

Assessing Christian Discipleship Formation in Catholic Youth Ministry

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Advisor, Jennifer York-Barr, Ph.D.

October, 2008



## Acknowledgements

I'd like to express my deep gratitude to my wife, Lynn Kaster, for her support throughout my graduate studies and especially through this process of completing this dissertation. I am especially grateful for the hours spent proofreading and providing helpful editorial comments. Thanks especially for dealing with the months of stress associated with these years of graduate study.

I would also like to thank my advisor Jennifer York-Barr, Ph.D. for her incredible support throughout the writing of this dissertation. I am very grateful for her encouragement, her belief in the importance of this research, and her critical feedback to improve its quality. I also want to acknowledge the significant help Michael Baizerman, Ph.D. provided in helping me develop my research skills.

Sincere gratitude also goes to the research team that helped to conduct the telephone interviews and enter data into SPSS. I am grateful to Carrie Anderson, Jeremy Ploof, Kristina Senden, and Kristi Bivens for the hours spent working on this study. I am also grateful to my daughter Elizabeth for her proofreading help and assistance in creating tables using the APA format.

I am also deeply grateful to my colleague and friend Vic Klimoski, Ph.D. for the hours he spent providing substantive feedback on this research and proofreading numerous drafts. His support and encouragement helped me think more deeply and clearly about this research.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and especially Craig Dykstra, Ph.D. and Christopher Coble, Ph.D. for their vision and leadership in creating and sustaining theological programs for high school youth.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the intermediate outcomes of a youth ministry curriculum seeking to foster Christian discipleship. The study developed and tested a preliminary Christian Discipleship Scale seeking to operationally define Christian discipleship for assessment purposes. Telephone surveys were conducted with a representative sample (n=76) of young adult Catholics (population=113) who participated in an intensive university/seminary sponsored youth ministry program between 2000 and 2004 as high school youth. Results indicate the curriculum of theological study, justice education, prayer, and vocational discernment was influential in fostering the Christian discipleship practices of theological education, volunteer service, and prayer in these young adults. Further study is warranted on the Christian Discipleship Scale as a tool for assessing Christian discipleship formation in adolescent religious education curricula as results showed it correlated with five variables including frequencies of Mass attendance, frequency of prayer, frequency of reading scripture, involvement in religious groups, and leadership in religious groups.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of youth ministry curricula in fostering Christian discipleship in adolescents. In 1999 the Lilly Endowment Inc. provided a major grant to Saint John's University's School of Theology\*Seminary to develop a youth program that would develop interest in theological learning and encourage vocations in church leadership. These goals are in close harmony with the primary goal for Catholic youth ministry, reflecting a National Conference of Catholic Bishops' (1997) statement about empowering "young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today" (p. 9). This study seeks to assess the effectiveness of Saint John's Youth in Theology and Ministry program (YTM) in accomplishing these goals.

Sparse research has been published assessing youth ministry or adolescent religious education curricula in fostering Christian discipleship. This poses two challenges. The first challenge involves the lack of clarity surrounding the term "Christian disciple." This study will address this challenge by attempting to create an operational definition of Christian discipleship that can be used in assessment of youth ministry and adolescent religious education. The second challenge posed by the lack of published research is the difficulty it presents for comparing or corroborating the findings from this study with other published studies. These challenges are daunting, but perhaps they will be offset by the possibility of breaking new ground in the assessment of youth ministry that will ultimately lead to improvement in ministry with adolescents.

### The Statement of the Problem

Three metaconditions in the Catholic Church in the United States are impacting Catholic youth ministry and adolescent religious education. The Pew Forum on Religion

and Public Life (2008) highlights declining membership as a major problem. Pew research reports that, “Catholicism has lost more people to other religions or to no religion at all than any other single religious group” (p.19). The research indicates that one-third of adults who say they were raised Catholic no longer affiliate themselves with the Catholic Church. “This means that roughly 10% of all Americans are former Catholics” (p. 7). These findings suggest that a crisis of maintaining membership is currently occurring within American Catholicism. Consequently, youth ministry and adolescent religious education are likely to be scrutinized more closely, particularly in their effectiveness of sustaining Catholic affiliation.

The second metacondition within Catholicism is the decline in family religious practices. Research suggests that family religious practices are among the best predictors of future teen and young adult religious involvement (Smith, 2005 and Wilcox, 2005). Yet, research shows Catholic teens are being parented by adults who practice their faith less regularly. One example of the decline in practice is frequency of Mass attendance. Research by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (2008) and Gallup show weekly Mass attendance among Catholics has declined by more than 50% in the last 50 years. With large numbers of parents leaving the Catholic Church and practicing their faith less frequently, it follows that many Catholic teens are experiencing a familial religious context that makes effective religious education difficult at best. Christian Smith’s (2005) data from the *National Study of Youth and Religion* bear this out. His research shows Catholic youth scoring “5 to 25 percentage points lower than their conservative, mainline, and black Protestant peers on many of a variety of religious beliefs practices, experiences, commitments, and evaluations” (p. 194). For



example, 59 percent of Catholic teens ages 13 through 17 rarely or never attend Christian education compared to 38 percent of mainline Protestants (p.53).

The third metacondition within Catholicism impacting youth ministry and adolescent religious education is the clergy sexual abuse scandal. Years after the *Boston Globe* broke the story in January 2002 of sexual abuse of children by priests and Catholic leadership's failure to deal with this abuse and its aftermath, newspapers regularly run stories about dioceses filing for bankruptcy. What is often not reported is that diocesan youth ministry and religious education staffs are being routinely cut or eliminated to meet the financial burden caused by the scandal. Rachel Martin (2007) estimated that the clergy abuse scandal has cost the Catholic Church more than one billion dollars in legal liability. This obviously impacts funding for all Catholic programs including adolescent religious education and youth ministry. Christian Smith provides a similar conclusion about why Catholic teens score significantly lower on measures of religiosity. He argues that the Catholic Church has a "lower level of institutional commitment and investment in youth ministry at the parish and diocesan levels" (p. 210).

