has happened. When life experiences are shared, it gives the mentee a new context for understanding God, righteous behavior, and the journey of faith. This happens most readily when the

\(^{171}\) A discussion of this theory can be found on pages 51-52.
mentee’s own experiences are the subject of examination and are compared with the mentor’s experiences: “As we hear people’s stories, we will probably gain their permission to enter into their pain...If we are older we can share our own points of pain. We can then provide the perspective that only age brings.”

For women in particular, an essential part of the mentoring relationship is friendship, a place where both women will receive validation and support. In her D.Min. dissertation on mentoring, Lynn Etta Manning makes this observation, “Most women thrive in and naturally desire relationships...Women bring deeper understanding to other women regarding the physical, psychological, emotional, relational, sexual, hormonal, and experiential commonalities and can most effectively relate to one another on these various levels.” Pat O’Connor also speaks to postmodern women’s friendships and advocates the necessity of authentic relationships in light of their distaste for institutional or programmatic structures. For women, modern or postmodern, sharing life experiences is essential to building a bond of friendship and support, but this is particularly important for the relationally oriented younger woman.

**Authenticity**

Robert Webber emphasizes the importance of being authentic with postmoderns: “They insist that people be authentic. Don’t pretend you’ve got it all together, spiritually or otherwise. Admit your mistakes and struggles, for then we can work on them together. No posers allowed.” It is important that mentors show

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themselves to be real people who have real problems instead of attempting to be perfect role models. Carol Brazo explains that everyone has been damaged by sin:

None of us is whole. None of us reached adulthood without broken places in our lives. It is a gift of enormous measure to share our brokenness with others. Sharing allows others to see areas in which God is at work. It allows them into the Healer’s office to watch the miracle begin. And it reassures us the miracle we seek can be found at his feet.\(^{176}\)

When mentors are authentic, trust is developed, and their faith and values are taken more seriously. Postmoderns will listen to a mentor who speaks the truth, is honest, and lives an authentic life.

The Apostle Paul was willing to be transparent and share his life experiences (1 Thess 2:8). He told the Corinthians that when he arrived in their city he was weak, fearful, and trembling (1 Cor 2:1-3). There were also times he had felt afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down (2 Cor 4:8-9). He admitted that when he landed in Macedonia he was embroiled in outward conflict and was inwardly fearful (2 Cor 7:5). He revealed that he struggled with a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7-10). Early in his ministry he went to Jerusalem to speak with the church leaders privately because he was somewhat doubtful that his work was acceptable (Gal 2:1-2). He admitted that he needed prayer to speak boldly (Eph 6:19). When encouraging his mentee Timothy, Paul mentioned his own sinful past as a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent aggressor. As a result he saw himself as the one who needed Christ’s mercy the most (1 Tim 1:13-16).

Even though he was a godly role model, Paul was the first to admit his weaknesses.

We also see amazing transparency in Israel’s greatest king, David. His psalms, some of which read like journal entries, reveal times of painful emotional crisis (Ps 6:2, 6-7), frustration (Ps13:1-2), distress (Ps 18:6), abandonment (Ps 22:1), grief (Ps 31:9-13), despair (Ps 42:5-6), and heartbreaking sin (Ps 51:1-17). These transparent writings continue to encourage and instruct believers.

\(^{176}\) Brazo, *Divine Secrets of Mentoring*, 79.
These findings indicate there is greater growth potential when the nature of the mentoring interaction is relational rather than didactic. There is greater motivation to grow when the mentee’s own goals are in play, greater insight when she shares her personal experiences and compares them with her mentor’s experiences, and greater encouragement when she sees the work and grace of God operating in her mentor’s life.

**Summary and Conclusions of the Literature Review**

**Research Results**

“For many reasons, the practice and wisdom of mentoring has been weakened in our society…Restoring mentoring as a cultural force could significantly revitalize our institutions and provide the intergenerational glue to address some of our deepest and most pervasive concerns.”  

These words of Sharon Parks eloquently describe the situation found in many churches today—weak mentoring practice and lost potential. In response to declining interest in traditional mentoring programs, this D.Min. project sought to discover the elements of a mentoring program that will meet the needs of postmodern women. The literature review supports a new worldview of mentoring based on postmodern preferences. The current research reveals the following:

1. Postmodern women will be attracted to a mentoring program that allows them to choose their mentor. Having been raised in the self-esteem movement with constant assurance they are unique, these young women resist formal, organized programs where everyone fits into a predetermined slot. They also live in an open-source world, which means they expect to have input into situations that affect them. And, in contrast to their seemingly optimistic exterior, the trust of these young women is not automatic—it must be earned by an authentic life lived

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out before them. A program that artificially pairs them with a mentor will not meet their needs.

2. Postmodern women will be attracted to a program that values flexibility. Postmodern women were raised to be busy, and their schedules are full. Most of them work, and some have additional family and church responsibilities. They also tend to be commitment averse and are hesitant to make long-term commitments. Their busy schedules, preference for flexibility, and reluctance to commit means they find required mentoring schedules restrictive. Though they like the idea of meeting regularly, programs that require a weekly contact overwhelm them.

3. Postmodern women will be attracted to a program that promotes shared experiences. In their estimation, the opportunity to share their life experiences and hear their mentors’ life experiences is the best way to learn how to be a godly woman. Shared experiences give the relationship authenticity, create the community they desire, and are preferred over a structured curriculum. Howard Hendricks and his son William succinctly summarize the findings of this literature review as they give advice to those establishing a mentoring program in their church: “First, programs for mentoring succeed or fail depending on the extent to which they honor the fundamental law that mentoring involves a relationship, not a program.”

Additional Research Needs

Since postmoderns have been adults only a few years, there is still much to learn about them. Still lacking in the literature is research on effective ways to bring the generations together so young women will know the older women well enough to identify mentors. It would be helpful if future studies target the exact source of

\[\text{178 Hendricks and Hendricks, As Iron Sharpens Iron, 231.}\]
postmodern anxiety so mentoring can be more effective. Researchers also need to explore the best way to prepare mentors so they might be successful with postmodern women.

The Appropriateness of the Current Project

There has been an explosion in mentoring publications in the last twenty years. A vast resource of information is available on mentoring in the business world, in education, or with disadvantaged youth, each offering recommendations unique to those disciplines. Men have written many of the Christian mentoring publications, which tend to focus on spiritual discipleship or developing leaders. Modern women have written most of the resources that address mentoring Christian women, which tend to follow modern preferences. These programs are already in place, and many of them struggle to attract young women. This study contributes to the research as it offers mentoring practices suitable for Christian young women who seek mentors in a world that has become postmodern in many ways.
The research problem originated from a situation in the field—the loss of young participants in traditional mentoring programs for Christian women. This problem led to the development of the research question: What are the elements of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of postmodern women? Examination of traditional mentoring programs led to the identification of three potential problem areas:

1. Traditional programs rely on someone other than the women involved to pair mentor and mentee.
2. Traditional programs typically require a high level of structure and commitment.
3. Traditional programs tend to focus on the transfer of wisdom or information from mentor to mentee.

The problems areas identified led to the development of three problem questions:

1. How do postmodern women prefer to be paired with a mentor?
2. How do postmodern women prefer to structure the relationship?
3. What do postmodern women want to learn from their mentor?

The literature review further established the need for this study; as a result of the postmodern shift in Western society, young women seek mentoring relationships that are in harmony with their unique postmodern preferences. Mentoring practices in the Christian community have tended to follow a traditional format that is more modern in character. To mentor and grow the next generation of Christian women, research was
needed to better understand their world and discover more effective mentoring methods. To discover the elements of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of postmodern women, one must first identify their needs. The literature review provided direction for isolating the needs that impact mentoring and suggested the following three hypotheses:

1. The first element of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an opportunity to choose her mentor. Postmoderns are relational people and when it comes to mentoring, young women will look for a woman with whom they can relate and build a friendship. Not just any older woman is a candidate due to their conviction that age does not necessarily qualify one to be a mentor. It is important that the young woman feel an attraction to this woman based on respect or a perceived similarity. They also have a tendency to be skeptical and trust only those about whom they know something. Postmodern women tend to resist pairings with older women they do not know.

2. The second element of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is a flexible schedule. These women avoid programs that are structure and commitment heavy. Their lives are busy, and they prefer to meet with a mentor when their schedules permit or a need arises. Required contact seems artificial and unnecessary. They want a mentoring relationship to be more like a friendship; friends interface naturally because they want to, not because they have to.

3. The third element of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an informal relationship where life experiences are mutually shared. Mentoring for the postmodern is a relationship, not a time of instruction. Her desire is to talk about her on-going life experiences and hear about her mentor’s life experiences. She tends to learn more from experiences, so transparent conversation about life will be her priority.

The research was then limited to and designed to test these three hypotheses.
The Research Method

Once a researcher determines what is to be studied, the next task is to decide how it is to be studied. This applied research project studied the problem using the case study method of investigation:\(^1\):

Case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves. A form of qualitative descriptive research, the case study looks intensely at an individual or small participant pool, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group and only in that specific context. Researchers do not focus on the discovery of a universal, generalizable truth, nor do they typically look for cause-effect relationships; instead, emphasis is placed on exploration and description.\(^2\)

The best research design is one that allows full investigation of the research question.\(^3\) Case study allows this full investigation and was the appropriate method for this research for the following reasons:

- A qualitative research approach is more effective when there is a paucity of information on a particular subject. Though there is a substantial amount available on mentoring in various contexts, this researcher was not able to find research focused on mentoring postmodern Christian women. The case study method afforded the opportunity to collect a greater depth of information and explore the topic in detail through in-depth interviews with selected postmodern women.\(^4\)

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4. Ibid., 7-8.
Qualitative research is appropriate when the goal is to understand a problem from the participant’s point of view.\textsuperscript{5} To more fully understand the problem and why it exists, the most reliable information will come from the young women themselves. Case study research often utilizes interviews as the major source of data because they yield a broad and rich source of information.\textsuperscript{6} The information collected from these women can be subjected to systematic analysis to better understand the situation and extract relevant meaning.

This study sought to understand a contemporary phenomenon, mentoring, in its real-life context.\textsuperscript{7} The case study method allowed the researcher to collect information from participants who were currently being mentored and could speak from current personal experience.

One purpose of a case study is to shed light on why certain decisions are made and how they affect a particular situation.\textsuperscript{8} This study sought to know why young women decide not to participate in traditional mentoring programs.

Case study research is the preferred method when a “how” question is being posed.\textsuperscript{9} In answering the question of how one can know if the case study method should be used, Yin says, “There’s no formula, but your choice depends in large part on your research question(s). The more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g., “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant.”\textsuperscript{10} This research

\textsuperscript{5} Hancock and Algozzine, Doing Case Study Research, 8.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 39.


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{10} Yin, Case Study Research, 4.
sought to answer the question, “How can a mentoring program be effective for postmodern Christian women?”

- Finally, the case study method suited this researcher’s ministry goals. I have been ministering to young women for over twenty years in the Houston area and wanted to see if what I observed was true on a broader scale. Though helpful, personal knowledge of postmodern characteristics was not enough; I needed to hear from the women themselves. Case study is the best method to use when the researcher wants to listen to the thoughts of others. And finally, to propose changes in mentoring methods, I also needed reliable evidence from young women to convince skeptical older women that changes need to be made.

The design of this particular case study is instrumental in that it seeks to better understand a problem and the circumstances behind it.\(^{11}\) This study is more interested in examining the mentoring preferences of young women instead of the practice of mentoring itself. In many cases mentoring ceases to take place because programs are designed, or continue a design that is attractive to the older women involved. Though it is necessary to have knowledge of effective mentoring practices to conduct this study, the focus is on gaining insight into what is appealing to younger women.

This case study is descriptive in design and identifies themes that emerged from interviews with fourteen postmodern women that describe their mentoring preferences. The young women are the objects of the study and key participants in the research because they are the ones who seek mentoring. Their opinions and needs must be discovered and honored if mentoring is to be successful.

\(^{11}\) Hancock and Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research*, 32.
Development of the Case Study Instrument

The next task in research design is to determine the best way to collect data. Asking questions is the best way to gather information concerning someone’s personal attitudes, opinions, or preferences, and therefore questions play a major role in conducting qualitative research. To conduct an effective case study that is based on verbal data, Robert K. Yin posits the researcher must be able to ask good questions that are based on a firm grasp of the problem being studied.\(^\text{12}\) However, fellow researchers point out that the task of asking questions to measure attitudes and opinions is not a simple one.\(^\text{13}\) Care must be taken to ask the right questions in the right way to obtain reliable data.

The primary research instrument the researcher used to obtain verbal responses from the participants during an interview was a questionnaire.\(^\text{14}\) This technique was chosen because it allowed the interviewer to direct the discussion, clarify any questions on the part of the participants, and afforded flexibility to further draw out incomplete or superficial responses. The intention was to allow the interview dialog to be fluid and therefore encourage a rich flow of data. Based on information obtained through the literature review, open-ended questions were formulated to address the three hypotheses. Open questions were preferred because they are more likely to reveal the respondent’s original thoughts, allow for a larger range of responses, allow for greater expression of feelings or attitudes, and may elicit unexpected data that will be useful.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{12}\) Yin, *Case Study Research*, 69.


\(^{14}\) This questionnaire can be found in appendix A.

The questionnaire had three sections with each addressing a particular hypothesis. Section 1 asked the participant to describe the best way to be paired with a mentor. Section 2 asked the participant to describe a preferred structure for the relationship. Section 3 asked the participant to describe the preferred nature of the mentoring interaction. To build validity, each question was asked three different ways to determine if the participant was consistent in her responses and to draw out more information. Before asking the research questions, about five minutes was utilized to get acquainted with the participant and establish rapport.

To reduce potential bias on the part of the researcher, a question to explore possible rival explanations was added to section 1. A rival explanation is one that suggests the outcome of the research is due to an influence other than the one predicted. The most likely rival explanation of why young women are not participating in traditional programs is they are not interested in being mentored. Therefore, the participants were asked if the desire to be mentored was prevalent in their demographic.

