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Senior Center Participation in Northwest Arkansas: An Examination of Future Marketing Strategies, Policy Implications, and Program Needs to Attract the Baby-Boomer Generation

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SENIOR CENTER PARTICIPATION IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS: AN EXAMINATION
OF FUTURE MARKETING STRATEGIES, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, AND PROGRAM
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SENIOR CENTER PARTICIPATION IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS: AN EXAMINATION
OF FUTURE MARKETING STRATEGIES, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, AND PROGRAM
NEEDS TO ATTRACT THE BABY-BOOMER GENERATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of the Baby Boomer Generation on the future services provided by Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas, specifically in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties. The study was a mixed methods design utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Three research groups were used: Nine Senior Center Directors, which were interviewed; one focus group composed of four Baby Boomers; and a print survey distributed to ninety-two Baby Boomers. The data revealed that changes are needed in the program and services in Senior Centers to attract the Baby Boomer Generation. Changes will need to include updating facilities and eliminating the institutional feel to the buildings. Providing current and trendy programs, activities, and education was also recommended. The primary policy implication is funding, which affects all of the areas suggested for change. Senior Centers will need to find innovative ways to increase funding or reduce expenses, and starting entrepreneurial activities and building community partnerships is one method to increase resources. If increased funding is not forthcoming, then a re-evaluation of the target group of seniors is warranted, along with a review of the best way to service seniors on a limited budget.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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DISSERTATION DUPLICATION RELEASE

I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this dissertation when needed for research and/or scholarship.

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_____ **Wanda Faye Dobbs Turner**

Refused

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First and foremost, I want to thank God and my family. The support and encouragement of my family was priceless. My late husband, David Alan Turner, was always supportive and gave me the strength to embark upon this endeavor. To him, I will be forever grateful, and I am just sorry he is not here to see this project finished, as he was always my number one cheerleader in this project and in life. My two beautiful daughters, Angela and Meredith, were always there for me and gave up precious time with me on numerous occasions so that I could complete this project. Angela and Meredith thank you for being so understanding. I love both of you more than words can express. My brothers, Jerry, Larry, and Mickey, have lovingly expressed their pride in my tackling this research project. To each of you, thank you for your love and support, and now you no longer have to call me “Master Sis”. Although, I kind of like being the “Master,” but “Dr. Sis” has a nice ring too. As well, I want to thank my sister-in-laws, Carol and Debbie, my nieces, Bobbie and Jennifer, my mother-in-law, Dorothy, and each member of my very large family. A thank you seems so insignificant in relation to how much I appreciate each and every one of you for all of your support and encouragement, not only in this process but in life.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late husband, David, my daughters, Angela and Meredith, my brothers, Jerry, Larry, and Mickey, and my late beloved father and mother, W.T. and Ruth.

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Chapter One

Introduction

At present, Senior Centers provide an extensive array of services to Americans over the age of 60. Senior Centers were funded initially through the passage of the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 Title IV Section 401(b). Lowry & Doolin (1990) provide the following definition of a Senior Center, "The multipurpose senior center is a community facility in which older people come together to fulfill many of their social, physical, and intellectual needs" (p. 342). Types and quality of services currently vary from one senior center to another. However, a new challenge is on the horizon. According to Gillon (2004), "The Baby Boom would prove to be the single greatest demographic event in American history...." (p. 1). As such, "The ability of Senior Centers to adjust to this dynamic will be of considerable importance not only to senior center users, but also to policy makers and planners..." (Krout, 1989, p. 8). As the population of older adults continues to rapidly increase, the need for services offered by the Senior Centers will probably be in high demand.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), the Baby Boomer cohort consists of approximately 78 million individuals born in the United States between 1946 and 1964, and the oldest of this group started turning 60 in 2006 at a rate of approximately 8,000 per day, while the youngest Baby Boomers turned 42. In the year 2011, the age range of the Baby Boomer cohort was 65 to 47 representing a birth year of 1946 and 1964, respectively. The enormity of this aging cohort is influencing policies in all areas, as well as creating a need for change and reconsideration of services offered through social programs. This cohort of aging adults is considered to be healthier and wealthier, as well as more assertive and less giving in regards to their individual needs and wants. As such, it is approximated by the U.S. Census Bureau (2006)

that in the year 2030 Baby Boomers will be 58 million strong. If this proves true, then the impact on social activities, social services, and public policies will be affected in a variety of ways. This study is designed to explore further the projected impact of the Baby Boomers on services delivered by Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas.

Demographics: Older Americans' Profile

United States of America

The Baby Boomer generation has been determined to be the driving force behind the increasing numbers in age categories that typically require social services. The impending wave of these age cohorts has agencies and policymakers scrambling to keep up with the ever-changing landscape in this area.

With approximately 78 million Baby Boomers, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported valuable statistics for this population (2001). For the decade from 1990-2000, those aged 50 to 54, also known as the leading-edge Baby Boomers, increased by 55%, while those aged 45 to 49 increased by 45%. During the above referenced decade, the Baby Boomers were aged 36 to 54. In *Age: 2000* (2001) which analyzed the data from the 2000 U.S. Census, the report indicates that 35 to 39 year olds were the largest age group representing 8.1% of the total population with approximately 23 million people, and immediately following this group were the 40 to 44 year olds representing 8% of the total population with approximately 22 million people. The majority were Baby Boomers, so approximately 28% of the total population in the 2000 Census, were Baby Boomers. Although these numbers are impressive, perhaps the most important finding was that a 55% increase occurred in the 50 to 54 age group, and a 45%

increase occurred in the 45 to 49 age group, all of which fall into the Baby Boomer age range. Eleven years later in 2011, these age groups are 61 to 65 and 56 to 60, respectively.

In 2000, 12.4% of the total population (approximately 25 million Americans) was over the age of 65. In 2011, the leading-edge Baby Boomers will begin to turn 65. Between 2011 and 2020 there will be a significant increase in those aged 65 and over, and by 2030 this number is estimated to be approximately 72 million. The Administration on Aging (AOA) (2008) estimates those 65 and over by 2010 will be approximately 40 million, by 2020 approximately 55 million, and by 2030 approximately 72 million. By 2030, the AOA reports those 65 and older will account for almost 20% of the total population, and the minority populations will blossom by approximately 184% for this same age group.

To further compound the problem of the Baby Boomer cohort size, the life expectancy rates increased by an additional 19 years in 2006 for those obtaining 65 years of age (AOA, 2008). From the 2005 White House Conference on Aging report to the President and the Congress, *The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action*, "If projections of the population for the next forty years hold, the number of older persons will further increase to 80 million, and one-in-five Americans will be age 65 or older" (p. 8).

The information contained within all of the previously referenced reports paints an explicit picture of the potential impact of this age cohort, Baby Boomers, in many areas including Senior Centers and other social services, as well as policy. With a service age of 60 plus, the Senior Centers, most likely, will be dealing with an ever-increasing population, as well as the intricate demands of the Baby Boomer Generation.

State of Arkansas

As seen nationally, the number of older Arkansans is on the rise and rising quickly. The Arkansas Healthy Aging Report (2004), using U.S. Census Bureau data, provides a snapshot of current and projected state demographics as related to an aging population. It is anticipated that by 2025 those aged 65 and older will double from the 2000 population for this age group. By 2025, approximately 24% of the Arkansas population will be comprised of those 65 and over. Based on 2001-2002 data, Arkansas ranked 4th in the top ten list of states with the highest population of 65 and over adults with 15% (above the United State total of 12%). Meanwhile, based on 2001-2002 data about population 65 and over living in poverty, Arkansas is ranked 10th (16% of population). The *Arkansas State Plan on Aging: 2008-2011* (2007) notes that 19% of the 2005 population estimates were aged 60 plus, and a 75% increase is expected in this age population by 2030. It is important to point out that the above data were prior to the Baby Boomers reaching age 65. By the year 2020, it is anticipated that Arkansans 50 years and older will comprise over 32% of the state's population, with those 60 years and older accounting for approximately 14%. In 2020, the Baby Boomers will be aged 56 to 74.

Northwest Arkansas

This study focuses on the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas. According to the Arkansas Healthy Aging Report (2004), northwest Arkansas has one of the highest percentages of older citizens in the state (based on the 2000 census data). When reviewing the Arkansas counties map for the population aged 65 and older in 2000, Benton and Madison Counties are depicted as each having between 13% and 15.9%, while Washington County was depicted as having between 10% and 12.9%. The Northwest Arkansas

counties of Benton, Madison, and Washington also contain a considerable percent of the total state's population of those over age 62 (14% in 2007).

In *Northwest Arkansas Community Indicators: A Quality-of-Life Assessment*, Fitzpatrick, Myrstol, and Miller (2008) state, "No region in the entire state of Arkansas is growing at a faster pace than Northwest Arkansas" (p. 21). The report indicates that Benton County was responsible for the bulk of the growth in Northwest Arkansas with a 32.3% change in population from 2000 to 2007, contrasted with a 23.1% change in Washington County and an 8.2% change in Madison County during the same time frame. With 2020 on the horizon, Northwest Arkansas growth is anticipated to continue. Fitzpatrick, Myrstol, and Miller (2008) attribute a large portion of this growth to the influx of immigrants between 1990 and 2000, which is responsible for an increase of 500% in Benton County, 460% in Washington County, and 300% in Madison County. At this same time, the racial and ethnic diversity of Northwest Arkansas increased with a reported non-white increase of 350% in Benton County, 280% increase in Washington County, and 260% increase in Madison County. In 2006, the 45-64 year olds in Benton and Washington counties were increasing faster than any other age cohort. It is important to note that the Baby Boomers, in 2006, were 42-60 years of age, with the 60 year olds prime candidates for Senior Center services.

Senior Centers

History

The National Council on Aging (2008) reports the National Institute of Senior Centers defines a Senior Center as a place where, "older adults come together for services and activities that reflect their experience and skills, independence, and encourage their involvement in and

with the center and the community." Senior Centers provide a variety of services to older adults. These include: educational, recreational, nutritional, and social services (NCOA, 2008). One-stop shopping could summarize the services provided by Senior Centers due to the fact that the above services are offered, as well as the coordination of comprehensive program services are filtered through these facilities.

It is believed that senior clubs existed as far back as the 1870s, and they are considered the predecessors of Senior Centers. However, the William Hodson Community Center in New York City holds claim to being the first Senior Center, according to the National Council on Aging. It was established in 1943 by the city's Welfare Department (Krout, 1989). The Senior Center concept grew, and with the passing of the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965, these facilities began to receive governmental funding on a national level, with the funding being funneled through the states' Area Agencies on Aging. Prior to the passing of the OAA in 1965, the 1961 White House Conference on Aging took place and brought to the forefront the work of the Senior Centers. In 1970, the National Institute of Senior Centers was established. 1971 brought the second White House Conference on Aging and a focus on multipurpose Senior Centers (Krout, 1989). The 1973 amendments to the OAA followed suit by describing the multipurpose Senior Centers and establishing the Area Agencies on Aging. While subsequent amendments have transpired, the ones already mentioned are responsible for Senior Centers as we know them today. Now there are approximately 15,000 Senior Centers nationwide serving tens of millions of adults.

Older Americans Act

Federal Provisions

On July 14, 1965 the Older Americans Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson who said, "Under this program, every state and every community can now move toward a coordinated program of services and opportunities for our older citizens" (Koff & Park, 1999, p. 89). The purpose of the Act was:

"to provide assistance in the development of new or improved programs to help older persons through grants to the States for community planning and services and for training, through research, development, or training project grants, and to establish within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare an operating agency to be designated as the "Administration on Aging." (OAA, 1965).

The growing number of older adults dictated the need for legislation to help protect and assist this population of Americans. Not only did the Act provide an avenue for community based support and services, but the U.S. Administration on Aging (AOA) was born within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Act called for the "full and free enjoyment" of the ten objectives of the Act by the older adults in the United States of America (Title 1, Section 101 as amended in 2000). The objectives of the OAA established a framework for providing much needed services to older adults, as well as assuring the protection of rights for this population of Americans.

With these ten objectives, the OAA provides for a variety of services to the older U.S. citizens delivered through an organized network of federal, state, and local officials working together to bring these services to the older adults. Hence, the establishment of the Administration on Aging, the State Units on Aging, and the Area Agencies on Aging were needed to work in harmony with one another in order to deliver the desired and needed services.

The Older American Act has been referred to as the aging policy of the United States. Public policy, regarding aging, has been effectively established in dealing with the needs of older adults, but because of the lack of sufficient funding for the large array of services mandated, there are questions in regards to it actually being the U.S. aging policy (Koff & Park, 1999). With an effective aging policy, there would be adequate funding to support the wide array of services and programs. Over the years, funding has improved somewhat in many areas. However, the Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas continue to have to raise funds and collect a fee for service from their participants to help fulfill their mission.

The OAA has been amended on various occasions. Some of the prior amendments pertain to state issues and authorizations that will be discussed in the following section.

State Provisions

The Division of Aging and Adults Services under the umbrella of the Department of Human Services has the responsibility of carrying out adult services within Arkansas. From the Administration on Aging timeline, *Historical Evolution of Programs for Older Americans*, the 1973 comprehensive services amendment to the OAA established Area Agencies on Aging that work in conjunction with the Division of Aging and Adult Services to carry out the programs and services offered to the older adult population within the state. One of the most notable services offered by Senior Centers within every state has been Meals-on-Wheels. This nutritional program was derived from a 1972 OAA amendment that authorized funding for this service to the elderly, while the 1974 amendment added transportation services. Transportation offered by the Senior Centers provides a means for older adults to remain independent by providing rides to grocery stores, doctor's appointments, Senior Centers, etc. With the 1987 reauthorization of the OAA, the following additional appropriations were authorized: 1) in-home services; 2) long-term

care ombudsman; 3) assistance for special needs; 4) health education and promotion; 5) prevention of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and 6) outreach services.

In 2000, the National Family Caregiver Support Program was authorized and more flexibility was given to the states and the Area Agencies on Aging to provide a streamlined effort in supplying services (AOA, 2007). The sheer number of program and services available to the older adult population is overwhelming. Therefore, it is important that the Division of Aging and Adults Services and the Area Agencies on Aging have a streamlined plan of action for delivery of these services. Hence, the one-stop shopping place, Senior Centers, which fall under the domain of the Area Agencies on Aging.

As a private, non-profit organization, the Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Arkansas serves nine counties and has been operating in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties since 1972. The Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Arkansas (AAANWAR), *2007-2008 Annual Report*, states that their mission is "to commit financial and human resources to enhance the lives of the Northwest Arkansas senior community" (p.1). In its annual report, the AAANWAR listed the following services provided to seniors: 1) in-home services; 2) case management; 3) alternatives program; 4) nursing home diversion grant program; 5) family caregiver program; 6) community support program; 7) housing; 8) senior activity center; 9) adult day center; 10) ombudsman; 11) personal emergency response system; and 12) non-durable medical supplies. These services are funded by a variety of sources including federal funds (18%), state funds (19%), fees for services (43%), local support (17%), property management (2%), and other sources (1%).

This study focused on the Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Arkansas, specifically the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties. Given an increase in services

rendered in the fiscal year preceding this research, it was anticipated that the following years would require additional growth due to the Baby Boomer cohort coming of age. With this in mind, this study identified the services presently offered and evaluated the future needs of the Senior Centers as they attempt to remain a viable, functioning one-stop shopping center. Presenting the services available at Senior Centers in a way that make them attractive to Baby Boomers is challenging and this where marketing expertise and direction can make a huge difference.

Marketing to Baby Boomers

Because of the projected size of the Baby Boomer cohort, businesses and mass marketers have marketed their individual products to clients in a distinctive manner as unique as the Baby Boomers themselves. Senior Centers may want to consider the same. Green (2005) said, "It is ludicrous to expect members of such an outspoken generation to accept their parents' standards for retirement life" (p. 30). It seems important to determine where marketing should be focused and how it should be focused.

According to Harris (2003), marketing to Baby Boomers will be more complex because Baby Boomers span over 18 years. The leading-edge Baby Boomers at age 65 are, most likely, at a different place in life than the 47 year old trailing-edge Boomer, and as such, different marketing techniques appeal differently to each sector of the Baby Boomer generation. Even though there are several years separating the Baby Boomers by age, there is one thing that has not changed. Smith and Clurman (2007) referred to Baby Boomers in this manner, "Boomers may be aging, but they do not see themselves as getting old..." (p. xiv). This presents Senior Centers with a problem. The name, Senior Center, alone could be a deterrent to Baby Boomer participation. This is just one example as to why the marketing of Senior Centers is important

for continued viability. This problem along with the compilation of others will be discussed in greater depth.

Problem Statement(s)

The tremendous growth of the older population has raised concerns about the ability of Senior Centers to adequately serve the rapidly growing older age group, especially the Baby Boomer generation. This group is already larger and more diverse than previous age groups, and it is reasonable to assume that the needs and wants of this group may be considerably different from those of today's senior citizens. As such, there is a need for an assessment of current programs and services and perceived needs. Krout (1989) indicated that Senior Centers will need to be open to change. Beisgen and Kraitchman (2003) stated, "...senior centers will have to adjust and refine their programs and services with new and improved methods and systems for addressing the needs of their ever changing constituency" (p. 7). This study addresses these problems in relation to the impact of the Baby Boomer generation on Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas. Through interviews, focus group participants, and surveys, an assessment of anticipated program needs and changes were ascertained for the centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties. This determined future marketing strategies to engage the Baby Boomer generation, as well as identified important policy implications. The study primarily addressed educational opportunities, health/wellness/fitness, technology, and overall Senior Center programming.

Research Questions

With the Baby Boomers coming of age, Senior Centers need to be prepared, both in handling the number of participants and anticipating the possible change in service needs for this

age cohort. This is essential if Senior Centers are to remain viable as a comprehensive service provider for older adults. Therefore, this study addressed the following three research questions:

1. What effect will the Baby Boomer Generation have on the programs and services offered by the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas and what adjustments and/or changes in these programs and services will be needed as a result?
2. What process or marketing strategies should be used to attract Baby Boomers to the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas?
3. What policy implications will result from the increase in available clientele for the Senior Centers?

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Senior Centers

Today there are approximately 15,000 Senior Centers serving older adults and providing valuable services. The number of Senior Centers has grown steadily over the years, and this growth has resulted in variations in the Senior Centers and the programming they offer. As pointed out by Lowy and Doolin (1990), "The experience of visiting a good Senior Center leaves many observers with quite a strong impression of their value" (p. 345). To fully grasp why these variations make a difference and how they present a strong picture of opportunity, one needs to review past research on Senior Centers, as well as pay close attention to recommendations by past researchers for future endeavors. Prior research provided the foundation for the present study and was used with this study's outcomes to provide recommendations to contribute further to readiness of Senior Centers to provide relevant programs and services to the Baby Boomer Generation.

Legislation

Federal

Signed into law on July 14, 1965, The Older Americans Act was designed to assist older people in securing the following objectives as stated in Title I, Section 101, as amended in 2000:

1. An adequate income in retirement in accordance with the American standard of living.
2. The best possible physical and mental health which science can make available and without regard to economic status.

3. Obtaining and maintaining suitable housing, independently selected, designed and located with reference to special needs and available at costs which older citizens can afford.
4. Full restorative services for those who require institutional care, and a comprehensive array of community-based, long-term care services adequate to appropriately sustain older people in their communities and in their homes, including support to family members and other persons providing voluntary care to older individuals needing long-term care services.
5. Opportunity for employment with no discriminatory personnel practices because of age.
6. Retirement in health, honor, dignity—after years of contribution to the economy.
7. Participating in and contributing to meaningful activity within the widest range of civic, cultural, educational and training and recreational opportunities.
8. Efficient community services, including access to low cost transportation, which provide a choice in supported living arrangements and social assistance in a coordinated manner and which are readily available when needed, with emphasis on maintaining a continuum of care for vulnerable older individuals.
9. Immediate benefit from proven research knowledge which can sustain and improve health and happiness.
10. Freedom, independence, and the free exercise of individual initiative in planning and managing their own lives, full participation in the planning and operation of community-based services and programs provided for their benefit and protection against abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

As defined in the opening paragraph of the Act, the intent was “to provide assistance in the development of new or improved programs to help older persons through grants to the States for community planning and services and for training, through research, development, or training project grants, within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare an operating agency to be designated as the ‘Administration on Aging’” (Public Law 89-73). The Act provided a much needed response to increasing pressures to address the needs of older adults in the United States. It has been the primary legislation protecting the rights of the older adult population during the years since its inception.

In creating the Administration on Aging administered through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Agency’s primary charge was to administer state aging grants, while conducting research in the area of aging (Title II, Sections 201,202). The establishment of State Agencies or Units on Aging was provided for in the Act. The Act indicates that these agencies are “primarily responsible for coordination of State programs and activities related to the purposes of this Act” (Title III, Section 303(a)). In the 1973 amendments to the Act, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) were established as local service providers for the aging in each state; they report to the State Agencies on Aging. Objective number seven of the Act highlights the provision of educational opportunities and assistance to older adults. The Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II, Section 203(B) (8)) both have the purpose of providing educational opportunities to the older adult population by directing functions of the Area Agencies on Aging.

State

The Division of Aging and Adult Services within the Department of Human Services administers the services to older adults within the State of Arkansas. Arkansas Area Agencies on

Aging (AAA) are located in eight regions including: Northwest Arkansas, White River, East Arkansas, Southeast Arkansas, Central Arkansas, West Central Arkansas, Southwest Arkansas, and Western Arkansas.

The Northwest Arkansas AAA (NWAAA) has been in operation since 1972. Nine counties are incorporated in the NWAAA: Washington, Benton, Madison, Baxter, Boone, Carroll, Marion, Newton, and Searcy. According to the 2009-2010 NWAAA annual report, the Agency's funding is normally divided as follows: 17% federal funds, 14% state funds, 52% fee for service, 12% local support, 2% property management, and 3% other. The following services are provided by the NWAAA: adult day care, care coordination, case management, emergency connection, family caregiver support program, housing, medical supplies, information and assistance, in-home services, the ombudsman program, and senior center services. "The Senior Activity Center program offers senior adults nutritious meals, an opportunity to socialize with other seniors, health and wellness programs/facilities, educational and enrichment opportunities and home delivered meals to homebound frail seniors" (AAANWAR, 2009, p. 4). Under the Senior Activity Center portion of the annual report, the statistics included 429,220 home delivered meals, 270,247 congregate meals, 334,787 socialization units, and 75,977 one-way transportation trips. These statistics represent a 5.97% increase in program services in the 2007-2008 year as compared to 2006-2007. In an effort to offer additional educational opportunities and as required by the Older Americans Act, the NWAAA has maintained relationships with the local universities in Northwest Arkansas, including the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. To further enhance the educational opportunities for older adults as required by the Act, the Senior Centers offer classes, transportation, and other services.

Senior Centers - History

Senior clubs, considered the predecessors to Senior Centers, date back to the 1870s. New York City holds claim to the first Senior Center, the William Hodson Community Center, established in 1943 by New York City's Welfare Department (Krout, 1989). As the number of Senior Centers grew, the 1961 White House Conference on Aging took place and brought to the forefront the work of the Senior Centers. Further, the passing of the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 provided support on a national level for Senior Centers, and this, in turn, brought about additional facilities and services. This is especially true with the later amendments to the OAA. In 1970, the National Institute of Senior Centers was established, and in 1971, the second White House Conference on Aging was held and focused on multipurpose Senior Centers (Krout, 1989). The Area Agencies on Aging were established and multipurpose Senior Centers were described with the 1973 amendments. Now, there are approximately 16,000 Senior Centers nationwide serving tens of millions of adults.

The National Council on Aging (2008, p. 1) reported that the National Institute of Senior Centers defines a Senior Center as a place where, "Older adults come together for services and activities that reflect their experience and skills, independence, and encourage their involvement in and with the center and the community." Senior Centers provide educational, recreational, nutritional, and social services to older adults (defined as age 60 and over), as well as serve as the coordinator of comprehensive program services (NCOA, 2008). These comprehensive services are provided through the Area Agencies on Aging in conjunction with the State Units on Aging and the Administration on Aging.

Because of the vital services offered by Senior Centers, questions have been raised about why some people utilized these services and others did not participate. Theorists and researchers

began to study various aspects of the centers as a means of trying to predict or explain the utilization of these facilities.

Senior Center - Theory

Taietz (1976) conducted a random sample study entitled, *Two Conceptual Models of the Senior Center*, where he examined the theory surrounding two different types of Senior Centers participants. The first type was the Social Agency Model where Senior Center participants are considered to be disengaged, poor, older adults using needed social programs, which are coordinated through Senior Centers. The second type of Senior Center was the Voluntary Organization Model described as a community group where older adults that are engaged in the community are more likely to be participants. The participants in the study were from 34 communities in the state of New York. The study findings supported the Voluntary Organization Model theory, which suggests that Senior Center participants were more likely to be (or to have been) actively involved in other community organizations or have a strong community attachment, and income was not a factor in participation.

A combination of the two models offered by Taietz was used in Schneider, Chapman & Voth's (1985) study of Senior Centers. They viewed the Social Agency Model and the Voluntary Organization Model as sequential steps rather than independent models. Seven Senior Centers in Crawford and Franklin Counties in Arkansas were the focus of the study. The authors emphasized a two-stage approach to Senior Centers in which participation is a precursor to behavior changes that occur through the social services offered at the centers. The approach presented by the authors suggested that the selective determinants for participation could then be the driving force for program engineering. The findings of their study indicated that Senior Centers were not meeting their objectives in the social intervention of their programs nor were

the participants of the Senior Centers studied considered to be the neediest in the area. Of great concern is the finding that Senior Center participants were more likely to be institutionalized than non-participants. These findings are somewhat contradictory to the two models offered by Taietz, with the exception of higher participation rates by church-going individuals.

The Behavioral Model presented by Andersen, Kravits, and Anderson (1975) categorizes variables that influence participation or use as predisposing, enabling, and need. The model was originally developed for determining the use of health services, and the model is thought to be able to explain and predict program use. The model has been used more recently in studies concerning Senior Center utilization and participation. The variables of the model were further described by Andersen (1995) as "... predisposition to use services, factors which enable or impede use, and their need for care" (p. 1). Predisposing items include demographics, social structure and attitude, enabling items include family and community resources, while need was viewed as both perceived need and evaluated need.

While there are different conceptual models of Senior Centers, human growth is a pivotal key in Senior Center philosophy. Aging is viewed as a natural developmental process, and it is on this premise that the Senior Center philosophy was established (Lowy & Doolin, 1990). Senior Center program participation is thought to contribute positively to the aging process.