These three metaconditions in American Catholicism provide a challenging context for researching effective adolescent religious education. On the one hand, this crisis heightens the importance of youth ministry while; on the other hand, the lack of resources will most likely prevent any significant new initiatives. In addition to these large contextual challenges, it is also important to identify particular problems more specifically related to youth ministry and adolescent religious education.

As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, the lack of research into effective youth ministry and adolescent religious education poses problems for this study. The

literature review in chapter two will show that research assessing effective education in this field is virtually non-existent. This is very important because it makes it impossible to compare the findings from this research to other studies. Consequently, judgments about curricular success or effectiveness become difficult to make. Related to this is the problem of the lack of an operational definition of Christian discipleship. Catholic Bishops have identified discipleship formation as the primary goal of youth ministry. This goal is a beautiful ideal, but it will remain an ideal until it becomes operationally defined. In other words, if measurable criteria for “discipleship” are not established, then assessment of this goal remains nearly impossible. What is needed is an operational definition of Christian discipleship that can be used in youth ministry and adolescent religious education curricular assessment.

#### Significance of the Study

Recognizing the serious problem facing Christian churches throughout the United States, the Lilly Endowment Religion Division in 1998 established a sixty million dollar initiative to encourage Christian seminaries to create theological programs for high school youth. Saint John’s School of Theology•Seminary was one of forty-eight seminaries given grants to: 1) stimulate and foster an excitement about theological learning and inquiry and 2) identify and encourage talented Christian youth to consider vocations in the ministry. The immediate outcome of these projects was to nurture in young people ways of thinking, practices and disciplines essential to the Christian life and to encourage youth to think theologically about contemporary issues. The long-term intent of the Lilly initiative was to recruit a cadre of theologically minded Christian youth who would become ordained ministers and committed lay leaders in their churches and

society. This study of young adults who participated in the Youth in Theology and Ministry program as high school students will be significant to the Lilly Endowment because it will be the first program assessment research utilizing rigorous research methodology.

This study uses a sampling methodology that seeks a representative sample of young adults who participated in the YTM program between the years 2000 and 2004. A representative sample allows claims to be made about the entire population. This is significant because published evaluations of Lilly funded programs used convenience sampling techniques that do not allow for valid claims to be made about the population. A secondary benefit of this study, then, is that it could spur other youth ministry and adolescent religious education programs to utilize better methods in curricular assessment. Finally, this evaluative study assessing the effectiveness of one curriculum fostering adolescent Christian discipleship will attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The knowledge gained from this study seeks to be useful for curricular improvement.

A final and personally compelling reason for why this study is significant is that the voices of young people themselves are rarely considered when discussing effective Christian education and youth ministry. The voices of young adults who have had intensive youth ministry experiences have rarely been published. This study will give voice to these young people and their lived experience of their faith. This listening and advocacy for youth will hopefully add to the body of knowledge about Christian education and inform Catholic leaders about effective practice.

## Research Questions

Because this study evaluates the influence of intensive youth ministry programming on forming Christian disciples, it specifically it seeks to assess the intermediate outcomes that resulted from participation in Saint John's University's YTM program. It identifies the faith practices in the everyday life of young adults who participated in YTM. This study explores and measures Christian discipleship as embodied by these respondents.

The research questions framing this study are:

1. What are the everyday life faith practices of young adults who participated in intensive youth ministry experiences in high school?
2. To what extent did Saint John's University's Youth in Theology and Ministry curriculum accomplish its intermediate outcomes?
3. How might Christian discipleship be operationally defined for assessment purposes?

The YTM program is a 13-month youth ministry program that engages Catholic leadership youth in a curriculum of theological study, service-learning/justice education, prayer, and vocational discernment within a learning community. It consists of two, two week long, summer institutes twelve months apart held at Saint John's University. The program also includes adults mentoring youth to complete a service-justice project back in their local community between the two summer institutes. The YTM mission is to:

Apprentice Catholic leadership youth, counselors, and their adult mentors to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. YTM seeks to cultivate the practices of theological reflection, service, prayer, and leadership while encouraging a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry.

The four intermediate outcomes to be assessed in this study are the extent to which the YTM curriculum: 1) encouraged Christian faith practices; 2) nurtured excitement about theological learning; 3) encouraged a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry; and 4) apprenticed Catholic leadership youth to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The study's methodology included a telephone survey of the 113 young adults (ages 18-24) who participated in YTM's thirteen-month intensive youth ministry program between the years 2000 and 2004. It attempted to survey all 113 members of the population. The telephone survey contained quantitative and qualitative questions. Analysis of the data will utilize statistical and phenomenological methodologies.

#### Limitations

The scope of this study is limited by three main factors. The first limitation is that the population under study is Catholic young adults. More precisely, these are young adults who completed the 13-month YTM program as high school youth and at that time were affiliated with the Catholic Church. It will be argued in chapter three that this population represents an elite segment of Catholics because of their participation in the YTM program and because of the high rate of religious practice by their parents. This limits the application of findings because the population is not representative of Catholic youth in general. Further research will be needed to assess the applicability of the findings from this research to parish and Catholic school youth ministry and religious education curricula.

The second limitation of this study is that the population studied is not representative of the ethnic diversity of young adults within the Catholic Church. This is especially important as the proportion of Hispanic youth and young adults approaches 50% of the U.S. Catholic population. This factor once again limits the interpretation and application of findings.

The third limitation that relates to most research of this kind is the difficulty of determining causality. The design of this study does not allow for the isolation of curricular variables such as theological study, prayer, or service learning from other influential variables such as familial faith practices. This limits the ability of the study to make any claims of curricular causality. The study will determine the frequency of theological engagement, faith practices, and vocational choices among these young adults. It will also ask participants about the influence of the YTM curriculum on these variables. However, claims of curricular causality are beyond the scope of this research methodology.