Jerry Wofford, Adjunct Professor in Doctor of Ministry at Dallas Theological Seminary reviewed the first draft, and adjustments to the instrument were made according to his suggestions. A random sample of five women tested the second draft to determine if the questions were understood in the manner the researcher intended. Necessary adjustments to the instrument were then made again. The third draft was used in the pilot case study. The questionnaire was not distributed to any of the participants. It was only for my use as I conducted the interviews.

The target group consisted of women under thirty-five who had a postmodern mindset. A second questionnaire was constructed to determine if the potential participants

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16 Yin warns that since case study researchers must understand the issues and problems before research is conducted, they are more prone to bias. Bias is reduced when a researcher is open to contrary findings or rival explanations. Yin, *Case Study Research*, 72.
had a postmodern worldview and qualified for the research.\textsuperscript{17} This written questionnaire was designed according to a consensus of scholars’ opinions concerning postmodern characteristics and was composed of twenty-eight closed questions. Closed questions were chosen because this format enabled quick evaluation and results. Each question was asked twice, once in a positive statement, and once in a negative statement to check the respondent’s consistency. Wofford also reviewed this instrument, which was then tested on five random women after which one question was eliminated, one confusing word was changed, and two more questions were re-worded to be clearer. This questionnaire was emailed to the prospective participants and the results tabulated before an interview was scheduled. Of the fifteen women who agreed to participate in this research, one did not qualify as postmodern and was therefore not invited to participate. Answers provided on this questionnaire were not part of the research results.

The Case Studies

This study examined three cases with each case being treated as a separate study. The same questions were asked in the same manner in each case, but the responses came from three different sources. The data collected from each case was then triangulated to determine if all cases supported the hypotheses.

Three Dallas area programs were studied. These programs were selected on the basis of the presence of a mentoring program for young women, a minimum participation rate of 30 percent postmodern mentees, willingness to participate in the study, and accessibility to the researcher. The cases chosen represent three different approaches to mentoring: a traditional approach, a postmodern approach, and a hybrid approach. Because these ministries were gracious enough to allow complete access to their program and participants and are still active ministries, the researcher and her

\textsuperscript{17} This questionnaire can be found in appendix B.
advisor decided to keep their identity confidential. They will be referred to as Case A, Case B, and Case C. To encourage honest feedback, the identity of the participants has been kept confidential, and they are referred to by number.

The interviews were conducted at each case site where the interviewer and participant met privately for the interview. Interviews for Case A took place May 24-26, 2010, interviews for Case B took place June 2-3, 2010, and interviews for Case C took place July 14-20, 2010.

*Detailed Description of the Cases*

**Case A**

Case A participants were seminary students who chose to participate in a peer mentoring program designed to provide encouragement and support as they adjusted to the demands of master’s level work in a city and sometimes a country that is new to them. This seminary attracts conservative students with an intellectual bent and a heart to serve God around the world. Sometimes women arrive on this campus feeling alone and overwhelmed. Others bring with them wounds from dysfunctional family life. This program offers a more experienced student to encourage and help the newer student adjust and thrive while in seminary.

The advisor to women students designed and currently directs the program. She is responsible for the oversight of all women students.\(^{18}\) Each female student meets with this advisor upon entering seminary, and those who are interested are matched with a mentor based on the advisor’s extensive background in assessing the needs of women seminary students.\(^{19}\) The matches are suggested based on the advisor’s first-hand

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\(^{18}\) She envisioned this program as a result of her academic responsibilities, and this desire to effectively mentor students culminated in Doctor of Ministry research during 2008-2009.

\(^{19}\) The program director engaged in D.Min. research to determine the needs and issues of women seminary students.
knowledge of both women. The mentor’s name is given to the student, and the student has to initiate contact. Mentors do not volunteer; the program director selects them based on gifting, potential, or recommendations from other students, especially those in the program. The director then trains and mentors the mentors. This program has been in place two years, and there are currently nine trained peer mentors serving their fellow students.

The stated purpose of this program is to provide suitable, trained peer-mentors for those students seeking a deeper relationship of authenticity, accountability, and encouragement in addition to or in place of professional counselors, staff, and faculty who may not always be available. Once the women are matched the relationship is allowed to develop organically. The pair will determine how often they will meet and what they will talk about. The five research participants in this case ranged in age from twenty-three to twenty-eight. This program represents a hybrid approach to mentoring—a combination of structural and organic elements. The structured element focuses on the mentors who are identified, provided with training, and on-going mentoring. The mentoring relationship has no required structure and is allowed to develop according to the needs and preferences of the two women involved. The women maintain the relationship as long as they desire while both are attending seminary. The relationships are closed out when the peer mentor approaches graduation.

Case A also was a pilot case to test the research instrument, design, and reliability and to refine the researcher’s interviewing and data analyzing skills. This pilot case shaped the approach to the following two cases in these ways:

1. The research instrument was found to be effective in eliciting the pertinent information. The women understood the questions in the manner intended and gave relevant and valuable data related to the hypotheses.

2. Based on information gathered in the pilot case, more time was added to the initial get-acquainted opportunity at the beginning of the interview. In addition to
general information concerning occupation, home, and school background, they were asked to briefly describe their spiritual background as it was realized that the participant’s religious experiences might influence her mentoring preferences. The purpose was to see if there was a connection between the amount of Christian training they received previously and the type of interaction they preferred with a mentor. Would those who had received training in the church as children prefer to keep that teaching model in place when mentored?

3. The researcher added a summary question spontaneously at the end of the first interview. This question asked for recommendations or advice for developing a mentoring program that would appeal to the participant. This question yielded rich additional information. When answering this question, the participants revealed what was most important to them. This question was then added as part of the research instrument.

**Case B**

Case B consisted of participants in a church program that was specifically designed to appeal to postmodern women. These women were members of a large church located in a trendy, urban, upscale area of central Dallas. The historic church is sandwiched between shops, offices, restaurants, and nightlife and attracts many young professionals. This church has been intentional about cultivating an environment that would attract young adults. The mentoring program has been in place four years and was developed by a then twenty-eight-year-old seminary student who has since graduated and continues to oversee the program as staff liaison to women. By design, this program aims to connect women naturally through a fellowship opportunity offered six times a year. Since postmoderns are resistant to programs and over-organization, this mentoring opportunity has no organizational structure. The only structure consists of a scheduled bi-monthly dinner during which the older and younger women in attendance fellowship over
the meal and then listen to an older woman relate her life story or spiritual journey.20 This program is built on the conviction that younger women will be naturally mentored as they speak with and get to know older women and that ongoing mentoring relationships will develop on their own.

The program started as a way to assimilate young women into the larger church community. This traditionally older congregation had developed a somewhat exclusive culture that presented challenges for newcomers. A young adult ministry was drawing younger women, but these women found it difficult to connect to the rest of the church body. This program targets young women who value participation in the wider church community and intergenerational relationships. In the words of the program designer, “It was more a way to break down walls, to bring the younger women in and make them feel at home.”

Thus, the stated primary goal of this program is to help young women become a part of the church at large and build biblical community. The secondary goal is to provide an opportunity for young women to build multi-generational relationships and find an older friend to turn to when there is a need, someone who could be a mentor.

When asked to define mentoring, the program director first defined what mentoring is not:

Mentoring, especially in this day and age, is not sit down for one hour once a week and go over a program…When our generation sees something that is a program and not relational, we are not going to come because we have had enough of programs. You can get teaching anywhere. Built into that is our desire to know people and for people to be real and to be relational…It’s living life together, seeing that someone is flawed just like you are, that they need God’s word just like you do, that we are all in this together, that God created us for

Documents examined related to this program include a guideline given to the event speaker. She is alerted to the demographic to which she will be speaking—women in their 20s and 30s, and the questions with which they struggle. “Remember that many young women are struggling with being single, finding purpose in their lives, and living lives they would not have chosen for themselves…Just remember that what makes this program different is that it is NOT teaching they are coming for, it is to hear someone’s story and how God is seen in that person’s life.”
community. It should look more like a relationship than anything, more natural, invited into someone’s life.

This program is considered a mentoring program to the extent that one views mentoring first and foremost as a relationship. The director continues:

We are viewing this as a way for the younger and older to build relationships with one another. The young woman is naturally going to turn to that person when they need help and when they want someone to speak into their life, or if they want someone to meet with them more consistently, or to read a book with them. So, it is more leading the horse to water. Whether or not the horse decides to drink is their choice. So, we are letting them know –here’s some women, you are here, you can get to know them if you want to, but you can also walk out the door and never get to know anyone.

The only structure in the program is administrative. The director publicizes the event to the younger women, handles media contacts and anything in print, sets the agenda for the evening, assigns roles for the evening, emcees the event, and coordinates the event with the church. An older woman partners with her and finds the speaker, arranges for a host home, arranges for the food, and publicizes the event to the older women. Two other women help with various duties during the event.

This researcher attended an event to observe the activity first-hand. It was held at a large home close to the church. Dinner was catered and offered for eight dollars. Two older women greeted at the door and provided nametags. However, these women or anyone else present did not recognize me as a visitor, which may indicate the women do not know each other well. About two-thirds of those present were younger women.\footnote{This event took place in June and the lack of older women may have been due to the fact that some of them travel in the summer or visit second homes in another location.} They were animated and talking with other younger women initially. Most of the older women were involved with organizing the meal. After the women obtained their food, they tended to sit in mixed age groups, but younger women significantly outnumbered the older women at the tables. Everyone seemed to enjoy the lively conversations over dinner. After dinner an older woman transparently related her life story, and the younger
women listened attentively. However, I was told later that the speaker did not normally 
attend the event and was not available as a mentor; she had just agreed to speak to the 
women. After her talk, some women lingered to enjoy more fellowship time, but most 
said their farewells and headed home. Overall, there was a positive ambiance, and it was 
an attractive and enjoyable evening for everyone.

Since this program is organic in design, there is no way to know how many 
women serve as mentors or how many young women are being mentored. The bi-
monthly meetings typically draw fifty to sixty women, but there is a different mix of 
women at each event. Women tend to flow in and out, and each gathering looks different. 
A woman, younger or older, may attend just one dinner during the year, or she may 
attend all six.

The five participants in this case ranged in age from twenty-six to thirty-three. 
This program represents a completely organic approach to mentoring. Mentors and 
mentees are not identified, paired, or trained in any way, and no records are kept 
concerning mentoring activity. The only way to measure the effectiveness of this 
program is feedback from participants. The director often gets emails from enthusiastic 
young women communicating how much they enjoy this event, but there is no official 
feedback system in place for the mentoring aspect of the program.

Case C

Case C consisted of participants in a traditional mentoring program. This 
program has been in place for at least seven years at a mega church located in the 
suburbs. This expansive church campus of lush landscaping, flagstone, and bubbling 
fountains takes on the feel of a resort and tends to draw young families from the 
postmodern demographic. Because of its size, this church tends to do ministry

22 The current director thought the program had been in place much longer, but she was not sure.
demographically, and there are not many occasions when younger and older women are
together.

The director of the mentoring program is an older woman who took over the
existing program two years ago and was instructed to maintain what was in place. She is
a seminary graduate and assistant to the Women’s Ministry Director. The mentoring
program is promoted at the yearly women’s retreat, and young women are invited to sign
up for a mentor. The potential mentees fill out a survey detailing their preferences, and
then program leaders match them with a mentor. The women are matched based on their
surveys and prayer. This program emphasizes the prayer that is “poured into” the
matches. One of the participants believed the leadership prayed intensely over the
matches for months before they were made. Mentor and mentee meet at a kick-off event
where the importance of mentoring is discussed and mentoring resources are also
provided.

The mentoring director defines mentoring as an essential friendship:

Mentoring is walking beside a woman and doing life together. It is just a
friend. It is a friendship and it is essential. The younger women need life
experience and the older women can offer that. Some of them need Bible
knowledge and some of them just need life… What I have learned from them is
that they just want you to be real, and they just want you to walk with them and
listen to them and tell them the truth. They want authentic relationships.

The mentoring term lasts nine months during which the women are asked to
commit to regular contact. If a pair wants to continue beyond the nine-month term they
are encouraged to do so. The director felt one advantage of this limited term was that it
gave both women a graceful way to exit the relationship if it was not working. Even
though the leadership emphasized that the power of prayer makes good matches, they
also build in an exit strategy for matches that fail. The director estimates that about three
out of thirty to forty matches each term do not work. The program director checks on the

23 There are two relationships that have lasted as long as two years.
progress of each relationship once a month through email and invites feedback on how the relationship is going. If it is not going well, she encourages them to keep trying and gives suggestions. If the younger woman wants to discontinue the relationship, an attempt is made to pair her with a substitute mentor, but instead of being matched this second time on similarities, by necessity she is matched with whoever is currently available. If no substitute mentor can be found, the younger woman waits until the next term for a mentor. At the end of each term there is a celebration meeting where selected women give a testimony about the value of their relationship.

According to the director, about 40 percent of the young women choose to remain in the program after the first term. There are also about thirty new young women who join the program each year. These numbers would indicate 40 percent of the women (about eighteen) find the program valuable and continue to participate. According to these numbers (if 40 percent of the young women are retained, and thirty new women are added each year), the program should be growing. However, the number of young women being mentored has consistently been between thirty and forty each year. This number has been flat for several years, indicating the program is not growing but staying about the same. A closer look at these numbers tells another story. If thirty of the women are new each year, and the program usually has between thirty-five and forty young participants each year, it indicates a retention rate of only about 16 to 20 percent. This would indicate a significant attrition of young women takes place each term. It seems likely that more than three relationships each term are not working and probably fizzle out unreported.24 These numbers are in line with what is being observed on a larger scale; after six months, traditional mentoring programs only retain about 20 percent of the young women who participate.