Senior Center - Participation and Utilization

Several research studies have utilized the Behavior Model (Andersen, et al., 1975) and the Voluntary and Social Agency Models (Taietz, 1976) in an attempt to identify variables that predict Senior Center participation. The predisposing variable (Behavior Model factor) of being female was found to be a predictor (Krout, 1982; Krout et al., 1990; Holland, 2003), while Miner, Logan, and Spitze (1993) found this not to be the case when utilizing the Voluntary and Social

Agency Models. Therefore being female, may or may not be a factor of participation, since prior studies have conflicting results. Two predisposing factors, education and social interaction, identified by the Behavior Model were recognized as participation predictors. Education, particularly less education, (Krout, 1982; Miner et al., 1993; Calsyn et al., 1996; Holland, 2003) and the need for social interaction (Krout, 1982; Jirovec et al., 1989; Miner et al., 1993; Calsyn et al., 1999; Holland, 2003; Walker et al., 2004) were identified as predictors in several studies. Socialization is believed to be the primary reason for Senior Center participation among aging adults, especially those with less education. However, non-users are identified by different characteristics.

Senior Center non-participants were identified by the following variables: too busy, poor health, lack of interest, negative attitude, non-acceptance, higher education, higher income, rural residents, and transportation needs (Krout, 1982; Jirovec et al., 1989; Miner et al., 1993). Of primary consequence to this study are the variables too busy, higher education and higher income. This is because Baby Boomers are believed to be identified by these characteristics, and if this is true, Senior Centers will need to devise ways to attract the Baby Boomers and offset the possible consequences of non-use by this age cohort. Calsyn et al. (1999) reflected, "If the administrators of Senior Centers knew how non-users of senior centers differed from users of Senior Centers, it might be possible for them to modify their programs and marketing strategies to better meet the needs of non-users" (p. 54). Specifically, the requirements of Baby Boomers will need to be evaluated to further the programs and services offered by Senior Centers in an effort to attract Baby Boomers as participants through marketing techniques.

Senior Center - Minority Participation

By 2030, the increase in minority populations nationwide is expected to grow substantially with the Hispanic older population growing the fastest (Beisgen & Kraitchman, 2003). The Arkansas State Plan on Aging: 2008-2011 identified a 42% increase in the Hispanic population from 2000 to 2005 referencing the U.S. Bureau of Census. However, research has been inconclusive on whether Senior Center utilization by minority groups is an area of concern.

Previous research indicated that minorities are less likely to utilize the Senior Centers (Krout, 1989; Krout, 1987; Pardasani, 2004; & Miner et al., 1993). Contradictory to this Calsyn, et al. (1996), Miner, et al. (1993), and Krain and Trevino-Richard (1987) found race not to be a factor in Senior Center utilization. The Krain and Trevino-Richards study used a sample of 1100 participants from Central and Southeastern Arkansas. Their findings indicated that blacks were not underrepresented in Senior Center usage in the area studied, and specifically, there was no significant difference in the usage of blacks and whites.

Even though race may or may not be a factor in participation, the importance of Senior Centers is supported by the findings of Turner (2004). The study used 856 participants utilizing 27 Senior Centers in Tarrant County, Texas. The findings revealed that 70% to 80% of all blacks and Hispanics received most of their nutritious meals from Senior Centers, as well as their primary source of daytime socialization. Another striking finding by Krain and Trevino-Richard (1987) is that the individuals most in need of services offered by Senior Centers were the least likely to participate. Pardasani (2004) had findings indicating that increasing minority staff, including directors, in Senior Centers increased attendance by minorities, as did increasing programs in languages other than English. With the anticipated changes in minority population come the needs to identify and connect with the aging members of these ethnic groups.

Utilization of Senior Centers is one means of servicing ethnic groups, but to make this happen, Senior Centers need to re-evaluate their current status and make changes conducive to attracting minorities in the upcoming Baby Boomer generation.

Baby Boomers

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), the Baby Boomer cohort consists of approximately 78 million individuals born in the United States between 1946 and 1964, and the oldest of this group started turning 60 in 2006 at a rate of approximately 8,000 per day, while the youngest Baby Boomers turned 42. In the year 2010, the age range of the Baby Boomer cohort will be 64 to 46 representing a birth year of 1946 and 1964, respectively. The enormity of this aging cohort is influencing policies in all areas, as well as creating a need for change and reconsideration of services offered through social programs. This cohort of aging adults is considered to be healthier and wealthier, as well as more assertive and less giving in regards to their individual needs and wants. It is approximated by the U.S. Census Bureau (2006) that in the year 2030 Baby Boomers will be 58 million strong. If this proves true, then the impact of the unique characteristics of the Baby Boomers on social activities, social services, and public policies will be affected in a variety of ways.

It is anticipated that Baby Boomers will have a larger income, more education, and be in better health, which translates into older adults with more active lifestyles and different expectations for the future (Coughlin, 1999). It is possible that Baby Boomers “will be wary of doors marked Senior Center” and “services will have to be taken to them, rather than waiting inside the traditional senior center building for their arrival” (Alt, 1998, p. 29, 32). With an eighteen year gap in cohorts, there may be variations in the needs of the older and younger Baby Boomers. As such, Senior Center administrators will need to focus the centers’ programming on

the needs of these individuals as they change over the course of time. As Cravit (2008) stated, “I believe the big story isn’t how many older people there are. It’s who they are” (p. 2). For Senior Centers to keep up with their constituency, they have to know the characteristics and expectations of the potential clients in order to meet their expectations and provide learning opportunities that are beneficial.

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

The need for Senior Centers to be ready for change in response to the educational needs of the more highly educated Baby Boomers is emphasized by the following statement. “Without educational transformation that include attention to the physical environment, we may witness 15,000 established senior centers become virtually obsolete as a hub for lifelong learning” (Eaton & Salari, 2005, p. 479). Perhaps this will not be the case and/or will be prevented, especially since the research findings of Price and Lyon (1982) and Sheppard (1983) indicate that Senior Centers are the preferred locations of educational opportunities. Why older adults learn and what motivates them to learn is important in planning future educational activities at Senior Centers.

To better understand why adults learn and the motivating factors for learning, it is important to understand Andragogy, which is the theory behind the teaching of adults developed by Malcomb Knowles. There are three dimensions to Andragogy: 1) goals and purposes for learning; 2) individual and situation differences, and 3) core adult learning principles. The six core adult learning principles are: 1) learner’s need to know; 2) self-concept of the learner; 3) prior experience of the learner; 4) readiness to learn; 5) orientation to learning; and 6) motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2005). Perhaps because of a lack of training on adult learning theory, there may be a disengagement from what educational opportunities Senior Centers offer and the educational needs of their constituents (Ralston, 1981). Oddly enough,

previous research has identified that older adults participate in learning based on their individual interest in the content of the subject (Kim and Merriam, 2004; Price and Lyon, 1982). This aligns with the “learner’s need to know” as well as the “motivation to learn” in the core adult learning principles. By identifying the needs and motivators of older adults, Senior Centers can establish educational activities that are worthwhile for their program participants. In doing so, the barriers to learning need to be acknowledged and examined. Price and Lyon (1982) indicated that barriers are the greatest obstacles to participation in program offerings. Some of these include transportation, health, and lack of knowledge. It is important for Senior Centers to remove as many obstacles as possible to help enrich the lives of the participants. One way to inform participants of Senior Center opportunities and eliminate barriers to participation is by marketing the activities at the Senior Centers.

Marketing to Baby Boomers

"Marketing could help to change the public perception of Senior Centers and to educate the public about the activities and services they provide," according to Walker et al. (2004, p. 363). Since Baby Boomers have a negative image of growing older, Senior Centers may need to improve their image to appeal to Baby Boomers as potential participants. "It is pretty well recognized that Boomers should not be addressed as "old people" or "seniors," according to Smith and Clurman (2007, p. 23). In other words, the name "Senior Center" may have negative connotations for this age group. This could be a potential obstacle, since the name is imbedded in the legislation that funds the programs. However, Senior Centers could be marketed in a way to offset this issue. Typically, word of mouth has been the primary marketing tool of Senior Centers. Although funds may be limited, more proactive marketing is needed, such as printed materials, web sites, e-mails, newspaper articles, or social networking (Beisgen & Kraitchman,

2003). Beisgen and Kraitchman (2003) presented the following suggestion, "Use focus groups of younger, nonparticipating elders to find out what message the physical location, appearance, amenities, and services send. Create opportunities for participants to share suggestions, complaints, opinions and comments (and one hopes) praise." (p. 42 – 43). Focus group participants can provide valuable information for the possible transformation of Senior Center appeal and services, and focus groups can be one tool used in a program evaluation to determine future marketing strategies.

Senior Center - Program Planning and Evaluation

"At various times, policymakers, funding organizations, planners, program managers, taxpayers, or program clientele need to distinguish worthwhile social programs from ineffective ones and launch new programs or revise existing ones so as to achieve certain desirable results" (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004, p. 3). With an anticipated influx of Baby Boomers, Senior Centers need to re-evaluate their programs and services to attract and meet the needs of this dynamic age cohort. From what is known about Baby Boomers and their distinctive style, changes will most likely be required.

Change is inevitable, and there is always room for improvement. Kirkpatrick (1996) said it best by stating, "If programs are going to be effective, they must meet the needs of participants" (p. 4). Baby Boomers have changed almost every aspect of life as they have aged, so it seems likely that they will require changes in the services offered by Senior Centers to meet their needs as participants. Program evaluation is one method to address the needs of Baby Boomers in this area.

Before Senior Centers can address any program changes that may be warranted, there must first be an evaluation of the programs and services already offered. Formative evaluation is

one method of evaluation, described as being able to guide program improvements and to help shape improved performance or change through the process of collecting information (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004; Caffarella, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 1996). Evaluation is necessary before any future program planning can be adequately addressed.

Since older adults are the core of Senior Centers, it seems appropriate to look at program planning through this lens. Program planning for adults is somewhat different than planning for other age groups. Adults, especially Baby Boomers, typically know what they want, how they want it, and this is constantly changing. Caffarella (2002) developed the Interactive Model of Program Planning especially for programs that focus on adult learners. The basic characteristic of the model is that there is no beginning or ending in program planning; rather the planner can use the individual components of the model in any manner deemed necessary or appropriate. Because of the nature of Senior Center programs and services, the flexibility of this model seems ideal for use in future program planning directed at the needs of the Baby Boomers.

Policy Implications from the Literature Review

Researchers who have studied Senior Centers have identified several areas of consideration where policy is concerned. Funding may be the biggest policy concern for the future of Senior Centers, especially with the changes and/or demands brought on by the Baby Boomers. Beisgen and Kraitchman (2003) suggested that new sources of revenue be explored to help fund needed program additions, changes and updates, while Krout (1995; 1989) referenced a lack of funding and staff training as a concern. Krout (1989) emphasized the need for program evaluations to establish the effectiveness of services offered. Ferraro and Cobb (1987) also discussed the need for Senior Center analyses to help programming and leadership. The stigma associated with Senior Centers was expressed as a major concern for program participation in the

study by Jirovec, Erich, and Sanders (1989). In addition, age creep (Turner, 2004) and a decline in participations levels (Krout, 1995) are also areas of concern. The culmination of these concerns is why Miner et al. (1983) emphasized the importance of policy makers being made aware of Senior Center research and the findings.

Summary

Senior Centers are a key component of programs authorized via the OAA legislation, which reflected a major policy commitment on the part of the U.S. Government to provide assistance to American seniors. The lack of research specific to Senior Centers in Arkansas is evident, and there is no research related to Baby Boomer use of Senior Centers in Arkansas. Although there are some researchers that have contributed significantly to the area of literature in regards to Senior Center, there is a gap in the research of Baby Boomers' perception of Senior Centers and the needs that might be met by such centers to this increasing cohort of older adults. The above literature review is both thorough and pertinent to the subject being study. The surge in the number of seniors because of the Baby Boomers raise questions about what they will want or need in order to be drawn to using centers and about whether the resources exist to address those needs, which may lead to fundamental questions of policy at the federal and state level concerning the desirability of serving Baby Boomers. The study described in this dissertation provides a foundation for exploring ways in which Senior Centers may evolve to better serve an aging population in future years.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of characteristics, interests and needs of the Baby Boomer generation on future services provided at Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas. The study used mixed methods to identify current programs and services and probe perceptions of programs and resources needed to attract Baby Boomers to the Senior Centers in Benton, Washington and Madison counties in Northwest Arkansas. The study was designed to provide a foundation for programmatic change, development of future marketing strategies, and identification of policy implications. The research questions are as follows:

1. What effect will the Baby Boomer Generation have on the programs and services offered by the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas and what adjustments and/or changes in these programs and services will be needed as a result?
2. What process or marketing strategies should be used to attract Baby Boomers to the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas?
3. What policy implications will result from the increase in available clientele for the Senior Centers?

This chapter discusses the components of the design including: purpose, research questions, participants, data collection method (mixed qualitative/quantitative design), and data analysis procedures. Appropriate guidelines were followed in obtaining IRB approval to conduct the study. Informed consent forms were provided to all participants.

Theoretical Rationale for Research Approach

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to address the research questions targeted in this study. The quantitative component involved data collection using a survey administered to the targeted subject group, Baby Boomers. However, a predominately qualitative research design was used to address most of the research questions. Specifically, grounded theory methods were employed. Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as "the discovery of theory from data" (p. 1). Charmaz (2006) states, "grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data..." (p. 2). Patton (2002) indicates that grounded theory can be utilized to explain, predict, describe, and analyze a program under evaluation. A constructivist design to grounded theory focuses on subjective meanings to an individual participant's views and feelings (Creswell and Maietta, 2002). Patton (1987) stressed, "Grounded theory can provide relevant information which is useful to program staff and other decision makers in their efforts to understand and improve their programs" (p. 40). A sense of "reality" is gained from the data results (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Because Baby Boomers are new clientele to the Senior Centers, it is pertinent to generate new themes to explain the relationship between the two. The use of grounded theory methods in the current study provided insight into the evolving status of Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas, specifically as they hope to engage the Baby Boomers. As such, participants that could provide insightful experiences were utilized in this process.

Participants

The participants in the study consisted of a purposeful sample of 92 Baby Boomers in the targeted counties in Northwest Arkansas who completed a print survey. Purposeful sampling provides "information rich" interviewees which have the most insight into the evaluation being

carried out (Patton, 1987). Additional participants included nine Senior Center Directors in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas and one focus group consisting of four Baby Boomers with knowledge of Senior Centers. Baby Boomers are defined as those individuals born between 1946 and 1964. The distribution and collection of a survey was the first data obtained. This was followed by the beginning of the interviews of Senior Center Directors. The focus group was held in the middle of the interviews. The study did not control for the sex or the educational level of the participants, although this information was collected for informational purposes.

Data Collection

Surveys

A print survey was developed using demographic questions, Likert scaled items, and open-response questions. It was distributed to a convenience sample of Baby Boomers in the targeted area. The sample was obtained from persons attending a local health fair. Ninety-two surveys were distributed and 33 surveys were completed and returned for a response rate of 36%. Demographic information included sex, ethnicity, education, income, birth year, marital status, anticipated retirement age, and county of residence. The latter was included to ensure that only data from participants residing in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties were used in the research. The survey questions focused on the programs in the Senior Centers and their attractiveness to Baby Boomers. The open-response questions were used to gain insight on possible changes and/or improvements to the Senior Centers (see Appendix 1).

Interviews

Seidman (2006) has stated, "Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior"

(p. 10). Following Seidman’s perspectives, this study utilized semi-structured interviews with open-ended interview questions as the primary means of data collection from the Senior Center Directors in the target area. In-depth interviewing provided a means to understand the current program status of the Senior Centers and to ascertain the perceptions of the Directors in regards to the needs and wants of Baby Boomers.

The Directors of nine Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties were interviewed. The Directors are involved in hands-on management of the programs and activities offered at the centers. They are responsible for fund raising, attendance, meals-on-wheels, and a wide variety of other duties. Thus, they have a wealth of knowledge concerning the current status of the programs at the Senior Centers, and most are abreast of the trends and changes needed for the Baby Boomer generation. As such, interviewing the Senior Center Directors provided a "reality" of current status of the centers. Eight of the Senior Center Directors were interviewed in person using semi-structured interviews with pre-determined, open-ended questions, while one director responded to the same questions via email due to a scheduling conflict (see Table 1).

Table 1. Senior Center Director Interview Questions.

1. What changes, if any, in Senior Center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?
2. What specific changes in Senior Centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the Baby Boomer generation?
3. Do you foresee a decrease or an increase in Senior Center Participation as the Baby Boomers become of age?
4. What activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate Senior Centers will need to engage in to attract the Baby Boomer generation?
5. What barriers or obstacles, do you already face, or anticipate facing in continuing Senior Center Programs, or implementing new activities to meet

the changing population of older adults?
6. How do you think Senior Centers are, or will be, viewed by the Baby Boomer generation?
7. How do you think Senior Centers can change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming Baby Boomer generation?
8. How can Senior Centers increase their participation in the future?
9. How can Senior Centers increase participation of a more ethnically diverse population?
10. Assuming there were absolutely no obstacles to prevent changes, including funding, what is your image of the most perfectly appealing Senior Center, both structurally and activity/program wise, especially to Baby Boomers? What would you have in it? How would it look?
11. How long have you been the director of this Senior Center?
12. Are you a Baby Boomer, born between 1946 and 1964?
13. Do you have an advisory council?
14. What is your funding and how much do you have to raise with donations?
15. How do you anticipate balancing the needs of your existing Senior Center population with any Baby Boomers that start attending?
16. How many full-time employees do you have?
17. How many part-time employees do you have?
18. Is transportation a problem for your participants?

As needed, follow-up questions were used to probe for additional and clarifying information and field notes were utilized. Additional follow-up questions were used until response content was clear. The interviews held in person were taped recorded and transcribed, and the email responses were printed in hard copy.

Focus Group

A focus group consisting of four Baby Boomers familiar with Senior Centers was utilized in an effort to determine how this cohort perceives and feels about certain programs, issues, obstacles, and services at Senior Centers. The focus group participants were located with the assistance of a Senior Center Director, and all of the participants were familiar with Senior Centers and the services provided. Focus groups are effective and have become widely used in research and evaluation (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The focus group format provided a friendly, non-threatening environment for the exchange of ideas and challenges facing the Senior Centers with respect to the upcoming Baby Boomer cohort. Pre-determined, open-ended probes were used to obtain information from the focus group (see Table 2).

Table 2. Focus Group Topics.

1. Knowledge of Senior Center and their programs, activities, educational opportunities.
a. Can you describe the Senior Center programs, activities, and educational opportunities?
2. Participation in Senior Center
a. Attraction/Non-attraction
1. Why would you be a Senior Center participant in the future?
2. Why would you not be a Senior Center Participant in the future?
3. Programs, Activities, and Educational Opportunities
a. What types of activities, programs, or educational opportunities would entice participation, especially for Baby Boomers?
4. Imagine a perfect Senior Center and share ideas.
a. If there were no barriers or obstacles, including funding, how would

describe a perfect Senior Center?
b. What types of programs, activities, and educational opportunities would you change, assuming no barriers or obstacles, including funding?
5. Increase participation at Senior Center for your age group as well as ethnic diversity.
a. How would increase participation of Baby Boomers, including ethnic groups?
6. What is the best way to advertise the Senior Center to attract Baby Boomers?
7. How would you market or promote the Senior Center to Baby Boomers?
8. What type of leadership, advisory council, etc. should the Senior Center utilize while accommodating Baby Boomers?
9. If you were going to start your own Senior Center from scratch, what would that center be like, both as a facility and the programs, activities, educational opportunities provided?
10. What other comments would you like to share regarding the upcoming Baby Boomer generation and the future of Senior Centers?

The responses were then followed-up with additional questioning as appropriate.

Guidelines were established at the beginning of the meeting so that the session using multiple participants could be managed effectively and participants would not be interrupted when speaking. This helped ensure the process would provide as much information as possible.

Demographic information was also collected from the focus group participants, and field notes were utilized. The session was taped recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

All three data collection methods lend information potentially relevant to the three research questions addressed in the study. The analyses performed on the data were individualized dependent upon the type of data obtained.

The quantitative data obtained from the surveys were analyzed using SPSS after entering the responses into a database file. Descriptive statistics were run on the data. As well, demographic information was compiled on the participants, and their individual responses to the open-ended questions were captured and organized for analytical purposes.

Qualitative data, which included the responses from the interviews and focus group, were analyzed beginning immediately upon the collection of data. According to Bryant and Charmaz (2007), "Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other" (p. 1). Inductive analysis is inherent to grounded theory. In conducting inductive analysis, the smaller more specific categories are broadened into the larger picture or wholeness of the subject being studied (Hatch, 2002). In other words, the parts are developed into a broader concept.

Coding is a means of separating the data into the smaller parts with the ultimate goal of developing theory. Open coding identifies categories or concepts, axial coding begins the reconstructive process of pulling data back together between categories and subcategories, and selective coding assimilates the data into theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding of the data in this study began right away using open coding categories, and then proceeded to axial and selective coding. A constant comparative method was used to analyze data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described the constant comparative method as having four stages, "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3)

delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory" (p. 105). After coding and once a central category or theme was established, the theory was fine tuned. The collection of data and analysis was cyclical until saturation was achieved.

Validity

Proper protocol was followed to ensure trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed. Interviews were conducted for Senior Center Directors, Baby Boomers were surveyed, and a focus group session was held. According to Hatch (2002), data from a focus group is an excellent source for triangulation of data in research. The collection of data from a variety of sources helps to address any concerns regarding triangulation of data issues.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this study, data were collected from interviews with Senior Center Directors, a focus group conducted with Baby Boomers, and surveys completed by Baby Boomers. Because this was a mixed methods project, the triangulation was used to review and analyze the data received from each source. The volume of data was considerable and was condensed for reporting purposes.

The interviewees included nine Senior Center Directors in Northwest Arkansas. All of the Directors were female. Age distribution was as follows: three (1956, 1957, and 1961) were Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964; three were not, with one older born in 1938 and two younger born in 1967; and three did not disclose this information. A focus group was conducted with four Baby Boomers knowledgeable about Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas (see Table 3).

Table 3. Focus Group Demographics.

AGE	46-50	51-55	56-60	All Ages
N	1	1	2	4
Race/Ethnicity				
Caucasian	1	1	2	4
Education				
9 - 12		1	1	2
HS Diploma/GED			1	1
Masters	1			1

Sex				
Female	1	1	2	4
Marital Status				
Married	1		1	2
Divorced			1	1
Other (Widowed)		1		1
Employment				
Full-time			1	1
Part-time	1		1	2
Unemployed		1		1
Income				
Less than \$10,000		1	1	2
\$20-\$29,999	1			1
\$70-\$79,999			1	1
County Residence				
Madison	1	1	2	4
Retirement Age				
55 - 61		1		1
62 - 65			2	2
66 -70	1			1

Print surveys were distributed to 92 Baby Boomers. Of the surveys distributed, 33 were completed (36% return rate). The demographics of the survey participants were as follows:

96.9% Caucasian; 78.1% Female; 43.8% hold a Master’s Degree; 37.6% had a income level between \$30,000 – 50,000; 71.9% were married; 78.1% work full-time; 40.6% intend to retire between the age of 66-70; 87.5% live in Washington County; and 31.3% were between the ages 56 – 60 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Survey Demographics.

AGE	40-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65 +	All Ages
N	3	8	10	10	2	33
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian	1					1
Caucasian	2	8	10	10	2	32
Education						
Some College	1	1	2	5		9
College Grad		2	4			6
Masters	1	4	3	5	1	14
Doctoral	1	1	1		1	4
Sex						
Male	1	1	2	2	1	7
Female	2	7	8	8	1	26
Marital Status						
Single		2	1			3
Married	2	4	7	9	2	24
Divorced			2	1		3
Other		1				1

Missing Data		2				2
Employment						
Full-time	2	7	8	8	1	26
Part-time			2	1		3
Retired					1	1
Unable to work		1				1
Missing Data		1		1		2
Income						
\$20-\$29,000		1	1	2		4
\$30-\$39,999		3	1	2		6
\$40-\$49,999	2	1	2	1		6
\$50-\$59,999			1	2		3
\$60-\$69,999		1	1			2
\$70-\$79,999			1	2		3
\$80-\$89,999						
\$90-\$99,999		1	2		1	4
>\$100,000	1	1	1	1		4
Missing Data					1	1
County Residence						
Benton		2		1		3
Madison	1					1
Washington	2	6	10	9	2	29
Retirement Age						

62-65			2	6		8
66-70	1	4	5	3		13
71 or Older	2	4	2	1	1	10
Never			1			1
Missing Data					1	1

The data analyses provided a wealth of information concerning the projected use of Senior Centers by the Baby Boomer Generation. The coded data were broken down among three broader categories by data type (interviews, focus group, or surveys): Programs/Facilities; Marketing; and Obstacles/Suggestions. These categories were determined by reviewing the data obtained from all the groups. In the coding process, the broader category of Facilities/Programs was further divided into Exercise, Education, Activities, Food, Appearance, and Technology. Marketing was divided into Need, Where, and How. Obstacles/Suggestions were divided into Name, Funding, and Image/Other.

In the following sections, the data are organized around each of the three specific research questions addressed in the study. The categories described above provided a framework for combining data from the three sources.

Research Question 1

What effect will the Baby Boomer Generation have on the programs and services offered by the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas and what adjustments and/or changes in these programs and services will be needed as a result?

Because of the size of the Baby Boomer cohort, there should be anticipated changes in the programs and services, and this is indeed what the data showed. All groups participating in

this research stressed a need for changes to Senior Centers to attract and maintain attendance by Baby Boomers. Specifically, changes were recommended in exercise, educational programs, activities, food service, appearance, and technology.

Exercise

The interviewed Senior Center Directors in Northwest Arkansas (see Appendix 2) had a wide range of suggestions and comments regarding the facilities and programs offered at their Senior Center, as well as their thoughts on the future needs of Baby Boomers. Exercise is considered a mainstay for the Senior Centers. The Directors indicated that more exercise equipment and classes are needed. They believe that this will be a very important aspect of recruiting and/or retaining Baby Boomer participants. Seven out of the nine Directors emphasized the importance of access to an indoor, heated swimming pool for their participants. A pool was mentioned several times in regards to the physical needs of the aging participants. One Director put it this way, “Well, so many of our people have had hip replacements, knee replacements, or have osteoarthritis, and they really need that”. Zumba Gold dance classes are being offered at most Senior Centers in an effort to keep up with the desires of attendees and to hopefully entice new participants. It was indicated that this dance class is also a mechanism for possibly attracting minority participants, few of whom attend Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas, although the attendance data on minority participation was not collected. The need for more exercise classes and exercise equipment was also discussed, as well as the mention of the designation of a wellness center.