#### Definitions of Terms

Table 1 summarizes the definitions that will be used for the key terms in this study. Like most areas of study, religious education faces challenges with its definitions of terms. For example, one frequently hears the phrase, “I’m spiritual, but not religious.” Fuller (2001) writes that spiritual “came to be associated with the private realm of thought and experience, while the word religious came to be connected with the public realm of membership in religions institutions” (p. 5). “Religious” in this context has come to mean public membership in a Church, following denominational doctrines, and

Table 1

*Definition of Terms*

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Adolescence	Current literature describes adolescence as a social construction. For the purposes of this study adolescence will be defined as 10-18 year olds.
Christian Disciple	The Greek word disciple ( <i>mathetes</i> ) literally means a “learner” or an “apprentice.” The role of the Christian disciple is precisely to be a student or apprentice in the Christian way of life. Elements of Christian discipleship include: 1) call; 2) relationship with Jesus and the Christian community; and 3) commitment to continue and extend the mission of Jesus (Rademacher, 1991, pp. 21-23).
Christian Practice	“Things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in light of God’s active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ” (Bass & Richter, 2002, p.18).
Curriculum	“The sum total of learning experiences in the local situation” (A. Lewis & A Miel, 1978, p. 17). This definition means the term curriculum includes learning activities beyond classroom instruction.
Religiosity	“Religiousness, religious feeling or sentiment” ( <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 1989). For the purposes of this study religiosity will refer to both the common understandings of spiritual and religious.
Vocation	“The place where our deep gladness meets the needs of the world.” (Buechner, 1993, p.119). Vocation is found in a “youth’s vocational (reflective) stance towards its everyday life and as its mode of being (in the world). Discernment is the validity process by which an individual decides if she can live everyday the divine call or the summons and claim of the world” (Richter, Magnuson, & Baizerman, 1998, p.35).
Youth Ministry	The efforts of a Christian congregation to foster the formation of adolescent Christian disciples (Pope John Paul II, 1993). This term will be used synonymously with “adolescent religious education.”

participation in community rituals and worship, while “spiritual” has come to mean one’s individual connection with the sacred or divine.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of “religious” and “religion” include both these distinctions. “Religious” is defined as “imbued with religion; exhibiting the spiritual or practical effects of religion; pious, godly, god-fearing, devout,” while “religion” is defined as:

Recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship; the general mental and moral attitude resulting from this belief, with reference to its effect upon the individual or the community; personal or general acceptance of this feeling as a standard of spiritual and practical life (Simpson, 1989).

For the purposes of this study the term “religious” and “religiosity” will follow the definition provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and will consequently include both the meanings of spiritual and religious that are in common usage today. This definition of “religious” is also consistent with developmental theories that stress analyzing the interactions between individuals and their communal ecologies of family, school, neighborhood, or religious community. These interactions between individual and communal contexts are thought to shape one’s religious identity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lerner, 2002).

A second definitional challenge in the field of Catholic youth ministry and adolescent religious education is the lack of agreement on the meaning of terms. Confusion exists over the meaning of the terms youth ministry, religious education, and catechesis. The Vatican’s Congregation for Clergy (1997) in its *General Directory for*



*Catechesis* uses the Greek term *catechesis* to mean all efforts at forming Christian disciples. It defines catechesis as “an apprenticeship in the whole of Christian life” (p. 57) with the aim to “encourage a living, explicit, and fruitful profession of faith” (p. 59). This suggests that all activities that foster Christian living such as prayer, charity, justice, service, and education constitute catechesis. On the other hand, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1997) in their document *Renewing the Vision* defines catechesis as one of eight components in comprehensive Catholic youth ministry. Among youth ministry professionals the term catechesis most often connotes classroom religious education and not the broader notion of catechesis described above. For example, it is common to hear youth ministers say something like: “I do like doing youth ministry, but I don’t like doing religious education.” For the purposes of this study the terms “youth ministry” and “adolescent religious education” will be used synonymously to mean all the curricular activities both inside and outside the classroom that foster Christian discipleship. These terms will be used to describe what the *General Directory for Catechesis* defines as “catechesis.”

### Summary

This study seeks to assess the effectiveness of Saint John’s School of Theology’s YTM curriculum in forming Christian disciples. It seeks to operationally define Christian discipleship in an attempt to foster assessment of discipleship formation and basically understand the faith practices of young adults who participated in intensive youth ministry as high school students. This study will gather data through telephone surveys with the 113 young adults who participated in the YTM program between the years 2000 and 2004. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide data to improve policies and practices

related to youth ministry and adolescent religious education.

This dissertation will follow a typical organizational structure. Chapter two will report the results from a review of the literature. Chapter three will discuss the methodology utilized in this study. Chapter four will highlight the results of the study. Finally, chapter five will provide a summary of the key findings of this research and then discuss implications for policy, practice, and future research.

It could certainly be argued that the current problems in American Catholicism are so pervasive that it would be futile to attempt to improve adolescent religious education and youth ministry. It could also be argued that this type of research is akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. These are legitimate and logical arguments given the contextual reality of American Catholicism. On the other hand, the vision of educating and forming a community of learners dedicated to Christ's mission of feeding all the hungry, sheltering all the homeless, and promoting peace and justice throughout the world is a dream that has defied logic for centuries and has defied even the darkest times. It is the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study may be one small step in a much larger process of rebirth.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Social science has traditionally paid limited attention to adolescent religiosity. Longitudinal studies of adolescents typically included only a few questions on the salience of God and religious practice. However, in the last few years there has been a significant increase in social science research on outcomes associating adolescent faith practices with health benefits, civic engagement, attitudes and values, academic achievement, and family outcomes. A number of new literature reviews (Regnerus et al., 2003; Benson et. al., 2003; Kerestes & Youniss, 2003) and new major social science handbooks on adolescence and religious development (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006; Ebaugh, 2005) suggest a growing interest in the field.

A literature review associated with evaluating intensive youth ministry programming would most likely focus on the published evaluation studies of youth ministry and adolescent religious education curricula. Unfortunately, this literature is almost non-existent. This researcher found only two evaluation studies of youth ministry or adolescent religious education recently published in academic journals. A common concern expressed within this literature is the general lack of knowledge and involvement in social science research and program assessment by practitioners of adolescent religious education and youth ministry.