24 Two of the participants revealed during their interview that if their match was not working well, they would not report this to the leadership.
There are currently thirty-six young women being mentored through this program. One of the volunteers for Case C did not qualify as postmodern, so this case had four participants who ranged in age from twenty-six to thirty-two.

**Description of Participants**

**Age of Participants**

To qualify for the research, a participant could not be older than thirty-five. The following chart compares participant age by case. The average age in Case A was twenty-six, in Case B twenty-eight, and in Case C twenty-nine.

**Figure 3.1. Participant’s Age by Case**

![Chart comparing participant age by case]

**Postmodern Worldview**

The following chart compares qualifying test scores by case. A postmodern response on every question produced a score of 63, equal postmodern and modern responses produced a score of 84, and a modern response on every question produced a
score of 103. To qualify as a participant, the score had to be 83 or below. The chart shows that while the scores on the qualifying questionnaire were close, Case A participants had a slightly stronger postmodern worldview, while Case C participants had the slightly weaker postmodern worldview.

Figure 3.2. Participant’s Postmodern Worldview

Research Procedures

The researcher contacted the leader of each participating site’s mentoring program and requested permission to use the program as a case study. A written copy of permission was then secured from each site before any data collection was carried out. The director was then sent a letter detailing why the site was chosen for study, what activities would take place at the site, how the results would be reported, and what the church could gain from the study.25 A copy of the interview instrument and qualifying

25 A copy of this letter can be found in appendix C.
questionnaire were also provided to her at this time. The director of the program then secured volunteers under the age of thirty-five willing to participate in the research and provided the researcher with names and contact information. The oldest participant in the research was thirty-three. The researcher contacted each volunteer to confirm their interest in the project and provide them with a qualifying questionnaire. Once the questionnaire was scored and the participant deemed qualified, a time and place for the interview was scheduled.

**Data Collection**

The research design included two units of analysis: the mentoring program and the mentee. However, the overall intent was to collect information about postmodern women who desire mentoring. Each particular program was examined in light of what it could reveal about the women being mentored. In each case the data was gathered using the following methods:

1. **Documents.** The program director provided the documents, which concerned the organization and structure of the program. These documents were examined for additional information related to the research question. These documents included an organization chart, mentee survey, schedule, vision statement, event checklist, mentor training information, and publicity documents. These documents were the first data source. The director of each program was also interviewed to understand the purpose of the documents, to secure a history of the program, and better understand how the program operated. The researcher also attended the bi-monthly mentoring opportunity for Case B on June 3, 2010 to observe the event and take notes.

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26 A table recording the questionnaire scores can be found in chapter 3.
2. **Focused in-depth interviews.** The researcher conducted these face-to-face, one-on-one interviews. Each participant was interviewed individually, and the interview lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes. The nature of the interview was conversational, and the purpose was to collect verbal data concerning the attitudes, feelings, and opinions of the respondents. Before the interview commenced the participant was told the overall purpose of the study and the specific purpose of the interview. She was assured there were no right or wrong answers, only her own personal preferences. Each participant was also told they would not be identified by name in the research write-up and that a general summary of the findings would be given to the program director. In an attempt not to bias responses, the participants were not made aware of the research hypotheses. After securing written permission, each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed word for word to ensure accuracy of information. These interviews served as a second data source.

3. **Observation notes.** The researcher took these notes during and after the interview for the purpose of noting nonverbal communication, areas of emphasis, demeanor of the participant, and identifying when a participant used the same or similar words but intended a different meaning. The researcher’s interview notes served as a third source of data.

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27 A focused interview is one that lasts a short period of time and concentrates on obtaining specific information.

28 The participants were told the overall purpose of the study was to develop more effective mentoring opportunities for young Christian women.

29 The participants were told the specific purpose of the interview was to determine her personal preferences concerning mentoring. She was also asked to think about mentoring in general since it was possible that her preferences may not be exactly like the program in which she was participating. Each participant understood the interview was not about the mentoring program in which she was engaged, but about her personal mentoring preferences.

Data Analysis

Once reliable data has been collected, the researcher must determine the best way to analyze or interpret the information: “Analysis is the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units.”\textsuperscript{31} There is no standard formula for analyzing case study evidence. Analysis is built on the researcher’s own thinking, the careful presentation of evidence, and consideration of alternate interpretations.\textsuperscript{32} Conclusions are based on the weight of the evidence.

The first step of analysis involved organization of the data. Data in this study was organized according to the following steps:

1. The recorded interviews were transcribed word-for-word. The interviews generated 152 single spaced typewritten pages of transcribed data.
2. The content of the interviews, documents, and researcher’s notes were read and coded into the following categories:\textsuperscript{33}
   - Items which related to mentor selection
   - Items which related to structure of the relationship
   - Items which related to the nature of the relationship
   - Repeated words
   - Repeated concepts
   - Unexpected themes or perspectives
   - Unrelated themes or perspectives

Once coded, the data was collected according to categories: “The evaluator-analyst begins by looking for ‘recurring regularities’ in the data. These regularities represent patterns that can be sorted into categories.”\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{32} Yin, \textit{Case Study Research}, 127.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 186-187.
In following these steps a case record was established for each of the three cases. All the major information needed for analysis was identified, coded, and put in a written record. This information was then assimilated into a narrative case study report for each case. This report is a descriptive picture of the program, participants, and their preferences for mentoring and can be found in chapter 4.

Analytic Strategies

Analysis must begin with the causal and theoretical statements that emerge from the data collected from the field and grounded in the specific case study context. Once this data has been organized and the cases described, analysis may commence. In analyzing this case study, three strategies were used: analysis based on the hypotheses, analysis based on triangulation, and the examination of a rival explanation.

Analysis Based on the Hypotheses

First, analysis was based on the hypotheses established prior to the fieldwork. These hypotheses guided the data collection and formed the focus of the study. To identify pertinent patterns, the analytic technique of pattern matching, the most common method for interpreting case study data, was used. The task is to discern what fits together in a meaningful way. This technique compares patterns that emerge from the data to previously predicted patterns. If the patterns match, the evidence is considered valid. The potentially relevant information from each case was assimilated into a description of themes and perspectives for each case and repeated and meaningful patterns were then identified.

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34 Patton, How to Use Qualitative Methods, 154.
35 Ibid., 158.
36 Ibid., 136.
37 Ibid., 184.
Each pattern identified was compared to the hypotheses for relevance and potentially meaningful information. In other words, did the patterns observed in the field match the ones the researcher predicted?38

Themes, perspectives, and patterns found in each case were then linked to the hypotheses and literature review and interpreted to determine whether or not the data supported the theoretical presuppositions and lends itself to replication logic. According to Hancock and Algozzine, research “involves finding patterns or irregularities in data, which in turn become tentative answers to questions.”39

**Analysis Based on Triangulation**

Once patterns were identified, the analytic technique of triangulation was used. The data from each case was summarized and then compared and contrasted with the data from the other cases. Similarities and differences were documented and the results examined to determine patterns across the cases. The collective evidence was then compared to the hypotheses and the literature review. If the evidence collected from all three cases is in agreement with the hypotheses and the information discovered in the literature review, replication logic may be claimed: “If two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed. The empirical results may be considered yet more potent if two or more cases support the same theory, but do not support an equally plausible, rival theory.”40

**Examination of a Rival Explanation**

The third analytic strategy examined a possible rival explanation for the research results. If the patterns identified match an explanation outside of the hypotheses,

38 Yin, *Case Study Research*, 140.

39 Hancock and Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research*, 3.

there is evidence the rival explanation is the correct one. If patterns do not match the rival explanation, it can then be ruled out. The rival explanation considered in this study was that young women are not participating in traditional mentoring programs because they are not interested in being mentored. If this rival explanation is true, then no mentoring program will be effective. However, if it can be established that young women do want mentors, then traditional mentoring programs will have to consider what changes need to be made.

Interpretation

Because these cases were not intended to be scientific samples representing a particular population, analytic generalization was used to interpret the results. In analytic generalization the results of the research are compared with the information yielded by the literature review and the previously developed hypotheses to determine causes, consequences, and relationships. Analytic generalization was used in chapter 5 to apply the research to a broader audience—that of postmodern Christian women.

41 Patton, *How to Use Qualitative Methods*, 158.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that may have contributed to the decline in participation of postmodern women in traditional church mentoring programs. This study asked and answered the question, “What are the elements of a mentoring program that will serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman?” This chapter summarizes the information collected and reports the meaningful findings the data supports, which was related to the research question and hypotheses. In this report each case is described, and direct quotes from the participants support a summary of the data related to the hypotheses. Information from the three cases is then triangulated to compare the data and results from three different perspectives and determine patterns across the cases. And finally, a rival explanation for the research problem is discussed.

The hypotheses formulated before the research began and tested by the research are as follows:

Hypothesis 1 states that the first element of a mentoring program that may serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an opportunity to choose the mentor. This hypothesis is based on research that reports postmoderns value natural

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1 Patton describes the report as one that will include a great deal of description. The experiences of people in the program are detailed to let the reader know what it was like from the participants’ point of view. Michael Quinn Patton, How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), 147.
relationships, options, and participation. ² These tendencies indicate that when it comes to mentoring, they will prefer to be connected with the mentor of their choice under natural circumstances.

Hypothesis 2 states that the second element of a mentoring program that may serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is a flexible meeting schedule. This hypothesis is based on research that reports postmoderns prefer to live under less structure and often see programmatic restrictions as stifling. ³ When applied to mentoring, it indicates they will prefer flexibility over commitment to a predetermined schedule.

Hypothesis 3 states that the third element of a mentoring program that may serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an informal relationship where life experiences are mutually shared. Postmoderns are relational people who desire authentic community. Informal sharing based on life experiences is a part of meeting people where they are and the foundation for an authentic relationship. Research also shows this generation is often unprepared for the demands of life once they leave home and tends to be more interested in processing life events with an experienced and qualified person than in structured learning opportunities. ⁴

² Webber notes a movement from fundamentalism to grace and freedom in the younger generation of believers. Individuality, spontaneity, and greater responsiveness to the Holy Spirit are part of this movement. When these values are applied in a mentoring context they would result in the freedom to choose a mentor based on individual needs, preferences, and the prompting of the Holy Spirit within the mentee. Robert E. Webber, The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 174-176.

³ Postmoderns live comfortably in a world of “chaord,” or a combination of chaos and order. They want flexibility within structure, and a free-form environment that is driven more by mission than schedule. Leonard Sweet, Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 81-82.

⁴ Postmodern researcher Rebecca Huntley reaches the conclusion that postmoderns are generally unprepared for adult life. Rebecca Huntley, The World According to Y: Inside the New Adult Generation (Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2006).
Case A

These five women were all young seminary students, and one of them was also a pastor’s wife. These women tended to be articulate and had well formed opinions. Two of the women grew up with a church background, one did not, and the church backgrounds of two are unknown. One participated in the program in the role of both peer mentor and mentee. The program director matched all of these women with their mentor. Four of the women gave the anticipated postmodern responses and confirmed the hypotheses. One of the four was from India, and it was informative to see that she also had strong postmodern preferences. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 had similar responses to all three hypotheses’ questions.

Participant 3’s mentoring relationship never really got off the ground. Mentor and mentee only met twice during the year. This young woman was strongly distrustful of me because we had not met before the interview. Trust seemed to be a significant issue for her; she used the word “trust” nine times in the interview, and when we were discussing the selection of a mentor she said, “I don’t trust people.” It was an awkward interview, and her body language indicated she was holding back and reluctant to give a whole lot of information. However, she still had strong convictions about how a mentoring relationship should look and contributed valuable data. The distrustful nature of this participant may indicate she is carrying significant wounds, as many in the postmodern generation do. It seemed apparent from her interview that this young woman would probably not do well in a traditional program where she was matched with someone she did not know or trust.

Participant 5 was particularly interesting because though she had a strong postmodern score on the qualifying questionnaire, she had a mix of both modern and postmodern preferences. When asked a question, she initially gave a typically modern response, but the more she was drawn out, the more postmodern preferences surfaced. Several of her responses were in conflict with each other. This participant grew up with a strong church background and was also a pastor’s wife and these factors may have influenced her initial responses. Her responses will be addressed separately.

_Hypothesis 1_

When asked to describe the best way for a mentee to find a mentor, four of the women said they would prefer to choose their own mentor. Participant 1 saw it as fundamental to the situation, “I think the biggest thing is being the one to search that out. I think it’s better for me to seek someone out because I think the mentor relationship will work better if I’m seeking that person out.” Participant 2 reflected, “I think ideally (it) would be for the younger woman to pick out who her mentor would be.” Participant 4 was clear about her opinion, “I am a firm believer that it’s the mentoree’s job to find the mentor… I hate it that it has come to where it has to be matched. That is just so unnatural.”

The women prefer to select their mentor because each one is looking for particular characteristics in a mentor, such as similar background experiences or struggles, someone who is spiritually mature, someone with wisdom and insight, a personality that is compatible with theirs, someone they think is further down the road than they are, someone they respect and trust, and someone who is living an authentic life. Different things were important to different women. For four of the women, it was important that they “click” with the mentor or that it was a “good fit.” If these elements were not present, they would not be inclined to invest in the relationship.
When asked how they felt about being paired with someone they had never met, two women thought it was scary, one said it would be easier not to do it that way, and one thought it uncomfortable and unnecessary. Four said they wanted a mentor they already knew in some way. Participant 4 commented, “It’s not one of those things you can just sign up for. This isn’t a potluck. It’s just not.” She went on to say that because women are relational, they would feel pressure to make the match work if someone else paired them with a mentor, and if it ended up not working, there would be additional stresses and awkwardness. Though they did not prefer for someone else to match them, two of the women thought it might work for shy women.6

Participant 5 preferred to be matched with a mentor. Based on her current experience, she thought third party pairing was helpful. Her mentor was selected for her, and it worked out well. She thought being matched based on a survey was a good idea. However, she also spoke of a failed match in a different program when she first arrived at seminary. The two women had nothing in common, it turned out to be awkward for both, and they only met one time. This experience did cause some skepticism and hesitation on her part when the program director offered to pair her with another mentor. She was not sure she wanted to try another match. Later in the interview she revealed that her church had a traditional mentoring program in place but she had no desire to participate because she did not trust the woman who was in charge of making the matches. When asked what would attract her to a mentoring program she said she would need to know a little bit about the mentor—where she had worked, gone to school, what equipped her to be a mentor, what skills or values she brought to the table. This was in conflict with her earlier statement that she would prefer to be matched by a third party based on a survey. She went on to say, “I would prefer to have a few choices, or for the director of the program

6 A common postmodern trait is that what works for one individual may not work for another. In all the cases this concept was frequently mentioned.
to come and say, ‘I really think this would be a good match. How do you feel about that?’” So, as the interview progressed, she also expressed a desire for some choice in the matter based on characteristics in the mentor that would appeal to her. In different places in the interview, this participant expressed a preference for both matching and choice.