Consistent with the Senior Center Directors, the focus group (see Appendix 3) composed of Baby Boomers also indicated the need and/or desire for a heated pool and a whirlpool. Water aerobics was also suggested. As well, the need for a designated area for up-to-date exercise

equipment was indicated, along with personal trainers. A variety of dance classes was also mentioned including: ballroom, line, and waltz.

The Baby Boomer survey respondents had similar suggestions. Regarding exercise, they indicated the desire for swimming, dance, and exercise programs. A few specific activities suggested were Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, and aerobics. Twenty-eight out of the 32 survey respondents indicated the need for exercise classes, while 25 out of 32 stated that they would want to use the Senior Center to work out on exercise equipment.

With regards to exercise, the three groups had similar suggestions about Baby Boomer use of Senior Centers. Exercise appears to be a very important aspect of the Baby Boomers' everyday life and a desire for the future. Exercise and education classes are currently utilized by Senior Center participants, but it is anticipated that the Baby Boomers will not be content with the current arrangements.

Education

Education is a primary goal of Senior Centers, especially for health related issues. With one of the initial Federal mandates of Senior Centers being a mechanism for sharing health education issues, screenings, and clinics, this is an important aspect of the Senior Center.

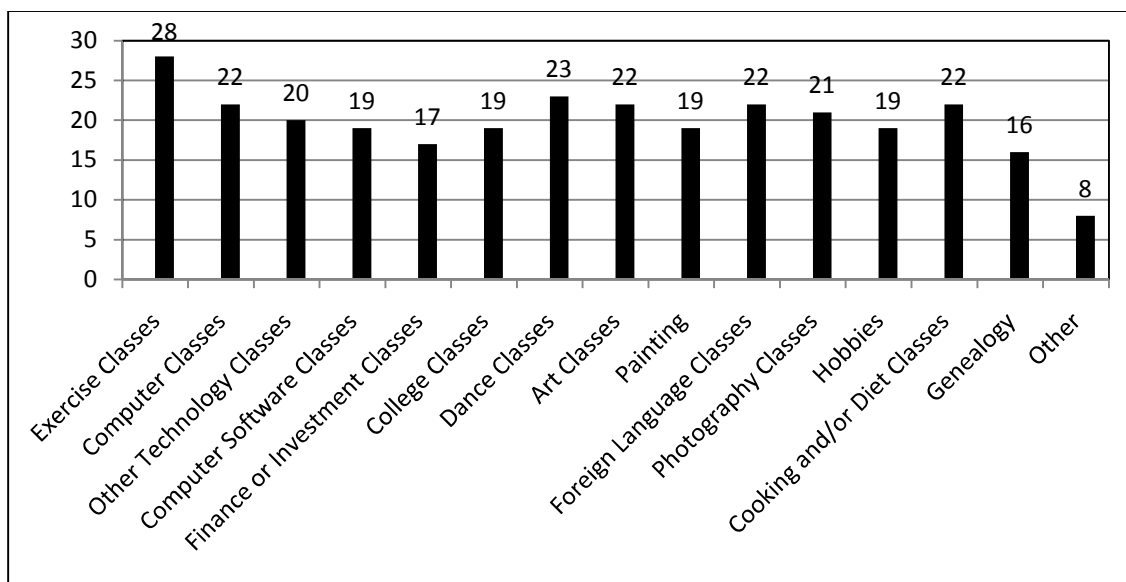
Despite health education being a mandate, the Directors did not focus on health classes in the interviews, although they were mentioned. They primarily focused on other educational opportunities, such as subject matter classes including creative writing, Spanish, literature, and financial topics. Basically, they see a need for a wider variety of educational opportunities to attract Baby Boomers. Evening classes or more choices when classes are offered were suggested. According to one Director, "Educational classes are huge hits, and we just have a couple a month now." Another stated the need for variations in hours of operation, "Some of them are raising

their grandchildren, so they're not able to do the day classes, so evening classes are definitely a key thing, keeping the centers open longer.”

Along this same line of reasoning, a focus group participant stated, “A lot of people are looking for more evening things when they get off of work or maybe weekend programs to participate in.” The group also shared the idea of more educational classes, such as English classes for non-English speaking participants, computer classes, or first aid/CPR. The focus group suggested the need for a variety of opportunities, as well as a need for a range of time choices.

The survey respondents were asked whether they would be interested in educational classes at the Senior Center. Out of 33 responses, 44% agreed, 34% somewhat agreed, 13% somewhat disagreed, and 9% disagreed, or would not be interested in educational classes. Survey respondents provided considerable detail as to what type of classes they would prefer at the Senior Centers. The top choices were: art; foreign languages; cooking/diet; photography; technology; painting; finance and/or investment; and genealogy (see Chart 1).

Chart 1. Survey Respondents' Education Choices.



They also indicated a desire for educational learning programs, performing arts and music. This survey group was also more interested in charitable giving classes, nutrition, and wellness classes. They generated a large list of activities in which they were interested.

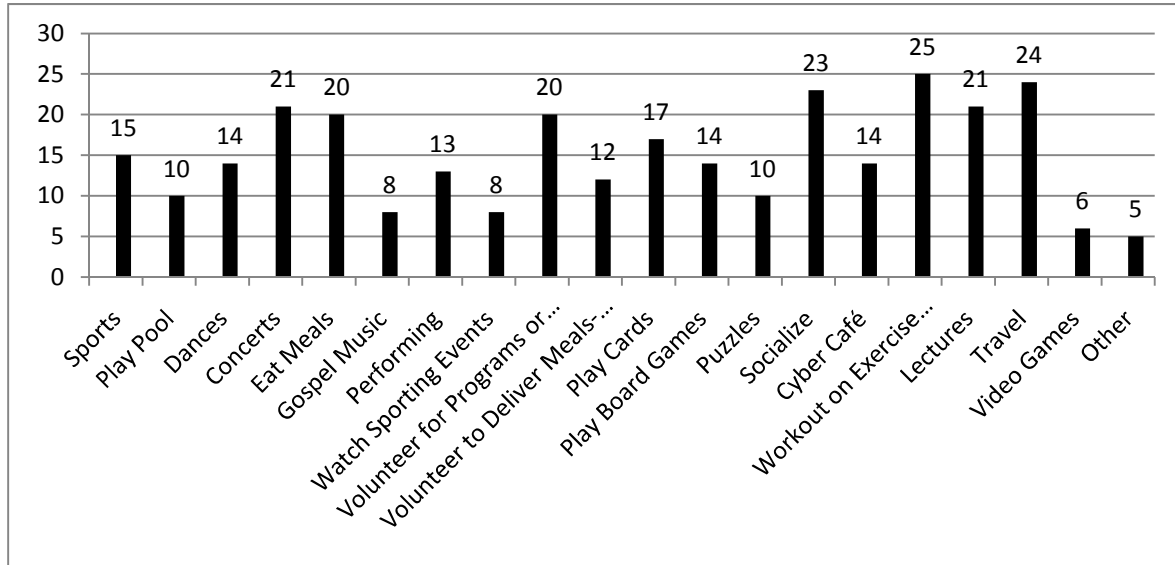
Activities

The activities offered by Senior Centers have long been an attraction for participants. These activities have included playing cards or pool. The Directors indicated that a broader range and/or level of activities would be required for Baby Boomers. As one Director stated in regards to the anticipated requirements of Baby Boomers, “They will use the center as a place to stay active and keep their brain and mental processes going. It’ll be more of a resource to them instead of just a place to land and kill time.” As such, activities will need to be geared to the demands of Baby Boomers. Another Director stated it this way, “No longer will they be content playing dominos or cards.” One of the primary activities suggested is more travel to further destinations or overnight trips. The Directors also felt that more Baby Boomers will want to volunteer their services to the Senior Centers instead of being the recipient of the services. For instance, they may want to deliver meals or teach classes, since this is believed to be the nature of the Baby Boomer Generation.

The focus group and survey respondents agreed with Directors about the need for a wide variety of activities, travel and volunteer opportunities. When responding to the survey question concerning whether participating in Senior Center activities was appealing to the respondent, 22% agreed, 47% somewhat agreed, 22% somewhat disagreed, and 9% disagreed. One survey respondent wants “activities everyday not just once a week or month,” and another stated they want “trendy or timely activities to what’s going on in society.” The survey respondents listed

their top seven desired activities as: 1) workout, 2) travel, 3) socialize, 4) lectures, 5) concerts, 6) eat meals, and 7) volunteer opportunities (see Chart 2).

Chart 2. Survey Respondents' Activity Choices.



The focus group suggested movie days, book of the month club, video games, and travel.

Nutrition was also a concern of all three groups, and they provided their suggestions on this subject.

Food

The discussions regarding food and nutrition elicited some of the most detailed conversations concerning future Senior Center changes. The Directors have an important job in making sure that meals are provided not only to the participants at the Senior Center but also to the hundreds at home. From the beginning, the Meals-on-Wheels Program has been an integral part of Senior Center operations and takes a large portion of the resources available to each center. The Directors recognize the importance of Meals-on-Wheels, with one Director commenting, “We provide one-third of their nutrients for the day.” To help offset the expenses

of providing meals, a Senior Center in Benton County has its own vegetable and flower garden, and they use the vegetables grown in their kitchen to prepare meals. The Director feels that Baby Boomer will enjoy this type of natural, sustainability activity. The Directors are very proud of the meals they serve. One stated, “I tell my food services manager that the numbers we serve here every day are directly related to what he has on the menu. So we are working to improve our menus and make it a place that people want to come.”

Several Directors indicated that the Baby Boomers may want a different style of food service. They indicate a need for more of a Cyber Café style of food delivery, instead of the institutional cafeteria style of delivery. A Cyber Cafe is also consistent with the suggestions made by the focus group and the survey respondents. Approximately two thirds agreed (31%) or somewhat agreed (34%) that they would be more likely to participate in a Senior Center is it were more technologically advanced or a Cyber Café and only 12% disagreed. The Directors also indicated a need for healthy food choices with fresh fruits and vegetables, and perhaps a more “grab-and-go” type food service rather than more formal sit down meals. The “grab-and-go” would also suit providing meals at different times, such as evening meals, rather than just the noon meal. The focus group suggested a coffee and juice bar. The Cyber Café is only one of many suggestions for changes in appearance of the Senior Centers.

Appearance

In visiting the Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas, it became apparent that they come in all shapes and sizes. As expected, the larger communities have larger facilities, while all of the centers appeared clean and well-maintained. The primary differences were the amount of space, especially classroom space, and whether there was a kitchen on site. However, even though the physical structures may be different in size and shape, the way the centers are run and organized

are all very similar. While the first impression of the centers is good, the institutional feel is very prevalent as observed by the researcher, which most of the Directors did not feel would be appealing to the Baby Boomer Generation.

The Directors indicated that a more modern decorating scheme would be appropriate. As one Director put it, “The Baby Boomers seem to be interested in a more modern look and not the old country look.” As such, they feel that updates and remodels are needed with new color schemes, and a more plush, best of everything, “wow” feeling. Several Directors indicated that they needed bigger buildings and larger kitchens, with more walk-in freezer space. They would also like more classroom and exercise space, along with a pool. They also wanted a computerized center with access to telecasting.

The focus group had similar ideas as the Directors in terms of décor. They wanted warm, modern, environmentally friendly facilities, with lots of sunshine. One participant more bluntly indicated “not sanitarium-type colors.” One item this group mentioned was a locker room with showers for individuals exercising, indicating a more gym like atmosphere. Additionally, one participant responded that, “One of the things that I would like to see, if I were going to be coming on a regular basis, is even the environment, the physical environment being different somehow, kind of like the coffee club-type look, where you have tables, where you could group and cluster in social groups instead of more the cafeteria feel with the more stretched out tables.” Some survey respondents also indicated a desire for more up-to-date, nice, and progressive centers. On one survey, the individual indicated the desire for a “vibrant center,” while another wanted “a full exercise center with a grandchildren care room.” A desire for technology was also mentioned by all the groups as a desire for Senior Centers.

Technology

The need for up-to-date technology is a recurring theme for Senior Centers, especially in the context of meeting the needs of the Baby Boomers. While the current Senior Centers have computer access for their participants, the equipment is not necessarily updated nor is there internet access in some facilities. The Baby Boomers grew up in a technological world, so this is an important issue. The Directors realize this challenge. As a Director stated, “We’ll have to have more computers,” yet another stated, “I’d have a computer room – wall-to-wall computers with instructors.” The focus group and survey respondents echoed these sentiments. Both groups indicated a need for more computers, computer training, software training, and internet access. Technology is an expensive obstacle, but also a valuable marketing tool to attract Baby Boomers to Senior Centers.

Facilities/Programs Summary

Of primary concern was the overall outdated appearance of the Senior Centers and the need for larger, improved facilities. The groups indicated that Baby Boomers are going to want more up-to-date accommodations, activities, educational opportunities, and technological amenities. Additionally, food services are in need of revamping, including a less institutional feel. Suggestions were made to have more of a “grab-and-go” type food service or a Cyber Café. Providing current technology is also a need and a major concern, because this is a high ticket item and funding is already a problem. The Directors, focus group participants, and survey respondents provided valuable insights into the future needs of Senior Centers in this area, as well as ways to market and attract Baby Boomers to the centers.

Research Question 2

What process or marketing strategies should be used to attract Baby Boomers to the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas?

The survey results indicated that there is a definite need for the advertising and marketing of the Senior Centers. Although some respondents were aware of the centers, many were not, and many were not aware of the programs offered.

Need

The first question on the survey inquired about the awareness of a Senior Center in the community. Fifty percent of the respondents were aware of such centers, while 31% were somewhat aware (total of 81% with some level of awareness), 3% were somewhat unaware, and 16% were totally unaware. Question 6 asked about the need for advertising or marketing of the centers. Close to 100% (96.9%) agreed or somewhat agreed there was such a need. This emphasizes the need for marketing the Senior Centers in the local communities. While 50% were aware of the centers, 50% were either only somewhat aware or not aware at all. This is a large section of potential Baby Boomer participants. The survey also asked the participants if they were familiar with the programs provided by the Senior Centers. The responses indicated that none of the survey respondents were familiar, 19% were somewhat familiar or somewhat agreed, 28% somewhat disagreed, and 53 % disagreed. This indicates that the Senior Centers are not doing a good job of getting the word out about their programs in some instances. Additionally, almost 97% of the respondents indicated the need for marketing the Senior Centers, and with the results to the question addressed above, this is apparent. The Directors and focus group also saw the need for marketing, especially directed “towards the Baby Boomers.” The questions are

where and how to get the most bang-for-the-buck, since funding is limited for advertising or non-existent.

Where

The Directors indicated that the most cost effective means of advertising is through word-of-mouth. They feel their best advocates are the participants themselves. Another cost effective means is media coverage of events, activities, or fund-raisers at the Senior Centers. This is normally a free service and typically depicts the Senior Center in a positive light. This is normally through local newspaper article, but could also include local magazines. Newsletters are produced each month by the Senior Centers; the newsletters provide the monthly calendar and a list of upcoming events. It was suggested that these be distributed to beauty shops, banks, health clinics, libraries, Chamber of Commerce, and various other public locations. One Director described the newsletter as "...probably one of the best marketing tools we've had." In keeping up with technology, advertising on search engines was mentioned, as well as radio ads, churches, and other senior groups. The focus group and survey responses were very similar. Survey respondents suggested using flyers, open houses, TV, direct mail, and Wal-Mart greeters, while the focus group also mentioned the news media. The groups were also creative in discussing how to market the Senior Centers to Baby Boomers.

How

"By education, tell our story to any one that will listen," is how to market according to one Director. This should be used together with connecting to the newspaper media and other news outlets to get the story out there, and for free. Since "most of our Baby Boomers are computer literate," internet advertising was mentioned by several Directors. These suggestions included Facebook, Twitter, and email. Taking part in community activities, public schools, and

flu and health clinics were also recommended by the Directors. One different and interesting idea was to use a community liaison to get the word out about Senior Centers. Several Directors also shared the idea of getting Baby Boomers connected to the centers before they are actually participants, for example, using them as volunteers or for other purposes in the centers. Other ideas included advertising any updates in décor and inviting Legislators to visit. Consistent with this line of thinking, the surveys recommended posting information at stores and at farmer's markets. One very innovative idea from the survey respondents was to get local businesses to include information about the local Senior Centers in their retirement packets. The focus group zeroed in on using the media outlets and inviting them to center events for advertising. They indicated that this is also a mechanism for improving the image of Senior Centers.

Image/Other

Marketing can help improve the image of Senior Centers, which is directly related to Senior Center participation. Question Two of the survey addressed whether a Baby Boomer would participate in a Senior Center when they become of age. The results are that 16% agreed (they would participate), 59% somewhat agreed, 19% somewhat disagreed, and 6% disagreed. Although the 75% that agreed/somewhat agreed is reassuring, it is disheartening that only 16% seem relatively sure that they would participate in Senior Centers when of age. Survey respondents were also asked if they felt the Senior Center programs were outdated: 3% agreed that programs were outdated, while 28% somewhat agreed, 22% somewhat disagreed, and 28% disagreed (6 respondents did not answer). These results provide evidence of a good image of Senior Centers.

However, one Director did not think Baby Boomers were as positive as these responses indicated. She noted that, "a lot of them (Baby Boomers) view us as just a place where people go

and drop off the decrepit, the people who aren't active." A survey respondent put it this way, "When I think of the Senior Center, I think of my grandmother going and eating bad food all day." These comments correspond with another Director's viewpoint that "a lot of times they think we are for the poor or old." This image has been around for awhile, and it seems to be hard to overcome. Another image issue is the lack of an ethnically diverse participation population.

According to the groups used in this research, there are different theories for the seemingly low participation rate among diverse groups. While a demographic snapshot of the participants of each center was not collected, the Directors provided some insight as to the participation rate of ethnicities in Senior Centers. Most indicated few participants of different ethnicities other than Caucasian. One Director indicated this was primarily due of the population makeup of the county not being diverse. Another observation was that certain ethnic groups "take care of their own," and are not interested in Senior Center participation. Some suggestions to increase participation of different ethnics groups were offered. A director related, "You almost have to have somebody within your center that can represent the center to the different cultural groups." Another indicated the need to "train staff on different cultures and how to relate to different ethnicities." Yet others stated the need to advertise directly to ethnic groups in hopes of increasing participation. This would include producing literature in different languages, if necessary, and advertising in or on ethnic media outlets.

The improvement of image is necessary for the future of Senior Centers. When asked, only one third of the Directors felt there would be an increase in participation when the Baby Boomers started to attend Senior Centers. However, one indicated a decrease in participation, while one thought the numbers would stay the same, one was undecided, and three did not respond. For centers to stay viable, they will need to maintain or improve their current

participation numbers. However, this may present a problem when viewed in terms of funding needs and the anticipated new needs of Baby Boomers.

Marketing Summary

The research groups suggested some very creative means of marketing not only to Baby Boomers, but also to ethnically diverse populations. They indicated that a newsletter distributed to various public locations and in different languages could be a very effective advertising tool. They also stressed the importance of using free advertising, such as stories regarding events or fund-raisers published in the newspapers, reported on TV, or on the radio. Advertising using ethnic community resources was also suggested. Some of the more imaginative suggestions involved using social media networks, including Facebook and Twitter, and email. Other ideas included the use of Human Resource Departments in local companies to distribute information regarding Senior Centers upon retirement of employees was an inspired idea.

Research Question 3

What policy implications will result from the increase in available clientele for the Senior Centers?

There is the potential for far reaching policy implications, because of the size of the Baby Boomer cohort and the span of ages within the cohort (1946 to 1964). Within the eighteen years of Baby Boomers coming of age for Senior Centers, the changes and/or needs could change substantially, especially with an ever evolving world and economy. This section discusses the specific observations and recommendations from participants as they relate to the research question, with further policy implications addressed in Chapter 5.

Name

The Senior Center name was prescribed in the Older American's Act. Although at the time the name may have been appropriate, it is not received well by Baby Boomers. According to the Directors, focus group, and survey respondents, Baby Boomers do not view themselves as old. The connotation of "senior" is perceived as being old, rather than seasoned or experienced. A focus group member indicated that, "Senior makes it sound like you're old." On the survey when asked if the name "Senior Center" is a good name, 34% disagreed to some extent, while 22% somewhat agreed and only 9% agreed the name was good. One Director said, "It's going to have to change." However, another Director disagreed by indicating, "I do not think it matters much. Image is more important, and what is going on inside the building." Seven out of the nine Directors thought the name needed to be changed or would be a detriment to recruiting the upcoming Baby Boomers. Even though there is some disagreement about a preferred name, all three groups indicated the name was a problem and suggested a change. Some of the suggestions for names were Sixty-Plus, Adult Activity Center, Baby Boomer Club, The Connection, Second Life, Intellectual Retirees, and Adult Life Learning Center. The bottom line, as one survey indicated, was to "use words that compliment – not senior." The choice in name will possibly have policy implications in the future if there is a decrease in participation. Funding is another issue of significant importance.

Funding

The Directors of the Senior Centers were the primary source familiar with funding issues, so only their comments and thoughts are reported in this section. While not commonly understood by the public, the reality is that Senior Centers have to match the funding they receive from governmental sources. This means that the centers are responsible for raising

approximately 50% of their operating expenses for the year. This can be a monumental task, especially in times of economic downturns as we are currently experiencing. It is not surprising that a Director announced that, “Funding is my biggest barrier.” Six out of the nine Directors indicated funding was a substantial problem when it comes to trying to implement new programs/activities and/or accommodating the large Baby Boomer cohort, especially since they already struggle to make ends meet with their existing clientele. In order to keep the Legislators in tune with funding need, one director indicated that they go to the legislative sessions in Little Rock to garner support. Some other comments on funding included, “We have a very small community to raise it because we’re competing with the libraries, the museums, the schools, and the churches,” and “The way the economy is, it’s getting harder.” During the interviews, it was obvious that this was a serious situation at times, with some centers not meeting their required quotes for fund raising. As one can imagine, this can be a difficult juggling act given the need for the services provided by the Senior Centers, especially since in most of the centers the only full-time employee is the Director. This provides additional challenges in trying to meet the needs of the participants of the Senior Centers, while trying to make sure that funding is raised to keep the required services provided and maintaining a positive image for the Senior Centers.

The perceived lack of ethnic participation is already a policy concern. With a growing population of ethnic groups in Northwest Arkansas, the need to address this issue is imperative. A lack of ethnic participation in Senior Centers at present is very disheartening. However, without proper resources and manpower, it is very difficult to sufficiently address the problem. The needs of this population group in public service and health related issues will continue to grow just as with the Baby Boomers.

The research data confirms some previous research in regards to Senior Centers, but also provides new insight and suggestions on the future needs, especially in regards to Baby Boomers. This research cannot be generalized due to the limited data set; however, the information obtained can be explored in the future for continuous improvement to Senior Centers and their services.

Summary of Findings

The outdated appearance of the Senior Centers and the need for larger, improved facilities is a big concern. Baby Boomers are going to want more up-to-date facilities. Food services need a less institutional feel, with more of a “grab-and-go” or Cyber Café type food service. Funding of current technology is also a need and a major concern. Because technology is a priority for Baby Boomers, updating and maintaining this equipment will be a need and challenge.

The marketing of Senior Centers can be accomplished using a variety of methods including a newsletter distributed to various public locations and in different languages. Also stressed was the importance of using free advertising, such as stories regarding events or fundraisers published in the newspapers, reported on TV, or on the radio. The use of social media networks, including Facebook and Twitter, and email was also recommended. An innovative idea was using Human Resource Departments in local companies to distribute information regarding Senior Centers upon retirement of employees.

The main policy implications included the name, Senior Center, and funding of the programs, staff, technology, and much needed changes to the Senior Centers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study obtained extensive data about projected Baby Boomer use of Senior Centers from three sources, Senior Center Directors, focus group, and surveys. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used to answer the three research questions. The quantitative research method, grounded theory, provided a wealth of information, more than anticipated. Grounded theory allowed for flexible yet systematic data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Utilizing grounded theory while examining the Senior Centers' operations allowed for the ability to explain, predict, describe and analyze the programs under review (Patton, 2002), and this information will be useful to decision makers evaluating the programs offered at Senior Centers (Patton, 1987). While much of the data from these sources coincided with prior research findings, analyses also provided new insights into the use of Senior Centers by the Baby Boomer generation and highlighted policy concerns. This chapter elaborates on the findings presented in Chapter 4, reviews potential implications of these outcomes, and explores their policy implications. The outcomes related to each research question are discussed, followed by programmatic and policy implications, limitations of the present research, and suggestions for future research.

Research Question 1

The first research question was: What effect will the Baby Boomer Generation have on the programs and services offered by the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas and what adjustments and/or changes in these programs and

services will be needed as a result? The results for this question were consistent across the three groups of participants in the study. The Baby Boomers were viewed as having a potentially profound effect on Senior Centers, if they decide to participate. All research groups indicated that change was needed in both programs and services to attract the Baby Boomer Generation for utilization of Senior Centers.

Some of the suggested changes from the multiple data sources involved exercise, educational programs, activities, food service, facility appearance, and technology. These ideas are examined in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Most Directors (7 out of 9) and the focus group participants indicated the desire for an indoor heated swimming pool, while the survey respondents did not specifically mention this. When asked about their idea of a perfect Senior Center, one focus group participant responded, “A heated swimming pool.” One Director mentioned an “indoor pool for water aerobics.” She went on to elaborate, “Well, so many people have had hip replacements, knee replacements, or have osteoarthritis, and they really need that. We did take a bus to the Jones Center a couple of months for a group to go to water aerobics there, and they really enjoyed it, but we had to stop because we didn’t have staff to drive the van and because of gas prices, too.” The survey group may not have mentioned a swimming pool because of a lack of knowledge in regards to Senior Centers, while the other two research groups were more familiar with the clientele needs of Senior Centers. However, swimming was listed as a desired activity by the survey group, but they simply did not specify that a pool be included in the Senior Centers.