This lack of evaluation literature is especially significant for the Catholic Church. Smith's (2005) research from the *National Study of Youth and Religion* shows Catholic U.S. teenagers scoring significantly lower on many measures of religiosity (p. 194). Catholic Church documents state the main goal of youth ministry and adolescent

religious education is to form adolescent Christian disciples. But nowhere are national standards, outcomes, or learning objectives associated with adolescent Christian discipleship identified or assessed. The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) has developed a test evaluating adolescent basic religious literacy but has not published national test data since 1994 (Convey, 1999). Nowhere in the NCEA literature is the relationship of religious literacy and adolescent Christian discipleship specifically explored. Both the lower frequencies of Catholic adolescent religiosity and the lack of a clear profile of adolescent Christian discipleship suggest further research is warranted in Catholic religious education and youth ministry educational programming.

The focus of this chapter is on the critical issues associated with evaluating intensive youth ministry programming. The limited research conducted evaluating religious educational and youth ministry curricula and adolescent Christian discipleship leads this literature review to concentrate on the follow four questions: 1) What is a religious profile of adolescents? 2) What outcomes are associated with adolescent religiosity? 3) What theory and practice will both ground and inform this study? 4) How might adolescent religious education and youth ministry evaluation studies inform this study?

#### International Profile of Adolescent Religiosity

An international perspective on adolescent religiosity can be ascertained from a variety of surveys on adolescent and young adult religious values and attitudes. A premier international study is the World Values Survey (1999-2001) conducted four times since 1981 among 18 to 24-year-olds in nationally representative samples from 81 countries around the world. The World Values Survey provides data on: 1) importance

of religion; 2) belief in God; 3) importance of God; and 4) religious practice. A second major international study is the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study (1999) that measured participation in religious sponsored organizations. This study was a nationally representative sample of 90,000 14-year-olds from 28 countries. A third study focusing on European youth, The Young Europeans Survey (1997) provides information about the religious beliefs and practices among 15-24-year-olds. The sample was of 9,400 individuals from 15 countries in Europe with an average sample of 600 per country. Francis, Robins, & Astley (2005) report findings from The International Seminar on Religious Education and Values. This is a fourth source for data and conclusions on adolescent religiosity among European youth.

*The Worlds Values Survey (1999-2001)*

The World Values Survey provided “yes” and “no” response categories to the question of belief in God. “Yes” responses ranged from 100% in Pakistan to a low of 40% in Sweden. Response categories to the question “How important is religion in your life?” were “very,” “rather,” “not very,” and “not at all.” Responses of “very” important ranged from a high of 98.1% in Indonesia to a low of 2.7% in China. Overall, 46.6% of respondents from 81 countries replied that religion was “very” important and 23.2% replied it was “rather” important. Response categories to the question “How important is God in your life?” were on a ten-point scale with 1 being “not at all important” and 10 being “very important.” The population mean was 7.58 with a standard deviation of 3.096. A response of 10 (very important) was given by 48.5% of respondents with 67.2% of responses reporting 10, 9, or 8 on the survey.

In general, this study suggests that youths and young adults in economically developed countries are less likely to be religious. For example, western European countries had low percentages of young adults reporting religion as very important to them (5% in France to 18% in Italy), compared to less developed countries in Africa (Nigeria 92.8%) and South America (Argentina, 46.3%). Table 2 offers a quick comparison of the data from the World Values Survey on adolescent religiosity from a select group of countries.

Table 2

*International Adolescent Religiosity (WVS)*

	China	France	Turkey	Nigeria	United States	Total All Countries
Belief in God	NA	61.5%	97.8%	99.7%	94.2%	87%
Religion Very Important	27.0%	10.9%	81.9%	92.9%	57.1%	46.4%
Weekly Service Attendance	2.2%	7.6%	39.1%	92.2%	45.1%	31.1%
Pray every day	NA	9.9%	NA	NA	55.1%	36.7%
Denominational Affiliation	66.1%	57.5%	98.1%	99.3%	78.5%	80.6%

Lippman and Keith (2005) highlight a survey trend since 1990 of the decline in the importance of religion in the most advanced industrialized nations “reflecting increased secularization, while in less developed countries, the importance of religion grew” (p. 113). The United States is clearly an outlier in this trend with a slight increase of the importance of religion over this time frame (Inglehart et al, 2004). It should also be noted that countries with high Muslim populations reported youths with the highest levels of belief, importance of God and importance of religion.

*The IEA Civic Education Study*

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), located in Amsterdam, is an international consortium of national research institutions whose “primary purpose is to conduct large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement with the aim of gaining more in-depth understanding of the effects of policies and practices within and across systems of education” (IEA Civic Education Study website). The IEA Civic Education Study was administered in 1999 to students at age 14 primarily from Europe, but also from South America, the Asia Pacific regions, and the United States. The study gathered data on participation in religiously sponsored organizations. Generally, participation in religious organizations by 14-year-olds is low internationally. Lippman and Keith report study averages of participation by region: Eastern European countries: 10% participation; Northern European countries: 13% participation; Western European countries: 14% participation; Southern European & Asian/Pacific countries: 20% participation; South American Countries: 28% participation; and United States: 42% participation (p. 114).

The IEA Civic Education Study corroborated data from the World Values Survey. European youth, except for Southern Europeans, are least likely to participate in religiously sponsored organizations, just as young adults in those countries are least likely to place high importance on God or religion. American youth in the United States, Chile, and Colombia have the highest rates of participation.

Although the IEA Civic Education Study collected data on adolescent participation in religious sponsored organizations, the Executive Summary (2001) of the study did not directly mention religion once. It did include the following

recommendations: “Youth organizations have untapped potential to positively influence the civic preparation of young people” (p. 10). The Executive Summary also provides data about political engagement of 14 year-olds that could relate to religious social justice activities:

On average, 59 percent of students reported that they expect to collect money for a social cause. On average, 44 percent said that they would participate in a non-violent protest march. Respondents were also very likely to endorse adults participating in environmental or community betterment organizations as a way to demonstrate good citizenship (p. 10).

