

TITLE: An Examination of Leadership Practices in Large, Protestant Congregations*

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OBJECTIVE: To investigate how the leadership practices in large Protestant congregations compare with each other and with leadership practices in business enterprises.

METHODOLOGY: Pastors of Protestant mega-churches (2,000 or more in worship attendance) comprised the population (N = 213); from which a sample of 132 responded (62%). The LPI-Self and demographic data about the pastor and his congregation were provided. One hundred pastors were contacted for subsequent interviews, of which 53 consented.

While pastors represented 28 states, most were from Texas (29) and California (21). On average, they were 50 years old (range 33-81), with 15 years of tenure (range 1-41). About one-fourth (35) were founding pastors. The average age of the church was 55 years (range 4-206). There were five denominational affiliation groupings: Southern Baptist (40), other Baptists (10), Assemblies of God (11), other denominations (32), and non-affiliated (39).

FINDINGS: Leadership practices did not vary as a function of years of tenure, the pastor's status as founder, the age of the church or church members, or congregation's size (or rate of growth), but average scores did increase directly with the pastors' age. Leadership practices varied as a function of denominational affiliation, "with non-affiliated churches scoring the lowest followed by Southern Baptists. The grouping of other denominations scored highest with Assemblies of God and other Baptists being a close second and third" (154-155).

Overall, "pastors scored higher in each of the leadership practices" (161) than business leaders (no statistical analyses computed). Qualitative analyses revealed that "leaders in churches and business enterprises are similar not only in their values but also in their generic leadership practices" (173). The greatest difference was the higher importance placed on interpersonal openness by church, than business, leaders. "Pastors and business leaders employ a core group of leadership skills which make them effective as leaders regardless of differences in the nature, mission, and goals of the work site (233)...they challenge their congregations to break out of molded patterns of behavior by constructively confronting them with new paradigms for living which often engender both

risk and opportunity. Through their preaching and leadership, they enlist others to a shared vision for the future by breeding enthusiasm and excitement. They invest time in mentoring leaders whom they empower to serve. By their example, they demonstrate expected behaviors by modeling the way. Finally, they arrange for opportunities to celebrate accomplishments, giving their congregation a sense of significance by witnessing the church in action" (235). One final conclusion, from the interviews, is that pastors are "in love with leading their congregations" (257).

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