It is interesting to evaluate the preferences of these women considering a third party matched all of them. To gain some insight here, it is helpful to look at the program. This program is unusual in that it was designed and is directed by a woman who is exceptionally knowledgeable in the field of mentoring. It is her job to discern the needs of entering students and help them succeed. She does not use a survey but pairs women based on first-hand knowledge of both. She also trains and mentors the peer mentors and in so doing increases the potential for successful relationships. When they were paired, the women interviewed were also new on campus and did not know any other women who could serve as potential mentors. If they were going to have a mentor, the only realistic option was to be paired with one. However, when asked to think in broader terms, four of the five women said they would prefer to choose their own mentor, and the fifth one said she would like to be offered some options.

Unexpected data revealed another interesting perspective concerning the choice of a mentor. Four of the women mentioned that though they prefer to choose their mentor, they are somewhat fragile about this process because they suspect the older women are not as interested in being mentors as they are in being mentored, and there is a good chance their request would be rejected. As one young woman said, “I wish there was more of a desire among women like my mom’s and grandmother’s age to mentor girls. Sometimes I don’t feel like you all want to, or you are too scared, or have all your insecurities about it. When really, I think my generation is willing, and waiting, and ready…Like I said, it’s the mentoree’s job to pursue, but we need to know we can pursue them.” Participant 2 mentioned the problem this way, “I feel like that is a big, major thing—just not knowing who to go to.” All the women expressed a desire for more
interest to be shown on the part of the mentor. Another unexpected theme related to this was a recommendation for more publicity concerning mentoring. Three of the women did not think it was a high enough priority with the older women and that enough was being done to promote it.

Three of the women also revealed that they did not want their mentor to be like a mother. They want the relationship to be more equal in status and the freedom to take or disregard the mentor’s advice without causing tension or alienation. They do not want the mentor to tell them what to do but to share her experiences and help them to think through theirs.

_Hypothesis 2_

When asked about their preferred meeting schedule, four of the women in this case thought the mentor and mentee should determine the meeting schedule, which would depend on personal schedules, life events, and particular needs at the time. Participant 3 remarked, “I really don’t know how to set schedules for this…I don’t think it should be scheduled meetings, just as needed.” Participant 4 thought the relationship should be scheduled out of desire instead of obligation, and the mentee should take responsibility for initiating contacts when she felt the need. “It would be ideal if I had free reign to contact her (the mentor) when I wanted to.” These participants valued freedom and flexibility in the meeting schedule. However, each of these women wanted some level of regular contact with their mentor.

As far as how long the mentoring relationship should last, two said forever, one said she could see how both a scheduled time and a flexible time frame would be advantageous, and one said it should be limited to a year. All the women hoped the relationship would continue indefinitely if a friendship had been developed.

Participant 5 preferred a regular schedule of weekly meetings arranged beforehand. She felt this was doable and did not require an unreasonable level of
commitment. This worked for her because both she and her mentor were at the seminary during the week, and it was convenient for them to meet over lunch once a week. When asked if she could keep this schedule if they were in different locations and she was working or had young children, she thought it would be more difficult to keep a weekly commitment. As far as duration of the relationship, she also preferred a one year scheduled term, but she also wanted the freedom to continue the relationship if a friendship had developed. She thought a scheduled term was advantageous because it would allow the women to move on to a new relationship if they needed to.

**Hypothesis 3**

This hypothesis concerned the nature of the interaction between the women. When asked if her preference was a formal approach that might include a curriculum for her development or an informal approach that develops according to personal needs, three of the women preferred an informal approach, one preferred some of both, and one preferred a formal contract that included a growth plan. Two mentioned they wanted an informal approach because their lives already included a lot of structure. Four women expressed that they would need different input at different times based on their life experiences and wanted flexibility to address those events. Participant 1 remarked, “I am always going to need something different; I can’t just structure it out.” All the women were open to studying a book or doing a Bible study if it fit their current context or needs.

When asked what was the best way to learn from a mentor, all the women said they learn best by transparently sharing personal experiences through conversation. Their first priority when meeting with their mentor was to share what is going on in their lives. They wanted to relate their stories and hear their mentor’s similar stories. Participant 5 was thoroughly postmodern in her response: “It’s important to be able to talk through things that I am learning or struggling with, things that I don’t really understand or that I’m confused about…Yeah, I think stories are the best, opening up about experiences
rather than lecturing or bringing a three-point outline to the table every time.” Participant 2 also wanted to learn by sharing experiences, “I very much ‘get’ things through talking to people and just unfolding things together…I would love to know her experiences because I would like to see what hers were in order to learn from that and be helped by that. I think that’s important.”

It was particularly important for the mentor to share struggles and failures with the mentee as well as triumphs. Participant 1 thinks, “…it’s hard to meet with someone who isn’t vulnerable with you because they kind of get this persona that they are perfect and wonderful. When someone is actually vulnerable and shares with you, it makes them real. So, that really meant a lot to me, to see her struggles.” Participant 4 elaborated, “In the postmodern world we want honesty over rightness.” In summary, all of these women said they learn primarily from experiences and secondarily through teaching. Again, conflicting statements came from participant 5. She initially said she wanted a formal contract with a growth plan but then said it would be important to “…just talk about things, having her truly listen to me and be able to fully tell her everything I need to about my experiences. And then have her listen to me, and then maybe comment on my situation, seeing from her own situation where she can feed into mine.” Once again, she expressed both modern and postmodern preferences throughout the interview.

Case A Summary

The hybrid nature of this mentoring program appeared to meet the needs of the young women interviewed. The program paired the students with a mentor but then allowed the relationship to develop organically. Though most of them preferred to choose their mentor, they realized the limitations of this preference in their current setting. Four of the five found the match that the program director suggested to be a workable one, and the lack of program requirements made them feel comfortable once the relationship was
initiated. Mentor and mentee met when it suited their schedules and spent their time talking about life events. The two women who grew up in the church had similar preferences to the one who did not when it came to the preferred nature of interaction between mentor and mentee; all preferred the informal sharing of experiences over a planned curriculum for their development.

This program had limitations regarding its suitability in other contexts. The success of the program was highly dependent on the skills of the program director, and it would be unusual to find another leader so well equipped, especially on the lay level. However, the hybrid approach of some structure and some organic elements could be easily transferred to other settings.

When statements in the transcribed interviews were coded, there were 332 statements in support of the hypotheses, and 51 that did not support the hypotheses, most of those coming from participant 5. The weight of evidence in Case A strongly supported the hypotheses.

**Case B**

The five women participating in this case were all career women holding down professional jobs. Four were single, and one was newly married. All of the women came from church-going homes but were fairly new to this church with the longest being there four years. Though all regularly attend the fellowship and mentoring opportunity, only one of the women had found mentors through this program; the other four are still hoping it will happen in time. This is most likely due to the fact that this program is organic in design, and no mentoring facilitation is provided. The Case B interviews were more challenging to conduct because all but one of these women did not have a clear concept of a mentor or mentoring. They frequently asked for clarification of or elaboration on a question before they could provide an answer. One of the women, the oldest participant at age thirty-three, was significantly more mature than the other four.
She was a seminary graduate with a biblical counseling degree and had been in Christian ministry for ten years. She had also been previously mentored when she was involved in a short-term missions project overseas. Her responses were more articulate and expressed a mature point of view. Three of the participants’ preferences were theoretical since they have never been in a mentoring relationship.

**Hypothesis 1**

When asked to describe the best way to find a mentor, these women answered the question differently than expected. Because the program is organic, their only option is to find their own mentor through a fellowship opportunity. Instead of addressing the best way to find a mentor, they commented on who should initiate the contact. One participant said it was up to the one who feels the strongest connection or attraction to take the initiative, so it could be the older or younger woman. The four others agreed it was up to the younger woman to initiate, but this was because they have learned from experience that the older women do not initiate. Participant 8 expressed it this way, “If you feel like you need someone or you know you need someone, then you have to put yourself out there and that’s not fun…If you are the one who wants it, you have to take some kind of initiative or it just won’t happen.” Two of the women have approached older women as potential mentors, but in both cases the older women did not respond. This has somewhat dampened the younger women’s desire to take initiative. All thought it would be affirming for an older woman to approach them and were open to that but were doubtful it would happen. Participant 9 described it this way, “A lot of them (older women) aren’t working and so they do little lunches with their friends during the day, and at night or on the weekends they are with their husbands or grandchildren, so it’s just hard to connect with them.” All the participants expressed some disappointment that it was not easier to make a mentoring connection at these intergenerational events. In a similar manner to the women in Case A, they were also fragile about the possibility of
rejection if they approached a mentor. They had no assurance that they would be received favorably.

The one exception to this situation was participant 6. She mentioned that when she identified a woman to whom she was attracted in some way, she would introduce herself and start a conversation. As a result she has found three women she considered to be mentors. Closer observation of her experience reveals some important distinctives. This woman had an out-going personality and aggressively pursued relationships. During the interview she revealed that she called both her mother and her father twice every day. She also called and arranged to meet with her childhood mentor every time she returned home for a visit. She found taking initiative to be a comfortable activity, and she regularly initiated contact with her mentors. Secondly, her experience was not typical because the mentors she secured were the three high profile leaders of the program. It is easy to feel a connection with the ones who are up front and leading and to develop a mentoring relationship with leaders who are passionate about the concept of mentoring. When approached, these three women would be particularly responsive to the mentoring opportunity. However, this probably would not work for many other women in the program due to the leaders’ limited availability and the large number of women participating. Thirdly, the interview revealed that her definition of mentor included any woman with whom she felt a connection. She met with one of the women only once for lunch but considered her a mentor because she believed she could call on her if needed. She described another mentor as more of a peer and friend. They did not meet regularly for conversation but occasionally went on social outings together. She met regularly to process life and explore spirituality with only one of the three women she considered a mentor. There is a difference between a mentor and a friend. For the purposes of this study, mentor has been defined as one who facilitates growth in the mentee; therefore the mentor is one who provides not only support but helps a mentee develop a larger interpretive framework and a new capacity for appropriately responding to the tasks and
demands of life. According to this definition, two of the women qualify more as friends than mentors. Therefore it seems this participant only found one mentor, and this mentor was the director of the ministry to women.

When asked what criteria they would use for selecting a mentor, all these women indicated it would be on the basis of elements they found attractive about the woman, or common personal experiences. Participant 6 added, “I really do think you are drawn to certain people. Some people don’t mix and I think the way you end up finding someone is through an attraction. I think there is just an attraction. Yeah, there has got to be that, or just having something in common, something to relate to, a history of some sort.”

When asked to give their thoughts on the idea of being paired by a third party, Participant 6, the one who felt she had secured three mentors, gave the predictable postmodern response concerning pairing: “Unless you are the perfect match-maker, I just don’t know if that would be the best way for me. I’ve been matched up in Bible study and it just didn’t work, and I wasn’t comfortable telling them.” This response revealed important additional data—when a match is not working out, some women choose not to say anything. For the sake of relational comfort, or to avoid hurting another’s feelings, they will persevere for awhile in a less than ideal situation and allow it to quietly fizzle. Unfortunately, the fear of an awkward match is enough to keep some young women from trying again.

However, the remaining four women had a different and unexpected perspective; they appreciated the organic environment but said they were also open to being matched in some way. Participant 10 felt awkward asking a woman to mentor her and suggested, “…something in place that gives you the opportunity to sign up for something.” However, she quickly added that the pairing would have to be based on something in the woman that gave her confidence and trust: “I think I would like that friendship of closeness of getting to know someone and asking about her life, and see if
her wisdom from those experiences would apply to mine rather than someone I barely know." Participant 8 put it this way: “I would be fine to go to dinner once and see. I would be interested to meet that person, but I don’t know if there would necessarily be that connection or that level of trust, but if you have someone who is willing to be a mentor and someone who wants a mentor, and you are willing to match me, I think that’s ok.” She was open to a match but only if she saw something in the potential mentor that she respected, a similarity of experience, or something she would like to learn from her. If the mentee does not feel a connection with the mentor, she does not consider it to be a “match.” Participant 7 was also open to trying a match. Her first preference was to find her own mentor, but that was proving difficult so she was open to a possible match. She has been participating in the program since its inception four years ago and has yet to find a mentor: “Part of me would like to be matched because I don’t have to put myself out there and ask anyone and have them possibly say no…Because there is not (an opportunity to be matched) it’s more of this ambiguous thing.” The response of these women was thought provoking. They were in a program that offered complete freedom to choose their own mentor, a situation designed to suit postmodern preferences, but they were leaning towards being matched. A third party match was not their first choice, but it was apparent these women thought there needed to be some level of facilitation for mentoring to actually take place.

**Hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 anticipates that the younger women will want a flexible meeting schedule. All five participants expressed this preference due to the fact that they are busy people and think meeting schedules should be driven more by life events than an up-front commitment. Participant 6 expressed it well when she said, “Everyone’s schedule is a little bit hectic. For me, I would never want anyone to feel like they had to meet with me, ever. I would want it to be enjoyable for both or I’d feel indebted. I would think, ‘Oh,
she’s got to meet with me now.’ I would not be comfortable with that...This sounds bad, but I don’t like guidelines for meeting. I like to come and create my own.” Participant 7 thought meetings should be scheduled or they probably would not happen, but because life is “full and unpredictable” she did not think there was a right or wrong number of times to meet during a particular time frame. She believed mentor and mentee could come up with a schedule that suited their situation. Participant 8 added, “Weekly for me is very unattainable. Even monthly is kind of a stretch, honestly.” Participant 9 felt that if the women met too often in the beginning there would be pressure to come up with something significant to talk about: “Maybe nothing has changed in a week so what do you do with them?” It was her opinion that a significant relationship could be built by meeting as infrequently as once a month. However, she did think it would be good to send a text or email—something technology based—in between times to keep in touch: “I just feel so cared for when I get a quick email even if it is just a few words. It doesn’t have to be this long story, just ‘Thinking of you, hope your day went well.’” Participant 10 summed it up this way: “Because life’s busy and there is so much going on, and to do more than that would be too much for me. It’s just time constraints. It is all I feel like I can manage in my life right now.” All these women felt a commitment to meet weekly was more than they could manage.

Flexibility in meeting schedule also relates to how long the mentoring relationship would last. Two women thought the relationship should last indefinitely and continue to grow over time. Participant 10 put it this way: “I guess it is like any relationship—I would hope you would connect and share your lives forever. I would just figure you would keep in touch somehow or continue to meet.” The other three women thought it would depend on the circumstances. One thought there would be occasions where the relationship might be short term, maybe even just one meeting if the need was for specific advice. Others thought relationships should continue as long as they met a need. All the women saw the relationship ebbing and flowing over time according to the
need, circumstance, and location of the women, but in most cases they would consider a mentor a life-long friend.

_Hypothesis 3_

This hypothesis concerns the preferred nature of the interaction between mentor and mentee. All the women expressed a desire for a more informal interaction between the women instead of a curriculum. For them the most important element in this situation was flexibility. Four of the women were open to adding a book study or development curriculum but only if it somehow related to the mentee’s felt need or fit a current circumstance. However, they did not want to have a curriculum all the time.

Participant 6 did not want any kind of curriculum, “A curriculum means to me that I would have to have something ready for this. I wouldn’t want that. I want her knowledge…I want to talk to her about whatever is happening in that moment.” One participant thought she would prefer a curriculum if the mentor was an older, wiser woman. If she respected her wisdom, she would trust her to know what the mentee needed, and she would be willing to learn these things from her.

When asked how they would best learn from their mentor, all the women said it would happen through shared experiences. Their first priority was to talk about life.

Participant 9 thought listening was particularly important, “I think listening is one of the most important dynamics to a relationship…I think that (listening) is something that is important especially when you are entering a mentoring relationship; to really listen to that person and to hear what they are saying as far as what they are dealing with.” It was also equally important that the mentor share her personal experiences with the mentee.

Participant 8 remarks, “I do like people to tell me about their experiences and when they were in a similar struggle, or how they made decisions, or what they struggled with…If you are both talking through things—I think it is just beneficial for me to see the Lord moving in her life.” Going beyond surface conversation to authenticity and transparency
was also important for these women. Participant 10 says, “I think that getting to know someone—if you don’t have that, how are you going to learn from them? Knowing what she has gone through really goes a long way in how I take and use her advice.” The telling of stories was also an important component, “What is helpful is the mentor telling her story or sharing her story…I would feel a connection through women talking about their suffering and letting you know about the hard things in their life.”

Repeating an unexpected theme that also showed up in Case A, two of the women said they did not want their mentor to be like a mother. They want the freedom to make their own decisions without pressure to conform to the mentor’s opinion: “I don’t want someone telling me what to do without first asking them for advice.” Any attempt on the mentor’s part to form the mentee in her image will not be received well. Their idea of a mentor is one who is transparent, honest, and indicates she is a fellow struggler on the same journey toward Christ instead of an authority figure who directs according to a set of guidelines or principles.

**Case B Summary**

These participants confirmed postmodern preferences in all three hypotheses. They prefer to choose their mentor but in a surprise finding, they were also open to being matched due to the unexpected difficulty in finding a mentor. They indicated a scheduled weekly meeting was not realistic. They also confirmed they want a long lasting mentoring relationship and realize it takes time to build that. They think in longer terms as far as the duration of the relationship because they realize it will not happen quickly due to busy schedules and limited opportunities to meet. They want to process life events first and add structured material as it fits the situation. All Case B participants had a church background, and this previous experience did not cause them to prefer a more structured relationship that provided formal teaching. There were 279 statements that
supported the hypotheses and 36 that did not, with most of those related to being paired with a mentor. The weight of the data in Case B strongly supported the hypotheses.

The most significant data to emerge from this case was the indication these women did not think the program provided substantial mentoring opportunities. According to documents the program leader provided, one purpose of this program was to enable younger women to “meet older women in the church in a non-intimidating way and be encouraged to seek out mentors in this group.” In theory, the program should work well for these young women. It was tailored for the preferences of those in the twenty-three to thirty-six age group, the generations met together, they could choose their own mentor, and there were no program requirements to meet. However, four of the five women were still without mentors and did not know any other young woman who had found a mentor through this program. The one woman who had found mentors and the data indicating that her experience was not typical has already been discussed. As the interview drew to a close, participant 10 revealed she had been attending this program for two years and was surprised it was considered a mentoring opportunity. She enjoyed the fellowship component and thought that was the only purpose of the event. She further confided that she was not getting any feedback on her spiritual life and very much desired the accountability she might find through a mentor. Casual conversation over the event dinner did not provide her this type of opportunity. All of these women wistfully expressed the desire for a mentor, but four out of five felt it probably would not happen through this particular program. When asked to give the researcher additional advice concerning the development of a potential mentoring program, four participants indicated there needed to be some facilitation for connecting mentor with mentee. Participant 9 expressed it this way, “Well, I think the women are very good at chit chatting, but maybe

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7 This quote is taken from this young women’s ministry vision statement created in 2006, the year this program was put into place.
try to pair it up some way. Maybe you have a coffee hour or some time where you can invite the mentors and mentees to all mingle and see if you meet someone that way, and you are able to have it evolve naturally instead of based on a questionnaire…I guess a more concrete way instead of just the meeting, greeting, and seeing who you connect with.” When participant 10 was asked what would have to be present in a mentoring program to attract her, she replied, “Maybe someone to coordinate the women’s likes and dislikes, and personalities…Just someone to kind of coordinate the connection.” The majority of the women participating in this research felt there needed to be some type of facilitation to make the mentoring happen. The obstacle in this particular program appears to be the older women. The young women felt that though older women attended the event, they did not see themselves as mentors, did not have time to mentor, or did not have a heart for younger women.

This model starts in the right direction as far as postmodern preferences are concerned; it takes the first step and provides opportunities for friendship building through conversation. However, due to the transient nature of attendance at these events and the small amount of time to interact, it is hard for a conversation to develop beyond a superficial level. One of the women referred to these conversations as “chit chat.” One problem might be that this program defines mentoring as a relationship but fails to further define the nature of this relationship. Not every relationship that takes place between women is a mentoring relationship. By definition, mentoring is a relationship with a purpose; that purpose is to assist in the development or growth of another person. By necessity, this requires focused time and attention.

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8 In their discussion of organic discipleship, McCallum and Lowery confirm relationship building through conversation is the best place to start. However, to be effective this conversation must be of a certain quality, i.e., it must include insightful questions, active listening, sharing on the level of feelings, and it must take place regularly. Dennis McCallum, and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Disciplemaking: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2006), 68-77.
Some mentoring is taking place at these events as the young women listen to the speaker. However, according to the data obtained in Case B, this attempt to meet the needs of postmodern women through a completely organic approach lacks the necessary infrastructure to provide substantial personal mentoring opportunities. Further consultation of documents from Case B reveal the leadership embraces the concept of different levels of mentoring and has planned to implement “smaller scale mentoring” for those who get lost in this larger program and need help to connect with an older woman and build a mentoring relationship. This program would offer intentional pairings. However, this smaller scale program is not operational at this time.

**Case C**

The four participants in this case were part of a traditional mentoring program. Two of the women were single and worked full-time; one was newly married and worked part-time; and one was a married stay-at-home mom of an eight-month-old baby girl. All of the women grew up in a Christian environment. Two of the women started in the program just two months before their interview; one was not currently participating in the program but was being mentored; and one had been in the program two years. Participant 11 was a strong and confident individual who was extensively involved in the life of the church. She had participated in a match-type program previously but it was not a good experience so she personally chose her next two mentors outside of the official mentoring program. As a result, she spoke from a slightly different perspective. Participant 12 was reestablishing her spiritual life after straying from it in college and the first few years of

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9 This is referred to as occasional mentoring; one person who is considered a role model transfers what she knows to several at one time. It is considered a passive approach to mentoring and has less impact, but it can be helpful when personal mentors are not available. The mentee learns at a distance from the example the role model sets. Paul D. Stanley and Robert J. Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 151.

10 This information is provided on the young women’s ministry organizational chart and in the extended vision statement.
being on her own. She was anxious to order her life before God in a pleasing way. She had been accepted at Dallas Theological Seminary and expected to begin classes that fall. Participant 13 had worked several years for the church in their bookstore, married a church staff member, and is now an associate pastor’s wife. She had previously been friends with the mentor with whom she was matched, and this relationship was working well for her. She had a hard time separating her preferences from what she thought would also work for other women in the church. Participant 14 sought mentoring after the collapse of a nine-year romantic relationship and the loss of a job. She had participated in the program for two years and had been matched with two different women during that time. She is one of the few women who remained in the program after the first term. However, personal problems in the second mentor’s life had kept this pair from meeting regularly. Her second mentoring relationship was inactive at the time of the interview, much to her frustration.

**Hypothesis 1**

When asked to describe the best way to find a mentor, participant 11 was the only one to offer a perspective that was typically postmodern. Because a previous match did not work out for her, she thought it was best for the younger woman to choose her mentor: “Definitely my preferred way is for me to pick out somebody in my life.” She looked for a woman she respected, who was strong in faith, and a good leader. The level of this participant’s activity in the church indicated she was a leader, and she was drawn to women who had leadership skills. When asked to describe what drew her to the second mentor she said, “I thought she was a great leader. There are probably thirty or so women in there (the class) and I was impressed with the way she led everything. She has kind of a sweet, tender spirit and I just knew that we would mesh well together, so I asked her.” The first woman she asked to mentor her was the director of the mentoring program, also a leader. It appears this young woman selected mentors who would help her develop her
giftedness. Her personal position on finding a mentor was, “I would say, look at the women around you.” Because she had successfully found two mentors, others sought her help to locate a mentor: “I get emails quite often from friends at church who would like a mentor. If they go to church here I send them to _____ because I know they have a specific way that they pair people together. I would never want to say, ‘Hey, just go ask somebody.’” Though choosing a mentor has worked well for her, she was reluctant to recommend a path that might be in conflict with the church’s established program. This high level of loyalty to church staff was present in all four of the participants in Case C.

When asked her opinion on pairing by a third party, she said that based on her previous experience she would not participate in a program where she was randomly matched. She felt there had to be a connection between mentor and mentee: “I feel like there has to be a connection, and I know the bond builds over time, but I feel like there has to be a, ‘I really want to get to know you.’” She also knew of others for whom matching had not worked: “I seem to hear more often than not that the pairing up doesn’t always work well…sometimes people just don’t click.” But she also thought that choosing a mentor was not a viable option for everyone because some women were not comfortable asking, and others were new to the church. She thought pairing might work if it was based on some connection the women could make beforehand: “Maybe if they had a get-together where mentors and mentees were there and people just talked, not even for very long, and maybe at the end of the night you say, ‘This is who I would like to mentor me.’ That way you have already made that connection.”

In discussing her failed match, she confirmed that women often would not report a failed relationship. She gave feedback to the leadership that it was not going well, but they asked her to keep trying because they had prayed a long time over the match. She agreed to try again, but the situation did not improve, and she let it fizzle out without further comment. As far as the leadership knew, the relationship continued. Her experience indicated that failed matches were probably underreported. When asked what
additional advice she would give for a mentoring program she said, “Give mentees an opportunity to choose their mentor.” A suitable match was the most important element for this participant.

Participant 12 thought it would be good to look for a particular mentor that met her needs by asking around, identifying someone who had similar interests, but she did not know how a younger woman might do that. She liked the idea of being paired with someone she did not know because it offered a fresh start with someone who had not formed any opinions about her based on her background. She thought this person would be less biased: “You don’t want a judge or someone who is very reprimanding all the time.” According to the interview, this participant was raised in what she described as a legalistic church, and she did not live up to those expectations in college and the few years after college. For her, anonymity was important so she wanted someone who did not know her previously. When asked what she would do if the mentor turned out to be judgmental, she remarked, “That wouldn’t work for me, or with my personality. I would say, ‘No thank you’ at that point and then find someone that would work.” This remark indicated she was open to pairing as long as that match would meet her need for a grace-oriented person. If it did not, she would abandon the relationship. When asked what would attract her to a mentoring program, she was most concerned about the pairing process. She would need to be convinced the ones in charge had proper discernment to make good matches, and she would want to know if the program had a history of successful matches. This indicated successful pairing was the most important element for her.