#### *The Young Europeans Study*

The Young Europeans Study was commissioned by the European Commission (2001) Directorate General XXII-Education, Training, and Youth and was administered by Eurobarometer. It surveyed youth between the ages of 15 and 24 about spiritual beliefs and practices in 15 European countries. Major findings include:

- 19% of respondents indicated they believed in God and practiced a religion.
- 43% of respondents said that they had religious beliefs but did not practice a religion.
- Countries with strong Catholic heritage had rates of practicing youth believers double the European averages (Ireland-49%; Greece, 42%; and Italy-41%).
- Less than 1% of respondents belong to a spiritual group (such as a youth group, prayer group, or religious movement).



- 12% of respondents identified themselves as agnostic and 15% identified themselves as atheist (pp. 24-26).
- Approximately 21% of young Europeans with less than 15 years of education identify as practicing believers, while 43% of this group identify as non-practicing believers. For young Europeans who have 20 or more years of education, 16% identify as practicing believers, while 47% identify as non-practicing believers (Lippman & Keith, p. 117).

In summary, an international profile of adolescent religiosity would include a very high percentage who believe in God (87%), a significant percentage believe God is important in their life (67%), and close to half indicate religion is very important to them (46%). Countries with high populations of Muslim have the highest percentages in all three categories listed above. Adolescents generally have low participation in organizations sponsored by religious groups. Basic conclusions Lippman and Keith draw from these international studies include 1) as countries become more economically developed, adolescents place less importance on God and religion (the United States is the one exception to this conclusion); 2) the more education a person has, the less likely they are to be a practicing believer; 3) the “spiritual, but not religious” idea seems to be especially prevalent in Western Europe.

#### *International Seminar on Religious Education and Values*

The International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV) provides additional conclusions to the international profile of adolescent religiosity. It was established in 1978 in England to provide academic research from an international perspective about how young people perceive spirituality and faith. Francis, Robins, and

Astley (2005) provide quantitative and qualitative research from England, Germany, and Israel about Christian, Muslim, and Jewish youth. They give eight insightful conclusions that have emerged from their work. These conclusions relate to specific studies they conducted as part of the work of the ISREV, but also relate to the studies reviewed above. These conclusions provide keen insight into the complexity of adolescent religiosity in Europe and Israel and perhaps provide a fitting conclusion to an international perspective on adolescent religious involvement.

1. Europe and Israel are not heading toward rapid secularization in the way that some have predicted.
2. Religion remains a significant factor in the lives of young Europeans at the beginning of the twenty-first century.
3. Religion retains the power to shape young lives.
4. Young people across Europe are involved in a process of redefining their religious traditions for themselves.
5. The way in which young people express their spirituality and their religiosity is changing and becoming less visible to the public gaze, but no less real.
6. Today, young people's concern with religion is often focused more on personal quest than on an allegiance to religious institutions.
7. The task of the religious educator is enriched and enabled by the discipline of empirical enquiry which listens to young people themselves.
8. The churches need to listen to young people engaged in their own spiritual and religious quest (p. 11).

These conclusions about the redefinition of religious participation, institutional affiliation, and the changing way young people are expressing their spirituality and religiosity express a fundamental religious paradigm shift that has taken place in Europe away from religious affiliation and participation. This may be a harbinger of things to come as countries develop economically and become better educated. It may also be a harbinger of things to come for the United States.

#### Profile of U.S. Adolescent Religiosity

A number of nationally representative surveys have been conducted in the United States over the last fifteen years that include questions on adolescent religious involvement. The major studies include Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth, National Education Longitudinal Study, National Household Education Survey, National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 and 1997, National Survey of Adolescents in the United States, National Survey of America's Families 1997 and 1999, National Survey of Children, National Youth Survey, Survey of Parents and Youth, Teenage Attitudes and Practices Survey 1989 and 1993, Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study, Volunteering and Giving Among Teenagers: Independent Sector, and the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). The only nationally representative study specifically focused on religious involvement is the NSYR. Smith (2005) provides the findings of this study in the recently published book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. The other nationally representative studies ask a few questions about religion in their surveys that typically address affiliation, frequency of attendance and importance

of religion. The Monitoring the Future study begun in 1975 is particularly helpful because it provides longitudinal data that can identify behavior and attitudinal trends.

*The National Study of Youth and Religion*

The National Study of Youth and Religion (2003) represents the most comprehensive study of youth and religion in the United States. It is important because it provides a nationally representative profile of U.S. teens and their perspectives on religion. Funded by a sizable grant from the Lilly Endowment the study had a four-fold purpose:

1. To research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of U.S. youth;
2. To identify effective practices in the religious, moral and social formation of the lives of youth;
3. To describe the extent to which youth participate in and benefit from the programs and opportunities that religious communities are offering to youth;
4. To foster an informed national discussion about the influence of religion in youth's lives to encourage sustained reflection about and rethinking of our cultural and institutional practices with regard to youth and religion.

The NSYR conducted two waves of research on American adolescents. The first wave was conducted from July 2002 to April 2003. It included telephone surveys of 3,290 English and Spanish speaking youth between the ages of 13 and 17 and utilized a national random-digit-dial telephone sampling method that produced a nationally representative sample of U.S. teens. The first wave of research also included personal in-depth interview with 267 teens. (Smith, pp. 292-302). The second wave of the study did

follow-up telephone surveys with a nationally representative sample of the initial group of youth (78% of the original 3,370) between June and November 2005 with youth ages 16-20. In depth personal interviews were again conducted with 120 individuals. Results have not yet been published about the second wave of the study.

The NSYR provides data on multiple spiritual and religious variables for the U.S. adolescent population and breaks out the data into six religious traditions: conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Mormon/Latter-day Saint. This split does not specifically include religious traditions with less than 1% of the sample such as Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or Native American. *Soul Searching* reports the following religious profile of U.S. adolescents from the NSYR:

- 84% report belief in God (Table 8, p. 41) while 36% feel extremely close or very close to God (Table 7, p. 40).
- 51% report religious faith as extremely important or very important in shaping daily life (Table 7, p. 40).
- 40% attend religious services once a week or more often (Table 6, p. 37).
- 84% report religious affiliation (Table 1, p. 31)
- 55% report having made a personal commitment to live life for God (Table 10, p. 45).
- 38% report praying daily (Table 11, p. 46).
- 69% report being involved at one time in a religious youth group, while 38% report current involvement (Table 14, p. 51).
- 46% report attendance of religious Sunday school or CCD a few times a month or more often (Table 15, p. 53).