All of the research groups indicated the desire for an exercise area with up-to-date equipment in the Senior Center. Taking into account the recommendations for exercise from all groups, the overall feeling was that they wanted more of a sports club or athletic club

arrangement. This was indicated by the desire to utilize up-to-date exercise equipment, locker rooms, personal trainers, and swimming pools. A focus group participant indicated, “With the exercise things like they offer at the power clubs or curves...” Another focus group participant added, “A coach, an exercise expert.” Several survey respondents mentioned exercise and exercise equipment, while one desired, “a full exercise center with a grandchildren care room.” The Directors mentioned things such as, “a special fitness center,” “all the best exercise equipment,” and “a full gym with exercise equipment.” As well, the groups indicated a need for exercise classes that mimics current trends in this area. Zumba Gold, a Latin dance, is the new craze being offered in the Senior Centers according to the Directors. It is interesting that all Directors mentioned this dance, which would lead one to believe that this was instituted as a required new activity within all Senior Centers. In any event, the initiative in starting new activities is one that needs to be maintained to stay up-to-date on current developments in the exercise arena.

In addition to exercise classes, such as Pilates, Yoga, Aerobics, and Tai Chi, the survey respondents indicated an interest in educational programs addressing technology, wellness, nutrition, and a variety of other subjects. As well, all groups indicated that a large array of activities would be desirable, including travel. This coincides with the Directors and focus group’s responses, which included exercise, dance, health, creative writing, and English classes.

The food service area was seen as needing significant change across the research groups. The suggestions included cyber cafes and grab-and-go meals, instead of the institutional cafeteria, as well as a variety of meal times. One Director said, “...not so institutionalized...having cafes instead of a cafeteria...a different palate as far as eating more health wise. I see fresh fruits and vegetables and more salad bars—just more of the grab-and-go

type of situation more so than the sit-down meal.” A focus group participant added, “...walk through and get what you want, instead of fixing one thing in there and all of them have got to eat one thing or do without. I’d give them a choice.” A cyber café was the desire of 14 survey respondents for food arrangement. In addition to varied meal times, respondents suggested that Senior Centers be open at a wider range of times, not just normal business hours. “Again, the hours...we’d have to look at the hours being different for the Baby Boomers,” according to one focus group participant. Another put it this way, “The hours of availability...a lot of people in our age bracket, they’re employed, so they don’t have access during the day. Mealtime is scheduled at a certain time and that’s not always flexible with their schedule.” Along this same line of thinking, one Director suggested, “Maybe they would like an evening meal.” Perhaps as important as the mealtime choices and schedules is the appearance of the Senior Centers.

The appearance of the Senior Center will need to have a more modern, up-to-date look. Baby Boomers are perceived as wanting the new and shiny, so their desire for a Senior Center presumably would be no different. This is obvious in some of the comments made during the research by the survey respondents. They used terms such as up-to-date, nice, and progressive. The Directors specified things such as new, modern, updated, plush, and the WOW factor. One Director stated, “The Baby Boomers seem to be interested in a more modern look and not the old country look.” As another Director so eloquently put it, “Do not make it look like Grandma’s house.” The focus group used descriptions such as warm, sunny, “coffee club-type look”, and “not sanitarium type colors.” The discussion of appearance seemed to be very consistent among the three research groups. They were very explicit in their description of likes and dislikes.

In addition to appearance of the facilities, technology appears to be a big ticket item for Baby Boomers. For the most part, they are technologically savvy, and they will demand the

availability of technology in any Senior Center that they utilize. This was expressed among the three research groups, and participants in all groups stated that computers, internet access, and various other technological advances would be desired for the Senior Centers to attract Baby Boomers.

Implementation of changes requires leadership awareness, initiative and effort. While all the Senior Center Directors appeared aware of the fact that changes were needed to attract the Baby Boomer Generation, no one seemed to grasp how this should be accomplished. The Directors seemed to be so busy keeping up with the status quo that there did not seem to be time to address any desired changes. One focus group participant put it this way, “We make suggestions and sometimes it goes over the heads of our authorities.” She went on to say, “The input from everyone will be listened to, whereas right now it isn’t.” One Director indicated that she has to volunteer on her own time to help run the Senior Center. She stated, “Well, I’m considered full-time, although I don’t work full-time hours. I’m not paid for full-time hours, and I end up working a lot of my own time, which I’m not paid for, so there’s a lot of volunteerism there.” Four of the nine Senior Center Directors indicated that they are the only full-time employee. This leaves them with limited time to implement changes and presents challenges in the day-to-day operations of the facility.

Another possible barrier to change was noted by the researcher in visiting Senior Centers for research purposes. It was observed that all of the centers appeared to be a cookie cutter type design and managed in similar fashions. The centers had similar décor, kitchen operations, activities, as well as similarities in overall atmosphere, and staffing. If these observations are accurate, the task of change could be difficult and have significant consequences for Baby Boomer participation. Since there was no direct question addressing the issue of templates for

center design and management, it is difficult to ascertain whether there is a blueprint of operation for the Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas. However, it would appear that this is a possibility, and if this is the case, significant change would need to be approved by a higher authority than the Senior Center Director. However, it did appear that the Directors have a certain amount of autonomy to decide what activities and programs are offered in their individual centers. Once again, this was not addressed in a direct interview question and was an observation.

Changing Senior Centers on a larger scale to attract Baby Boomers could be problematic if major changes have to go through a tedious approval process from a higher authority in the region. To further complicate this is the possibility that all centers may need to be changed in the same manner, if they are indeed cookie cutter designs. If so, the consequences to Baby Boomer participation could be affected due to the delay in change to meet their needs. As referenced in the literature, Senior Center non-participants are identified as being too busy, having a higher education, and having a higher income (Krout, 1982; Jirovec et al., 1989; Miner et al., 1993). These characteristics are believed to be synonymous with Baby Boomers, and if this is true, Senior Centers will need to address ways to attract this age cohort. The needed changes may be difficult to make due to a possible authority structure of the Senior Centers, which may have an adverse consequence on the participation rate of Baby Boomers.

Regardless of potential barriers to change, if changes are made to the Senior Center programs and services, these need to be marketed or advertised. It cannot be assumed that the changes alone will be enough to attract the Baby Boomers to the Senior Centers. The work has to be spread by a variety of methods informing the Baby Boomers of the changes. However, what is the best way to market the Senior Centers? Research Question 2 addresses the need for marketing, as well as where and how it should be done.

Research Question 2

The second research question was: What process or marketing strategies should be used to attract Baby Boomers, as well as a more diverse population, to the Senior Centers in Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Northwest Arkansas? A direct indicator of the need for marketing the Senior Centers was illustrated by the fact that of the Baby Boomer survey respondents, 15.6 % were totally unaware of the centers while 53.1% indicated that they were not familiar with the programs offered by the Senior Centers. In addition, 96.9% replied that Senior Centers need to be marketed.

Because of the lack of funding, the centers need to maintain their newsletters, and these need to continue to make their way outside the walls of the Senior Centers. Directors made several suggestions on where these should be distributed, and this needs to happen every month with constant re-evaluation of where the newsletter can be distributed. As well, the repeated free use of news media outlets to bring the Senior Centers into view of potential participants is very important. However, more creative ways to market the Senior Centers is crucial because Baby Boomers are not as likely to pick up a newsletter and read it, especially if the first thing they see is “Senior Center” on the front page. Keeping current on technological advances, social media innovations, and smart phone developments will remain important in regards to using these outlets as an advertising mechanism.

With a continued increase in the Hispanic population expected, marketing directly to this sector may increase participation within the group. One method is to use Hispanic newspapers or radio stations. Another is to utilize Hispanic staff as a marketing tool. As indicated by the research of Pardasani (2004), minority participation increased as minority staff at the Senior Centers also increased. Increased minority staff could be stressed in the marketing of the Senior

Centers. Having minority staff could give the Hispanic population a sense of having someone as an advocate for them and a feeling of belonging.

The perception of Senior Centers could be influenced or improved by marketing, as well as by promotion of their programs and services through advertising (Walker et al., 2004). Senior Centers may want to market their services and programs with a more up-to-date image to attract the Baby Boomer Generation, or do they? This is discussed as part of the policy implications addressed in Research Question 3.

Research Question 3

Research question three was: What policy implications will result from the increase in available clientele for the Senior Centers? The Baby Boomer cohort spans 18 years and is 78 million strong. The sheer numbers have policy implications, not only for Senior Centers, but across a wide-array of social services and programs. Some of the policy-related items brought to the forefront in this research were funding, ethnic participation, and the name, Senior Center, but there are other underlying policy implications that need consideration.

First and foremost, funding is a major problem. It is virtually impossible to run a Senior Center with the funding received and raised now, so what will it be like if the Baby Boomers start to participate in vast numbers? This problem was also an issue in a study completed in 2003, which indicated that new revenue sources will have to become a reality to help fund Senior Centers (Beisgen & Kraitchman, 2003). The centers are having difficulty raising the required matching funds now, and the current economic downturn is bound to have a substantial impact on this requirement. In the current study, the Directors indicated that it was becoming harder to raise the matching funds required for their programs. In regards to raising the matching funds, one director indicated, “The way the economy is, it’s getting harder.”

The pressing policy implication is the need for additional funding. Without funding, it is impossible to make substantial change without affecting other areas within the centers. Another challenge associated with funding is the requirement that each facility match funding, which is becoming harder and harder to accomplish in this economy, given current budget discussions, entitlement debate, and balancing the Federal budget. Basically, the only somewhat guaranteed funding is from governmental agencies, which from the national to the state level has the potential to diminish at any given time due to the current state of the affairs. The outlook on additional funding is bleak, at best. The lack of funding has a trickle-down effect. Without funding, facilities cannot be updated, technology cannot be bought or upgraded, and programs cannot be added. Without the changes in these areas, there is the potential for loss of clientele as the Baby Boomers become of age for services. Without clientele, Senior Centers could cease to exist. Since the centers provide many valuable services to the population age 60 and above, this is a very distressing thought. Priorities need to be set to better utilize the limited resources available to Senior Centers, or innovative means of funding the centers will need to be established. As this population ages, there will be greater need for health information, which brings us to the next policy implication.

Although the Baby Boomers are considered to be in better health overall, as they age, health will become an important aspect of information and assistance. Since Senior Centers have been the focal point for health information distribution for those as 60 plus, the need for additional services in this area will become very prevalent as the Baby Boomers age. Legislators will need to address how they want to handle this situation and how they will provide the necessary assistance as this age group grows in a relatively short period of time. In most of these centers, the only full-time staff is the director. Thus, it is going to be very difficult to keep up

with the demand for assistance in coming years, not only in the health area but in other areas, as well. Whether through the Senior Centers or elsewhere, the assistance that will be needed by this age group will have to be dealt with in some manner.

The funding issues referenced by Krout as long as two decades ago (1995; 1989) are still a concern with today's Senior Centers. As one Director indicated, "Funding is a big deal, and we go to Little Rock every legislative session to make our point." From a policy standpoint, it is critical that Senior Center representatives keep making themselves visible to the state legislators, as well as lobby for federal funding increases and modifications to the existing legislation. With budget cuts likely due to the economic times, it is imperative that Senior Centers continue to monitor the number of clients served and the value-added to their constituents. This may mean additional work in the beginning, but the payoff could be large in the end, if detailed records and evaluations are maintained. Although this study did not specifically address data collection on participants of Senior Centers, it is prudent to evaluate the information being collected and look at ways to improve or enhance these procedures in means that would provide data beneficial in fighting for the Senior Center cause and to plead the case for their funding needs before the Legislature. The growing ethnic makeup of Northwest Arkansas could provide additional demands on the budget of Senior Centers, especially if ethnic participation is increased.

Ethnicity and race is not a determinant in Senior Center participation, according to prior research studies (Calsyn et al., 1996; Miner et al., 1993; Krain & Trevino-Richards, 1987). However, in Northwest Arkansas, diverse participation in Senior Centers is very low. As the ethnic populations continue to grow in the area, the mode of operation for attracting these sectors of the population will have to be carefully considered and additional marketing strategies put into place.

Ethnic participation in the Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas was perceived as a problem due to limited participation among the ethnic groups of this area, with the largest group being Hispanic. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2011), the Hispanic population of the three counties used in this research is as follows: Benton 15%; Madison 5%; and Washington 14%. These numbers represent increases in the Hispanic population in Benton and Washington counties of over 100% in 9 years. It is noteworthy to mention that some towns in Northwest Arkansas have a much larger percentage of Hispanics than the county average. For example, Springdale's population is approximately 34% Hispanic (US Census 2010). While data was not collected on the percentage of the total population that participates, it would appear from observation that it is safe to say that less than the 14% of the population within the age cohort utilizes the Senior Center. Of the Hispanic population within the State of Arkansas, 43% lives in poverty according to Pew Hispanic Center (2011), so the Senior Center could provide much needed services to this ethnic group including health/wellness and nutrition, which could provide long-term savings for the State on health and welfare services. One sector of the population that may not be influenced by the name, Senior Center, is the minority population in Northwest Arkansas.

The name, Senior Center, is imbedded in the OAA. This is an obstacle for some Baby Boomers. They do not normally view themselves as seniors and are not keen on attending a facility directed at seniors. The connotation of the term "senior" may be a direct deterrent for Baby Boomers. For instance, one survey respondent put it this way, "When I think of the Senior Center, I think of my grandmother going and eating bad food all day." A focus group participant made the following comment, "Senior makes it sound like you're old." As one Director, who is a Baby Boomer, stated, "With the name Senior Center out on the door, Baby Boomers aren't as

readily ready to come,” and she went on to say, “I don’t think the Baby Boomers want to be identified as seniors.”

Being able to replace the name “Senior Center” with something more appealing would possibly help with Baby Boomer participation. The Senior Centers that have attained the designation of a wellness center are more likely to be utilized by the Baby Boomer generation. Although the name is an obstacle, it does not have to be the deciding factor for participation, especially if the Senior Centers provide an appealing, active, and updated facility with an appropriate staff and programming to meet the needs and desires of the Baby Boomer generation. This is one aspect of the OAA that needs to be reconsidered.

Recommendations

The recommendations section provides suggestions for ways to deal with some of the projected challenges and changes needed in order to attract Baby Boomers to Senior Centers in the future, based on the research data from this study. This section includes both ideas generated by the three research groups and the researcher’s recommendations. The recommendations tie back to the OAA Objectives 7 and 8, which include: meaningful activity within the widest range of civic, cultural, education, training and recreational opportunities; and efficient community services that will emphasize care for vulnerable older individuals.

When considering exercise, educational programs, activities, food service, facility appearance, and technology, one primary concern related to all of these suggestions is the need for funding. Technology is not cheap and neither is remodeling of buildings or exercise equipment. However, all of these items would be highly attractive to Baby Boomers for participation in Senior Centers. One Director indicated that rooms with computer or updated technology could be used as an income source by charging to rent these rooms out to the public

or organizations. The survey respondents and focus group felt that fees could be charged for classes and activities and individuals would be willing to pay for these services. The suggested fees ranged from less than \$5 to \$25 per class or service.

Entrepreneurial activities can help fund the programs within the Senior Centers. At least one Senior Center has already started to tackle this with activities, such as growing a garden. It is suggested that the vegetables produced not only be used in the Senior Center as a cost savings mechanism but also be sold to the public to raise funds. Senior Center Directors need to be creative in this area. The possibilities are limitless. They should use the talents of the participants and community volunteers. The talents of the participants and community volunteers who, most likely, have different backgrounds and abilities could be utilized in fund raising activities. After all, it is the community's Senior Center.

Another suggestion concerning funding is to build community partnerships. With partnerships, the needs of the Senior Center become more visible; and the programs and services available to the community are exposed. The partnerships could provide valuable resources to the Senior Center, as well as build advocates to help support and promote the Senior Centers within the individual communities. Community partnerships should include local businesses and Corporations, such as Wal-Mart, Tyson, and J. B. Hunt, churches, non-profit and civic organizations, elected officials, health organizations, hospitals, public schools and higher education. The centers should not underestimate the connection that could be established among various other entities too, since the above list is not conclusive. The greater the number of partnerships, the stronger each Senior Centers will be, particularly in terms of its core support mechanisms. In addition, these partnerships could provide needed funding and/or supplies that could be used by the Senior Center, which would also cut costs.

Being out in the community will also provide opportunities to reach potential participants of different ethnicities. Some of the Senior Centers are already providing programming that may attract the Hispanic population with a dance, Zumba Gold. On this same line of thinking, adding programs offered in other languages and minority staffing has been suggested for potentially increasing minority participation in Senior Centers (Pardasani, 2004). In doing so, the minorities will be able to build a connection to someone within the centers, develop a sense of belonging, and ultimately be better served in the process.

Perhaps an unforeseen benefit to community partnerships is becoming more in tune with the community's needs and wants of the Senior Center. This is imperative because being able to meet the needs of the community will help the Senior Center remain viable and maintain or increase participation.

With this said, each center is going to need advocates that can go out and establish partnerships. The partnerships are not going to happen magically. This is a catch-22, because most Senior Centers only have one full-time employee and that is the Director. The Director cannot be all things to all people and without additional funding extra personnel cannot be hired to help.

Providing a staff that is sufficient for running the facilities is imperative. Sufficient refers not only to the number of staff, but a skilled, trained staff will be essential. Baby Boomers will require more educational programs which will require instructors that are proficient in the subject matter, as well as having the ability and knowledge to deliver and facilitate instruction to adults. The staff will need to be more proactive in deciphering the needs of the clientele and maintaining records on attendance and trends. Constant monitoring and tweaking of the

programs will be essential to satisfy the Baby Boomers. This will also help to keep the Senior Centers up-to-date in responding to needs of their clientele, the Baby Boomers.

The current staffing in Senior Centers is an obstacle for incorporating these suggestions. The limited number of full-time employees at most centers does not lead to pro-activity and innovation in Senior Center programming or in maintaining facilities that attract Baby Boomers. As well, staffing in Senior Centers need to have a schedule of professional development to keep them abreast on the wants and needs of their participants and the trends for the Baby Boomer cohort.

As noted by Eaton and Salari (2005), “Without educational transformation that include attention to the physical environment, we may witness 16,000 established Senior Centers become virtually obsolete as a hub for lifelong learning” (p.479). This educational transformation needs to include the training of Senior Center staff on the principles of adult learning and Andragogy. Understanding adult learning theory and Andragogy, the theory of teaching adults, is essential for Senior Center instructors. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) identified six principles to adult learning, which included: need to know, self-concept of learner, prior experience of learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn. Without this knowledge, instructors will not comprehend what motivates seniors to learn or to be interested in the programming at the Senior Centers. To develop meaningful educational programs for Baby Boomers, the needs, motivators, and barriers of this group must be identified. Since barriers are the greatest obstacles to program participation (Price & Lyon, 1982), making the staff aware of how to identify possible barriers is important. In doing so, educational programs based on the interest of the Baby Boomers will result, which aligns with previous research that suggests that

older adults participate in learning based on their individual interests (Kim and Merriam, 2004; Price and Lyon, 1982).

Advertising is the key to attracting Baby Boomers to the Senior Centers, but one of the primary problems with advertising is funding. As one Director stated, “My advertising budget for the year is five hundred bucks, and that gets eaten up really, really fast.” Creative means of spreading the word about Senior Centers will need to be established. Since the marketing needs to be directed to Baby Boomers, social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, could provide a relatively inexpensive means of advertising. With this said, there will need to be someone at the center that is familiar with and able to use these sites. With a small or non-existent budget, it is very difficult to reach large groups of people, and social media outlets may provide the mechanism to accomplish this.

A Director had an innovative idea about advertising, “I think that if we worked better as a whole network, because we’re all in this for the same reason...” This was in response to the question about marketing strategies. If the regional Senior Centers banded together with their resources to do mass advertising, they might get more bang for their buck.

All of the previously discussed recommendations revert back to the issue of the lack of funding which each group (Directors, Focus Group, and Baby Boomers) indicated as a problem. This is a major issue and may be worsened by the current state of the economy, not only at the state level but at the federal level. As such, what has been a hurdle of Senior Centers for years, the perception that they only serve the needy, may need to become a reality. This suggestion coincides with the Social Agency Model perspective of servicing those poor and most in need and OAA Objective 8, which focuses on providing support to “vulnerable older individuals”. This is a difficult suggestion, but if the funding is directed at those that need the services most,

possibly the dollars could stretch further and more of the desired items and programs could be delivered. The policy issue involved in this suggestion should be open for public debate, especially since this has been an obstacle in Senior Center participation for many years.

Even harder to recommend is the possible need to close or consolidate Senior Centers. By doing so, the funds could be directed toward providing the most services for the dollars allocated, which relates back to OAA Objective 8 for “efficient community service”. Clientele could be transported from some of the smaller communities to participate in specific activities, or, most likely, the Baby Boomers would drive themselves. Satellite facilities could be opened in the closed areas for special medical help or programs, such as flu shots, hearing tests, etc. This would be only as needed. This suggestion is in line with the thoughts of Alt (1998), “...services will have to be taken to them, rather than waiting inside the traditional Senior Center building for their arrival” (p. 32). Even though the thought of closing Senior Centers is difficult to process, this may be designed in a fashion that is preferable to Baby Boomers. However, the meals-on-wheels program should not be interrupted in any community, as this is the lifeline and foundation of the Senior Centers.

Senior Centers will need to be more appealing to the Baby Boomer Generation for them to participate. This includes the look of the facilities, the food, the activities, and educational programs. To make this happen, a trained, knowledgeable staff that continues to track the successes and data in regards to their individual centers is imperative. Policymakers need to be kept abreast of the impact Senior Centers make on the lives of those 60+ in the various counties in Northwest Arkansas. By providing analyzed data, this will help facilitate this process and possibly justify more funding, which is the lifeline for all Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas.

The above can be accomplished by performing a program evaluation, since participant needs must be met for programs to be effective (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Because program planning for adults is specialized due to the maturity and specific needs of this clientele, the Interactive Model of Program Planning was developed by Caffarella (2002). The no beginning – no ending design of this program planning model makes this method idea for dealing with the age span of the Baby Boomer Generation and their potential program needs over the course of several years. Program planning and evaluation can provide the lifeline for future funding, Baby Boomer participation, and Legislative support.

Limitations

This study focused on participants in three counties in Northwest Arkansas. As such, the results cannot be generalized. In addition, a limitation is the fact that there was a gap in time from data collection until data analysis and write-up. During this time, there have been significant changes in the economy of this country. There have also been major debates about entitlement program in the context of the economy. The policy implications of some of the recommendations generated by study participants are influenced by fiscal consideration.

During the process of data analysis, it became apparent that additional information in regards to Senior Center participation should have been collected, such as number of regular participants and their demographic background, especially education and income level. More data would have been helpful in the analysis, especially in regards to ethnic participation. Plus, additional information would have been beneficial on staffing within the Senior Centers. A specific question should have addressed the actual number of employees, whether or not they are full-time or part-time, and their specific job duties. As well, in addition to the surveys of Baby Boomers, some additional one-on-one interviews would have been very beneficial in comparing

and contrasting all of the data collected. The surveys did not provide the same depth of information as was afforded by the personal interview with the Directors and the focus group. Some of the research questions could have been worded differently or more clearly to alleviate any confusion of what was being asked of the participants, and perhaps richer data may have been collected in response to some questions. Additionally, the review of the survey demographics revealed that 44% had master's degrees, which is most likely much higher than the current Senior Center participants. As such, their views may be different on the issues surrounding Senior Centers.

Due to the population makeup of Northwest Arkansas, one county was chosen to represent the rural population, while the other two counties provided a more urban area. Because of this, the rural communities and their participants' in Senior Centers and their Baby Boomers may not have been accurately represented. As well, the Senior Center Directors that were interviewed were mainly from the urban counties, which may have skewed the data to reflect the views of more urban areas rather than rural communities.

Even with the limitation presented, the data obtained and analyzed for this research will be beneficial for future research in the area of Senior Centers. This study is particularly helpful in identifying future research directions.

Future Research

Future research needs to focus on why or why not individuals utilize Senior Centers. One of the biggest gaps in the research is the mindset of those individuals that currently participate in Senior Centers and those that do not. Although projects of this nature have been done in the past, the Baby Boomer Generation brings a new dimension to this question. The Behavior Model (Andersen, Kravits, & Anderson, 1975) could be utilized to explain and predict participation

among the Baby Boomer Generation. This method could be employed to determine any differences between current Senior Center participants and the Baby Boomers. Why individuals participate in Senior Centers has been addressed by several researchers in the past with varying results (Krout, 1982; Krout et al., 1990; Holland, 2003; Miner et al., 1993). If this model could be fine tuned to examine participation among Baby Boomers, this information could be drawn on in future program planning and assessment of needs to help the Senior Centers stay viable.

Additionally, with an eighteen year gap in Baby Boomer cohorts, future research needs to be conducted to determine what, if any difference exists in program and educational needs from the leading-edge Baby Boomers to the final cohort of Baby Boomers. This is a significant age difference and the possibility of differing wants and needs is probable. To have a grip on this possibility would give Senior Centers an edge in keeping up-to-date on possible changes.

Of continued interest is why there is a perceived lack of ethnic participation in Senior Centers within Northwest Arkansas. Further research in this area would be very beneficial in understanding the mindset of this subset population of Baby Boomers. Research on ethnic participation should also include whether ethnic staffing within the Senior Centers has an effect on ethnic participation.

In regards to community partnerships, research evaluating the process of establishing these partnerships and the benefits to the Senior Centers would also be valuable. Community partnerships could be very beneficial to Senior Centers and to actually evaluate this belief and any unexpected consequence, whether good or bad, would provide Senior Center Administrators information on the path to take in regards to partnerships.

This is also the case with creating entrepreneurial ventures for fund-raising. Using certain centers as model or experimental centers to establish money making ventures to help support the

activities of the center would be an interesting research project and could be very timely due to the current economy and potential funding cuts. As well, researching the impact of charging for Senior Center services and programs would also be worthwhile in determining if this is a viable means for accumulating funding or if this would be detrimental to participation.

Future research on the viability of the consolidation of facilities and services within and among Senior Centers is also of interest. Although this is probably not a popular research topic among Senior Center Administrators, the data obtained could help in providing data for future decision-making in difficult economic times.

Future research utilizing the Social Agency Model and/or Voluntary Organization Model (Taietz, 1976) could help shed light on the type of participants utilizing the Senior Centers among the Baby Boomers. If the participants are the disengaged, poor, older adults as indicated by the Social Agency Model, then perhaps the suggestion to offer services to this population should be seriously considered, whereas if the Voluntary Organization Model prevails, consolidation of facilities may be the appropriate path to take. Although information on community involvement was not collected from all the research groups, 18 of 24 survey respondents that indicated that they are interested in attending Senior Centers have been involved in some type of community service, which relates to the Voluntary Organization Model. Research using these models could provide valuable information on the future direction of Senior Centers in this economy.