Participant 13 found her first experience with pairing positive. She was friends with her mentor before the match and felt it was a perfect pairing for her. She was also an

11 She described the church environment as “…legalistic—very strict, lots of rules, and you didn’t always see the relationship as much as you saw the rules.”
associate pastor’s wife so it was possible her match received careful consideration. She did not feel she could ask someone to mentor her because she would be unsure if this woman had the time or inclination to mentor. She needed an invitation to which she could respond, and this invitation was provided through the mentoring program. She found it difficult to imagine how a mentor could be found outside of an organized program. She also had a high level of trust in the program leadership who were also women on the church staff. She recalled a time when she was attracted to an older woman and thought she would make a good mentor, but she did not have the confidence to pursue the matter. As the interview progressed, she also expressed some concern over who her match might be: “I think for me, with my husband being in ministry, I might be a little guarded if I didn’t know that person. I might have been a little guarded with what I might share because I would want to make sure it was in confidence and that it would never harm our ministry. Knowing this lady and knowing her background and who she is, I trust her.” This young woman needed someone who could keep a confidence, and this woman was provided for her, but it is also apparent that if she did not have prior knowledge of this woman’s character it would have affected the nature of the relationship. When asked what additional advice she might give for a mentoring program, she recommended the mentors be chosen carefully. She thought they should be women with whom the younger ones could connect.

Participant 14 used to think it would be best to choose her mentor, but at the time of the interview, she thought a third party match was a good way to do it considering the “prayer that is poured into it.” She, too, had a high loyalty to the program leadership. She related that she was not attracted to either mentor at first but over time became aware of what they had in common. She developed a bond with her first mentor when she discovered she could give her advice on a romantic relationship that was similar to her own nine year experience, and this provided common ground. This made her feel significant when everything else in her life made her feel insignificant: “I think for one,
not knowing who I was or what I could give anymore without a job, without this boyfriend, without whatever you think is your life, knowing that someone older than you—I was able to give to her. I could give my perspective, my input, to help someone else.” She needed a mentor who would bolster her self-confidence, and this did happen. However, she did not choose to remain in this relationship after the scheduled nine-month term, which may indicate there was limited common ground. Her second match was only three months underway, and though she was positive about the match, the conversation revealed a fairly high level of frustration over their failure to meet regularly. She was looking for a mentor who could hold her accountable: “This year I have really wanted her to put me on the spot, to have that accountability, ‘What did you learn this week? You are going to tell me!’” She went on to say, “Although I have liked both of my mentors, and we have had a lot in common, and I really felt like God put us together, there are certain things—like the accountability. She has so much going on in her own life that I think that sometimes she forgets.” She went on to express dissatisfaction with the fact that the program leadership did not monitor expectations on the mentee’s part and require the mentor to provide what was needed. Since the program leadership felt this was a good match, she wanted them to fix what was not working in the match. This woman needed a mentor who could meet with her regularly and provide the accountability that was important to her. Though she liked her, the mentor at the time was not able to do this, and the likely outcome was a failed match.

When asked to comment on being paired with someone she did not know she responded, “I guess with me that I am so trusting being inside the church that I feel like they are not going to lead me astray. If it was something outside of the church I would be much more, ‘I want to know about this person. I want to know where they came from; I want to know who they are.’ But knowing that it is inside the church, I am pretty naïve when it comes to whatever they are going to throw at me. I just trust they are going to do the right thing.” She expressed postmodern preferences when operating outside the
church and modern preferences when operating within the church. When asked if she would stay in the relationship if she thought it was not working, she said, “I probably wouldn’t say anything to _____ or _____. I would probably just go, ‘Ok, this isn’t working. I am just going to move on.’ I guess in my head—who are they going to find now? They have already matched everybody up, you know. This isn’t working so I’ll wait until next year.” This was another mentee who would not report the failure to the leadership. Even though she had complete trust in the leadership’s pairing, she would not stay in the relationship if she felt it was not working. When asked for additional advice on a mentoring program, she thought program leaders should make sure everyone was keeping their commitment to meet regularly, which was her need at the moment.

_Hypothesis 2_

As far as the meeting schedule, each one of the women felt it should be flexible and determined by each pair. Participant 13 expressed the thoughts of all the women when she said, “I think for the two of us flexibility is huge. We both put that down, that being flexible is really important.” Participant 11 elaborated, “I don’t ever want it to become a legalistic thing, like we _must_ be there.” Participant 14 emphasized that it was not the schedule that was important; it was the process of building a relationship and that could look different for each pair.

All these women wanted their mentoring relationship to be a long-term connection. Participant 12 felt it should last “until God tells you it is over. I don’t know what the defining moment would be. In my mind you would still keep up with that person.” Participant 14 was not ready for her relationship to be over at the end of the term: “I could have the same mentor for a long time. I would like somebody to help me through my marriage. I would like that same person to help me through my kids. I want to get to know one person. Jumping around every year—yes, they help you maybe with specific parts of your life, but I don’t feel like you are getting to _know_ that person.”
**Hypothesis 3**

All the participants preferred the content to be informal conversation rather than a teaching opportunity. They were all open to a book study, but it was not their priority. Participant 13 said it this way, “I prefer the organic. I prefer where you are in life and what you are going through. I guess because I take Bible studies and those are structured, and those are curriculum, so I would say my opinion would be organic.” Participant 14 elaborated, “We got a couple of books that we are going through, but that is usually at the end of our conversation. Our beginning is ‘life.’” Participant 11 added, “It’s not structured, but every time we get together I get something out of our time together.”

They all also want the nature of the interaction to focus on shared experiences. Participant 11 commented, “I ask her about her past and things she has done, and she talks about her children and grandchildren, and I love hearing about that. I like hearing (about) struggles she has had. Some of them are similar to mine and some are not—just how she got through that.” She also emphasized that honesty and transparency are important in a mentor. She is not interested in a surface relationship but wants to go “deep into life issues.” Honesty and transparency allow this depth to take place. Participant 14 said it in a more pointed way, “How can you mentor me if you don’t know what is going on in my life or what I struggle with? I mean, that’s the whole point, to know the person, know their failures, know their struggles, know their fears...You know, having somebody who is completely transparent, who can say, ‘I didn’t either—life was messed up—I didn’t either.’” In a repeated theme, one participant also expressed her desire not to be made over into the mentor’s image: “I am not saying I want her to be my mentor because I want to be like her, but I would like to walk with somebody through my experiences.”
Case C Summary

Three of the four women in this case were not postmodern in their preferences in that they supported a third party match. Their comments revealed several reasons. First, they did not know how else they would find a mentor. This church is highly demographic in their ministry approach, and there are few opportunities for older and younger women to interface. It appears they could not visualize choosing a mentor due to the separation of the age groups. Secondly, they have a high level of confidence in the program leadership and the prayer process. Because they are Christian women, they want to be part of a match made by God. This confidence and respect for the leadership and faith in God also causes them to be reluctant to report a failed relationship. Thirdly, there is a sizeable influx of young women to the church every year, and these women do not know any older women. Their only opportunity for a mentor is to be matched with one. Fourthly, some women are just too shy to approach a potential mentor, and they need the opportunity set up for them. Lastly, some women may want to be paired with someone they do not know to prevent bias based on previous lifestyle choices. However, none of these women would stay in a match if they felt it was not working well. Their confidence in third party pairing was not enough to cause them to remain in a match that does not meet their needs.

All four women were supportive of the remaining two hypotheses. Once paired, they wanted a flexible meeting schedule that accommodated their busy lives and informal interaction based on shared personal experiences. The Christian background of these women did not cause them to prefer a teaching curriculum over shared experiences, but all thought including a book or Bible study on occasion was a good idea. And, once a meaningful and supportive relationship was established, they thought it should last indefinitely.
When asked what elements would have to be present for a mentoring program to attract them, all the women gave input that concerned the mentor. Priority one for all of them was a good match. One even went so far to say that she would want proof that a program’s matches had been successful in the past. This indicated that though they are supportive of the pairing process, they carry some anxiety about who that mentor will turn out to be. These responses indicate the women are not completely sure the pairing process will meet their needs. They are willing to try it out because they believe in the women who lead the effort, but there seems to be an underlying discomfort with the process.

Case C yielded 201 statements in support of the hypotheses while 31 statements failed to support the hypotheses with the majority of those related to pairing by a third party. The weight of the evidence in Case C supports the hypotheses.

**Repeated Words**

The way words are used often indicate what is important to people. Each demographic makes use of a special vocabulary that communicates their ideas. A careful researcher can extract meaning from the way people talk about things.\(^{12}\) As the transcribed interviews were reviewed and analyzed, the use of certain repeated words were noted and counted:

- Relationship/friendship 116
- Click/connect/fit 76
- Struggles/failures 52
- Coffee/dinner 45
- Wisdom 28
- Guide 23

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Confront

The way these words were used in the interviews gives clues about what these women consider important.

• **Relationship/friendship:** When it comes to mentoring interaction, the development of the relationship is significantly more important than the transfer of knowledge or wisdom.

• **Click/connect/fit:** The presence or absence of a connection with the mentor will determine the success or failure of the relationship.

• **Struggles/failures:** The topic they most want to discuss is struggles in life.

• **Coffee/dinner:** For this generation, coffee is the “third place” and an ingrained part of their culture. The setting is one of leisure, comfort, acceptance, and conversation. It is where real fellowship or community takes place. They see mentoring as a relational event that takes place in this environment.

• **Wisdom, Guide, Confront:** The young women still desire wisdom and guidance, and are willing to be confronted with the truth when it is needed, but these elements are not their first priority.

**Triangulation of the Cases**

Triangulation, or the process of using multiple data sources to compare and contrast the results from each source, builds validity into research design by providing some amount of check and balance. When multiple sources are used it prevents the problem of relying too heavily on any one data source for the research conclusions.\(^1\) When data from multiple sources is collected, the findings are considered “more robust” than findings from a single case.\(^2\)

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\(^{1}\) Patton, *How to Use Qualitative Methods*, 60-61.

Triangulation of Hypothesis 1

Similarities

In all three cases the women had expectations for a potential mentor. This mentor needed to have certain characteristics that were appealing to the particular young woman and would help her grow. They referred to this as the ability to click, connect, or mesh and recognized it would only happen with certain women. They all agreed that if this element was missing they would not continue in the relationship. This finding corroborates the literature review, which found that mentoring could not be forced, and postmodern women have a skeptical core and do not tend to trust unknown people.

Differences

The process for selecting a mentor yielded the most diverse input from the young women. Overall, twelve of the fourteen women preferred some amount of choice when it came to securing a mentor, and two thought it was best to for a third party to match them based on a survey. Of those who wanted some choice, seven preferred to make the selection unaided; four thought there should be some assistance available if needed; and one thought it depended on whether the mentoring would occur inside or outside of the church. The two women who favored pairing by a third party also revealed some anxiety about a good match and advised program directors to take special care in this area. This data suggests that pairing of mentor and mentee is a complex process and that one size does not fit all. However, the weight of the evidence from all three cases suggests that young women prefer to have some say in whom their mentor will be. This finding also corroborates the literature review, which revealed that postmoderns like options and the opportunity to participate in and contribute to significant events, which interest them, and mutual attraction is a necessary component for a successful mentoring relationship.
**Triangulation of Hypothesis 2**

**Similarities**

Thirteen of fourteen women thought the meeting schedule should be flexible and determined by the needs and life situation of the mentor and mentee. The one dissenter thought the meeting should take place weekly but agreed this might be difficult if her circumstances changed. The other thirteen said weekly contact was unrealistic for them. All the participants expected some level of regular contact, but saw diversity in how that would take place.

All fourteen participants preferred an open-ended structure as far as length of the relationship was concerned. The desire of these young women was to develop a relationship that would endure as long as life circumstances would permit. They saw this relationship ebbing and flowing but hoped the mentor would be a life-long resource. These findings corroborate the literature review, which found that postmoderns resist formal structure and organizationally heavy programs.

**Differences**

There were no significant differences in these cases concerning hypothesis 2. The preferences were the same across all three cases.
Triangulation of Hypothesis 3

Similarities

Twelve of the women preferred an informal or organic structure instead of a teaching curriculum. These twelve mentioned that various other teaching opportunities were available to them, and they therefore did not want teaching to be the focus of the mentoring relationship. Instead of a predetermined curriculum they thought they would need different input at different times, and this would be hard to schedule or anticipate. One woman thought a combination of formal and informal was advantageous, while one preferred a formal teaching curriculum. All the participants were open to a book study if it fit their situation or interests. Flexibility was a high value for all these women.

All the participants preferred to learn from their mentor through shared experiences. Their first priority was to process life events with the mentor. They wanted to hear personal stories from their mentor and to share their stories with her. They expressed high value for transparency on the part of the mentor and wanted her to honestly share her own struggles and failures. These postmodern women expressed a desire for a flexible combination of sharing and teaching. These findings corroborate the findings of the literature review, which reveals that postmoderns learn primarily through their experiences and secondarily through teaching, and insist on authenticity.

Differences

There were no different patterns in these cases concerning hypothesis 3. The preferences were the same across all three cases.

Conclusion of Triangulation

When the data is compared between the three cases and with the literature review, the weight of the evidence strongly supports all three hypotheses. The only
significant difference that emerged concerned the best way to be paired with a mentor. However, there was overall agreement that the needs of postmodern women are more likely to be met when they have some choice in the matter.

Figure 4.1. Statement Analysis

Rival Explanation

A rival explanation is one that suggests the outcome of the research is due to an influence other than the ones predicted. To test a rival explanation, data is collected to determine if there is strong support for another conclusion. The rival theory tested in this study suggested young women no longer participate in traditional mentoring programs because they are not interested in being mentored. When the women were asked if they thought the desire for mentoring was prevalent among those in their generation, eleven of the fourteen agreed that in their experience, it was a prevalent desire. However, all the participants believed that not many young women were actually being mentored. The reasons put forth were as follows: their schedules are too busy; younger women do not know where to find a mentor; they do not take the initiative to seek out a mentor; it is hard to find a willing mentor; some do not think about the subject often; and the older
and younger generation do not often mix together. In a finding particularly interesting to this study, one participant did not think the desire was prevalent among the young women she knew. Her opinion was that young women were not interested in being mentored because they were afraid of the commitment that was required. The program she was referring to was a traditional program. All but one of the participants thought most postmodern women would accept an opportunity to be mentored if it was offered in a way that met their needs.