- 45% report having attended a religious retreat, 39% report having attended a religious summer camp, and 30% report participation on a mission trip or service project (Table 15, p. 53).

This statistical profile from the NSYR of U.S. adolescent religious involvement is strikingly similar to the international totals from the World Values Survey. 1) Belief in God (WVS: 87% and NSYR: 84%); 2) Responses that God and Religion were very important (WVS: God-67% and Religion-46% to NSYR: 51%); 3) weekly attendance at religious services (WVS: 31% and NSYR: 40%); and 4) daily prayer (WVS: 37% and NSYR: 38%). Statistically, U.S. adolescent religiosity looks similar to the composite of adolescent religiosity from 81 countries across the world. However, it is important to note U.S. adolescent religious and spiritual involvement is much higher than in Northern and Western Europe whose adolescents share similar economic development and educational attainment.

Perhaps the most compelling information from the NSYR comes from the 267 in-depth interviews with teens from 45 states. These interviews provide insight into understanding the complex layers of meaning associated with religion and spirituality. For example, the NSYR interviews explored the question of importance of faith. “We asked them outright how important their faith is to them, why and in what ways” (p.136). Smith identifies the following layers of meaning associated with this question. Some youth are very clear about the importance of faith in their lives: These teens report, “I base everything I do on faith, it affects every action I make” (p.138). By contrast, the majority of young people speak more moderately about the importance of religious faith.

Religion helps them in knowing right from wrong, making good decisions, providing a sense of hope and purpose in life, motivating them to be moral and altruistic, and helping them get through hard circumstance (p. 138).

Smith explains that for many U.S. teens this actually means that religion is very important “in the strictly religious sector of their lives. Religion influences them religiously—that is when it comes to church attendance, basic beliefs, prayer, and so on—but not necessarily in other ways” (p. 138). Another layer of meaning interpreted from the interviews was the difference between actual importance of religion and its ideal importance. One young person said, “I think it should be the, for me, I think it should be the central thing, um, yeah” (p. 140). The authors posit that this youth, like many others they interviewed, is caught between the ideal (religious faith should be very important) and the real that it is not really that important. A final interpretation Smith and Lundquist make on this question is that religion seemed to “be mostly part of the furniture in the background of their lives” (p. 140). They report that in the interviews teens repeatedly lacked specific examples of religion’s importance. This was in sharp contrast to what teens offered in other sections of the interview where they could provide great detail about school or relationships. For example, a teen who reported religion was very important also “denied in every other section of the interview that religion had anything to do with her relationships, dating, school work, or any other aspect of her ordinary life” (p. 140).

The interpretation of meaning from these interviews is important because it provides insight into the layers of meaning underneath the statistic that 51% of U.S. adolescents report religious faith as extremely important or very important in their lives. The NSYR

interviews clarify that some of these 51% have integrated the importance of religion into their everyday lives, while the majority seem to be saying that religion is important only in the religious sector of their life or simply represent religious scripts of the ideal importance of religion. The point here is that although 51% of U.S. teens report that religion is very important in their lives, only a small number of teens have actually integrated the importance of religion into their everyday life.

From the NSYR interviews Smith draws the following conclusion about the religious and spiritual lives of U.S. teens.

1. It is a fundamentally wrong assumption that American teenagers are rebellious. “American teenagers are exceedingly conventional in their religious identity and practice” (p. 120). The vast majority of teens across denominations said they simply believe “what they were raised to believe” (p. 120).
2. “We found very few teens from any religious background who are able to articulate well their religious beliefs and explain how those beliefs connect to the rest of their lives” (p. 131).
3. “Many U.S. teens across all religious traditions seem to hold in their minds a negative image of people who are too religious, which they definitely seek to avoid by muting their own religiosity” (p. 141).
4. “For most teens, nobody has to do anything in life, including anything to do with religion. “Whatever” is just fine, if that’s what a person wants” (p. 143).
5. “We discussed in depth with teens what religion was all about, whether religion has any value, why anyone would want to practice a religious faith, what religion does and does not do in their own lives. What we heard from most teens is



essentially that religion makes them feel good, that it helps them make good choices, that it helps resolve problems and troubles, that it serves their felt needs” (p. 148).

6. The researchers state they hardly ever heard teens express the idea that religion “is about significantly transforming people into, not what they feel like being, but what they are supposed to be” (p. 149).

Smith coins the term “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” to express a composite view of U.S. teen religiosity and spirituality that lies just underneath the layer of organized religion. “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism exists, with God’s aid, to help people succeed in life, to make them feel good, and to help them get along with others—who otherwise are different—in school, at work, on the team, and in other routine areas of life” (p. 169). Basically, this view suggests adolescents in the United States across religious denominations view God and religion in starkly intrapersonal terms that accommodate the pluralism in this country. Smith and Lundquist contend that for American youth religion is primarily about helping one be personally happy, do the right thing, and get along with others.

*Monitoring the Future. A Continuing Study of American Youth*

According to the Monitoring the Future website, this study surveys approximately 50,000 students in eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade from the United States each year to study their behaviors, attitudes, and values. Twelfth grade students have been surveyed since 1975, while eighth and tenth grade students have been surveyed since 1991. Additionally, annual follow-up surveys are mailed to a sample of each graduating class for a number of years after their high school participation in the study. The religious

questions that have been asked in this survey relate to religious affiliation, frequency of religious service attendance, and the importance of religion. The compelling value of this study is that it provides data on trends associated with U.S. adolescent religious practices.

Wallace, Forman, Caldwell, and Willis (2003) report the following patterns of religiosity of American young people from the Monitoring the Future study. The data indicates that as youth get older their religious involvement decreases. The data across the grade levels suggest that approximately “one third of them might be considered very religious” (p. 110). Sixty percent of eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students report that religions is at least “pretty important” to them and 31% to 34% say that it is “very important.” Likewise between 33% and 44% indicate that they attend religious services weekly and between 84% and 87% claim some affiliation to a religious denomination (p. 110).