Since there is limited current research on Senior Centers, all of these research recommendations could provide very valuable and timely data. With potential changes needed within Senior Centers, research data on the large age span of Baby Boomers and the differences in needs would provide valuable information for future operations of Senior Centers. This study,

having captured both qualitative and quantitative data, explored the Baby Boomers' desires for programs, activities, and facilities regarding participation in Senior Centers in Northwest Arkansas.

Summary

Funding is the primary policy concern for Senior Centers. The suggested changes in facilities and programs are expensive, so creative ways to increase revenue or decrease expenses is important. Some of these can include entrepreneurial activities, such as vegetable sales, and building community partnerships with large corporate neighbors to access possible financial support and contribution of commodities. Providing a sufficient, trained staff is important to Senior Centers and is also dependent on appropriate funding, as is advertising Senior Centers. Continuing to use free advertising will remain essential in promoting Senior Center programs and activities, and some programs and/or centers may need to be consolidated, closed or converted to only serving the needy.

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Appendix 1

BABY BOOMER SURVEY

If you were born between the years 1946 and 1964, this survey is for you!

Instructions: Please record one response per question by marking the box that best represents your opinion based on your experience or needs. Your participation is voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential. There is no penalty for non participation. Your participation is appreciated.

The National Institute of Senior Centers **defines a Senior Center** as a place where “older adults come together for services and activities that reflect their experience and skills, respond to their diverse needs and interests, enhance their dignity, support their independence, and encourage their involvement in and with the center and the community.”

Questions	Rating (Please Circle)			
1. I am aware of the Senior Center in my community.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
2. I will participate in the Senior Center when I become of age.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
3. Participating in the Senior Center activities is appealing to me.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
4. I am interested in educational classes at the Senior Center.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
5. The Senior Center and its programs are outdated.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
6. The Senior Center needs to be advertised or marketed.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
7. I am familiar with the programs provided by the Senior Center.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
8. I would be more interested in participation if the Senior Center was more technologically advanced or a cyber café.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
9. The name “Senior Center” is a good name.	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
10. I am interested in volunteering at a Senior Center	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree

11. Describe a Senior Center you would be interested participating in?

12. What programs or activities would interest you?

13. To reach your age group, how would you promote or advertise the Senior Center?

14. If a Senior Center could be given a different name that would interest you, what would it be?

15. Please provide any additional comments or ideas on Senior Centers.

16. Please indicate which programs and activities you would most likely participate in at a Senior Center, if you attended. Please check **all** that apply.

Education:

- Exercise classes – such as: Pilates, Yoga, Aerobics, Tai Chi, etc.
- Computer classes
- Other Technology classes – such as: EMAIL, IPOD, IPHONE, etc.
- Computer software classes
- Finance or Investment classes
- College classes
- Dance classes – such as: Ballroom, Line Dancing, Square Dancing, etc.
- Art Classes
- Painting
- Foreign Language classes
- Photography classes
- Hobbies such as: scrap booking, woodshop, etc.
- Cooking and/or Diet classes
- Genealogy classes
- Other: _____

Activities:

- Sports such as: Baseball, Bowling, Golf, etc.
- Play pool
- Dances
- Concerts
- Eat meals: Lunch, Dinner, Special Events
- Gospel Music
- Performing (singing and/or playing an instrument)
- Watch sporting events
- Volunteer for programs or instruction
- Volunteer to deliver Meals on Wheels
- Play cards
- Play board games
- Puzzles
- Socialize
- Cyber Café
- Workout on exercise equipment
- Lectures
- Travel
- Video Games
- Other: _____

17. Would you be willing to pay a small fee for these programs? Yes No
If yes, what do you think is a reasonable fee? _____
18. Do you participate in other social organizations, activities, or volunteering? Yes
 No If yes, please describe _____
19. Are you a primary caregiver of a parent or loved one? Yes No If
yes, please describe _____
20. What type of leadership and/or advisory committee should a Senior Center have?

Demographic Profile

Ethnicity:	Sex:	Age:	Highest Grade Completed:
<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-45	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 8
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> 46-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 9 - 12
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian		<input type="checkbox"/> 51-55	<input type="checkbox"/> HS Diploma/GED
<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		<input type="checkbox"/> 56-60	<input type="checkbox"/> Some College
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian/White		<input type="checkbox"/> 61-65	<input type="checkbox"/> College Graduate
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		<input type="checkbox"/> 65+	<input type="checkbox"/> Masters Degree or JD
			<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree

County of Residence:	Annual Income:	Year of Birth:
<input type="checkbox"/> Benton	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$10,000	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 - \$19,999	
<input type="checkbox"/> Madison	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 - \$29,999	
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 - \$39,999	Marital Status:
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 - \$49,999	<input type="checkbox"/> Single
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 - \$59,999	<input type="checkbox"/> Married
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000 - \$69,999	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000 - \$79,999	<input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000 - \$89,999	
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90,000 - \$99,999	
	<input type="checkbox"/> More than \$100,000	

Employment:	What age do you anticipate retiring?
<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-61
<input type="checkbox"/> Part-time	<input type="checkbox"/> 62-65
<input type="checkbox"/> Retired	<input type="checkbox"/> 66-70
<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to work	<input type="checkbox"/> 71 or older
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> Already retired

If you are interested in being contacted for additional information, please provide your name, address, and telephone number.

Thank You! Return to: GRAD 116

IMPLIED CONSENT

Title: Senior center participation in Northwest Arkansas: An examination of future marketing strategies, policy implications, and program needs to attract the Baby Boomer generation.

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Description: The study is a needs assessment and program planning evaluation of senior centers in Benton, Washington and Madison counties in northwest Arkansas to determine future marketing strategies and program needs to accommodate and attract the baby boomer generation. The study will address educational opportunities, health/wellness/fitness, technology, and overall senior center programming and attractiveness to the baby boomer market segment. The research results may provide valuable information to specific centers and to the Area Agency on Aging for future planning and policy implications.

Risks and Benefits:

The research will hopefully improve the delivery of services to older adults in the community, particularly through Senior Centers and the Area Agency on Aging. In addition, the research will contribute to the local community in goodwill, and hopefully, provide valuable information for future policy implications. No anticipated risks to participating in the study are expected.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. By agreeing to be part of a focus group, complete a survey or be interviewed, you are giving your consent to participate.

Confidentiality:

The survey will not require you to identify yourself, and all information will be recorded anonymously. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence. Results from the research survey will be reported without individual identities.

Right to withdraw:

You are free to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will bring no negative consequences—no penalty to you.

Implied Consent:

By completing a survey, interview or focus group, you give your consent to use of the information obtained for this project. Participation will in no way affect or have an impact on your ability to access programs and services through the Senior Centers.

Appendix 2

Senior Center Director Interviews

SAC B1

Interview: You are the director of the Senior Activity Center in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Respondent: Yes.

I: What changes, if any, in senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

R: We hope to see more of the younger group coming through, and they will demand more activities. No longer will they be contented playing dominos or cards, so we are hoping to have more programs to attract the younger seniors.

I: Do you think your population will stay approximately the same in numbers, even though you may have a younger crowd, or do you think they will stay about the same?

R: We are hoping they will at least stay the same. Obviously in the business we're in, people are entering nursing homes and assisted living or deaths, but we are continually marketing to try to get more new people in here all of the time because, unfortunately, there is a turnover. We hope for numbers. We're trying our best to keep the numbers steady and not have them drop off.

I: What type of marketing do you currently do?

R: I try to go to the senior groups, like at the churches. We have the senior apartments behind us and I try to visit with them, go to the activities that they have to make sure they know we're here. Of course, we run some ads in the paper. I did some advertising on a radio station that was geared kind of to the senior population, and we had some people come in who had heard it on the radio, so things like that.

I: What specific changes in senior centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: There's an effort to go more toward a wellness type center and have training along those lines. We already have exercise equipment and things like that that a lot of the younger seniors are looking for. We pride ourselves in having a family atmosphere here. They come in and have lunch and a lot of them come in every day, and if you are not here, then we're very well aware of it and you will probably get a call. But I think the tendency is to go more toward a wellness type center.

I: Do you foresee an increase or decrease of senior center participation when the baby boomers come out?

R: We hope to see an increase. We will have to do some changing in programming with these new baby boomers that are coming up because they are used to being so much more active than what some of those that are 90 now, what they were when they were 60. I think we are gearing for a change in activities.

I: We've touched on this: what activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate the senior centers will need to engage in to attract the baby boomer generation?

R: Right now we are looking at adding Zumba dance. It's a Latin dance, called Zumba Gold. It's a Latin dance that's kind of sweeping the country, and we have already sent someone for training on that. We're just trying to be one of the first ones in the area to offer that. Again, that is something the younger seniors will be aware of that's out there; whereas, maybe my 90-year-olds will be like 'Zumba what?'

I: A question off of that that just came to mind, where do you get your information from to determine what the current trends are, like what is sweeping the country today?

R: I try to attend conferences and online trying to see, and I try to be out there myself. I'm at different gyms and different places where I try to find out what people are looking for. As I said, I want this center to be on the cutting edge of what's going on. We're getting ready to do a UAMS. It has a "coaching program is what it's called. We are trying to do that and it's an 18 month commitment to them and it's a research program for them. I don't know if we will get the weight loss program or the cognitive program, and either one is fine, but we hope to attract the people in with that as well.

I: You are partnering with education?

R: Yes.

I: Back to the marketing, do you anticipate doing any different type of marketing in the future?

R: We want to do more marketing. I don't know if we will do very many different types of marketing, but we want to do more of what we have found that is working for us. In the last three or four months we are seeing lots of new people, and that's always a great thing. They are coming back and we're very pleased with that. I tell my food services manager that the numbers we serve here every day are directly related to what he has on the menu. So we are working to improve our menus and make it a place that people want to come.

I: What barriers or obstacles do you already face or anticipating facing in continuing senior center programs or implementing new activities to meet the changing population of older adults?

R: Funding is always an issue, with the economy the way it has been. There are several businesses that have been very kind to us, but everybody is watching their budget a little more, so funding is always an issue when you are planning programs.

I: How do you think senior centers are viewed by baby boomers?

R: We have people come in and they are like, I'm not old enough to be here. They don't view themselves as seniors yet, and that's not just baby boomers. I have people in their 80s come in here and they are like, this is for old people and I'm not old. But we are trying to change to where it will be the place to be; it's not just an "old people's" place.

I: How do you think senior centers can change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming baby boomer generation?

R: I think going to the wellness center probably sounds a little better to someone turning 60 because you don't want to think of yourself as a senior, right?

I: How can senior centers increase their participation in the future years?

R: Just offering the programs and getting the word out of the programs that we offer. We changed a little bit; we offer a casino trip every month and we pretty well fill the bus on that; so just offering things and making sure they know it's available, and things that are fun.

I: When I was here before, they were getting ready to go on a casino trip, when we were here before, and everyone was very excited.

R: They weren't doing it just every other month. They were concerned that they couldn't fill a bus each month, but we do. We would fill it every month. We can take two, and they loved it.

I: How can senior centers increase the participation of more ethnically diverse populations in the future years?

R: Probably by marketing to that group. There are Spanish speaking newspapers and radio stations in the area. It's just like any other group you are trying to attract; it's marketing to that specific group.

I: How is the ethnicity of your senior center now?

R: We have a little bit of diversity, but not a whole lot. Everyone is open to that; it's that they haven't participated a lot.

I: Why do you think that is?

R: I don't know.

I: Assuming there are no obstacles to prevent changes, including funding, and this is just your dream senior center, what is your image of a perfectly appealing senior center, both structurally and in activities and programs, especially to the upcoming baby boomers? If you had all the money in the world and could build a senior center to attract baby boomers, what would it look like and what kinds of programs would have?

R: That would take a lot of thinking. I would probably have more exercise equipment than what I have. We would have an expanded poolroom, a popular area. I would probably have more exercise equipment than what I have. We would have an expanded poolroom, a popular area. We would definitely do more trips. Of buildings, an aquatic pool would be wonderful, for the people who cannot... As we get older the knees don't do as well, so the nonimpact, water aerobics and things like that would be wonderful. There are all kinds of things like that, but that would take some thinking for me to answer that one adequately.

I: Just off the cuff is what I'm looking for. We could get really detail, to what color paint.

R: I never thought that would be an option, so I haven't sat down and really thought that through.

I: It's funny you would say that. This is a side note that a swimming pool has been brought up to me many times, so that's wonderful.

R: It would be wonderful because there are so many seniors whose joints just don't work as well, so that nonimpact would be great.

I: How many years have you been the director?

R: I have only been here as director, at this center for five months. I was at Lowell before that and then I was here as the assistant for about a year before that. I've been with the Office of Human Services about two years.

I: Are you a baby boomer, born between 1946 and 1964?

R: Yes, I am.

I: Do you mind telling me what year you were born in?

R: 1961.

I: How do you think the name "Senior Center" will be viewed by the baby boomer generation?

R: Not good.

I: Do you have any recommendations on what a senior center could be called?

: They are gearing towards a wellness center, so I don't know if you want to call it a senior wellness center. I don't know if *senior* doesn't need to be in the name, but I don't think the baby

boomers want to be identified as seniors because to them that's old, and that's not necessarily the case.

I: Does your senior center have an advisory council or a participant advisory council?

R: Yes.

I: How is that made up?

R: By volunteers, we have volunteers for a year period.

I: Were they participants, the volunteers?

R: Yes.

I: They volunteer for a year?

R: Yes, Ma'am, and we meet one a month. I try to run things by them that I'm thinking, and I always want feedback from them and know what they want to see in the center. That's how that works.

I: Have you had many changes from the advisory, suggestions that have come up?

R: Some, but I've just been here five months. In the five month period, we've made a lot of changes, but I have had very positive response to the changes that have been made. That's how that works.

I: Have you had many changes from the advisory, suggestions that have come up?

R: Some, but I've just been here five months. In the five month period, we've made a lot of changes, but I have had very positive response to the changes that have been made. Some of them I have made slower than others. I didn't want to come in and immediately...I started out with the easy ones that would create the least amount of concern on their part. I try to gain their trust and we continued on, and we have had a very positive response with the changes being made.

I: You talked a little about funding earlier. What amount is your funding and how do you raise money with donations? You have to raise a portion of your funding?

R: Our budget is a little over \$500K, and we are responsible for raising a little over \$100K of that. We do that through participant donations.

I: You have to raise \$100K of the \$500K?

R: Yes.

I: Through different funding sources you are given \$400K and you have to raise \$100K, so one-fifth of your budget you are responsible for.

R: Yes.

I: As the baby boomers come up, assuming you have participants that will fall in that range, which you will, how do you anticipate having to juggle meeting their demands along with your senior population that you already have going through the program?

R: They mingle together very well. I have a nine-year-old that is just as active as any baby boomer. So there's room for all of them. I'm amazed at how much some of the younger ones enjoy being with the older ones. Like the Zumba dance that we were talking about, for the most part that will probably be made up of some younger seniors. I don't feel the conflict between the age groups.

I: I know you will need to change some of your programming for the baby boomers, but do you think you will just maintain what you already have and maybe change a few things?

R: Right, we don't want to neglect the ones that have been here for a longtime, but the seniors are very receptive to new people coming in, and I have been very pleased with that because we have a lot of new people coming in right now and am constantly encouraging them to make them feel welcome. How you feel when you come in the door determines if you will be back or not.

I: Are these new people baby boomers?

R: Some of them are, but not a lot of them are. As I said, unfortunately, with the name Senior Center out on the door, baby boomers aren't as readily ready to come.

I: That's all my question. Thank you so much. Do you have anything else you would like to add? Do you still produce a newsletter?

R: We do.

I: Could I get a copy of that? So I have this for my records, what types of activities do you already have here?

R: We go to Tipperary once a month, our gambling trip. We went to Fantastic Cavern, a ride-through cave, which is great not having to walk through. We really enjoyed that. We went there and went to Lamberts to eat in Branson, you know, where they throw the rolls. They thought that was cool. We go to an Indian pow-wow. We do some of the lights at Christmas.

I: In-house, when I was here before, you have the pool tables. I know people put puzzles together back here in this corner. They played cards and dominos, and you have some computers. Do you have any computer classes?

R: Unfortunately, our computer instructor passed away and we have not found a new instructor yet, so we are looking for someone to do that, but that is something they enjoy doing.

I: Do you have any other type of educational classes here?

R: Some other things come in occasionally. I'm going to do an end-of-life theory, and have an attorney that will come in and explain to them some of the things they need to do to make sure that the finances and everything is prepared as it should be. I'm not into doing preplanning, but I want someone to come in and tell them their options, so when that happens that they are not blindsided by it all. We hope to do that and are planning that in the spring.

I: How many meals do you serve a day?

R: We send about 200 to your home deliveries, and we serve 80-100 here in-house. That's lunch and we also do breakfast, and we probably do 30 breakfasts a day, for in-house only. We don't do meal-on-wheels breakfast.

I: Is there anything else that you offer that we haven't talked about, like programs or trips?

R: I can't think of anything. We have a dance.

I: Do you still have auctions. Did you do silent auctions?

R: We did and then we have a bake sale occasionally. We were going to have a Western dance, when we had a bluegrass band come in, have brisket and play horse shoes. That was going to be a fund raiser for us. Even though it was a fun night, we were going to have an auction.

I: You were talking about doing the dance lessons; do you have dances where you have bands or music come in?

R: Every other Tuesday night we have a band come in, a Country and Western band. Then every other Thursday during lunch, or actually about 9:00 and through lunch, we have a band. I always have music in the building. It creates a great atmosphere.

I: What is the most popular? Is it Gospel or Country?

R: For the most part, people like the Country and Gospel. We go to a lot of musical events as well because they seem to like that.

I: You have a nice center. I really appreciate your time.

[End of Interview]

SAC E1

Interviewer: I'm working with baby boomers to see what changes might need to be made to senior centers as baby boomers come up. What changes, if any, in senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

Respondent: We are trying to market towards our baby boomers. We are bringing programs that we think will appeal to the baby boomers. For instance, we hope in January to bring in Zumba—that's a Latin dance/exercise program. I'm going to go get training on that. We're looking at updating and remodeling our centers throughout the district to make them more appealing to baby boomers, too. Some of the décor that we had previously just didn't work for that generation. One of our centers in Harrison just went through a really nice remodel that I think will be appealing to that generation.

I: I've heard a lot about Zumba Gold, by the way, in these interviews.

R: I'm taking the weekend away from my kids to go do that training, so I hope it'll pan out and be really good for our seniors. We're also going to be bringing in Tai Chi. There's more of a gravitation towards making our senior centers, instead of activity centers, making them wellness centers, and that should be more attractive, because baby boomers want to take care of themselves a little bit more so than the previous generation.

I: What specific changes in senior centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: I expect that we'll see more interest in financial programs, and that we may have some investment clubs come in. There will be probably more participation in community events.

I: Do you foresee an increase or a decrease in senior center participation as the baby boomers reach participation age?

R: Well, I'm going to be optimistic and say an increase. If we market correctly and change a few of our programs, hopefully we'll see an increase.

I: What activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate the senior centers will need to engage in to attract the baby boomers?

R: I think we'll probably need to do a lot more trips, perhaps some trips to Europe and things like that, to attract baby boomers. They do seem to want to travel a lot. They're newly retired.

I: Do you plan on doing additional marketing? Do you think we need to do more marketing? How do you think we need to reach the baby boomers?

R: Yeah, we will do a little bit of marketing. Of course, word of mouth is everything, but one thing that we've done that is somewhat new, is that we're advertising out there on the Internet.

We're on the Internet, and in previous years we weren't. Most of our baby boomers are computer literate, so we intend to do a little bit more marketing out there than what we did previously.

I: What barriers or obstacles do you already face, or anticipate facing, in continuing senior center programs or implementing new activities to meet the changing population?

R: Funding is a big deal, and we go to Little Rock every legislative session to make our point. We take seniors with us. Funding is a big point. We've got to make sure that we always have the support of our legislators and representatives in that. Other obstacle that we face, we are rural out here, and we have to bring a lot of our participants in that don't drive, and we are limited by...we've only got one van available to us, so we're limited in transportation, and that's where we're seeing the most growth right now. In order to meet that demand, we're looking into a grant for another van.

I: Plus, as the seniors get older, they're less likely to want to drive.

R: We're experiencing that. A lot of our seniors right now are to that age progression where they're just not able to drive anymore.

I: How do you think the senior centers are, or will be, viewed by the baby boomer generation?

R: Well, we have already implemented quite a few changes, especially when it comes to décor and activity programs. If we implement those sorts of changes, and continue to implement them, I think that they will be very surprised. It won't be what you would normally think of as a senior center when they walk in. That's what we're hoping for.

I: How can the senior centers change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming baby boomers?

R: Well, we probably need to do a few more programs where we're reaching out into the community just so that the baby boomers have some exposure to us before they actually go out and search for a senior center.

I: Do you think the baby boomers will seek the senior center, or do you think they'll actually seek services?

R: I think they probably will be seeking more services than the center itself. I think the services, the activities, will bring them in.

I: How can senior centers increase their participation [inaudible]?

R: Again, marketing the changes that we're making as far as décor and activities. We do quite a bit in the paper. We do a lot of articles in the paper for exposure, and hopefully that'll peak some curiosity in some of our baby boomers.

I: Do you advertise in a local newspaper?

R: Well, I wouldn't call it advertising; we just try to do a write-up about what's going on here at least once a month, and sometimes we make the front page. It's very possible that we will, even next week, because we're going to have a senator here Friday.

I: That's always good for trying to get additional funding or keep the funding flowing. How can senior centers increase participation of more ethnically diverse participants in future years?

R: As part of the gravitation towards wellness centers, we will need to offer some sort of spiritual activity, and there's a lot of different ways that we can do that. We can have groups that meet and talk about spirituality, or of course, there are religious meetings they could have, and then we could do wellness-type meetings where we are doing education on wellness and spiritual issues.

I: Assuming there were no obstacles to prevent changes, including funding—you had all the money in the world—what is your image of a perfectly appealing senior center, both structurally and activity/program-wise, especially to the upcoming baby boomers?

R: Well, if there were absolutely no limits, we'd have a larger center, and the décor would definitely be more appealing. We would have such varied activities that it would appeal to just everyone out there. We would have more long-distance trips, maybe even an indoor heated pool. There are a lot of things that we would love to do if we didn't have limits. If we didn't have limits, we would just want to have every kind of activity possible to draw people.

I: What kind of a décor do you think is appealing to baby boomers? Just more up-to-date, or do you think there's something in particular that would appeal to them?

R: Just something more progressive—color schemes being a bit more diverse, and just something more progressive. Literature that's available for them to view is important, too. In our Harrison center—you just have to go out there and take a look. It's different as night and day from our center.

I: [Inaudible] Harrison. I'm basically dealing with Northwest Arkansas, so I've been to Washington and Madison County, but I'll have to go up there.

R: They just finished a remodel. Fayetteville's décor is a bit more diverse and more progressive, too. As we gravitate towards these wellness centers, and try to pull in our baby boomers, we'll have funding, hopefully, for each one of our centers to update a little bit.

I: It'd be nice to have all the money in the world.

R: Wouldn't it?

I: How many years have you been a director of senior centers?

R: I've been here a little over a year.

I: Are you a baby boomer?

R: I'm a baby boomer.

I: 1946 to 1964?

R: Yes.

I: Do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

R: Well, I guess I wouldn't quite qualify, because I thought baby boomers went a little bit longer. I'm 1967, so I'm almost a baby boomer.

I: Well, you have to define, for the purpose of research, what you're classifying as a baby boomer. How do you think the name senior center will be viewed by the baby boomer generation?

R: I don't think it will be viewed as well. I don't think that is going to be as appealing as, for instance, a senior wellness center, or senior activities center, so we may need to do some changes where that's concerned. We do have a couple of centers in our nine-county district that have already become wellness centers, and they are going to have new signs erected that signify that they are wellness centers now.

I: Will they be called senior wellness centers?

R: Yes.

I: Do you have a senior advisory council or a participant advisory council?

R: We do. We have an advisory committee. It's composed of several of our seniors that want to be active in the decision-making. We meet once a month.

I: Some of the senior center directors said that they call theirs ambassadors. Do you call yours ambassadors as well?

R: Yes. That word has just changed. I think it was a little more than a year ago.

I: What amount is your funding and how much do you have to raise through donations?

R: I believe that...I'd have to actually get the percentage breakdown, but I know it's out there somewhere because we have to post it.

I: Most of them are either 49/51, or 42/58, or something like that.

R: Yeah and there's a little bit of change on each one. It's just under fifty-two percent, I believe, on one. I think you hit it pretty close there.

I: Can you give me a rough estimate of how much you have to raise each month to meet your funding?

R: Well, other than our government funding—is that what you're talking about?

I: Some senior centers have to, with their donations for their meals and things like that, and kind of outside donations, they have to raise so much per month.

R: Well, as far as our meal donations, we really need to raise about fifty percent. We are very rural and there's not a lot of jobs out here, and a lot of the people that are seniors are retired, but economically they're not able to be retired—financially. So we have a lot of participants who aren't able to contribute, and so we usually don't meet our financial goal on donations.

I: How do you anticipate balancing the needs of your existing senior center participants with the evolving needs of baby boomers?

R: We'll have to bring those changes in very slowly, and there will have to be some sort of balance. We will have to involve baby boomers and our current participants, for instance, on our advisory committee. We'll have to involve both groups in decision-making so that everyone's comfortable with the changes that we're experiencing. It'll have to be slow; it's just going to have to be a slow incorporation of changes.

I: That concludes all my questions. Do you have anything else you want to add about the senior center?

R: No, other than we just need to continue to use as much diplomacy as possible to bring in funding, because for centers like ours, where financially we don't meet our goals on donations, we really, really depend on monies that we receive from the legislature and other funding sources like that.

I: How many full-time staff members do you have at this center?

R: We have no full-time staff members.

I: Do you work off volunteers or do you have part-time? How many part-time people?

R: Well, I'm considered full-time, although I don't work full-time hours. I'm not paid for full-time hours, and I end up working a lot of my own time, which I'm not paid for, so there's a lot of volunteerism there. We do have a kitchen manager and we don't have a kitchen right now, so she's bringing food from Fayetteville until we have our kitchen built, hopefully next year. She works even less hours than I do. She's part-time. Our transportation has grown so much. I tried to do all the transportation myself before; now, we have a driver who works as needed by the

hour for transportation, and those hours are really picking up, but that's all that we have. We never had volunteerism much here in Elkins.