The most frequently mentioned alternative rival theory was that younger women are too busy to add mentoring to their schedule. But in the frank opinion of one participant, “Busyness is not an excuse, it’s a choice.” If the mentoring opportunity does not add value and meaning to their life, the young women will not be motivated to add it to their already busy schedules. The data shows that marginal relationships will be abandoned quickly.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

When the data from interviews, documents, and observations was coded, analyzed, and relevant patterns matched to the hypotheses and literature review, the women in all three cases were found to have preferences influenced by a postmodern worldview. When it comes to mentoring, they wanted a relationship with a mentor who met their personal expectations. When this happens they described it as a “click” or “connection.” When a young woman chooses her mentor, her choice flows from a natural attraction based on trust, admiration, or particular giftedness in the mentor, and the probability for a connection is high. If this connection is not in place the younger women were not likely to invest in the relationship, even if it was made through prayer. These postmodern women also viewed mentoring as a relationship for mutual sharing of experiences instead of a teaching opportunity. Like many postmoderns, they learned
through their experiences. Their preference for flexibility also caused them to prefer a schedule that was driven more by need than commitment.

The hybrid approach of Case A seems to be working well for the women interviewed for this study. Though being matched with a mentor was not their preference, the choice made by the director met their need. This is most likely due to the director’s skill, which was honed by extensive study in the area of mentoring. She was able to evaluate the needs of the incoming students on a deeper level and suggest a match based on those needs. The organic approach of Case B appears to be meeting the first purpose of their program, which is to assimilate young women into the larger church body. Based on the interviews of the women participating in this research, they appear to be weak in meeting the second purpose, which is to provide mentoring opportunities for young women. This program might benefit from the addition of a “mentoring consultant” to assist women who seek a mentor but find it difficult to make that happen. The traditional approach of Case C is experiencing the decline typical of these programs at this time. They retain only about 20 percent of their participants after the initial pairing. This program operates in a mega church and continues to exist due to the influx of new women every year. Considering the size of this church, the percentage of women participating in the mentoring program is small.

First Chronicles 12:32 refers to the men of Issachar as men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do at that moment in history, a time when Israel’s throne was vacant due to the death of Saul. These men traveled to David’s camp to advise him as he developed a plan to ascend the throne God promised to him. An understanding of the times is necessary if ministry leaders are to know how to meet the needs of younger women. Based on information gathered from these three cases, the final chapter of this dissertation will offer conclusions and suggestions for understanding the times and developing a more effective mentoring ministry to postmodern women.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

Seasoned researcher Robert K. Yin makes this statement: “…all empirical research studies, including case studies, have a ‘story’ to tell.”¹ This story is the one that emerges from the collective data. This chapter will “tell the story” of postmodern women and their preferences related to mentoring.

The decline in participation of postmodern women in traditional mentoring programs prompted this study. Many in the older generation do not understand the postmodern generation and are content to leave situations as they are even though it means minimal contact with the younger ones. Some ministry leaders are aware of the problem but do not know how to address it. When it comes to Christian ministry, it is possible for some ministries to ignore the postmoderns and carry on with business as usual. However, when it comes to mentoring, this is not possible: without the younger women there is no ministry. To discover how to better meet the needs of young women, it was first necessary to study the characteristics of these women.

This research project was based on a literature review, which confirmed that many young women have a postmodern worldview. This distinctive worldview causes them to have preferences that are different from women who were raised with a modern worldview. When the young director of Case B’s mentoring program was interviewed, she was asked how much she knew about the preferences of modern women, and this was

her response, “I think it is a complete mystery to me. I would say my personal weakness is understanding the older generations and respecting them. That is probably part of our generation too—we look at that generation and say, ‘Why are you like that?’”

Unfortunately, many young women see modern ways as strange and cumbersome, and programs that modern women design and implement many times fail to meet the needs of the younger ones. This study sought to discover the elements of a mentoring program that would meet the needs of postmodern women. The following conclusion will focus on three pivotal postmodern distinctives and how they relate to mentoring. These distinctives include a foundational desire for relationship, the influence of the organic movement, and an experiential learning style.

**Desire for Relationship**

This generation is relational to the core, and the element of relational connection in mentoring cannot be bypassed with them. This is a fundamental difference between the generations. The modern generation tends to approach the spiritual life as living correctly before God, and any godly woman can teach another how to carry out various responsibilities correctly. In this case the relational element is desirable but not mandatory. However, most postmoderns are not seeking a mentor for this reason. Instead they want to investigate how another has walked with God in good times and bad. They want to know how to process life events in light of their faith and how to know and pursue God. They are not interested in information as much as they are in transformation and how to make life work. They seek comfort as well as guidance and answers. In this case, the relational element is critical to the process. Young women want to learn and want meaningful content, but they want this to take place in the context of a relationship. A mentoring program that meets the needs of postmodern women recognizes that a

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2 “Personal Interview with the Director,” June 3, 2010.
vibrant relationship is foundational to mentoring and the avenue through which faith and values will be passed on.

Because their skeptical sides suspect people are not always what they appear to be, postmoderns will be more particular in regard to mentors. Being paired with a mentor they do not know is a scary situation for many young women because they do not automatically trust those in authority. Instead, these women want a mentor who has demonstrated characteristics they admire. Each woman will have her own criteria for a mentor, criteria she may not even be able to articulate. She most often experiences this as a natural attraction or connection with a particular woman she has met. When this happens, she is responding to impulses deep inside that sense this particular person may be a resource for her. She is the only one who knows what needs lie deep within and are presenting at the moment. She alone can sense the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. When she responds to these inner promptings, a learning or growth goal begins to come into focus.3 Once she is aware of this need, she is naturally motivated to look for someone who can help her. This woman is not as interested in a quick match as she is a meaningful match that would add value to her life.

Pairing by program leaders is distinctly modern in character. The concept of mentoring is biblical, but there is nothing biblical about third party pairing. It is more a product of the modern love for organization and efficiency. Third party pairing allows a program to run according to a schedule and takes care of all the interested women quickly. On the other hand, relational pairing takes more time and requires intergenerational community. However, the decline of organized and efficient programs confirms that when it comes to the younger generation, mentoring cannot be forced and instant mentors are not always the best mentors. A mentoring program that meets the

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3 Some mentoring relationships are unsuccessful because the mentee is not clear what she wants to learn. She is drawn to the idea of mentoring but the relationship lacks focus and fails to be a meaningful interaction. Large amounts of time are invested with little effect frustrating both mentor and mentee. Mentoring works best when it starts with a needs-based problem.
needs of postmodern women takes the pairing process out of the hands of the leaders and puts it in the hands of the mentees.

In traditional programs the practice of praying over the matches by program leaders presents a dilemma for some postmodern women. Program leaders often emphasize that God directs their hand as they match the women. The young women would love to be part of a match made by God. In this case the mentee is willing to be a passive participant because she trusts that God will match her with exactly the right mentor. When it works out well she gives the credit to God. But what happens when it is not a suitable match? If the mentee decides to abandon the relationship, which she is likely to do because it does not meet her needs, then she has essentially rejected God’s choice for her, and this makes her feel guilty. Or, she could decide the program leadership is the problem because they did not hear God correctly, and this leads her to lose confidence in the leadership. In either case when a match fails, negative feelings often surface and convince the young woman that she does not want to participate in the program any longer. A high percentage of women who experience failed matches drop out of the program.

Third party pairing emphasizes prayer while minimizing the importance of relationship or natural attraction, and the harsh reality is that sometimes it works, and sometimes it does not. Even though these programs highlight the prayer involved, many also limit the mentoring term so women can gracefully exit matches that are not going well. Prayer is always an essential ingredient in any ministry activity, and it is not necessary to choose one over the other; prayer and natural attraction can both be part of the process. Every mentoring program should include prayer for God’s hand of guidance in the pairing process. This prayer is equally effective if young women choose the mentor or the leadership chooses the mentor. If God guides the leadership in the pairing process, he can also guide individual young women in the process. When both prayer and natural attraction are in play, the probability for a good match is much stronger. A mentoring
ministry that meets the needs of postmodern women believes that both older and younger women can be guided through prayer.

Mentoring leaders need to be aware that younger women have perceived reluctance on the part of older women to invest in them relationally. Acceptance and the desire to belong are strong needs among postmoderns. They desire mentoring but sometimes older women make the process difficult for them. One problem is demographic ministries that segregate the age groups and unintentionally produce a deep divide between the generations. Church organizational structure has frequently hindered close community between Christian women. Often older women prefer to congregate with like-minded women and are content to ignore the younger ones. Younger women are more inclined to mix with the older, but they often become discouraged when the older women do not seem to have interest in or time for them. Younger women need assurance that they matter, they belong, and they are worthy of an older woman’s time and love. At the heart of this problem is a spiritual issue—older women are disregarding the biblical command to teach and train the young ones (Titus 2:1-5). An effective mentoring ministry is only possible where there are older women dedicated to the task. A mentoring ministry that meets the needs of postmodern women provides a welcoming ethos by mobilizing, motivating, and training the older women to lovingly include and carry out their responsibility to the next generation.

**Influence of the Organic Movement**

The popularity of the organic movement has dramatically impacted the lifestyle of postmoderns. This movement has pushed life toward a more simple, natural, and authentic way of living. As a result the world has become more casual, schedules more fluid, and community more important. Postmoderns have moved away from organized systems that produce mass results toward what works for individuals and is good for the environment. The organic concept means you accept things as you find them.
and you expect diversity in most everything. There is no standard of measure that applies to everyone because everyone is unique, and nothing works everywhere. Choices, options, and flexibility are an expected part of life and long-term commitment is unworkable. This change in lifestyle impacts every institution and organized program that interfaces with postmoderns. A program that meets the needs of postmodern women will demonstrate some value for organic methods.

Because postmoderns value an organic way of life where events unfold more naturally, many have abandoned organized religion because of what they perceive as restrictive rules. Many young women are likewise reluctant to join traditional programs because they consider them to be rule-bound with a commitment level that is unreasonable, an artificial schedule, and celebration meetings that are contrived. Young women today are busy people and required meetings do not fit their lifestyle. They would rather meet with a mentor when a need arises or as their schedule permits. They are also content to take longer to build a relationship. For a mentoring program to meet their needs, the focus of the commitment must be relocated. Instead of expecting the young woman to make a commitment to a particular mentor and a particular schedule, the commitment should be to the mentoring process. The mentee should have freedom to engage in this process on her terms and according to her goals. If a meaningful relational connection with a mentor is in place and the content of the meetings are valuable, she will make time in her schedule to meet with her mentor. Frequency of meeting also relates back to the particular need the mentee recognized when she presented herself for mentoring. If it is an acute need, she will be motivated to meet frequently. If she wants particular advice or a sounding board, she may not need to meet as frequently. The mission should drive the schedule, and a mentoring partnership should survive on its own merits, and to do this, it must meet the needs of the postmodern woman.

Mentoring programs that meet the needs of postmodern women will not require an up-front commitment from the mentee. Schedules meetings or contacts are not
required. There is no predetermined structure. It is better to create an ethos of mentoring-on-demand. This type of environment is flexible and casual, and mentoring contacts take place naturally according to the needs of the mentee. This type of flexibility also frees the mentee to interact with several mentors in the community and receive guidance in a number of different areas. A program that offers the freedom to move among mentors according to need will attract postmodern women.

**Experiential Learning Style**

The difference between modern and postmodern learning styles is probably the most difficult concept for moderns to grasp. Moderns were trained to be analytical, linear thinkers while postmoderns were trained to be experiential, creative thinkers. This means there is a fundamental difference in the way truth is received and understood. The modern mind emphasizes knowledge gained through systematic investigation of the truth. In a Christian context, the assumption has been that if you teach it, they will grow.

Correct living is closely tied to correct information. Teaching is the heart of the modern method, but postmoderns are more responsive to deeds and actions than words. It is not enough to simply tell them the truth; they need to see it lived out before they embrace it. For them, truth is discovered through life experiences, and they grasp it best when presented in the context of a story. Postmoderns learn through their experiences and the experiences of others and are more often reached through their heart instead of their head.

The bottom line is that postmoderns learn differently. This shift in learning style means effective mentoring is now a combination of sharing life experiences through informal conversation, modeling godly behavior, and teaching truth. Mentors can no longer function as a “wisdom dispenser” who has the right answers but instead must be a transparent person who joins the mentee’s spiritual journey of transformation.

Another fundamental difference between moderns and postmoderns is their view of the current state of the world. Moderns are inclined to believe that the world is a
good or at least an acceptable place while postmoderns see it as seriously broken. There is a fair amount of confusion in their lives as they strive to make sense of the failure of mankind on a large scale and a culture that has no absolute foundations. Many of them are unprepared for the demands of adult life, lack direction, and carry guilt because they have not lived up to various expectations. When they talk about their lives they often use the word “struggles.” Not knowing how to make life work means many deal with ongoing anxiety. Because they believe the world is a messed up place, they are not sure they are going to be all right in the long run. What they look for is hope. They want to know how Christian faith makes a difference in a broken world. They seek to process their confusion and anxiety with someone who has been down that road and come out intact on the other side. They are hungry to hear about real life events where God was present. They want to know how healing takes place. They do not want logical, well-reasoned answers as much as they want to explore the possibilities of life and faith with a wiser person. As a result, postmoderns are not usually attracted to programs that are largely information based. Instead of didactic teaching these women are eager for help to process life events and experience the presence of God. A mentoring program that meets the needs of postmoderns recognizes that life experiences viewed biblically can teach truth.