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive Online Data Analysis System provided the latest 2004 Monitoring the Future (twelfth grade survey) data on religious service attendance among U.S. twelfth graders: 32.8%: once per week or more often; 15.6%: once or twice per month; 34.1%: rarely; and 17.4%: never. Participants provided the following 2004 responses to the question “How important is religion in your life?”

31.2%	Very important
27.7%	Pretty important
24.5%	A little important
16.7%	Not important

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive Online Data Analysis System allows for analysis by individuals of the variables in the Monitoring the Future survey. A cross tab analysis of the variables listed above shows that the frequency of religious service attendance increases proportionally to the increase in the importance of religion and conversely decreases proportionally to the decrease in importance of religion. In other words, participants who indicated that religion was very important attended religious services most often (63.6%), while those who indicated that religion was not important most often reported never attending religious services (60.6%).

Longitudinal data from this study show a decline in high school seniors' weekly church attendance: 1976: 41%; 1991: 31%; 1999: 34%; and 2004: 33%. This attendance data show an initial decline in weekly attendance at religious services between 1976 and 1991, but then relative stability. The proportion of high school seniors reporting religion as very important has fluctuated only slightly since 1976.

The important trend of U.S. adolescent religiosity emerging from the Monitoring the Future study of twelfth grade students suggests stability in both weekly church attendance and the importance of religion variables since 1991. These have remained virtually unchanged in the United States during that time frame.

In a number of studies utilizing data from the Monitoring the Future data Youniss and colleagues (Kerestes, Youniss, & Metz, 2004; Youniss et al., 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997) found that youth that were more engaged religiously were also more involved in community service and civic activity. Youniss et al. (1999) reported that students who believe that religion is important in their lives were about three times more like to participate in service than those who did not report that religion is important. Likewise, in

a study tracking sophomores to their senior year in high school civic involvement such as demonstrating for a cause or participating in political activities was positively associated with stable and increasing religiosity (Kerestes, Youniss, & Metz, 2004).

The overall spiritual and religious profile of adolescents in the United States provided here suggests that American youth look more like developing countries in their high prevalence of belief in God and the importance religion has for them. U.S. adolescents also appear to be unique among developed countries in their high rates of belief in God, reported importance of God in their life, and religious involvement.

#### Profile of U.S. Catholic Adolescent Religiosity

Limited research has been conducted on Catholic adolescent religious involvement. The Center of Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) completed the *New Directions in Catholic Youth Ministry: A National Study of Catholic Youth Ministry Program Participants* (1996). It claims to be the first national data available specifically on Catholic youth ministry. This study collected 6,010 questionnaires from youth participating in Catholic youth programs. Forty Catholic dioceses from across the United States were asked to distribute and collect the surveys. Efforts were made to select parishes and programs that were as representative as possible, but this survey is not a representative sample of U.S. Catholics. A second study specifically on Catholic teens analyzes data from the NSYR. The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) commissioned McCorquodale, Shepp, and Sterten (2004) to write the *National study of youth and religion: Analysis of the population of Catholic teenagers and their parents*. This report provides helpful data on Catholic youth that is not provided in the *Soul searching* book. Two final studies provide a profile of Catholic young adult

religious involvement do not focus directly on youth. Bendyna and Perl (2000) conducted *The young adult Catholics in the context of other Catholic generations* study. It provides an “examination of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of young adults Catholics and how they compare with Catholics of other generations” (p. 3). The sample size for this study was 2,635 Catholics. The telephone survey calls were made on the basis of random-digit dialing and screening questions to target Catholic respondents. Data from this study give a helpful Catholic generational perspective on religious involvement from high school to young adulthood and beyond. A similar study, *American Catholics Today*, by D’Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, and Gautier (2007) not only provides longitudinal data on generational differences, but also provides data on highly committed Catholic young adults.

#### *Catholic Data from the National Study of Youth and Religion*

Smith and Denton devote an entire chapter in *Soul Searching* to analyzing Catholic youth and their families. They note, for instance, that Catholic youth score “5 to 25 percentage points lower than their conservative, mainline, and black Protestant peers on many of a variety of religious beliefs, practices, experiences, commitments, and evaluation” (p. 194). Smith concludes that U.S. Catholic teens are “faring rather badly” (p. 216).

Tables in chapter two of *Soul Searching* compare Catholic youth religious involvement to Protestant youth involvement:

- 41% of Catholic youth reported religious faith as extremely or very important in shaping their daily life compared to 51% of all U.S. teens, 50% of mainline

Protestant, 67% of conservative Protestant, and 73% of Black Protestant teens (p. 40).

- 41% of Catholic teens have made a personal commitment to live life for God compared to 55% of U.S. teens, 60% of mainline Protestant, 79% conservative Protestant, and 74% of Black Protestant teens (p. 45).
- 40% of Catholic teens report attending religious service once a week or more compared to 40% of all U.S. teens, 44% of mainline Protestant, 55% of conservative Protestant, and 41% of Black Protestant teens (p. 37).
- 40% of Catholic teens report never having attended Sunday school or CCD/Religious Education compared to 29% of all U.S. teens, 19% of mainline Protestant, 13% of conservative Protestant, and 12% of Black Protestant teens (p. 53).
- 45% of Catholic teens report participation in mealtime prayer compared to 54% of all U.S. teens, 54% of mainline Protestants, 67% of conservative Protestants, and 79% of Black Protestants (p. 55).
- 40% of Catholic parents report the church is extremely or very supportive and helpful to them in trying to raise their teen compared to 55% of U.S. parents, 48% of mainline Protestant, 64% of conservative Protestant, and 65% of Black Protestant parents (p. 64).

