

The letters 'JTLL' are rendered in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font. The 'J' is a simple hook. The 'T' is a solid block with a vertical stem. The 'L' is a solid block with a vertical stem and a horizontal base. The 'L' is repeated twice.

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The JTLL serves as a scholarly forum for the refinement and dissemination of research pertaining to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary implications of transformative learning and its applications for leadership in diverse contexts.

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The JTLL espouses the essential idea that learning that transforms is best understood through Biblical descriptions and processes. The JTLL is thus committed to refinement and dissemination of research and applications from the platform of the Biblical worldview in every discipline engaged. The JTLL also is rooted in the idea that those engaging in transformative learning ought also to be well equipped and active in transformative leadership – the application of transformative learning principles in the processes of assisting and guiding other individuals and communities in their own transformative growth.

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IN EFFECTIVE PREACHING

Part 2 –Understanding and Nurturing Adult Learning¹

Randall C. DeVille, EdD

INTRODUCTION

In this study, research on adult learning concepts was incorporated with research on communication techniques, especially as they relate to lecture and preaching, and with research on ambient teaching. In the first three divisions of the review, I focused on adult learning and its nature, needs, and nurture. In the fourth section, I concentrated on elements of communication with a focus on relevancy, immediacy, and authenticity. I also focused on physical environmental features that have an impact on adult learning.

I accessed the Trimble, Winterset public, Kraemer family, St. Charles City-County, and the Walden University libraries to obtain sources for this literature review. Databases consulted included ERIC, Medline, ProQuest, and EBSCO. I searched for peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and books written in the last 5 years. The search terms used in the literature review included *andragogy, adult learning, adult religious education, church education, adult teaching, communication, immediacy, relevance, lecture, preaching, ambient teaching, ambient learning, physical learning environment, and transformation.*

¹ This paper is adapted from Randall C. DeVille, “The Application of Adult Learning Principles in Effective Preaching,” (Ed.D dissertation, Walden University, 2012).

ADULT LEARNING

Brief History of Adult Education

The formation of adult education in the United States is different than from other places in the world. It has developed without defined goals, institutional forms, distinctive curriculum and methodology, or agreed upon goals (Knowles, 1962). Until the middle of the 20th century, there was no agreement as to the components or goals of adult education or even whether or not it was a movement (Knowles, 1962). Only within the past 50 years has a theoretical framework emerged that separates adult learning from children's learning (Knowles, 1984). According to Knowles (1962), the one institution that was most influential for the first 2 centuries of the United States' national life was the church. The church continues to be involved with adult education into the early part of the 21st century but has not integrated adult education philosophy and techniques (Knowles, 1962). Before 1861, three other institutions formed the basis for the adult education movement in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The three institutions were the Lowell Institute and Cooper Union, the library, and the museum (Knowles, 1962).

Lai (1995) suggested that adult education in U.S. churches generally include a teacher-centered or lecture approach and incorporates the Biblical mandate to use preaching as the means to instruct churchgoers. Knowles (1962) argued that while the church has made an impact on adult education in the United States during the first 2 centuries of its history, the church has not integrated adult education philosophy and techniques into its work of preaching. McKenzie and Harton (2002) posited that there was still some resistance

to adoption of adult learning principles in adult religious education due to what they suggested was a reliance on theology over methodology. While religious educators emphasized “the application of theology to life results in religious learning” (McKenzie & Harton, 2002, p. 2), adult learning theorists have advocated transformative learning whereby the teacher becomes a facilitator for student-centered dialogue that stimulates critical thinking, leading to changes in behavior (Brookfield, 1987; Houde, 2006; Lai, 1995; Mezirow, 1991).

Lecture

Lecture was the method of choice for higher education course instructors in the United States in the 20th century (Butler, 1992). Carlson (2001) reported that any group size can be taught with only one instructor with some degree of effectiveness. The need for few additional instructional materials makes lecture attractive to both the teacher and the administrator. The lecture method allows the teacher flexibility in influencing the delivery of the material with their style or preferences (Carlson, 2001). However, there are difficulties with the lecture method. During a lecture, the learner tends to become passive and unmotivated. Lai (1995) described lecture as oppressive because it extinguishes self-directedness and implicitly teaches listeners to be passive and dependent on the teacher. Lecturers often seem unaffected by the boredom they inflict on their listeners (Brookfield, 1990). Teachers struggle with the practical aspects of how to make their lectures critically stimulating.

The length of the lecture has a great deal to do with its effectiveness (Oermann, 2004). Carlson (2001) stipulated the optimal length of a lecture as between 20 and 30 minutes.