Postmodern women also have a different understanding of the role a mentor will play in her life. They prefer the mentor be a guide more than a teacher. For the most part these young women are not hierarchical and prefer the relationship be mutual to some extent. They want to contribute to the well being of the mentor as well as learn from her. Postmoderns tend to see the mentor as a resource instead of an authority. Any teaching by the mentor should be offered out of love and respect and should not be suggested before the young woman feels heard and understood. Advice or correction

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4 The desire to hear about the experiences of women who were “further down the road” was a strong theme in the interviews. This is another reason it is important to allow young women to choose their mentor. She is most responsive to a mentor who has experienced similar struggles and lived out truth in an authentic way.
offered too soon is unlikely to be received. Indications the mentee should make the same decisions as the mentor will also not be received well. Young women are inclined to have a strong sense of individuality and do not want to be made over into the mentor’s image or a cookie-cutter image of what a woman should be. Instead they want the mentor to walk alongside and be a godly resource as they experience life. It should be emphasized that young Christian women desire instruction and truth, and this should be part of any mentoring opportunity. However, they do not want to be fashioned into a predetermined mold. This type of mentoring requires a dynamic relationship between mentor, mentee, and the Holy Spirit. When this takes place the focus shifts from the mentor to the mentee, and the goal becomes the development of the mentee as a unique child of God. A mentoring program that meets the needs of postmodern women will focus on meeting her unique faith needs and finding her place in God’s kingdom instead of shaping her in a particular way.

**Program Suggestions**

On one occasion after Jesus talked with the crowds and taught them through parables, he went into a house. The disciples took this opportunity to gather around and ask for private instruction (Matt 13:36). After Jesus commented on several parables he finished the conversation by saying, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and old” (Matt 13:52). In the original context Jesus was referring to the importance of both New Testament revelation and Old Testament promises. There is a contribution from both Testaments, which together comprise a priceless treasure. The research involved in this project led to the design of a new mentoring approach for postmoderns, and this approach sees value in both new (postmodern) methods and old (modern) methods.
Jimmy Long argues, “If we are going to assist emerging culture people in their spiritual journeys, we need to develop strategies and methodologies specific to them.”

This is particularly true for the practice of mentoring; new strategies are urgently needed to pass the Christian faith to upcoming generations. However, this must be done in light of old strategies that may still make valuable contributions to the process. This study concludes that the traditional method of mentoring is no longer effective because it is over-organized. It also discovered that a totally spontaneous and unstructured organic approach lacks effectiveness.

After working with postmoderns for several years, Earl Creps came to realize that while modern methods have diminished in this demographic, they have not completely disappeared. Organic church planter Darrin Patrick came to a similar conclusion after several years in a church plant: “It dawned on us that everything could not remain organic. A more intentional, structured approach to discipleship was necessary.” Over time, the leadership in this organic church plant came to realize there were problems with both extremes. The unstructured organic approach suited the outgoing and relational personalities well, but the more introverted and organized people were frustrated “beyond belief.” They came to realize it was not a question of structure or no structure but what kind of structure would facilitate the mission. Fellow organic church planter Brian Hofmeister came to the same conclusion: “To survive as an organic movement, planters must make some very nonorganic decisions.”

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spiritual formation would not necessarily happen by allowing people to approach it organically and without any intentional effort: “Sometimes planters need to fudge the ideal for the sake of the real.” Both leaders recognized that some infrastructure was necessary and eventually developed an “organic blend” of spontaneous and structural elements. The program that this research suggests is an organic blend and includes the following elements:

1. An effective mentoring program that meets the needs of postmodern women starts by partnering with a strong teaching ministry that is separate from the mentoring program. Postmoderns prefer an informal, unstructured mentoring format based on transparent conversation. They are willing to participate in a Bible study or the study of a Christian book, but this is their second priority. They generally look to other venues for formal teaching, and these opportunities should be readily available to them. The mentor and the teacher should see themselves as part of the same team.

2. An effective mentoring program that meets the needs of postmodern women not only has a vision for developing young women but puts certain structures in place to facilitate the process:
   - Qualified mentors are identified and trained, not only in effective mentoring practices but in the characteristics of postmodern women. These mentors are available at intergenerational events and are encouraged to tell their faith stories. As these women share their experiences, younger ones can discern which ones would be a helpful resource.

• Brief biographies of available mentors are published and made accessible to mentees. This allows the mentee to identify and investigate particular women further.

• A mentoring consultant is available to young women who would like help to find a mentor.

• Mentoring resources are available to both mentor and mentee.

• A constellation model of multiple mentors is developed. The constellation model is a team approach based on the concept of mentoring functions instead of one mentor who can meet all the mentee’s needs. This model recognizes short-term and long-term levels of mentoring and offers a range of mentoring options to the young women. Short-term mentors are often called coaches and help mentees grow in a particular way or develop a particular skill. These mentors coach according to their particular giftedness in areas such as parenting, finances, infertility, marriage, cooking, career guidance, etc. Their time with a mentee is focused on a particular area and may involve just one meeting or several. Long-term mentoring takes place on a higher level, and these mentors are ones who help discover and address broader needs in the mentee such as processing life or the development of the whole person. In the constellation model multiple mentors on different levels are available to the young women according to their particular needs, and they are free to move among mentors.

• Hybrid mentoring opportunities are available. This method includes some structured and some organic mentoring. One mentor works with several young women as a group and offers times of teaching and is also available to the women in this group for one-on-one sessions as needed.
3. An effective mentoring program that meets the needs of postmodern women includes organic elements that offer the mentee flexibility and freedom to meet her needs:

- Multiple mentoring options are available to her.
- The mentee chooses her mentor or mentors.
- There is no program enrollment; mentoring can take place at any time.
- There is no schedule to follow.
- Mentoring relationships are managed by the mentee according to her needs and goals.

**Research Conclusion**

Based on the current state of mentoring research and data collected, it was determined that postmodern women desire mentoring relationships that allow for meaningful connections, flexible scheduling, and time to share and process life events. This is a departure from traditional programs that often focus on expedient pairing, commitment to predetermined schedules, and the transfer of wisdom from mentor to mentee. Programs designed in this way are appealing to modern women but often do not meet the needs of postmodern women. The secular world has already recognized this reality and adjusted by encouraging the mentee to find the mentor from whom she wants to learn, to determine her own learning goals, and to enter into a collaborative relationship to meet those goals. Mentors are no longer expected to impart their way of doing business but to assist the mentee in reaching her unique goals. It appears that Christian women also value this approach to mentoring and necessary adjustments should be made in church programs that want to remain viable.

Change is more challenging to implement in a church setting because the program that is in place is often viewed as the program God put in place. To minister to postmodern women, mentoring leaders must be able to distinguish between traditional
methods and biblical methods. Mentoring is biblical, but the Bible does not prescribe particular methods. An effective mentoring model for those identified as postmodern women makes use of valuable modern and postmodern elements and will include necessary infrastructure to support the program, focus on mentoring functions instead of the solitary mentor, and offers a variety of ways this can be accomplished in each unique context.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

As material was studied and interviews conducted, five areas that would benefit from further research were identified:

1. What is the best way to mentor postmodern women in a large church context? In large churches it is harder to know and be known, and this relational component is vital to mentoring.
2. What is the best way to motivate older women to overcome their reluctance to serve as mentors?
3. How can the church bring the generations together in authentic community?
4. Given the postmodern preference for community over autonomy, would a mentoring group consisting of two or three mentees be more effective than the traditional one-on-one model?
5. How has postmodernism affected the Constructive-Developmental theory of adult learning posited by researcher Robert Kegan? Has the culture changed this process, and if so where do young adults begin the process of cognitive development today?

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Implication of these Findings

This study listened to the voices of young women concerning mentoring preferences and found that many young Christian women are eager to get in touch with the presence and power of God and look to older, wiser Christian women to show them the way. They have considered, or in some cases tried, mentoring programs available through the church but often walk away disappointed. Older Christian women have the responsibility to teach and train these young ones, and the way is open through mentoring. At this moment there is huge opportunity available but unless programs reconsider and redesign their approach to the development of young women, the opportunity may pass by vacant.
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover the elements of a mentoring program that will meet the needs of the postmodern Christian woman.

Definition of topic: Personal preferences concerning the selection of a mentor, the meeting schedule, and the content of the mentoring relationship.

1. Questions to build rapport (5 minutes)
   A. Tell me a little about yourself (e.g., where are you from, how long have you been a Christian, what is your occupation?)
   B. What caused you to become interested in being mentored?
   C. How has this experience been valuable?

2. Selection of a Mentor (10 minutes)
   Hypothesis: The first element of a mentoring program that may serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an opportunity to choose the mentor.
   A. How was your mentoring relationship instigated?
   B. What is the best way for a mentee to find a mentor?
   C. What are your thoughts about being paired with someone you do not know or know only by sight?

3. Flexible Meeting Schedule (10 minutes)
   Hypothesis: The second element of a mentoring program that may serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is a flexible meeting schedule.
   A. How often do you think a mentor and mentee should meet? Why is this your preference?
   B. If it were up to you, how would you structure the meeting schedule? Why does this schedule work for you?
C. How long should a mentoring relationship last? Why would this be advantageous?

4. **Shared Experiences** (10 minutes)

*Hypothesis:* The third element of a mentoring program that may serve the needs of the postmodern Christian woman is an informal relationship where life experiences are mutually shared.

A. Do you prefer an informal relationship, one that develops according to personal needs, or a more formal approach that might include a curriculum for your development? Why would this be your preference?

B. How do you want your mentor to pass her wisdom on to you?

C. Describe the type of conversations that would be valuable to you.

5. **General Summary** (5 minutes)

A. What elements must be present in the type of mentoring relationship that would work for you?

B. If I were starting a mentoring ministry, what advice would you give me?
APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE IF MODERN OR POSTMODERN

1. What is your age?

On the following questions, circle the number that best describes your opinion.

2. A piece of writing can have several different meanings depending on who is reading it.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

3. Emotion and personal experiences should not be part of the decision-making process.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

4. I am comfortable with several things going on at once in my life.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

5. The earth is important and mankind has a responsibility to take care of it.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

6. I tend to learn more through my experiences than through formal instruction.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

7. I think the world is becoming a better place.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

8. People with titles need to earn my respect before I will trust them.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

9. I am comfortable with people whose moral standards are different than mine.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5

10. People may have different opinions, but there is usually only one right answer.
   Agree    Unsure    Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5
11. Step-by-step logic is the best way to learn.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

12. Being part of a relational community is very important to me.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

13. It is wrong to tell people in other cultures how they should live.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

14. I find that my experiences often lead me to a deeper understanding of life and truth.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

15. The main reason I go to church is to learn something.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

16. I enjoy incorporating traditions from other cultures into my lifestyle.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

17. I am encouraged when a role model is honest about their struggles.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

18. Problems usually have more than one right answer.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

19. I don’t think much about what is happening to the earth ecologically.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

20. For most daily interactions I prefer to communicate electronically.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

21. The main reason I go to church is to experience God.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

22. I find a lecture that includes visual elements more interesting than a straight lecture.
   Agree  Unsure  Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5
23. Mankind’s problems are becoming more serious.
   Agree   Unsure   Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

24. When in a learning environment, I usually prefer lecture to discussion.
   Agree   Unsure   Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

25. Most people should have the freedom to live the lifestyle that suits them best.
   Agree   Unsure   Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

26. It makes me uncomfortable when a person I admire talks about their mistakes or failures.
   Agree   Unsure   Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

27. I would rather discuss an interesting subject with a group of peers than hear a professional speak on the topic.
   Agree   Unsure   Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5

28. I trust people in positions of authority even if I don’t know anything about them.
   Agree   Unsure   Disagree
   1 2 3 4 5
April 21, 2010

Dear Program Director,
I am engaged in a Doctor of Ministry research project at Dallas Theological Seminary which will investigate the elements of a mentoring opportunity that may work for postmodern Christian women. As you know, young women today are more open to mentoring opportunities than any previous generation, but many of them choose not to participate in traditional mentoring programs that worked well in the past. My research will seek to discover their preferences and how these preferences might be implemented.

I am requesting permission to use a program under your supervision, Hesed Sisters, as a case study for my research. I have included information concerning the nature of the research in a separate attachment. If you choose to participate, you will be providing valuable data that may make ministry to young women more effective.

Thank you so much for considering this request. I am grateful for your proven faithfulness to women.

Blessings,

Barbara Neumann

4126 Luong Field
Katy, Texas 77494
This case study research will be conducted by Barbara Neumann for the purpose of discovering the elements of a mentoring program that may work for postmodern women. The results will be part of a Doctor of Ministry dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary.

**Nature of the Research**
This study seeks to understand a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. Your program has been selected on the basis of your willingness to participate in the research, the presence of a mentoring opportunity for women, and a participation rate of at least 30 percent postmodern women in this ministry.

The following subjects will be researched:
1) The best way to instigate a mentor/mentee relationship
2) The mentee’s preferred schedule
3) The mentee’s preferred content of the relationship

**Data to be Collected**
There will be two sources of data:
- Written or electronic documents concerning any aspect of the program
- Focused, in-depth interviews with five or six young women (35 or under) participating in the program. The face-to-face, one-on-one interviews will be will be conducted by me. They will be about 45-50 minutes in length and will consist of open questions concerning the three subjects. The nature of the interviews will be conversational and the purpose will be to collect verbal data concerning the attitudes, feelings, and preferences of the young women. Each interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy of information. Permission to record will be obtained from each woman who participates. Fictitious names will be used in the dissertation write up.

Before I meet with any of the women, they will be asked to answer an additional brief questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine if the woman has a modern or postmodern worldview. Only those with a postmodern worldview will be accepted for an interview. The data collected by this instrument will not be used in the research results.

A $50 Visa gift card will be presented to each woman participating in the research.
Women’s Ministry Director
________________ Church

April 20, 2010

Dear _______,
Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research case study project that seeks to discover the elements of a mentoring program that may meet the needs of the postmodern Christian woman. Before any research is carried out, you and ________ will be provided with copies of the two questionnaires to be used and details concerning how the research will be carried out. Please contact me if you have any questions.

I plan to be on your campus June 2-4, 2010, to conduct the research. ______ has agreed to assist me at that time.

Gratefully,
Barbara Neumann