I know a lot of our other centers have just oodles of volunteers; we just never seem to have that here, even though we expressed a need. A lot of the older seniors are just coming here for a little vacation during the day, and they really don't want to participate in any of the work, so volunteerism is something we really haven't had here. Experience Works last week brought us in an employee. That's a program where seniors who actually need to work, they let them work a few hours a week and they pay them, I believe, minimum wage. They come out here to work for us and it's no cost to us, so we're really fortunate to finally have that. That's the first experienced worker that we've had, I think.

I: What is that company called again?

R: Experience Works.

I: Are they located in Fayetteville?

R: Yes.

I: I've not heard of them, so that's interesting.

R: They've been really great to support us. They sent us out a couple of people before, but they didn't end up meeting the Experience Works qualifications and we weren't able to retain them, unfortunately, but finally, we've got one. I've been asking for one for a year.

I: That's a good program. I'm glad you told me about that; I haven't heard of them. Do you produce a newsletter?

R: I do.

I: Would you mind if I had a copy of that? Thank you so much.

[End]

SAC F1

Interviewer: What changes, if any, in senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

Respondent: A lot—we're going to be changing a lot. We are targeting the baby boomers, the younger seniors. That's the group we are seriously going after, and we're doing that by activities that are geared towards them. We're trying to get the Internet as part of our advertising, and websites, and Facebook. Technically, I'm a boomer, so whatever interests me is kind of where I've been trying to steer the center. That's one side of it. The other side of it is that we are going to have a commercial kitchen built and that's going to help us with preparing our meals—right now, we get them from Lincoln and the quality has not been even remotely close to what the seniors in this community are after. That's going to be the other side of it; we'll be able to offer more services.

I: What specific changes in senior centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: They're going to be more active. I think the focus will shift from just coming here, as a place [inaudible], to using the center as a place to stay active and keep their brain and mental processes going. It'll be more of a resource for them instead of just a place to land and kill time.

I: Do you foresee a decrease or an increase in senior center participation as the baby boomers become of age?

R: I'm hoping it'll be an increase. Obviously, we can't tell, because I think one of the challenges we face is that the baby boomers are working longer. Sixty-two to retire just doesn't happen anymore. Because our hours are eight to four, a lot of those activities are going to be right smack in the middle of their workday. Another side of that, though, is we are not held to eight to four every day. We can adjust our hours. If I have to have the center open from ten to seven, or whatever, that's what we'll do; we'll play with the hours to get those folks in here. I get home from work and the last thing I want to do is turn around and go back out, and that's probably going to be an issue with baby boomers, too.

I: What activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate senior centers will need to engage in to attract the baby boomer generation?

R: As far as marketing, we need to be where they are. We need to utilize whatever tools they're in the middle of—the Facebook, the Twitter if we have to; e-mail is huge. That's real basic, but that's a big communication tool; everybody has an e-mail account, it seems. Being on search engines, making sure that when somebody types in senior center that we pop up, that when they type in Farmington, we pop up, that if they type in Tai Chi, we pop up—whatever activity we're

offering, we need to be able for them to find us, because right now, we're kind of invisible and that drives me nuts.

I: Do you do advertising now?

R: The only advertising we really do is once a week in the local paper, *The Washington Enterprise*, or whatever they call it now. I make sure we have an article in there, that we have a picture, if I have one, just talking the place up, telling them what's going on. I also have a small ad that runs every week, but it's so expensive and we don't get any break from the price and we have no budget. Everything is funded privately with the state. My advertising budget for the year is five hundred bucks, and that gets eaten up really, really fast.

I: What barriers, or obstacles, do you already face, or anticipate facing in continuing senior service programs, or implementing new activities to meet the changing population of older adults?

R: Money—funding. That's probably the biggest one--money and perception. The perception is that senior centers are for poor people or low income, but the biggest [obstacle] is money.

I: Until I started doing research, I didn't really realize that the senior centers were viewed as welfare or for low income, but it's kind of interesting how that's brought up a lot.

R: It is. Think about it, too, we don't charge for anything—I mean nothing. It's all donation-driven. Our meals are a suggested donation of two dollars and fifty cents a meal. Our home delivered meals, Meals-on-Wheels, two dollars and fifty cents suggested donation. If you come to a dance, it's four dollars suggested donation. We don't keep track of who pays what. I keep track of money, but I don't keep track of who pays what. I think that the thinking is well, I don't want to take that dinner away from somebody who can't afford it. I can go out to Applebee's or Olive Garden, or I can cook whatever, so I'll just let them have that meal—I don't need it. I just want to scream because I want everybody to be here, not just...I've had seniors come in and tell me I can't pay for my meal today, and I'm like I don't care, if you're hungry, eat.

I: Do you think, because baby boomers want everything now, and they kind of have a sense of...even though the older baby boomers have worked very hard for what they get, the younger ones somewhat feel that they are due a certain amount. Do you think that'll affect the way the participation will go?

R: Not necessarily. I think some of the seniors that come here now have that attitude. New seniors coming in don't have that sense of entitlement that I've noticed. They are more like this can be a fun place to be, coming for exercise, T.V., Wii—we've got all sorts of things that can keep them out of their chair and keep them fit and healthy and mentally on top of things. But the older seniors, the ones that have been coming here for years, and years, and years, and years, they're just content to sit there and say what do I get. For example, we play bingo once a month.

Most of the senior centers play it once a week, but we play it once a month, and we don't charge—everybody else charges—yet they expect really cool bingo prizes. In their world, a really cool bingo prize is maybe detergent or shampoo, or something they can use that they maybe can't afford to buy a lot of. Well, I started charging twenty-five cents. I thought the place was going to implode. [They asked] why, and I said well, you guys want bingo prizes, where am I getting these? I don't have bingo prizes—sorry, but I don't have any. They feel like they're entitled to free stuff, because they're older—welcome to the real world.

I: How do you think the senior centers will be viewed by the baby boomers?

R: As a place for poor people—poor, old people--for old, poor people. Somebody even told me I don't want to go there, that's for old people.

I: Baby boomers don't think of themselves as old.

R: No. I was thinking about what I consider old the other day, and obviously, the closer I get to that age, it moves, but to me somebody in their eighties is old now. I'm fifty-two, so if you hit eighty, I think it qualifies as old. Some of these folks are in their nineties, and I would not qualify them as old.

I: How do you think senior centers can change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming baby boomer generation?

R: Probably just repetitive marketing—just constantly trying to hammer home that it's a fun and exciting place to be, that we have activities, just reinforcing every time you turn around that we appreciate them being here, that they're not just a number or a unit, and it's a great place to meet people your own age. You don't get that a lot.

I: Do you think the name senior center is a problem?

R: Yes. I just scream. I used to work in Fayetteville as the assistant director and she has worked very, very hard, and she just got the designation of a health and wellness center, which is fabulous. That is going to just, once the word gets out, take off. If we could change our name—I don't even know how you would do it. You have to get the senior part in there. I don't know how you would do it, but I think it's a detriment.

I: How can senior centers increase their participation in the future?

R: I think it's all going to come back to what types of activities that you offer and meeting those boomers where they are, getting on track with their goals and not just ours.

I: How can senior centers increase participation of a more ethnically diverse population?

R: That's tough. I honestly don't know. You almost have to have somebody within your center that can represent the center to the different cultural groups. I need some Latinos, I need some African-Americans, or [inaudible], or whatever the groups are out there, and I don't have that.

I: Assuming there were absolutely no obstacles to prevent changes, including funding—you had all the money you could ever want—what is your image of the most perfectly appealing senior center, both structurally and activity/program-wise, especially to baby boomers? What would you have in it? How would it look?

R: Structurally, I would have a lot of...well, the dining room would obviously be huge, because that's where most of your activities take place. I would have lots of rooms where they could have different activities going on at the same time—simultaneously. I would have the center open from ten o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night. I would have a full gym with exercise equipment—I'd have the full range and classes to match it. I'd have a computer room—wall to wall computers with instructors. I have a lady who is just dying to learn how to use a computer and I don't have time to teach it, and I wish I had somebody who could teach it. I'd have instructors that have that heart for teaching. I would love to see a hundred people a day every day at lunch. And volunteers—boy, I'd love to have me some volunteers.

I: How many people are employed here?

R: You're looking at them.

I: One person?

R: Me. I have two, which we call replacement labor, which one works four hours a day and the other one is kind of on call, but that's it.

I: How many years have you been the director of the senior center?

R: I've been with [inaudible] for almost two years, and I've been the director here since December of last year.

I: So ten or eleven months?

R: Yeah.

I: You said you're a baby boomer.

R: I am a boomer.

I: Do you mind if I ask in what year were you born?

R: '57.

I: I've already asked how you think the name senior center will be viewed by the baby boomer generation. We'll move on. Does the senior center have an advisory council or a participant advisory council?

R: We have something like that. We used to have what they called site councils, and that kind of got out of hand at one point, so they sort of revamped it and now what we have are ambassador committees, because everybody's an ambassador for the center in good will, and talking it up. Once a month—as a matter of fact, tomorrow—we have an ambassador's meeting. Everybody in the center is a member. If you come here, you're a member, you are expected to be an ambassador for the center, and I sort of run the meeting, but I'm wide open to suggestions. I have a suggestion box out there and I'll take whatever input they want to offer to me, because it's their center. I keep telling them that it's their center, not mine. I just work here, this is your place.

I: How many people do you typically have show up for one of those meetings?

R: For an ambassador's meeting, we usually have maybe twenty to twenty-five. It should be closer to forty.

I: What amount is your funding and how much do you have to raise through donations?

R: My monthly project income goal, which is the money I'm supposed to raise, is just a shade over fifty-six hundred dollars a month, which is [inaudible]. My funding that I get is a little over sixty-eight thousand dollars—the rest I have to raise.

I: Sixty-eight thousand for the year?

R: Mmm-hmm.

I: You have to raise almost fifty percent?

R: Yeah.

I: About fifty-one/forty nine?

R: Something like that, yeah—fifty-two/forty-eight, something in that vicinity, but yeah, that's pretty close.

I: How do you anticipate balancing the needs of the existing senior center participants with the evolving needs of the baby boomers?

R: Well, it sounds a little brutal, but the folks that come here, they're perfectly happy with the way things are, and so it's not that I'm not paying attention to them—I have activities and everything that they can participate in—but my focus is bringing in new seniors. I'm really all

about what can I do to bring people in. They have a [inaudible] club and they're perfectly okay with that, and that's once a week or whatever.

I: Are you saying that you'll maintain some of the activities that you already have, and then possibly change some activities?

R: Yeah, I'll maintain what I have and then every month I'm trying something new. Every single month I try something new, whether it's going out someplace, or bringing in speakers—whatever. It's kind of like scratch, that didn't work, or that's going to work; you just take it month by month, activity by activity. You find out which fund raisers work, which ones don't, and you just keep on plugging.

I: Most of the money that you have to raise, do you do that just with the monies that the seniors give you for meals? I'm interested to know how much you raise in-house, versus what you have to raise outside.

R: Well, it's real heavy in and not a lot out. We're expected to have two big fundraisers a year and whatever we can do in the meantime. Those t-shirts right there, that was one of our fundraisers. I started a group called OWLS, which means Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors, and what I did was I went to the chamber of commerce in Farmington and I said hey, I want you guys to sponsor our OWLS; for a twenty-five dollar donation, I'll put your name on the shirt. We raised about seven hundred dollars doing that, and that was just an e-mail; that worked out really well. I'm going to have a pie auction, and that'll probably bring in about five or six hundred dollars. I would say my goal is fifty-six hundred dollars—there's no way I can hit it, and that's just being realistic. We probably bring in anywhere between twenty-three and three thousand dollars a month, just by that and by renting the building every weekend that I can.

I: Do you just have to average the fifty-six hundred a month, or do you actually have to make fifty-six hundred?

R: You're supposed to make it, but as I pointed out to them, it is absolutely impossible to do that without the kitchen. Once I get the kitchen, I should be able to be closer, because that will bring in more people. We also have a unit goal that we have to hit, and I've been pretty successful at hitting that goal, but they can tell me you bring in the units, the money will follow—well, I'm bringing in the units and the money's not following, so I don't know what they're talking about there. It's not working out quite like they promised. Yeah, I would say really, if you can raise a quarter of it—three-quarters of it in-house and a quarter of it out--you're doing really well, but it's every month.

I: That's all my questions. Do you have anything else you want to add or say?

R: Those are interesting questions—good food for thought.

[End]

SAC F1

Interviewer: I'm looking at how the baby boomers will impact the senior center. What changes, if any, of senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

Respondent: We have been look at trying to upgrade the look of our senior center a little. We just redecorated just because the baby boomers seem to be interested in a more modern look and not the old country look, with ducks and chickens and all of that. We received a grant for decorating and spent all of that on making the senior center look a little nicer, a little fancier for the baby boomers, and we just achieved the status of a wellness center. Studies have shown that baby boomers are more interested in not just coming in and sitting and playing cards and playing pool, but wanted to do wellness activities, as well as ceramics and all of that that we already offer.

We have started off with Tai Chi and all that.

I: How do you attain the wellness status and what does that do for you? How does that put us different than the other senior centers?

R: For wellness status, it was a huge book we had to go through. It was emotional, physical, mental and a few other aspects. I'm not sure where the book is now. Sherry redecorated her office as well, but we had to achieve all of those different qualities within our center, and did that by different educational programs we had, different exercise programs and different rooms that were available for activities and just social aspects. That was another aspect.

I: Where did those guidelines come from? Who established the guidelines?

R: It's thorough the State of Arkansas and they received them through the national government because the national government is going more towards a wellness focus.

I: Do you anticipate there will be more or less participation when the baby boomers come up in the next five or six years?

R: We have been seeing more of the younger crowd coming in, and just because of the activities we've been able to offer lately. We've done a poker run and few other things that have brought us more attention, so all we can do right now is hope, since we are a nonprofit, that the changes we are making in the wellness status that we can prove something that the baby boomers will be able to use and enjoy.

I: You have kind of answered this question, but what specific changes in senior centers do you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: With them just coming in, the new and fresh ideas the seniors have so much to offer. They have a different way of looking at the present, with different activities that they want to do that we just don't think of because we are not of the same mindset, so they can just change and improve so much.

I: Do you see increase or decrease in senior center participation as the baby boomers reach participation age?

R: Since there are so many of them and since we are looking for new ways to reach them, we are hoping that there will be an increase that we have no way of guessing.

I: What activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate the senior centers will need to engage in to attract baby boomers?

R: Right now our main thing is just showing them that we're not just a group of people that sit around and do nothing and stare off into space. We are working on ways to have Saturday as game watching day and to get all the baby boomers that enjoy the Razorbacks that aren't able to go to the game. We're trying to do things like that, trying out different ideas. We have a senior who is great pulling people in, pulling in the younger set, which in their 60s. We are focusing on new and creative ways...

I: I have seen, not ads, but articles in the paper. Do you do any advertising; do you have an advertising budget?

R: We have an advertising budget. The *Arkansas Democratic Gazette* is great in providing us with low cost and a few free ads, and we are able to get in the morning news as well, occasionally. We run ads whenever we can just to promote different things we are doing here, and different volunteers also help promote other people in the marketing world that could do that for a living and help promote us in their own ways.

I: What barriers or obstacles do you already see or anticipate facing in continuing senior center programs or implementing new activities to meet the changing population of older adults?

R: In a sense, baby boomers are seen as the wealthier generation than the ones that we have now, just providing activities that they're interested in. They are used to traveling, and they are planning on getting out and traveling. We don't offer that. We're more you stay at home and you come to the senior center. We have activities for when they are here. We hope to be able to change used to traveling, and they are planning on getting out and traveling. We don't offer that. We're more you stay at home and you come to the senior center. We have activities for when they are here. We hope to be able to change and do what they want to do. We are the senior center. We're not here to do what the directors want to do. We're here for what the seniors want to do, so if they come in with an idea, we'll try to implement that as quickly as possible, as long as it's something that we can do.

I: How do you think senior centers are viewed by baby boomers?

R: Our problem is that, not even baby boomers, but the people that we serve right now, a lot of them view us as just a place where people go and drop off the decrepit, the people who aren't active. That is why senior centers are now called senior activity centers. We're trying to show

that we are active. We have walks on good days. We go out to Walker Park. I know that not every senior activity center is next to a park, but we try to show how active we are with poker runs and different things like that.

I: How can senior centers change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming baby boomers?

R: We have been really lucky with the quality of food we serve. I know a lot of people say we don't go eat lunch there because it's the old cafeteria style at schools, it's not good food, but our cook is very dedicated and proud of his work, and we do have very good food and quality of even entertainment on our social holidays and different needs that we provide, as far as activities and day trips.

I: How can senior centers increase their participation in future years?

R: I think if we get out into the community more. A lot of people don't know exactly where we are located and what we do, but if we participate in more nonprofit days, if we get out into the hospitals and really let the seniors know what we're doing and make contact with people that are under sixty, when they are 60 they will know. I think we've done a good job with the people in their 80s and 90s. Their children are seeing that we've improved the lives of their parents just by getting them active again and that's helped a lot, if we just go even further in that.

I: How do you think senior centers can increase their participation as a more ethnically diverse population, in the future years?

R: That's something we've really worked on. We've tried offering different language classes and different opportunities to learn about different cultures. But what we need to do is probably have training for our staff on different cultures and how to relate, so we can pull those cultures in, since we are in such a diverse community.

I: Assuming that there were no obstacles at all, including funding...

R: We dream about that a lot.

I: What is your image of the most perfectly appealing senior center, both structurally and activity program-wise, especially to the upcoming baby boomers? If you could build whatever you wanted and money was no object, what would you have?

R: We would have a much bigger building and more volunteers, just so we could provide all the activities that our seniors desire. We have so many different people who want to do so many different things and we only have so many rooms. In the summer we are able to do things outside, so some of our patrons can go outside.

I: What would you have in the center?

R: Language classes were so popular, but we just had a Spanish teacher and we lost him. He ended up getting a job. Educational classes are huge hits, and we just have a couple of months now.

I: Can you give an example of what kind of educational classes?

R: Our scam classes are huge, those on how to prevent scams. We did a post-menopausal and osteoporosis class, and that was so informative and so interesting. The ones that end up being small classes, the ones that are focused on a certain group end up being huge hits because people are interested in certain things. Say if someone comes to us and says there's a few of us concerned about this, and can you help us find more information about that and that is something I would like to focus on more.

I: What kind of equipment would you have in the center?

R: More electronic equipment. This is our electronic equipment. We have one microphone, so we have to pass it back and forth, and our seniors love music. If a band comes in, they have to bring all of their own microphones and all of that. So if we are doing a presentation, we have one microphone, and if there's more than one presenter, they have to pass it back and forth and it's all controlled in her, so that's a hassle for them to run back and forth and do sound checks, so just a little more high tech equipment.

I: How long have you been the assistant director?

R: I've only been here since January, and my title was program assistant, but I do all their duties, too.

I: About ten months?

R: Yes.

I: How long has Sherry been the director?

R: I think it's a year and maybe closer to two years. I'm not sure when she started.

I: I know you're not a baby boomer. Is Sherry one?

R: I think she's 45, so she is just barely.

I: How do you think the main senior centers feel about baby boomers?

R: I don't think they enjoy being called seniors. That's just the generic term they have always been called. My two-year-old doesn't like being called a baby, but he is, and what else do you call them? A lot of my seniors like to be called *young seniors* or *young older people*. But you can't put that on a sign, so you just have to do what you can.

I: Does the senior center have an advisory council or a participant advisory group?

R: We do. We don't have a lot of participants. But you can't put that on a sign, so you just have to do what you can.

I: Does the senior center have an advisory council or a participant advisory group?

R: We do. We don't have a lot of participants. People like to come to us one at a time to talk to us about it. We call it our ambassador's council.

I: What amount is your funding and how much do you have to raise in donations?

R: I can never remember the exact amount because I don't do all of the funding. That is something you'll have to get from Sherry. I do all the billing, so I should know it, but I've never actually seen it. I've heard her say it a few times.

I: How do you anticipate balancing the needs of existing senior center population with the evolving needs of the baby boomers?

R: I think so far we've done a good job with our seniors that are not active that like to just sit at the table and sometimes talk and sometimes just sit there for four hours until their lunch is served. With those that like to be very active, I don't think it will be a huge problem to have the baby boomers, who are very different from our younger seniors that we have now. We will increase activities that baby boomers like and you just activities that our young seniors like to do now.

I: How many meals do you serve?

R: Right now we are also doing Elkins Meals, so we send out between 200-220 meals a day, and serve between 40 to 80 people a day in the center.

I: How many fulltime and part time staff members do you have?

R: We have four in the office and three in the kitchen.

I: Are they fulltime?

R: Yes, those are all fulltime. We have nine, and two are considered part time, I'm sorry, so seven and two. I do all the time sheets, so I should know that right off, but I don't.

I: What age groups are your volunteers?

R: They are typically seniors.

I: Do you think they are baby boomers?

R: They are mostly in their 70. We have a few younger that are dedicated, come every day seniors, in their late 60s and 70s. Are Meals-on-Wheels drivers, who are very dedicated, working an hour once a week, are typically in their 30s and 40s. We have one who is in her 90s. She's a Meals-on-Wheels driver. She's unreal.

I: Is there anything else you would like to share about baby boomers and senior centers that I might not have asked?

R: We are still researching and trying and wondering, so that's all we're doing right now.

[End of interview]

SAC G1

Interviewer: What changes, if any, in senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five years?

Respondent: There will have to be more activities over the next five years? There will have to be more activities generated to a younger clientele.

I: What specific changes do you think will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: In activities or in which way?

I: As far as the senior center looks at it, how do you think baby boomers will change what happens in a senior center?

R: The same as I said before: we have to have more activities that are more suited to younger clientele, people that have done the work for us, and they will find the centers attractive to them.

I: Do you see an increase or a decrease in senior center participation as the baby boomers come up?

R: This is very difficult at this time because in the economic situation, right now we are in the increase because we are increasing our services to the people because of the economic situation; so therefore, we'll probably have an increase as we grow along the line of interest for them.

I: What activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate senior centers will need to engage in to attract baby boomers?

R: We'll have to have more computers.

I: Do you have computers here?

R: Yes, we do. They will have to have more computers. They will have to be more actively engaged in different activities like line dancing or Zumba dancing exercises.

I: I've heard of Zumba a lot; that's the new thing.

R: My gosh.

I: Do you market at all or do you advertise in any way to senior centers?

R: Yes, we do.

I: Do you pay for that, or is it mostly articles that you have printed?

R: We do newspaper articles weekly. We do newsletters every month. All fundraising activities are over the radio, over radio media.

I: Ya'll do quite a bit.

R: Yes, we do.

I: What barriers or obstacles do you already anticipating facing in continuing your programs or implementing new activities to meet the changing population of older adults?

R: Money.

I: I've heard that in many different ways, money, funding.

R: We need walk trails. We need swimming pools. We need tennis courts?

I: I've heard that in many different ways, money, funding.

R: It's a whole new population than we have been serving in the past, and I've been here for 33 years.

I: Swimming pools have been brought up a lot.

R: For exercise, oh yes, and they have to be indoors and heated.

I: Because it's a low impact.

R: And for use all year round.

I: How do you think senior centers will be viewed by the baby boomer generation?

R: It depends on our advancement in our activities and attractions for them.

I: Do you think they have an opinion right now, in regards to senior centers?

R: You see now baby boomers, as we speak of them, as volunteers, with gardening and things like that, so they are pretty familiar with us and know what we have to offer.

I: It's good that they volunteer; maybe they will be more likely to...

R: To come in. That's probably what makes them familiar, with volunteering.

I: How do you think senior centers can improve their image to the communities that they serve and to baby boomers?

R: I think we pretty well have already done that. Make them aware, be a part of the community, and take part in community activities. We go to plays at the schools and different activities at the schools, the seniors. We go in a group and take part. We are pretty visible because they see us every day, delivering meals to homes, and we have flu clinics and we have health clinics that attract them in already.

I: You being in a smaller community and serving a larger base...

R: We've been here 33 years. We are very familiar. We've served their parents. We've served their grandparents, and now we are coming into the generation with them.

I: How can senior centers increase their participation in future years?

R: Exactly as I said before.

I: How can senior centers increase their participation of a more ethnically diverse population?

R: I know that mostly our ethnic group here has been Indians, the Cherokee Indians because we are right next door to Oklahoma. We have an annual Thanksgiving dinner where they are our guests. The chief has come, the assistant chief has come and they are our guests. They tell their stories and we include them in on special occasion lunches or dinners.

I: That's really nice.

R: They really do enjoy that.

I: That's unique; that's very special. Do you ever invite the school children to come visit, too?

R: Yes, the children come in and read to my seniors.

I: Do you ever invite them to come and listen to the Indian chief?

R: No, but I've made arrangements for the Indian chief to go to their classes and visit in November.

I: That's very interesting, when they are doing the Pilgrims...

R: Yes, they contact with the Indian chief and he will be over there speaking with the groups. We also have Spanish classes.

I: If money was no object and you could design your own senior center, both structurally and the activity programs and whatever it had in it and that would include funding, having all the money you wanted, how would you design a senior center? What would it look like?

R: It would be designed with... If I could say what my dream was...

I: That's exactly what I want to know.

R: My dream was a space program for children that involve seniors working with the children. So not as a daycare but a safe place for them to come after school, where they would have refreshments and do their homework with the seniors helping them and reading to them, in a grandparent's situation. This was very important to me.

I: What would you have in the building? Would you have more exercise equipment?

R: No, I have enough of that. I would have a library. It's very important to have a library to keep them mentally alert. I would probably have indoor swimming pools, heated. I would have a large greenhouse, so they could work with plants. That would be a fundraiser back into the community, too.

I: It would be vegetables and herbs?

R: We did our whole garden this year. I think we are the only center in Arkansas that had its own vegetable garden, and those vegetables we raised out there, so they could work with plants. That would be a fundraiser back into the community, too.

I: It would be vegetables and herbs?

R: We did our whole garden this year. I think we are the only center in Arkansas that had its own vegetable garden, and those vegetables we raised out there were used in our meal program, and that saved a lot of our budget.

I: That's a very good idea.

R: We really had a wonderful garden. We just now getting ready to clean it off and get it plowed up for next year. They had fresh squash casserole. They had fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers and okra. They really appreciate that because this is all fresh and comes from our own garden they can see out there. We also had flowers, which were all fresh and comes from our own garden they can see out there. We also had flowers, which with our locations, I did flower arrangements out of it.

I: I would enjoy that. I really miss the garden that my parents always had. Can you get used to that, and food doesn't taste quite the same as when it's right out of the garden.

R: I love those tomatoes.

I: That's my favorite. I love the tomatoes.