Carlson suggested the use of a well-organized outline with a clear-cut introduction and conclusion and some form of visual enhancement to enhance student learning. Brookfield (1990) suggested several ways to improve lecture. The lecturer needs to know the audience, their interests, roles, and dilemmas. The asking of information-gathering questions can engage the audience and help the speaker by providing valuable feedback (Kraus & Sears, 2008; Oermann, 2004). Brookfield stated that the lecturer that takes an inquiry stance, especially at the beginning and the end of the lecture, encourages the listeners to investigate the big issues. Brookfield also suggested that the lecturer should speak from skeleton notes and not from prewritten scripts which can be perceived as boring and predictable. Brookfield preferred the use of notes because notes “create [the] appearance of being spontaneous, allow for idiomatic language, and require thorough knowledge of subject” (p. 79). Brookfield also suggested using visual aids to connect the main points in the lecture. Researchers have indicated value in the lecturer illustrating ideas by using analogies and metaphors as well as anecdotes from his or her life, pop culture, sports, or current events (Brookfield, 1990; Butler, 1992; Carlson, 2001; Chesebro, 2003; Kraus & Sears, 2008). Krause and Sears (2008) found lectures from teachers who are approachable, caring, creative, open-minded, realistic, fair, and respectful most effective. Krause and Sears further noted that teaching that included things that were interesting and involved students actively through discussion, labs, and projects held the students’ attention and aided in the students’ retention of the material.

Butler (1992) presented the findings from a research study conducted with freshman and sophomore students taking human biology courses at Dorset House School of Occupational

Therapy. The study was designed to evaluate perceived effectiveness of different teaching methods that can be incorporated into a basic lecture format. The 126 student participants were divided into the two groups taught by the same professor. Five different ways of using the 50 minutes of class time were tried. The five methods were worksheets, didactic or traditional lecture, uncompleted handout, completed handout, and the use of experimental tasks. The students were given evaluation sheets and asked to rank each method from one to 10, where one was least effective and 10 was most effective. Butler confirmed that traditional didactic lecture was the least effective method. The best method was the use of handouts, whether completed or uncompleted. Students added that the handouts helped them know where the lesson was going and what would be expected of them. The students especially appreciated the clearly stated objectives that served as study guides for reading and tests. The modified lecture with notes and handouts were shown to increase subject relevance while making the lecture more exciting, provoking, inspiring, and effective (Butler, 1992).

Definition of Adult Education

The term adult education has been used with three intended meanings. One meaning is to describe the process of continued learning after formal schooling has been completed (Knowles, 1962). Adult education can also be defined as a movement, classification, or field (Knowles, 1962). Adult education can also refer to a set of educational exercises that institutions design for adult men and women for the reaching of certain educational objectives (Merriam, 1991). It is this last

definition for adult education that is the focus of this literature review.

Andragogy

Andragogy is a system of intentional strategies aimed at creating an environment that encourages adult learners to participate in transformational learning (Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1991; Vella, 1994). Andragogy is not an idea that competes with pedagogy but is at the opposite end of the same spectrum. Pedagogical strategies are applicable in applications where the andragogical model is not (Knowles, 1980). The andragogical model comes with certain assumptions. Four of the assumptions are that the adult learner has (a) self-direction or autonomy; (b) more experience triggers to learning than youth; (c) a task-centered, or problem-centered orientation to learning; and (d) action or some other way of indicating learning has happened (Knowles, 1984; Merriam, 1991). The importance of dialogue is one of the basic assumptions in adult learning (Shor & Freire, 1987; Vella, 1994). Vella (1994) explained that adult educators have to have confidence in the adult learner because they have enough life experience and can learn new knowledge they deem helpful.

Adult Religious Education

During the period from 1920 to 1960, adult religious education developed as a subfield in adult education (Elias, 1993). Religious organizations were slower than other bodies to expand their adult education programs. Rapid growth of such programs after 1960 is credited to church leaders' response to declines in the frequency of religious activity amongst church members (Foltz, 1990). During 1980 to 1990, there was an

increase in theory and research concerning adult learning with virtually no research focusing exclusively on adult religious learning. Many Protestant churches had begun expanding their adult religious education programs leading to the hiring of directors of adult education (Elias, 1993).

According to Foltz (1986), adult religious education needed was a reconceptualization of its purposes and scope. Foltz called for a reconceptualization “based not only on theological perspectives but also on principles of adult education, an understanding of educational anthropology and contextual metalanguage, research information regarding adult development, and on the principles of marketing” (p. 21). This call for learning the teacher’s art is also a call for the Christian minister to develop and keep alive a scholarly approach to his or her profession (Palmer, 1937). Adult religious education needs to develop professionals who will integrate theory and practice, acknowledging the need for not only the professional but also for the practitioner to ensure future progress (Foltz, 1986).

The purpose of adult religious education is to challenge an individual or culture’s ideals, feelings, and living (Vogel, 1984). Most of the laity assumes that the Christian faith should make a difference in the way an individual lives (Foltz, 1990). Palmer (1932) stated that adult religious education makes a Christian character or “efficient Christian personality” (p. 35). Education in the church, Palmer posited, is not just a department or special service but it is the work of the church itself. Vogel (1984) described the function of Christian religious education as that which affirms the worth of every individual and their power to make responsible decisions. Vogel further described religious education as witnessing to the acts of God in

history, thereby urging individuals to reflect critically on what they have seen and heard.

One of the challenges of adult religious education is that the church in the United States exists in a pluralistic society and a constantly evolving world. The institutions of family, church, and school have seen their importance wane while persons have experienced growing flexibility and personalized life choices (Vogel, 1984). Another obstacle to religious learning is seen in the increasing trend towards secularism, rationalism, relativism, plurality, and individualism (Elias, 1993). Given this background, it is appropriate to consider the goals of adult education.

Goal of Adult Education

The goal of adult education and adult education activities is to provide for the multifaceted growth of each participant. In Knowles's (1980) view, the purpose of education is to produce competent people who can apply what they learn to life's ever-changing situations. The focus is not simply on learning, as Carter (2009) suggested, but on transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991). The development of adult education will lead to better conditions of individuals and throughout society (Knowles, 1962). The change that adult education can effect occurs when participants enter into critical discourse on subjects relevant to them that are reflective of social norms and cultural codes (Mezirow, 1991). Adult educators have a responsibility to create opportunities for learners to become more critically reflective. The goal of andragogy in Mezirow's (1991) view is to develop critically reflective and self-directed learning adults. Some of the values that adults must wrestle with include freedom, democracy, equality, justice, and social cooperation.

Through critical thinking, adults can be better equipped to expand their way of looking at and behaving in their world (Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1991; Vella, 1994).

Needs for Adult Learning

Adult learners are avid learners who are motivated by different things in which they place value. Whether it is for vocation or vacation, realization or acquisition, adults are motivated learners (Merriam, 1991). Adult learners are self-directed and ready to learn what is needed in order to function more competently in some area of their lives (Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1991). The role of the adult educator is one of many that provide needed support for the learner. Knowles (1980) listed the functions of the teacher of adults as diagnostic, planning, motivational, methodological, resource, and evaluative (p. 26). The diagnostic function is seen as helping the learner focus on the needs for particular learning activities. Sequencing of the learning experiences by teachers is considered a planning function. Teachers who create conditions that are conducive to learning perform a motivational function (Knowles, 1980). When teachers make decisions and selections concerning teaching techniques and methods, they are engaging in a methodological function. The resource function is illustrated by a teacher providing human and material resources needed for the learning activity (Mezirow, 1991). Teachers of adults perform the evaluative function as they help the learner measure the outcomes of their educational experience (Knowles, 1980).

In an educational program designed for adults, the curriculum is developed around the interests and needs of the student. The adult learner has a wealth of experience which will

serve as a living text (Jackson, 2009). This same experience fosters greater differences in the adult student (Knowles, 1984). Consequently, the task of adult educators is to assist the learner in evaluating and analyzing critically their values, beliefs, and conduct as each has developed in the context of their lived experiences (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) described this task as assisting adult learners through several phases of transformation. The first phase is a disorienting dilemma wherein the learner's previously held belief comes into conflict with a newly identified value, leading to a sort of unrest or disequilibrium. Several phases lead through the transformation of feelings, values, relationships, and finally result in action. The final phase of the transformational learning process is theorized as occurring when the learner has built competence and confidence in their new skills. The transformed adult learner has acquired knowledge that he or she can reintegrate into life with different conditions dictated by a new perspective (Mezirow, 1991). The use of Mezirow's phases of transformation informed this study and the research questions by exploring how a sermon might create a disorienting situation for the listener. The preacher might understand and use the impact of core elements of a transformative approach to teaching. The list of elements the preacher might incorporate in a sermon includes individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of context, and an authentic practice (Mezirow et al., 2009).

The use of critical incident exercises, criteria analysis, and crisis-decision simulations are three ways Brookfield (1987) suggested to prompt adult students to examine their assumptions. Critical incident exercises are used to ask students to identify some event that held particular significance to them,

particularly their greatest personal satisfaction. Criteria analysis is an exercise that helps students identify and make explicit the standards and values they use in determining whether an activity is good or profitable. Crisis-decision simulations get students to imagine themselves in situation where they must choose from a number of unsettling choices (Brookfield, 1987).