R: We used so much I would enjoy that. I really miss the garden that my parents always had. Can you get used to that, and food doesn't taste quite the same as when it's right out of the garden. We used so much pepper and tomatoes in our salads.

I: My mother would raise purple hull peas and I would pepper and tomatoes in our salads.

R: We do, too, and we even had tomatoes and okra mixed together and cooked together with the onions. I'm very proud of that project, and if we had a greenhouse we could continue on with that.

I: I thought you were going to say that you sold the vegetables back into the community, but it's more interesting that you used it for your own food.

R: We used it for our own food and our own menus.

I: Did the seniors help maintain it?

R: My seniors are in the elderly group. They furnished all the seed for it. I had volunteers from the community to come in help work it for them. That's where the baby boomers come in. Get them in here to pick those vegetables for us.

I: How long have you been the director of this senior center?

R: I'm starting my 34th year. I started the center in Sulfur Springs, in the WPA building down there.

I: Most people are fairly new, so you've been here quite a while.

R: Yes.

I: Are you a baby boomer, born between 1946 and 1964?

R: No.

I: How do you think the name "Senior Center" will be used by baby boomers?

R: This has come up on several occasions. To what do we change our name? How do we change our name? To me, what's wrong with senior citizens? Look at the benefits that go with it. There's lots of talk of what do we change it to and all of this. Of course, being my age, there's nothing wrong with being a senior citizen, but marketing probably would not agree with that.

I: Do you have an advisory council?

R: It's called, not advisory council but Ambassadors. I've head that quite a bit and we meet monthly.

I: Do they determine what your programs will be?

R: Yes, we go over suggestions and ideas. Another thing we do is go to the plays; we go to the Theater of the Ozarks in Springdale. We go to plays and have one scheduled for Friday at the community college in Batesville. We try to keep it all around. I just told them today that we'd be going to basketball games over here at the school because they've got passes. They've got a pass and we go watch the kids play basketball, and have popcorn and all.

We've had a Halloween party in here on Halloween and had music, everything to keep them actively in their home as long as possible, whether they are baby boomers or what they are.

I: What is your funding and how much to you have to raise with donations?

R: That depends on our budget. We have federal/state funding and then local, and the local is the funding that we have to raise.

I: Is it about 51% or 49%?

[Looks for paper]

R: It doesn't give the amount. Oh, yes, it does, 49% for combined federal, 28% state, and 23%.

I: You have a pretty good amount you have to raise.

R: Yes, we do; we have a very small community to raise it because we're competing with the libraries, the museums, the schools and the churches.

I: How do you anticipate balancing the needs of your existing senior center population with any baby boomers that start attending?

R: This is very difficult because the present people we are working with, their income is very small. I assume that the baby boomers' will be much larger than these people's because we live in a country, rural farming area and there's not a high economic situation here. The baby boomers, I assume, probably worked and their income will be much greater. Does that answer the question?

I: Yes and assuming you have baby boomers that start to come in and start participating, they may want different programs than your existing people. How would you balance that? Would you try to meet in the middle and do some for each one, or do you anticipate any changes at all?

R: Yes, there will be changes, but the activities that I have now, I think the boomers will be interested in computer programs and Spanish programs and the library that comes each week here and the plays we take them to.

I: You don't anticipate a lot of change?

R: Not other than what money could provide for them. Yes, we'll have to start Zumba.

I: Have you gone to training for that?

R: I have seen it. We have training in December.

I: That's all my questions, unless you have anything else you want to add.

R: You pretty well see that we provide one third of their nutrients for the day, with the menus that we provide for them. They are well balanced.

I: How many fulltime employees do you have?

R: We have no fulltime employees besides me. The others are from four to six hours.

I: How many part-timers do you have?

R: Five and this is only part because I use other programs, too, and others who work with me.

I: Is transportation a problem for your participants?

R: No, not a big problem.

I: Thank you so much.

[End of interview]

SAC H1

Respondent: ...hot meals, and it's cut back on people coming in to get their meals here, getting someone to come in and pick up their meals. We do frozen meals throughout the county; our county's so rural, we have to do seven frozen meals per person for a week. A family member or some of my drivers are taking them out on the routes where they can go to that person's house and it's not out of the way in order for them to get their frozen meals. It's cut back on them being able to come in and get them, or having someone get them.

Interviewer: I know Springville advertises all the time donate five dollars for Meals-on-Wheels, and I figured it was probably affecting all the centers in the area.

R: It is. Another thing is our funding that was distributed this time [inaudible] hurt us, and we're only allowed to do so many [inaudible] meals a year now. At one time, we were able to do whatever we needed to do, but now I have to really ration it. A couple of months this year, I've had a waiting list. I don't have one right now, but I've had one previously.

I: It makes a big difference.

R: It certainly does.

I: Unfortunately, right now, gas is coming down, but who knows what's going to happen in the future.

R: Our budget's already set for the year, so that's not going to change ours.

I: How do you think the senior centers are, or will be viewed, by the baby boomer generation? How do you think you're perceived as a center?

R: I think that some of them may not want it to be called a senior center. I don't feel in our county it will be one of the major things like it is in other counties, but I think there will be some who will not want it to be called a senior center. We might have to change it to [inaudible] living, or sixty-plus. I don't think they'll want senior on it.

I: Otherwise, do you think the programs you offer would be attractive to the baby boomers?

R: I think most of them. Our seniors enjoy playing cards, and we personally have a new activity which is [inaudible] baseball, and we're really enjoying that. We've got one of the banks making our shirts for us and putting the name of our team on there. They shoot pool, we have exercise three days a week—a variety of different types of exercise—and we have an oil painting class on Tuesdays. We have music a couple days a week; they really enjoy that. We have two different country/western bands that play country, western, and gospel music.

I: Do you think you'll have to change any of the programs that you offer, either educational-wise, computer-wise, or, as you mentioned, travel? Do you think any of those will need to be changed for the baby boomers?

R: I think they'll probably want to go on more trips, maybe for longer periods of time. At the present, we just do day trips. I think they might want to go on some overnight trips. It's hard for me to answer that, because it depends on the county they grow up in [as to] what they're going to want, and I really feel in our county, there's not going to be a big change. I think more of them will probably want to volunteer maybe to teach special classes and do different types of presentations to our seniors that come, working in our senior center, getting them involved with [inaudible] and things like that.

I: Do you feel that the baby boomers that are coming up are more highly educated or anything along those lines? Do you think the qualifications of the people using your center will be different from what you have now?

R: Yes, there will be a difference, because a lot of the seniors I have now, it's really strange. I've been working forty-one years and when I first started, I was working with their parents, and now I see their children coming, and it really makes me feel old when I see them and meet them. I've known them for a long time. I grew up in this county, and I've always lived here, and I know practically everyone except people who've moved here from other states. I know we have a lot of those people, and a lot of them attend the center, and they're happy with what we have at the present. They're just happy to be coming and visiting, and playing cards. We have a group that comes early in the morning and works out on the exercise machines, and treadmills, and cycles, and bench press. They just stay busy throughout the day coming and going and doing different things.

I don't think the need for a lot of different things will be that great. I know that a lot of our seniors now never learned to drive, and that's one of the reasons we're still doing the transportation routes with the vans. A lot of them are leaving us, are dying off or not able to come anymore. The ones that drive in on their own can come more frequently than the ones that come in the van only once a week. They come from different parts of the county. There will always be a need for the vans because they will get to where they won't be able to drive, or their eyesight keeps them from driving. We've had a lot of them with macular degeneration.

I: The general aging process.

R: Yes.

I: Do you think that with the baby boomers coming up you'll have a larger population volunteering to do your classes, or programs, or whatever you may have?

R: I really feel that I will; I think they'll be more eager to get involved with fundraising, since we have to do so much fundraising. We have [inaudible], we have a golf tournament, and lots of different things like that that they would enjoy working in and organizing and getting things established to help the center. I really feel I'll have that from them, but I haven't had it with a lot of the seniors because a lot of them never got to finish high school, especially in this county. They had to stay home and work and they didn't get to finish high school. Some of them may have taken the GED to finish their education, but we'll have a different...you asked me that a minute ago about education. There will be a large number that went to college, where most of our seniors didn't get to do that. I think they will feel more comfortable stepping up and being involved with committees and things like that.

I: The next question goes on to talk about how the senior center can change to improve their image in the communities they serve and the upcoming baby boomer generation. Do you think there's anything that the senior centers should look at as maybe the way they're viewed in the community?

R: I think we'll just need to advertise more—advertise our programs, advertise what we have to offer—not just in our county, but reaching out to all of Northwest Arkansas, because we have a lot of people that travel. We have recently put signs up showing the directions to the senior center on all the highways coming into Huntsville, and we've had people from other states drop by and have lunch with us; they were just traveling and saw our sign. Tour buses that travel through—we had one stop by; they called ahead, and came to our center to eat and to visit with people. We had probably seventy-five people that did that.

I: How do you think you meet your market with senior centers, or how do you think you need to advertise them?

R: Well, at the present we have newsletters. We started doing those a couple of years ago; that shows all our activities, it has our menu every month, and things about our senior center, our stories that highlight our seniors and the things they do.

I: Do you distribute those?

R: We distribute those throughout the beauty shops, banks, all the different health clinics we have, the library, the chamber of commerce, and just wherever we feel people will pick them up. It's probably been one of the best marketing tools we've had. We also have [inaudible] that we [inaudible].

I: Do you have an ethnically diverse population here?

R: No, I really don't. Most of the time I may have one or two that come that are not white. We have an American Indian. I don't have any Spanish, and I don't have any blacks that come to our

center. I don't know of any. I've sent out Spanish brochures to a church in town, and I haven't had any input from them, but I don't think I have any seniors in this county that are [inaudible].

I: I've looked at the population charts and I think that you're probably right on target for what your population is for the county. How can senior centers increase their participation in future years, like the number of clients they have come to the center? Do you think it'll be an automatic thing through advertising?

R: I think by advertising and by word of mouth. I've never really had to advertise that much. In order to stay within our budget and serve the meals we're doing, we're pretty much keeping up with that.

I: Do you feel that if you did advertise there might be a constraint because of budget issues?

R: I think it would after a period of time.

I: How can the senior centers increase participation of a more ethnically diverse population in the future years?

R: Just the marketing, like I've already said.

I: Some of yours may be an actual change in the population as well.

R: Yes. I feel that probably in the next ten years, we'll have more of that. I think we'll have a different population here and a different ethnic generation.

I: Assuming that there were no obstacles whatsoever to prevent changes, including funding, what is your image of the most perfectly planned senior center, both structurally and activity/program-wise, especially to the upcoming baby boomers? In other words, if you had an unlimited budget and you could do anything, what would your senior center look like?

R: I think just a special fitness center, and also an indoor pool for water aerobics. There are so many things I could do.

I: You're the second person that's told me a pool.

R: Well, so many of our people have had hip replacements, knee replacements, or have osteoarthritis, and they really need that. We did take a bus to Jones Center a couple of months for a group to go to water aerobics there, and they really enjoyed it, but we had to stop because we didn't have staff to drive the van and because of gas prices, too. They enjoyed it tremendously, and I just would really like to see that happen in Madison County.

I: Would you change the structure of your building at all other than size-wise? Would you do anything special?

R: Do you mean as far as increasing our kitchen space and dining area?

I: Anything.

R: We would have to have a larger kitchen, because our walk-in freezer is full. The number of people we serve daily, and the frozen meals that we do, we get groceries delivered twice a week and we don't have room for them. It's just crowded.

I: On average, how many people do you serve in a week?

R: Tuesday, we served a hundred twelve hot meals here. We do approximately a hundred seventy-five to a hundred eighty meals a day—that's homebound, frozen, and our hot meals here at the center.

I: How many Meals-on-Wheels trucks or vans do you have?

R: We only have one route. We only serve here in the Huntsville area because we have to keep our temperatures to a hundred and forty-one degrees at the last drop-off, and it's hard to go very far out of town to do that. We have three housing complexes that we do a lot of our meals to people need them.

I: You had already mentioned before more computers and things like that, so those are things you'd also want.

R: Yes, and one other thing that I think would help with the baby boomers, especially if our economy keeps on going down like it is, I think there are going to be more parents moving in with their children, especially with baby boomers, and I feel probably that our adult daycare center will be great to have close to the senior center so they could bring their parents there while they attended the senior center or had other things they needed to do.

I: Are you a baby boomer?

R: I was born in '38, so not really.

I: We've touched on this a little bit, but I'm going to go back to a couple of questions because my recorder wasn't working. How do you think the name senior center will be viewed by the baby boomer generation?

R: I think in our county, probably most of them will be comfortable with it, but I think there will be some who won't want the word senior in there and we'd have to come up with something different.

I: You had mentioned previously sixty-plus.

R: Lively living.

I: In Chicago, there's a group called Mathers that does the cyber cafes for seniors, which I think is a neat thing for them. If you don't mind, because the recorder wasn't going, could we go over

just a couple of things again? It'll be very brief. What changes, if any, in the senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years? You had originally indicated that you thought there would be a decrease.

R: I feel that in the next three or four years, we will see a decrease because a lot of seniors are in their late nineties, and those in their late eighties are very frail. I have a proportion of those that I feel won't be able to attend, and I don't feel the baby boomers are going to increase that quickly into the center during that period of time. I think probably after that, we'll see an increase [inaudible].

I: Question number two was what specific changes in the senior center, if any, you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation, and you had talked about the increase in computers and different programs.

R: Yes, different types of exercise equipment, which means we need more space for that. I think they'll probably want more educational presentations health-wise, and different hours of operation. Maybe they would like an evening meal. We only serve breakfast and a lunchtime meal. I think they will probably want [inaudible] other [inaudible] like we have our tables rotated like they are.

I: When we talked about you seeing a decrease or an increase in senior center participation as the baby boomers reach participation age, you indicated you felt then you would have an increase.

R: I think we will. There will still be a lot of them who will be working. From the looks of things, a lot of us may be working until we're seventy or seventy-five, but I feel that we will see an increase. I already have probably a dozen baby boomers that are coming, and they're happy with it being called a senior center; they've never made a comment about that, and they're happy with the activities that we have.

I: This is just an off-the-wall question, but do you think that the baby boomers that you have that presently attend would be interested in answering some questions with me as far as a little focus group?

R: I think they probably would.

I: I may get back in touch with you, then. Also, we talked about marketing strategies with the senior centers that would attract baby boomers, and you had said you've already put flyers out in different locations.

R: Yes, newsletters.

I: And different things as far as advertising—you mentioned putting up the signs on the sides of the streets [inaudible]. I think, before I figured out the recorder wasn't on, we were at barriers or obstacles you already face, and you had mentioned funding.

R: Funding is my biggest barrier.

I: I think that's pretty much it. Do you have anything else you'd like to share about the senior center that you think would help as far as future planning for baby boomers?

R: I just think that it'd probably be best to get a bunch of baby boomers together that are willing and just kind of find out so we can start planning for those times.

I: That is one of the things I'm going to be doing. I'm going to be doing two focus groups. That's why I was interested when you had mentioned that you had some baby boomers who are already here--I know you mentioned your assistant director was a baby boomer—to try to get some feedback from baby boomers to see how they think maybe things should change, or programs should change, or if they like everything just the way it is. They may be perfectly content, but I'm sure they may have some suggestions that might be beneficial.

R: If you want to do the interview yourself you can, or probably my program assistant—she has her master's in social work. She's great, but she probably could get them together if you sent the list of questions you want asked, or if you'd rather do the interview, you can.

I: I would be happy to have her moderate it for me; that would be wonderful. I'm more than willing to have anyone help, but I would like to be there just so I can hear the answers myself and get a feel for who's saying what.

R: You'd have to come on a Tuesday; that's the day most of them come.

I: Okay. What is her name?

R: Her name is Vickie Boettcher. I'll introduce you to her.

I: That would be wonderful. Thank you very much.

[End]

SAC L1

Interviewer: What changes, if any, in senior center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

Respondent: Well, I haven't had [inaudible], and I hope I see a bunch of baby boomers come along, because they are the next in line for seniors.

I: What specific changes in senior centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: More traveling, more wellness, more exercise equipment, more computers, more technology.

I: Do you foresee an increase or a decrease in participation as the baby boomers reach participation age?

R: I don't know. I'm kind of undecided because there are still so many of those working. They're not retiring as early as they used to.

I: What activities, or marketing strategies, do you anticipate the senior centers will need to engage in to attract baby boomers?

R: More exercise, more wellness. I'm fixing to go through training for an exercise program that I think will really attract them.

I: What is that?

R: Zumba.

I: I've heard a lot about that. Do you advertise now?

R: In local papers. We put an article in there every week, and we're on the city's website. They're still working on that. We're trying to be able to have the newsletter changed every month on there so people will know what we're doing on a monthly or weekly basis.

I: Do you think your advertising will need to change in the future or stay about the same?

R: No, I think it needs to change, and that's why we're getting on the web. There are more and more doing that.

I: What barriers, or obstacles, do you already face or anticipate facing in continuing senior center programs or implementing new activities to meet the changing population of older adults?

R: Getting the two to agree on something, on a program [inaudible]. Older seniors want the way it's always been [inaudible] changing [inaudible].

I: How do you think the senior centers are or will be viewed by the baby boomers?

R: As they are right now. They don't want to come, because we're not doing many activities. That's why we're trying to get more programs, something they want to do.

I: Do you have baby boomers that participate now or that volunteer?

R: I have some that deliver meals for me. They help with fundraising events and that kind of thing, but most of my baby boomers here are still working, whether it's on the farm or a job to keep their insurance.

I: How can senior centers change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming baby boomers?

R: Well, [inaudible] a whole new renovation [inaudible]. We just had that [inaudible], and we've repainted. We've done several things.

I: Do you provide meals to other centers through your kitchen?

R: Yes, we cook for Prairie Grove and Farmington, for their congregate and for their Meals-on-Wheels program.

I: I was thinking that. I knew Farmington did, and I was pretty sure Prairie Grove did, too. How can the senior centers increase their participation in future years?

R: Just try to come up with new programs, something the seniors want to do.

I: How do you think senior centers can increase the participation of a more ethnically diverse population?

R: Advertising.

I: Do you have anything in mind to attract a certain category of ethnicity?

R: [Inaudible] other than advertising and telling them what we're doing. I don't know.

I: Assuming there were no obstacles, including funding, what is your image of the most perfectly appealing senior center, both structurally and with activities, especially to the upcoming baby boomers? In other words, if you could build the senior center of your dreams, and money was no object, what would it be like?

R: New, modern, obviously computerized. It would have all the amenities for all activities. A swimming pool would be cool, because I know there are some in the Prairie Grove area [inaudible] swimming classes, so it'd be cool to have an indoor pool, especially one of the local centers here so they didn't have to drive so far.

I: How many years have you been the senior center director?

R: Four.

I: Are you a baby boomer?

R: No.

I: That's 1946 to 1964. Do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

R: '67.

I: You're the second one I've had born in that year. How do you think the name senior center will be viewed by the baby boomer generation?

R: I don't think they're going to like it. I think the name's going to have to be changed in some form; I just don't know what that's going to be.

I: Do you have a senior center advisory council or a participant advisory group?

R: Mmm-hmm.

I: Do you call them ambassadors as well?

R: Yes, ambassadors.

I: How does that work for you?

R: Well, if you get them to show up, it works pretty well.

I: You have a problem with them showing up?

R: [Inaudible]; they say we don't need a meeting for that.

I: How many people do you serve on a daily basis, meals in-house and Meals-on-Wheels?

R: I serve twenty home-delivered every day—hot, home-delivered. I have six that I take frozen meals to once a week. It averages here from twenty-five to thirty-five a day.

I: What amount is your funding and how much do you have to raise with donations?

R: It's almost half that we have to raise.

I: Fifty percent?

R: Mmm-hmm.

I: Do you have problems meeting that?

R: It's getting harder. The way the economy is, it's getting harder.

I: How do you anticipate balancing the needs of the existing senior center participants with the evolving needs of the baby boomers?

R: I don't know how it's going to work. I'll just do the best I can from day to day, because they're totally different [inaudible].

I: How many employees do you have, both full-time and part-time?

R: I [inaudible]. I have one replacement labor person working in the kitchen [inaudible], and then I have an Experience Works person that Experience Works pays.

I: Speaking of that '67, I think it was Angela Gonzales at Elkins, and she had told me about this Experience Works. That's the first I had heard about it. Are they working out really well for you?

R: Yes, she's my little lady out there right now.

I: Is the cook full-time or are you the only full-time?

R: She's only six hours a day.

I: Okay, so all of these you just told me are part-time.

R: Well, the cook isn't full-time.

I: The replacement labor is part-time?

R: Yes.

I: Do you have anything else you would like to add or that you could share about the senior centers that might need to be changed in regards to the baby boomers? Or maybe nothing needs to be changed?

R: I think there has to be changes; I'm just not quite sure what they are. The name, for one, and then the activities [inaudible]. To attract one, it's going to distract the other. I don't know how to make them go together.

I: That's the difficult part; that's true.

R: Just that they're so different.

I: You said you produced a newsletter. Do you mind if I have a copy of one?

R: No, I'll get you one of those.

I: That concludes my questions.

[End]

SAC P1

Interviewer: I'm looking at senior centers and how the baby boomer generation is going to affect the centers and what you're going to want and need to come into the senior centers to be able to participate or to volunteer, or any of the above items or other things. What changes, if any, in senior citizen participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

Respondent: I think that educational classes are going to be very much important, informing and helping them address their needs. There are so many changes that come every day, and we just can't upload all the new information, and so that's what's really important, to educate us.

I: Educate you as the senior center?

R: Educate me as a member, as a baby boomer participating in the centers.

I: I'm identifying baby boomers as 1946 to 1964, those born in those years. Do you also think that there will need to be more education for the baby boomers as participants as well?

R: Absolutely. I think that's what they strive for, because we're the sandwich generation trying to take care of our parents who are living longer. They're saying that children that are born now will exceed over a hundred years old. We do educate ourselves. We are more informed of health reasons and so on, and so forth, so yeah, we do live a lot longer, so I think that education, exercise, fun trips and events, I think will be really important—different things that are not necessarily bingo, but planned events. People that want to could take one-day trips; that could be really important. I think that keeping you motivated in your thinking, and exercise programs are also very important for them. It is now, too.

I: What specific changes in the senior centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the baby boomer generation?

R: Of course, all the senior centers are starting to think outside the box and not be so institutionalized, having a more creative atmosphere, having cafes instead of a cafeteria, more of laid-back situation, but yet much more of a different palate as far as eating more health-wise. I see more fresh fruits and vegetables and more salad bars—just more of the grab and go type of situation more so than the sit-down meals. I'm getting close to the baby boomers also, so I think that's what I would like to see—different things, where you can do a grab and go situation where we have more sandwiches and salads and things like that we could grab and just take off or sit down and eat.

I: That's true. I like to do that. Do you foresee a decrease or an increase in senior center participation as the baby boomers reach participation age?

R: I feel that if we start marketing to do the outreach of the baby boomers now, and if we change and think outside of the box of what we need to be, letting them know that there are a lot of

different alternatives, and kind of change the status quo...we eat, play bingo, and sit and play cards. We've got to have a lot more fun things, like pottery classes, different things—creative writing, bridge playing, which is very strong in focusing. I think that we definitely need to do a lot more outreach to the community to let them know exactly what we're all about.

I: That ties into my next question. What activities, or marketing strategies, do you anticipate the senior centers will need to engage in to attract the baby boomers?

R: I think that if we worked better as a whole network, because we're all in it for the same reason, but interacting with other companies that want to make a difference in someone's life, that we can offer something that maybe someone else cannot, and kind of enter as a partnership. I know that the Walker's Senior Centers are a wonderful place, and I'd love to be able to take my people and do their different things that I'm not able to provide for them here, but able to do the transportation for them as a group. That type of thing, I think, is very important, to make sure that we can go ahead and present that in every aspect.

I: Do you do a newsletter here?

R: Yes, I sure do. As a matter of fact, I was [inaudible]. I e-mailed it to her, because she prints it out.

I: What barriers or obstacles do you already face, or anticipate facing, in continuing the senior citizen programs or implementing new activities to meet the challenge of the population?

R: I've noticed that this generation is a little shy of change, so I have to do it in an easy way so that I don't discourage them. I try to make them be more part of it.

I: Like have a say in what the change is?

R: Exactly. Not so much that they're going to be controlling it, but just to let them know it's a good thing, and we need to support that, and [inaudible].

I: Are you referring to the participants you already have or the baby boomers coming up?

R: The participants I already have, and then for them to embrace the baby boomers that come in.

I: We've already talked about some of the changes that'll need to happen when the baby boomers come in. Can you think of anything else that might need to happen?

R: I know that different outdoor activities that we don't participate in so much as of now; it's more indoor activities. We're trying to get a wellness program going on in different centers, and I think it's just so important. Actually, I started Tai Chi here. I didn't know if it was going to work, and the first day that I had Tai Chi classes, there were thirty participants. It was unbelievable. The instructor was like, oh my gosh. He teaches over at the Walker Senior Center, and he couldn't believe how well. He said, 'are you all from Prairie Grove,' and they said,

‘yeah,’ and he said, ‘wow.’ Now, I have an average of thirteen to fifteen people every Tuesday night. Another thing, the baby boomers are going to still be working since the economy has gotten the way it is.

They’ll probably be working until they’re in their middle sixties, so I think that if we are trying to encourage them to come to the senior centers, a lot of them will have to be evening classes. They may be semi-retired, where they’re not yet committed to full-time retirement, yet we could go ahead and get them to be participants here and there will probably be evening classes that they would be more interested in. Some of them are raising their grand-children, so they’re not able to do the day classes, so evening classes are definitely a key thing, keeping the centers open longer.

I: How do you think the senior centers [inaudible] baby boomers?

R: I think that being that there are more new senior centers that are being built, they are thinking to attract the baby boomers. Like the Wow statements at the senior centers. There are some that are just absolutely breath-taking and beautiful, and very plush. Well, one of them is the Walker Senior Center. That’s just unbelievable—indoor pool, the whole nine yards. That’s where you’re going to see a lot of them being built. Hopefully, they’ll get federal funding for that.

I: How do you think senior centers can improve their image to the community they serve and to the upcoming baby boomer generation?