THE NURTURE OF ADULT LEARNING

The Climate for Adult Learning

Adult educators have come to realize that they should focus on facilitating learning by creating an environment that is conducive to learning (Brookfield, 1990; Knowles, 1984; Merriam, 1991; Vella, 1994). Merriam (1991) listed people, structure, and culture as three organizational factors that can encourage learning. Knowles (1984) argued that the teachers can set a psychological climate that influences the adult learner. Knowles prescribed a climate of “mutual respect, collaborativeness, mutual trust, supportiveness, pleasure, humanness, openness and authenticity” (p. 15). An environment that optimizes learning is described as one that features utilitarianism, attractiveness, comfort, and flexibility (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990). Knowles posited that even the arranging of chairs and the lectern is important because the arrangement reveals the mindset of the instructor.

The Adult Teacher

Brookfield (1990) described an adult educator as someone who has a personal vision of teaching that reflects on whether or not they are helping their students learn in the context that they

find themselves working. The educator will continually evaluate his or her methods and techniques in order to sharpen his or her skills in cultivating learning.

Kersson-Griep (2001) studied teacher communication competence and its effect on student motivation in a university setting. Kersson-Griep concluded that teachers who are schooling students for democracy can significantly improve their results by employing adroit *face-support*. Face-support refers to the way students interpret how teachers communicate with them. Three related concepts that Condon (2008) connected to teacher communication competence described a student's feeling of being misunderstood as feeling unheard, ignored, and/or misinterpreted. Three face-needs of adult students that Kersson-Griep highlighted were described as autonomy, belonging, and competence. Autonomy is communicated when an instructor gives students a choice or an opportunity to be self-directed as the notion of andragogy explains. Belonging refers to the student's need for fellowship or camaraderie. The student needs assurance that he or she is accepted and fits in the group. The face-need of competence describes the student's need to believe that he can learn as well as believe that the instructor believes she has what it takes to master the material. The student's need for a feeling of competence runs counter to the student feeling that the teacher is demeaning or talking down to him or her (Kersson-Griep, 2001).

Trust is a significant factor in whether or not students will experience significant learning from their teacher (Brookfield, 1990). Brookfield stated that "the more profound and meaningful the learning [will be] to the students, the more they need to be able to trust their teachers" (1990, p. 163). Brookfield perceived two components for trustworthiness—

credibility and authenticity. Credibility is the component that is comprised of the teacher's knowledge, skill and expertise--in a word, their competence. Authenticity, the other component of trustworthiness, when perceived by students comprises the teacher's character with his or her passions, frailties, and emotions. Authenticity reflects on the teacher's personhood and whether he or she is able to admit to errors and fallibility while being consistent in words and actions. Brookfield instructed teachers seeking to build trust to: "be explicit about your organizing vision, be ready to admit your errors, reveal yourself unrelated to teaching, demonstrate that you take students' concerns seriously, realize the power or role modeling, don't play favorites, and don't deny your credibility" (p. 165). In Brookfield's view, trust in the teacher is built up over time as the teacher is given opportunities to reveal competence and authenticity. The nurture of adult learning is enhanced by the three organizational factors of people, structure, and culture. The adult teacher who leads students to significant learning is one who is trusted. A teacher's perceived credibility and authenticity lead students to trust them.

Preachers as Adult Teachers

Some ministers fail to realize that they are in a role of an adult educator (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (1980) contended that large meetings such as church preaching services as they are generally conducted do not produce much learning. Knowles stated that the educative quality of any such meeting is directly proportional to the quantity and quality of the interaction during the meeting. The three loci of fields of where interaction can be stimulated are the audience, the platform, and the interplay between the audience and the platform (Knowles,

1980). Lai (1995) agreed with Knowles that a new model for Christian adult education is needed in churches where the principles of andragogy are considered. Lai argued that approaches where theology is taught through a teacher-centered lecture need to give way to a model that encourages dialogue with listeners in order to produce individuals that are “biblically literate, critically conscious, and actively involved Christians” (p. 2). Lai listed two reasons why it is time for a change in the way the Bible is taught in churches. Lai first reason was that the printed Bible is now available to the people in the pew and they have become enabled independent learners. Lai’s second reason related to his view of the changes in the church and society through the expansion in information availability that has left the church and its antiquated educational modalities less functional.

Communication

While there are many different qualities that are given for effective teaching and preaching, two that appear frequently on researchers’ lists are the qualities of immediacy and relevance (Furman, 1992; McCroskey, et al, 2002; Morgan, 2002; Olenowski, 2000; Strangway, 2004; Warren, 2007). In the following division of the literature review the literature on the topic of communication with a focus on relevancy and immediacy in preaching will be synthesized. Relevancy in communication is understood by connection, character, and context. The literature on the topics of verbal and non-verbal forms of immediacy and their impact on the learning process are also synthesized.