R: Be more upbeat. There has to be more of an upbeat. Another thing I do have to say, senior centers are really [inaudible] and [inaudible] saying that they’re for the poor people, and they’re not. I will tell you that I have people that have an income coming in anywhere from a thousand to ten thousand, so that is not what this was all about. Senior centers were built for the purpose of keeping people out of nursing homes, to live longer. When you have a group of people that interact with each other every day, it’s a healthy thing. It’s a worse thing to let our seniors become depressed, and a lot of us don’t know about it. That’s the sad part. They hide that from us so well. Nights are very long for them. I have a gentleman here that’s ninety years old that just started coming and loves it. He lost his wife a year or so ago, and the neighbors are so excited because he comes and he plays cards, and he does things, and he’s just very happy.

I: How do you think senior centers can increase their participation [inaudible]?

R: I think the media—media coverage, newspaper coverage, documentations, advertising. Word of mouth is probably the best advertisement you could actually have. You can have a friend that will share something with them and say come, enjoy, and have a complimentary lunch with us—anything to make them feel welcome.

I: Do you have an advertising budget?

R: Yes, I do. It's not very much. When you're a non-profit, you don't have much to really go by, but yes, it's in there.

I: What can senior centers do to increase participation of more ethnically diverse populations?

R: That is something that we really need to work. There is a Latin dance that all centers are trying to accommodate. They have to have a certified instructor—it's called Zoomba Gold. I think that the Latin Hispanic population, especially in this area that's coming in, the older ladies and gentlemen that would like to learn how to do the Zoomba Gold, even Latin dancing would make more participants.

I: It was mentioned to me by another senior center director. That's interesting. Assuming there were no obstacles to prevent this, including funding, what is your image of the most perfectly appealing senior center, both structurally and activity/program-wise, especially to baby boomers?

R: Well, you're saying that if I was going to build one?

I: If you were going to build one or improve one, both structurally and programs, if you could have anything you wanted, money was no issue, what you think a senior center should have?

R: I would definitely make it more plush—more of the best of everything. Having cafes instead of cafeterias, having more educational rooms with all the components of the Internet and access to telecasting—I guess all the electronic components that you would need to be able to make different types of....

I: What about exercise equipment?

R: All the best exercise equipment—swimming pools, aerobics water classes and stuff like that for people who have arthritis so bad. It's so beneficial to them. Hopefully to have more volunteers that are baby boomers that are able to volunteer to do these classes, like your professors that come out of universities that are bored and don't have anything to do would offer to come to the senior centers and offer an educational program. P.E. teachers that had been P.E. teachers do classes who would love to be able to do some exercise aerobics. Maybe your Tai Chi instructors or your yoga classes would be stronger in your baby boomers. But to be able to interact with them, kind of do some interacting with the school systems, let them be able to sit and read to the children, and then in turn, the children come to us and teach us different things like Wii. I mean, how many times have I called the [inaudible] please come and fix my Wii. They say, 'oh, okay,' and here they come. They start playing a game together and away they go. The interacting with that, I think, is so important. Yeah, I think a baby boomer being able to offer something of their passion, to be able to service something that someone else would enjoy, I think would be really important.

I: Kind of serve and be served?

R: Yes, serve and be served, absolutely.

I: That's a good idea. How many years have you been a director of a center?

R: I started in March.

I: So you've been in about six months?

R: Six months, yeah.

I: Did you say you were or were not a baby boomer?

R: I am going to be fifty-four in March.

I: What year were you born?

R: '56.

I: So you are a baby boomer.

R: Yeah, I am a baby boomer.

I: How do you think the name senior center is viewed by baby boomers?

R: No.

I: It's not?

R: No, it's going to have to change. It will have to be like aging wellness centers or teacher/aging—some type of a catch-all, but something that is...I have to say none of us want to say that we're going to be getting old.

I: We don't think of ourselves that way.

R: No, and when you say seniors, you're thinking like ninety.

I: Does your senior center have an advisory council or a participant advisory board?

R: Yes, I have an ambassador. I go to an ambassador meeting every month, so we come up to the table and interact with what we want to do for the next month. Suggestions are always welcome. I always say that my door is always open. That's what's really important, is for them to be a part of it. This is theirs. It's their place of interest; I just coordinate.

I: How much funding do you get each year? Do you have a budget, and then you have to meet a certain amount in donations?

R: There's a federal and state budget, about forty-nine percent, and then we have to do the fifty-one percent.

I: Do you match fifty-one?

R: Pretty much, yeah. Yeah, it's pretty tough. The Meals-on-Wheels program is a wonderful program, so we try to make sure we keep that up well so we can nurture our seniors that have had surgery, or are without a spouse, or have children that are out of state. It's comforting to know that your mom and dad are being taken care of and someone is coming knocking at the door and making sure they're not on the floor. They're being taken care of. People don't realize how important that program is.

I: I agree with you [inaudible] in how valuable the programs are. How do you anticipate balancing the needs of the existing senior citizen participants with the evolving needs of the baby boomers to keep them both happy?

R: I see it now. New members that I have encouraged—a lot of them are my friends, actually—they're sixty, sixty-one, and they are younger—have enjoyed interacting with the ones who are in their eighties and nineties, even though there is a thirty-year span there, really, if you think about that. Well, John right here does a talk for me on fat food—he works for Edward Jones, and he does talks and classes for me on Mondays, and he stays in there and interacts with them, and he's twenty-eight years old.

I think it's how you blend them in so they're not...you know, some of them may feel threatened, some don't, some enjoy it tremendously, some of them, I think, it just keeps them young when you have a thirty-year span. I just think that it's a health thing. I'll tell them are you seven, eight, nine—seventy. I'll say are you a seven, are you an eight, are you a nine? They'll go, I don't know what she's talking about, and I'll say eighty or seventy. When I see that you have a seventy and a ninety, there's still a span age-wise, but they all get along tremendously. We sure have a good time.

I: There will be an age span within the baby boomers because that's eighteen years just with one generational group, so there's going to be a big difference in the ones that come in at the beginning as opposed to the ones that come in at the end.

R: Have you ever heard of the hipsters?

I: No, I haven't.

R: Well, it's the hippie era, so they call them the hipsters, and so they have a different blend than the ones that are more preppy. You have not so much of a clash, but it's kind of the same thing, because in the seventies, there are the beatniks, they used to call, and then they went to the hipsters, and now the baby-boomers, but you'll have that kind of a different blend also. It's different; it's kind of a neat thing. We're all trying to get where we need to be, and the simple fact is we can always make things happen. We have to strive a little harder, but I seriously think that you have to have a passion to be able to do this job, and I do. I love what I do.

I: How many meals do you serve for Meals-on-Wheels?

R: We do twenty meals. It can change; one week I can put in two or three, and then I'll have one that's either deceased or doesn't need it anymore because they're coming to the center instead to have their meals.

I: How many do you serve in-house on average?

R: Anywhere from twenty-five to thirty, depending on what's going on. If I have music or different things, I can do anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five; it all depends. For a small town, I think we do pretty well.

I: Yeah, you do.

R: This is all of thirty-two hundred.

I: Do you have volunteers that work here that might be baby boomers?

R: Yes, I do. As a matter-of-fact, I just started a couple, a husband and wife that are baby boomers. Actually, I have probably about five that are baby boomers that volunteer delivering meals for me. I have a lot of [inaudible] that do that for me that are all in different ages. Even to just come and do things for me—yeah, I have quite a few.

I: That concludes all my questions. Do you have anything else you want to add about the centers?

R: I guess what we're trying to do is to make this a place where they can feel safe and comfortable, and enjoy their retirement, and do different things. I wish that we could just get more people to be involved. We all live very busy lives, but like I said, even classes are going to be a key thing. I think that people will do more interacting during the evening hours.

[End]

SAC S1

Interviewer: What changes, if any, in Senior Center participation do you anticipate over the next five to ten years?

Respondent: I think the type of client we serve will change. I think we will have Seniors that are more active.

I: What specific changes in the Senior Centers, if any, do you anticipate will be brought about by the Baby Boomer generation?

R: I feel like they will want more education classes, exercise classes and want to go places.

I: Do you foresee a decrease or increase in Senior Center participation as the Baby Boomers reach participation age?

R: I feel we will get the seniors that want to stay social.

I: What activities or marketing strategies do you anticipate the Senior Centers will need to engage in to attract the Baby Boomer generation?

R: Our ads will have to be more youthful seniors.

I: What barriers or obstacles do you already face or anticipate facing in continuing Senior Center programs or implementing new activities to meet the changing population of older adults?

R: We are going to have to offer even more variety.

I: How do you think the Senior Center are or will be viewed by the Baby Boomer generation?

R: A lot of times they think we are for the poor or old.

I: How can the Senior Centers change to improve their image to the communities they serve and to the upcoming Baby Boomer generation?

R: By education, telling our story to any one that will listen. Make the Senior Center look better on the inside. Do not make it look like Grandma's house.

I: How can the Senior Centers increase their participation in the future years?

R: Changing things up! Coming up with new ideas to make it fun.

I: How can the Senior Centers increase the participation of a more ethnically diverse population in the future years?

R: Awareness so they know who we are and what we offer.

I: Assuming there are no obstacles to prevent changes (including funding), what is your image of the most perfectly appealing Senior Center, both structurally and activity/program wise, especially to the upcoming Baby Boomers?

R: We need a swimming pool (our bunch wants that bad!), lots of different classes. Variety!!!

I: How many years have you been a Director of a Senior Center?

R: 5

I: Are you a Baby Boomer (Born between 1946 and 1964)?

R: No

I: How do you think the name "Senior Center" will be viewed by the Baby Boomer generation?

R: I do not think it matters much. Image is more important than what is going on inside the building.

End of Interview.

Appendix 3

Focus Group

Focus Group

Moderator: I'm going to tell you a little about why we're doing the study. I've given you an informed consent. It tells you that I'm doing it as a dissertation project, but none of your information you tell me, you won't be identified in any way, other than respondent 1, 2 or 3. No one will know your names or anything like that; all of your information will be kept confidential.

This project came about at the request of a couple different people because with the baby boomer generation coming up, there are so many of them it's going to have a real impact on the senior centers and we're trying to figure out how to keep senior centers active and keep participants there, so that we can keep up with the baby boomer generation.

With that said, I'm going to give you a few topics to discuss, and let's set a few guidelines. This is very informal; say anything that you want. When one person is speaking, try not to interrupt because for recording purposes it makes it real hard to hear, but feel free to jump in at any time. Feel free to say anything you want, and like I said, it won't go anywhere but to me and your name won't be attached to it.

I'm going to start with topics and ya'll can go any way you want with the answers. What is your knowledge of the senior centers and their programs, activities and educational opportunities? Can you describe at the senior center here what you do presently?

Participant: You mean what our job is?

Mod: What the activities are, what participants do that come in every day. For instance, they might come in and eat a meal. They might come in and play cards or pool or bingo. Are ya'll aware of the different programs?

Par: That's pretty much what the program is.

Par: I'm pretty much new at the senior thing. I just recently started coming.

Par: We have art classes. We have exercise classes. There are potlucks at least once a month in addition to the regular meal each day. They have planned activities like trips, shopping trips, trips to Branson shows, different things of that nature that they offer in addition to the regular daily activities.

Mod: Are there any educational opportunities? Do you offer any classes, like maybe in a foreign language, investments or anything like that?

Par: No.

Par: Not that I know of.

Par: We have speakers come occasionally on retirement.

Mod: Maybe health issues?

Par: Health issues, yes.

Par: We had the health fair, too, not long ago.

Mod: When you do your travel, do you just travel locally? You said to Branson. Ya'll don't take any trips to Las Vegas or anything like that.

Par: No.

Mod: Just local. Do you charge fees for those?

Par: There's a suggested donation.

Mod: But it's not required?

Par: It's just a suggested donation.

Mod: For future participation in the senior centers as baby boomers, what do you think a senior center participant would want in the future? If you weren't already somewhat involved in a senior center, what do you think someone from the outside would be interested in having at a senior center?

Par: More activities, dance lessons.

Par: Computer lessons.

Par: Yes, definitely computer.

Mod: Can you be specific? What kind of dance would you like?

Par: Line dance, waltz.

Mod: Do you watch Dancing with the Stars? I like the ballroom dance.

Par: Yes.

Par: I like to dance and I go dancing at least twice a week.

Mod: My husband has told me he'd do that, so we're going to sign up for ballroom dancing. Computer class – what type specifically, just basic classes, email...?

Par: Yeah, just basically learning how to use one.

Par: That would be great because I'm struggling to learn right now on my own.

Par: It would be nice, because some of the participants already use computers. They know how to email, those types of things, but when it comes to how do you use a spreadsheet, make a spreadsheet or use programs like Outlook or Excel, some of those things.

Par: I don't know any of that. I know how to send an email and I know how to play a game. I know how to search the Internet, period.

Mod: I know here that you don't have very many computers that participants have access to. Is that one thing you think in the future you'll need more of?

Par: Yes, Internet access for people just wanting to look up things. They can go next-door to the library and do that, but we don't have that capacity here. Even presenters who've talked about using our facility have asked if they'd have access to the Internet in order to plug in certain programs and things that they wanted to do.

Mod: What would keep someone that's in your age group from wanting to participate in a senior center?

Par: The name. The word senior will put them off.

Par: I think so, yeah.

Mod: There's been quite a bit of research on that that says baby boomers do not want to be attached to any name that indicates that they are getting older.

Par: The name senior makes it sound like you're old.

Mod: What would you suggest would be a good name?

Par: Oh, lord, I don't have a clue.

Par: Adult activities center, or is that even close to anything? I don't know.

Mod: The term senior center comes from the legislative record, the law that was passed that told them what the name would be, which is senior center. It's the Older Americans Act. There, in itself, it's unusual that that would be the name of the actual bill that was passed that got senior centers to be where they're at today. There's a little bit of a problem with that, but what we're looking at doing, because part of mine is public policy, is to see how those things could be changed for the people that are coming up that would make a big difference. Do you think there would be any other reason why someone wouldn't want to participate in a senior center, other than the stigma attached to the name?

Par: The hours of availability. A lot of the people in our age bracket, they're employed, so they don't have access during the day. Mealtime is scheduled at a certain time and that's not always flexible with their schedule.

Par: That's true.

Par: A lot of people are looking for more evening things when they get off of work or maybe weekend programs to participate in.

Par: A lot of them ain't got nowhere to go on the weekend, but up here we're not here on Saturdays.

Mod: That's basically because you're a rural county and you think it's too far for them to travel to Fayetteville or somewhere, or maybe they just don't want to do that.

Par: A lot of them can't even drive.

Par: That's where busses come in.

Par: And we're so rural that a lot of people can't even afford it.

Par: Especially when you factor in gas prices and the state of the economy right now. That's a factor.

Mod: I think that's affecting a lot of people, what their entertainment is in general, whether they go out to eat or to the movies. Having a senior center open, maybe that would be a fundraising activity, if it were open more in the evening for some activities.

Par: If they could have it open in the evenings once a week or a couple times a month, that would give them something to look forward to because a lot of them don't want to go home.

Par: No.

Mod: We've already talked about educational opportunities, but what types of activities or programs do you think would entice baby boomers to come? Do you think it needs to change from what it is presently? We've talked about computers a little bit.

Par: Videos, just anything to look at.

Mod: Look at it from what would you want to do, not necessarily what's here now, but what would keep you coming back for years to come?

Par: I would say activities.

Par: Lots of activities. Vickie has had some really good suggestions. Maybe a movie day and have popcorn, more holiday-related activities.

Par: I go to the Jones center once a month for a dance and they have luau days and stuff like that and a dance. We live in Madison County, so... When the centers have more dances and stuff, you get a lot of people coming in that way because a lot of people love to dance.

Par: It's good exercise.

Par: It's important because it's a very good exercise; it's good for you.

Par: One of the things I'm trying to think about is you're asking us as the baby boomers what we want, what we want to see, not the group that we're working with currently, what they want to see, but what we want to see. One of the things that I would like to see, if I were going to be coming on a regular basis, is even the environment, the physical environment being different somehow, kind of like the coffee club-type look, where you have tables, where you could group and cluster in social groups instead of more the cafeteria feel with the more stretched out tables.

Par: Yes, absolutely.

Mod: There's quite a bit of research on that, that that is true because of the way baby boomers look at things and the way they grew up a little differently, with different attitudes and different needs and wants. They don't really want to go to that older... Cyber cafes is what they're calling some that are being built now in Chicago. They're more like a sandwich-type café, where they provide the meals, but you get a choice of maybe more like a Subway sandwich, versus a hot meal that day. There are some centers that are going in that direction.

Par: I think we as baby boomers would socialize much more with other people, like wanting to know about them. Not have your own little group, but just socialize with everyone.

Mod: What about videogames that are exercise?

Par: Oh yes.

Par: That could be good [Inaudible]

Par: Getting up and jumping.

Par: Yeah, baseball.

Mod: They call it We Fitness. [?] A lot of centers are going to things like that. Would ya'll be interested in things like that?

Par: Absolutely.

Mod: Or anything else along those lines?

Par: Throw in a juice bar.

Par: The healthy choices in drinks.

Par: [Inaudible] has that book of the month club. A lot of them my age will need to read when they get up here. [?] Let's read this book this month and talk about it.

Par: [Inaudible] social groups.

Mod: This goes along with what you said. If you could imagine the perfect senior center that you would want to attend when you get to be a little older, what would that look like, both physically and activity-wise?

Par: I'd want one that was friendly. You'd walk in and it would make you feel like you're wanted, that you're not just old and going to be put away.

Par: There you go, yeah.

Par: And not the sanitarium-type colors and everything either.

Par: Nice colors.

Par: Happy, colorful, yes, lots of greenery.

Par: Lots of sunshine.

Mod: Could we maybe say keeping up with the trends of decorating?

Par: Yes.

Par: Absolutely.

Mod: That seems to be a big part of baby boomers' lives these days is keeping up with what's going on. What about programs? Is there anything else that you'd want to see? We talked a lot. I've had a couple people tell me they'd want a swimming pool.

Par: A heated swimming pool.

Par: That would be good.

Par: Water aerobics.

Par: That would be wonderful. Well, in our generation it might be available to us if it could be affordable. I think that would be great.

Par: Not if you're required to wear a bathing suit.

Mod: Assume that you don't have any barriers or obstacles. Funding is no issue whatsoever and you could have anything that you wanted. What would you want?

Par: Hot tubs, whirlpools.

Par: Well, yes.

Par: An exercise area that's designated as an exercise area, not just thrown in the mix with everything else.

Mod: Would you want exercise equipment to go with that, like if you were to go to a fitness center or health club?

Par: Yes.

Par: With the exercise things like they offer at the power clubs or curves, where they have some of the aerobic-type...

Par: Somebody to help...

Mod: Personal trainers?

Par: Something going on with kind of a...

Par: A coach, an exercise expert. You do weights and stuff like that.

Par: This may be going too far, but maybe even showers.

Par: That it has that gym-type feel to it.

Par: Yes. If you wanted to shower after all the exercise, you could shower and then go out and mingle with the others.

Par: Have lockers where you could store exercise equipment and clothes.

Mod: With the university being so close to here it's a possibility that you could have some retired professors that would eventually join your center. Would you be interested in them teaching classes for you?

Several: Yes.

Mod: What types of classes would you like to have?

Par: You could feed in education hour classes, even, [?] something that you could actually use. There are some people in this area that have different licenses that require classes in mental health and things of that nature.

Mod: What about the rest of you? Are there any other classes that you would like to have?

Par: I don't think this is going to be down the road for us, the baby boomers, but there still are people who cannot read or write. If there were a way we could do that without embarrassment to them, that would be a good program.

Par: I would even like to learn CPR and stuff like that. I've been a healthcare provider, not professionally, but I've had to care for sick people for about 30 years now. I don't know that. I know a lot of it, but I don't know that.

Par: I think even a garden club, a teacher or somebody to come in and teach horticulture.

Mod: Anything else on that?

Par: Especially what she was saying with that medical stuff and CPR, I didn't know until Vickie and I went to that deal, you're not supposed to use peroxide on open cuts. I didn't have a clue on that – all kinds of stuff. They need to know that.

Mod: Your group here because of your community, you're not very ethnically diverse, but how do you think senior centers should try to bring in people of different ethnicities?

Par: We do have a very good selection getting started of Mexican families. It goes back to the continuing education material. Learning to speak English, they might come in for classes, just to pull them in so they might get a feel for what we're offering.

Par: They'd feel more comfortable doing it here than they would somewhere else.

Mod: Do you have any other suggestions on that, on how to bring ethnic groups in? I know that your county isn't maybe as ethnically diverse as Benton County or Washington County, but that may change. That might be something ya'll need to think about in the future.

Along those same lines, how do you think you should advertise the senior center to attract baby boomers? Since they're already probably not going to like the name senior center, unless that gets changed somewhere in the future, how do you suggest we advertise and market it?

Par: Would the focus be more activities and learning?

Mod: What kind of media would you use? Should it be something printed? Should it be TV advertisements? What do you think would be the best way to reach baby boomers?

Par: For this particular county, our local newspaper is one of the best sources for getting information out to people here. We have a cable system, but that is pretty much geared for just this town. It doesn't go out in the rural areas.

Par: Well, and really the news media, also. To an extent it would reach people, us baby boomers. Maybe in the news...

Par: Local, but not just necessarily our cable news thing, but local TV ads.

Mod: If you were having, say, a dance and you invited the media to come in. either write a newspaper article on it or show it on TV, like in the news segment. Ya'll were talking about some holiday stuff. Maybe a fall festival or something big that you did as a fundraiser, those are things that could possibly be done and have been done in the past. Is there anything out there you think maybe hasn't been considered? It's hard, isn't it? It's hard to think of these things. If you think of something, just pop it in later.

What types of leadership or advisory council do you think the senior centers should utilize to accommodate baby boomers?

Par: Baby boomers themselves, for one thing, on an advisory committee.

Mod: Do you think the senior center should have an advisory council or should the director be the one...?

Par: No, I'd like shared input and expertise.

Mod: It comes in different ways. Some senior centers just have a director; some have advisory councils. Do you think there's a better way to do it than that? That's one of the reasons why we're here to ask.

Par: Somebody that's qualified.

Par: I think all the people should be involved. If they want an input in things they should be able to do it and not just have the advisory committee. If they have a suggestion, suggest it.

Mod: Maybe run it a little like city hall, where you have an advisory board. You have scheduled meetings where people can come in and give their opinion on things.

Par: I like that. I think that's a good idea.

Mod: If you were going to start your own senior center from scratch, what would you do? What would it look like? This is a little bit of a repetitive question.

Par: Since I'm in the kitchen I'd have it done a lot different. I'd have it where they had, like you said, walk through and get what you want, instead of fixing one thing in there and all of them have got to eat one thing or do without. I'd give them a choice.

Par: Like a cafeteria. Well, not like a cafeteria, but you know...

Par: A couple different meats... Where some of them do like potatoes, maybe this lady down here doesn't.

Par: It would have a more open feel to it than this, with a designated area for exercise. Some things need to be in a designated area. It would have more modern decor, more up to date, and it would have environmentally friendly stuff, like no carpet, which limits people from being in certain areas, those kinds of things.

Mod: Would you charge a fee for activities? You know that you get a certain amount of funding from different areas and that would continue. Maybe if you went into more detailed computer classes or hired a professional to do line dancing, do you think that baby boomers would be more willing to pay a fee for services?

Several: Yes.

Par: Absolutely.

Par: I do.

Par: I think there's an expectation that you get what you pay for.

Mod: Of course you don't want to exclude anyone that absolutely can't pay for something, but that's where part of your other funding would come in. Kind of like with your meals, the people that can pay do pay and the ones that can't afford to don't. Do you think that would work with baby boomers?

Par: Yes.

Mod: What do you think would be reasonable fees for things like that?

Par: I think for a computer class, monthly... Throw something at me; I don't know.

Mod: Say you had a six-week class, a month-long class or six-week class. Do you think \$25 is too much?

Several: No.

Mod: What fee do you think would be good? I'm just offering a suggestion.

Par: I'd say \$25 or \$30.

Par: yeah, because you're talking a minimum of \$5 a class.

Mod: Say you went to a cyber café; we talked about that a little bit. You might have cappuccinos or whatever. I'm not a big coffee person... Do you think that would be something baby boomers would be willing to pay for as well?

Par: Yeah.

Par: Yes.

Par: There are a lot of them out there that would like that.

Par: Not just coffee; it can be teas and different things, too.

Mod: That would be good. Is there anything else ya'll want to share that you think would make the senior center better and more attractive to baby boomers?

Par: Just the colors.

Par: Again, the hours. We'd have to look at the hours being different for the baby boomers.

Par: That and having more in the evenings for those who can't get up here during the day, and weekend stuff.

Mod: Is there anything you'd like to share that I haven't asked you that you think would improve the senior center in the future? The main point in doing this is to try to make sure that senior centers don't become obsolete. There's a possibility that if you don't have enough baby boomers that don't like what you're offering they may go away. I'm not saying that's going to happen. I'm just saying there's always that possibility, just like with anything. Part of the purpose of the research is to try to make that not happen, to see what we can do to improve things.

Par: One of the options that would make it more financially viable for keeping them going is to open them up to the community for more activities as well. We do some of that, but it could be utilized even more for those types of programs that the community could utilize too.

Mod: You mean the center itself?

Par: Yes.

Mod: As well as the programs?

Par: Yes. It could help earn its keep. We do class reunions and things here for other people, but there are a lot more of those types of programs that people would be interested in participating in and paying a fee for utilizing our building space and that kind of stuff as well.

Par: Yeah.

Mod: This is not one of my questions, but along those same lines, do you think if there were programs you could offer, say, for someone who's not of the age to use the senior center, that could help promote it, just to keep that flow of people coming?

Par: Yes.

Mod: That you could offer to younger people. What do you think should happen there?

Par: I think some of the educational programs, after-hours classes for the younger high school people or something, also might be utilizing that. We talked about ethnicity – language classes or something of that nature. Because you're talking about more hours in the evenings, having more people around is a safety and a comfort zone for people. That would be beneficial.

Mod: Is there anything else you wanted to add about what I asked or comments you want to make?

Par: We were talking about an advisory committee – I know the baby boomers that are here, we make suggestions and sometimes it goes over the heads of our authorities. I think trying to improve the listening part, which I think can happen with us. I think that's going to happen. The input from everyone will be listened to, whereas right now it isn't.

Mod: This is another off the wall question, but what about as far as funding, funding is an issue? The centers have to raise a certain amount of money. What do you think should happen in the future? Do you think the government should provide more money? Do you think the center should have to raise more money? How do you think the funding should come about?

Par: I think it should be joint, work together.

Par: I'd like government to do more than what they're doing.

Par: Yeah, I do too.

Mod: Unfortunately, it's probably going to get a little worse with the way things are going at the moment. We'll have to wait and see about that. Well, thank ya'll very much. I appreciate your time and effort.

[End of Session]