Relevance

The concept of relevance seems to encompass much more than a teacher or preacher contextualizing the subject matter in a contemporary setting. Strangway (2004) explained relevancy in preaching as tying the message into the concerns, hopes, and dreams of the listeners. In Strangway's view, the perception of being relevant is the work that the teacher does in order to connect with the listener.

In the literature reviewed for this study, not only was agreement found on the influence of relevance on the effectiveness of preaching, but there was agreement as to what constitutes relevance (Butler, 1992; Furman, 1992; Lai, 1995; Morgan, 2002; Strangway, 2004; Warren, 2007). Preaching that is relevant is consistently presented as communication that helps the learner connect to the lesson (Luntz, 2007; Strangway, 2004). There are several ways the preacher can encourage this connection. One method is the presentation of the lesson in a way that helps the listeners to visualize it as the story of their lives (Furman, 1992; Daggett, 2005; Luntz, 2007; Olenowski, 2000; Strangway, 2004). Being practical or giving the "how to" after teaching spiritual principles or truths was also suggested as characteristic of adding relevance (Furman, 1992; Luntz, 2007; Strangway, 2004). A third characteristic presented in the literature reviewed for this study focused more on the character of the speaker than on a technique. The integrity and good character of the preacher were stated as important elements in promoting relevancy (Furman, 1992; Morgan, 2002; Olenowski, 2000; Strangway, 2004). One other descriptor of relevance discussed was the teacher giving a clear overview of the lesson ahead and how it would connect to what had already been

learned or presented (Butler, 1992; Furman, 1992; Daggett, 2005).

Luntz (2007) stressed the need for communicators to make their presentations relevant. Luntz stated that the speaker needs to “take the imaginative leap of stuffing yourself right into your listener’s shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling in the deepest recesses of their mind and heart” (p. xiii). While the notion of relevance lends itself to speaker creativity, it is also practical in nature. Relevance in teaching can be gained by using instructional strategies that help students connect with the material. A teacher who tells the class what to expect in the next chapter and how it compares or contrasts to what they are currently learning, improves the instruction and adds relevance to the lesson (Marzano, 2003). Robles (1998) built on this notion by listing the relevance terms that describe important concepts which connect the student with the lesson. Robles delineated the concepts of experience, present worth, future usefulness, needs matching, modeling, and choice. A broader description of relevance included the context of the speaker’s character (Morgan, 2002; Warren, 2007). Warren specified humility, integrity, generosity, civility, and clarity as attributes that are needed to engage the listener (2002).

Furman (1992) scrutinized baby boomers, those U.S. citizens born between 1946 and 1964, and their unique characteristics that influence how they receive spiritual truth. Furman interviewed ministers contemporary Furman’s time, reviewed previous research, and drew conclusions concerning what constitutes effective preaching to baby boomers. Furman’s analysis of the findings indicated that young to middle age adults choose a church based on the meaningful content of sermons. The conclusion of Furman’s research was that effective

preaching could be described in the terms biblical, personal, and practical. While Furman did not use the word *relevance*, the meaning and spirit of relevance was found in all three points of Furman's conclusion. Biblical was defined as preaching that is only effective when it "introduces and explains characters, background, and doctrines in contemporary terms" (Furman, 1992, p. 165). Personal preaching was described as preaching that emphasizes how the story of the sermon can be understood and visualized as the story of the listeners' lives. Furthermore, practicality in the message was embodied in the concept of relevance. The conclusion of Furman's study was that preaching is most effective when it tells the listeners "how to" live, do, or be in light of revelation given (Furman, 1992).

Strangway (2004) conducted research in order to better understand how to preach effectively in a postmodern context. Strangway termed effective preaching that which is "incarnational" (p. 4) meaning it is based on the view that the message presented is delivered to a specific group of listeners in a specific context. Strangway listed 10 qualities of effective preaching, one of which states that the goal of preaching is relevance. For Strangway, the ideas of the audience listening taking the message seriously, interacting with the message, and considering the claims and promises is directly related to its relevance. Strangway connected relevancy to authenticity and to life. Strangway's findings indicated that relevancy is composed of two elements. First, whatever is preached must be shown to be pertinent to a person's life. The message presented needs to address needs, concerns, and questions that the individual is already contemplating. The second element of relevancy is the need for whatever is taught to hold value.

Relevance in the sermon must be connected to how this important message can make a difference in the listener's life.

Strangway (2004) declared that relevance affects the preacher's view of application and impact. The effective preacher is one who is a student of culture and is aware of the macro and micro concerns of the people. The application of the sermon is a time for connecting the message to the issues, events, and concerns that confront the listeners. Thus, preachers should list some micro issues as family, marriage, sin, and spirituality and include macro issues such as world peace, terrorism, employment, and social concerns in their sermons. The preacher is person who can bridge the gap between deep spiritual truth and the need for practical everyday wisdom while communicating a compassion for and interest in the listeners' daily struggles. Relevancy in this context has an effect because the speaker creates a dialogue with the listener by using stories, questions, and objects. An effective preacher not only speaks about the things that are commonplace but also the matters of the heart (Strangway, 2004).

Daggett (2005) developed a framework for planning and instruction that was designed to assist teacher practitioners with rigorous and relevant instruction (Appendix A). The idea was to help teachers and the developers of teachers take a deeper look into how they were planning their curriculum and teaching. This framework was centered around a taxonomy of knowledge which was based on Bloom's taxonomy (Forehand, 2005), and Daggett's action continuum application model. The rigor/relevance framework (Daggett, 2005) has four quadrants that are labeled from A to D, and to each is assigned a level-acquisition, application, assimilation, or adaptation respectively. Each of these levels represents a different type of

knowledge and a higher level of understanding. When the instructor uses the lecture approach, he or she only supports learning in the A and C quadrants (Daggett, 2005). Quadrants B and D are the quadrants of application and adaptation which correspond closely to life-changing types of education. To enhance student learning, Daggett challenged teachers to change their focus of instruction. Daggett stated that deeper level meaning can be attained if the teacher takes into consideration students' interests, facilitates students' active construction of meaning, uses questioning and feedback to stimulate student reflection, and uses a variety of resources to promote understanding.

In Luntz' presentation on context and relevance, Luntz (2007) explained and illustrated Luntz' notion of what is critical for anyone who wants their message to be understood and cause the listener to act. Luntz presented context for the "why" of the message so that the listener will be ready for the "therefore." In Luntz' view, the value of the message lies in its relevance to the context. Relevance is the complement to context and is focused on the individual and the personal meaning of the message. Luntz (2007) challenged speakers to shed their own perspective in favor of seeing the environment through the listeners' eyes.

Relevance and context are needed for successful sermon delivery. Warren (2007) stated that if a person is not worried about staying true to the biblical message, relevance is easy. Warren also stated that if teachers are narrowly focused on making sure they remain biblical in their teaching, they might easily abandoning relevance. Warren's response to this dilemma was to consider relevancy not as a strategy but as a lifestyle (Warren, 2007).

Immediacy

Immediacy is the manner in which the teacher stimulates the student to have affect for the content and for the teacher. Immediacy is described in terms of being verbal or nonverbal. The action of the speaker may include speaking in a way that communicates the speaker's emotional bond with the listener (Olenowski, 2000). This emotional bond is one outcome that Simmons (2007) noted in reporting the outcome of adult learning experiment. Simmons stated that the building of community and relationships in the class Simmons studied aided students in their retention of information. This outcome can also be supported by the speaker using proximity to the listeners and purposeful expression.

Morgan (2002) argued that preachers have a responsibility to connect with their audience through an inspiring transmission. The problem, according to Morgan (2002), is linked to the minister's habit of reading, competence in language, passion, emotional affectation, and/or ethical persuasion. Morgan's solution or prescription for curing a lack of relevance in preaching is for preachers "to fortify themselves with competence in language, involve not only the mind but also the emotions of the hearers, and be respectable both morally and intellectually" (p. 4). The facility with language, Morgan said, has a predictive ability as to whether a speaker will have the ability to persuade effectively. Learning rarely happens in an emotional vacuum (Brookfield, 1990; Olenowski, 2000). Language is also at the center of the need for the speaker to touch the emotions of the listener. Knowing the mind and feelings of those being taught allows the preachers to identify with the ones they wish to influence. Morgan contended, "in every era when memorable sermons flourish, dynamic preachers

implement passionate persuasion” (p. 3). Truth by itself will not always persuade, Morgan argued. Preachers are called to be more than “mere pulpit disc jockeys playing God’s records” (p. 4). She stressed that impassioned persuasion makes a tremendous difference in whether or not preaching is effective or not (Morgan, 2002).

Preachers need to speak in such a way as to bond emotionally with their listeners. The emotional bonding theory declares “there exists a group of skills that together can allow for verbal and nonverbal communication between the speaker and the listener or create an emotional bond” (Olenowski, 2000, p. 11). This facility with language is said to have a predictive ability as to whether a speaker will have the ability to persuade effectively. Language is also at the center of the need for the speaker to touch the emotions of the listener. Knowing the mind and feelings of those being taught allows the preacher to identify with the ones he or she wishes to influence. The reality of the need for emotion in persuasive speaking is emphasized in the statement, “in every era when memorable sermons flourish, dynamic preachers implement passionate persuasion” (Morgan, 2002, p. 3). Luntz (2007) presented 10 rules of effective language: (a) simplicity, (b) brevity, (c) credibility, (d) consistency, (e) novelty, (f) sound and texture, (g) aspirational speech, (h) visualization, (i) asking a question, and (j) providing context and explain relevance. Luntz demonstrated the connection between immediacy and relevance in his discussion of what people really care about, and 21 words and phrases that connect emotionally with listeners. Luntz (2007) argued, “It’s not what you say, it’s what people hear” (p. xiii). Luntz posited that no matter how good the message or lesson is, it will only be understood through the prism of someone’s emotions, ideas,

experiences, and presuppositions. Vella (1994) echoed the need for the learning task to contain an element of actions, ideas, and feelings.

Olenowski's (2000) research on the emotional bonding theory and effective preaching, stated "thirty-seven percent of homilies didn't have any of the applications of the teaching presented" (p. 9). Olenowski argued that this lack of application results in a certain coldness where emotions of the spirit are missing. The emotional bonding theory is promoted as the answer to bridging the gap and finding common ground of shared experience between the minister and the congregation. Olenowski's approach is one that encourages the speaker to identify with the listeners in such a way as to help the listeners to perceive that they are "in the same boat" with the speaker. The emotional bonding theory focused the spotlight on the emotions found in the preaching process. Emotion is referred to as a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and the range of propensities to act. Olenowski stated that emotions are what attract individuals to certain people, objects, actions, and ideas, while moving people away from others. Words have emotion and thoughts connected to them, therefore preachers would do well to consider their choice of words and the emotion and thought they communicate. Olenowski also focused on strategies that can help the preacher to offer messages that will relate to the human condition. Olenowski explained, "Creating this "common ground" involves imaging, painting and clarifying our interior emotional lives" (Olenowski, 2000, p.10). Olenowski advocated the use of metaphor, illustration, humor, storytelling, and self-disclosure to create a common ground between preacher and listener.

Nonverbal immediacy has also been shown to greatly affect cognitive learning and to promote favorable outcomes in students (McCroskey, et al., 2002). There is a connection between teachers who are more nonverbally immediate and a favorable response of their students to their lecture. Students interpret nonverbal immediacy in a teacher as being caring, understandable, and indicating better teachers than those who are less immediate (McCroskey, et al., 2002). Nonverbal immediacy is nonverbal behaviors that communicate approval, fondness, or positive affect to others. McCroskey, et al. suggested several behaviors that teachers do that communicate immediacy such as the teacher looking in the direction of the student, smiling, sitting in proximity to the student, or even touching the student in a nonthreatening manner.

Ambient Teaching

The climate for adult learning is impacted by the physical characteristics of the space in which it is to take place (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; Knowles, 1984; White, 1972). Environmental features are important because they have a direct and powerful impact on learning. White (1972) noted, “general estimates indicate that while about seventy-five percent of learning is accounted for by motivation, meaningfulness, and memory, the remaining twenty-five percent of learning is dependent upon the effects of the physical environment” (p. 1). Adult students are more likely than children to be affected by the physical learning environment with an increase in their motivation due to sufficient space, attractive decoration, and functional furnishings (Lane & Lewis, 1971). Hiemstra and Sisco (1990) suggested that the physical environment “enhances learner commitment” (p. 246). The term “ambient teaching” is used (K.

Lynch, personal communication, December 27, 2010) to describe “the way in which the preacher uses the space and the characteristics and conditions of the space to enhance the message of the oral communication and support adult learning.” Hiemstra and Sisco stated that the physical environment for adult learners is a subject that is often ignored in literature on adult learning. The reasons offered for ignorance of the physical location included these: (a) adult learning takes place in spaces designed for other age groups, (b) adults lack of perception of the seriousness of the environmental problem, (c) the lack of a budget designated to improve the adult learning physical environment, (d) administrators and teachers do not embrace the responsibility to ensure the learning environment, and (e) those who want to improve the learning environment do not know where to start. Four areas of concern when evaluating adult learning environments are *anthropometry*, *ergonomics*, *proxemics*, and *synaesthetics* (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990), terms that will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Anthropometry

Adults display different shapes and sizes. *Anthropometry* focuses on the dimensions of the human body. These dimensions are important to consider when designing adult learning spaces (White, 1972). Hiemstra and Sisco (1990) posited that the choice of chairs, their size, padding, shape, and arrangement are real areas of concern. They further submitted that attractiveness or décor concerns may influence selection of seats more than the size or shape of the adults participating (Vosko, 1991). Some other concerns of the furniture that should be considered in a learning environment are those which pertain to movement and interaction. Round tables are optimal for encouraging eye

contact and interaction between students (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; White, 1972).

Ergonomics

The target audience or student should dictate the design of the learning space. Ergonomics deal with bringing comfort to those who occupy a space or use an instrument (White, 1972). The aspects of size and shape enter into the philosophy or expectation that the teacher has for the instruction within that space. A straight row of seats in a narrow rectangle of a room indicates one way communication of a lecture mode by which knowledge is deposited into passive students or listeners (White, 1972). A semi-circle or wider arrangement of seats indicates the teacher is seeking discussion and dialogue between the students and with the instructor (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990).

Proxemics

The use of space not only defines a physical setting but it also indicates and in some cases creates a culture. Several issues connected to proxemics include gestures, touch or avoidance of touch, eye behavior, and posture (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990). Sociofugal and sociopetal are two different settings that affect the use of space for adult learners. Sociofugal settings are used in environments where interaction among the students is discouraged and attention is primarily forward towards the lecturer. This arrangement creates a status distinction where students see themselves as nonspecial and having no distinct identity compared with the instructor (White, 1972). Sociopetal settings encourage interaction and can facilitate conversation by having the learners seated facing towards one another. Hard architectural spaces, like those with fixed seating, do not provide

for or encourage individual movement or interaction (Fulton, 1991). A common arrangement for a sociopetal setting is a large square where the students are seated around the outside edges or the use of a circular setting or round tables. Soft architectural spaces have furnishings that can be moved or changed and have inherent flexibility (Fulton, 1991; Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; White, 1972).

Adult learners have learned to choose their seating preferences to accommodate their desired amount of interaction (Vosko, 1991; White, 1972). Hall (1966) claimed that there are four distance zones, the intimate, personal, social, and public, from which the students may choose. Students who have the freedom and ability to move or change their seats benefit through stimulated social and personal growth (Hall, 1966; Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; White, 1972).

Synaesthetics

Synaesthetics involves the study of how students are affected by the simultaneous use of several of their senses. Many instructors have faced the challenge of extraneous noise from construction, planes, or a noisy adjoining class that interferes with the hearing of their class (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; White, 1972). The lack of light or the over abundance of illumination can have a direct impact on the effectiveness of an instructor's presentation. The key idea is for teachers to be able to select or change the amount of lighting as needed for the task at hand. The impact of colors on the learning environment can affect participation and productivity (White, 1972). Comfort concerns can be noted in temperature and humidity levels as well as in the availability of suitable chairs, bathrooms, and refreshments (Vosko, 1991). Hiemstra and Sisco (1990) and Knowles (1980)

indicated that much more research needs to be done on the relationships between the human senses such as touch, smell, and taste the outcomes adult learners experience in an adult learning environment.

CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE METHODS FOR THE STUDY

I used a case study design to analyze the bounded phenomenon which is preaching. Merriam (2009) defined a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 46). A case study explores a case or multiple cases over time utilizing multiple sources of data (Creswell, 1998). The case being studied can be a single site or program or several programs in a multi-site study where the focus is on individuals, an activity, or an event. Within a case study, many methods of collecting data can be used with the researcher as the primary instrument for collecting data (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Information regarding the research problem can be collected by various means including interviews, focus groups, and field notes. Qualitative data research supports the hermeneutic paradigm because it explores the lived experience of participants (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative data are presented in a rich, thick narrative to convey the participants’ experiences. A constructivist paradigm “assumes that multiple, socially constructed realities exist and that the meanings individuals give to their experiences ought to be the objects of study” (Hatch, 2002). Interpretative analysis fits well with a study that focuses on making sense of situations where there is a certain social aspect to the event and the researcher is exploring explanations for what goes on within the event (Hatch, 2002).

Triangulation is as a strategy to strengthen the internal validity of the study (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The hermeneutic paradigm provides tools that the researcher can use to connect interpretations to data in an effort to construct meaning that explains the social phenomena in the study (Hatch, 2002). The paradigm will provide tools to expand the researcher's sensitivity to the complexity of the data collected from the three sources he or she intends to use. This paradigm guides the researcher towards a specific priority as the study is conducted.

SUMMARY

The literature synthesized here encompasses topics that inform and relate to the conceptual framework for the study on effective preaching. The review of literature on adult learning included literature on the potential for transforming learning environments into dynamic learner-centered spaces where dialogue is encouraged and interaction is a valued commodity. Literature on communication theory focused on two key characteristics of effective communication, relevancy, and immediacy. Relevancy in communication was explained by the concepts of connection, character, and context. The literature on communication also included the topic of verbal and non-verbal forms of immediacy and their impacts on the learning process. The literature review also includes a section on ambient teaching, which covered the important aspects of an effective learning environment. The last section of the literature review contains literature on the research methods selected for the study. In the following section the justification for the study is presented along with the justification for using a qualitative

design. Furthermore, details concerning the population, how the interviews were administered, and the data analysis used are included.