These statistics present an alarming profile of Catholic teen spirituality and religiosity when compared to Protestant teens. The authors offer five explanations for Catholic teenage religious laxity: 1) Demographic differences: Catholics congregate in regions of the country that are less religious; 2) Low levels of Catholic parent religiosity: Catholic

teen religious laxity simply reflects the religious laxity of their parents. The study found that Catholic parents were far less likely to participate in organized church activities outside of worship than their Protestant counterparts; 3) Lack of institutional commitment of resources: only 67% of Catholic teens belong to congregations that offer youth ministry programs while between 81 and 86 percent of Protestant teens do. Similarly, only 21% of Catholic parishes have hired a full time paid youth minister compared to 37-44% of Protestant congregations; 4) Changes in Catholic schools and CCD: simply put, decades ago Catholic schools and religious education was staffed by priests and nuns. Today this is no longer the case; and 5) Upward mobility and acculturation: historically Catholics in the United States were often regarded as dangerous outsiders because they threatened the dominant Protestant religious order and because their allegiance to the pope was viewed as threatening American democracy. Today, Catholic teens are part of the mainstream of American culture. They come from relatively well off families and find very little in the culture that reminds them of their religious historical distinctiveness or tensions (pp. 207-215).

The data from the NSYR have generated a great deal of concern about Catholic youth and their families as evidenced by numerous articles on this subject in Catholic publications and numerous conferences and workshops across the country focused on this. For example, in 2006 the Youth in Theology and Ministry program at Saint John's University sponsored a workshop discussing this Catholic data from the NSYR. To our amazement, 160 youth ministers, priests, religious education directors, Catholic school principals, and vocation directors attended the full day workshop. This was the highest

participation (double) for any workshop Saint John's School of Theology offered that year.

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) commissioned McCorquodale et al. (2004) to write a report analyzing the Catholic data in the NSYR. This report provides information that differentiates Catholic youth by race, Catholic school attendance, parish religious education attendance, and youth group participation.

Race responses for Catholic teenagers ages 13 to 17 from the NSYR sample: White-60%, Hispanic-30%, Black-4%, Asian-2%, Mixed-2%, Native American-1% and Islander-less than 1% (p. 10). *Instituto Fe y Vida*, a Catholic Hispanic research organization reports that in 2005, 44% of Catholics between the ages of 10 and 19 are Hispanic. This discrepancy suggests that Catholic Hispanic Youth may be underrepresented in the NSYR. Another indicator of this possible underrepresentation in the survey is that 96% of Catholic teens reported speaking English as their primary language and only 4% Spanish. The only data broken down by race in the NFCYM report were on attendance at worship for Catholic teens by race. White Catholic teens reported attending Mass weekly-41%, Hispanics-37%, and Blacks-23% (p. 15).

The NFCYM report provides interesting comparisons between Catholic teens attending Catholic Schools (9%), participating in a youth group (24%), and/or attending parish religious education or CCD (60%) and those not attending these religious education programs. The table below provides cross tab comparisons of these groups with four variables: 1) How important is religious faith in shaping daily life? 2) How close do you feel to God? 3) How often do you attend religious service? 4) How often do you pray? Results of these cross tabulations are summarized in the Table 3.



Table 3

*Catholic Adolescent Religiosity & Catholic School Attendance*

	Importance of Religion: “Very & Extremely” Responses	Close to God: “Very & Extremely” Responses	Weekly service attendance	Daily Prayer
Catholic School Student	55%	39%	63%	33%
Non-Catholic School Student	40%	36%	42%	34%
Parish Religious Education Student	47%	36%	53%	40%
Youth Group Participant	59%	39%	67%	46%
Youth Group Non-Participant	36%	31%	36%	30%
Religious Ed. Non-Participant	33%	27%	28%	26%

A consistent pattern emerges that Catholic youth who participate in youth groups, Catholic schools, or parish religious education have higher positive frequencies on these four religious variables. However, since youth group participation and Catholic school attendance only includes 24% and 9% of the Catholic population respectively and since Catholic youth group participation is primarily voluntary unlike participation in parish religious education and perhaps Catholic school, the data are likely to be somewhat skewed.

McCorquodale et al. provide the following overall conclusions and corresponding recommendations from their analysis of this Catholic teen data from the NSYR.

1. “It is impossible for the church to empower young people to live as disciples if the young are not present in the faith community” (p. 57). Recommendation: The church needs to excite, motivate, and equip teens with the skills needed to eventually become faith filled, practicing Catholic adults (p. 58).
2. “When young people are drawn into participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community the results are very positive” (p. 59). Recommendation: Church leadership must find ways to encourage participation in religious activities (p. 60).
3. “The statistics and findings of this report demonstrate that active participation in parish programming, regular Mass attendance, and enrollment in Catholic schools reduces at-risk behaviors in youth” (p. 60). Recommendation: The faith community should recognize the diverse pastoral needs of young people who are struggling with depression, alcohol and drug use, sexual abstinence and respond (p.61).

Comparing the main conclusions and recommendations in this NFCYM report to the explanation of the data provided by Smith in *Soul Searching* highlight important differences in assumptions about youth and youth ministry. Smith as a sociologist explains the low level of Catholic teen spirituality and religiosity primarily through geographic location, social factors of parental practices, institutional financial commitment, and acculturation, while the NFCYM report highlights a call for the church to more effectively engage individual teens. In a sense the NFCYM has a micro perspective focusing on individual teens disassociated from social factors, while Smith has a macro perspective on the larger social forces that are influencing this behavior.

Keeping both the micro and macro perspectives will be critical for a successful evaluation of intensive youth ministry.

*New Directions in Catholic Youth Ministry*

Bryan Froehle's *New directions in Catholic youth ministry: A national study of Catholic youth ministry program participants* (1996) provides some helpful data about Catholic youth involved in Catholic youth ministry programs particularly related to families and vocations. However, since the sampling plan utilized was not representative of Catholic youth or even representative of Catholic youth participating in Catholic youth ministry activities, these data should be taken with a grain of salt.

In the study, Catholic youth participating in youth ministry programming were given ten possible factors influencing participation with four possible responses: very much, somewhat, a little, and not at all. The four factors with the highest frequencies of "very much" were: 39%: social activities; 38%: friends who were involved; 37%: family's urging and support; and 37%: a safe and caring environment (p. 6).

Fifty-five percent also reported that they personally placed very much importance on having a strong family life. This population of youth also reported significantly higher levels of regular Mass attendance by their parents. Seventy percent of mothers of youth ministry participants were reported to attend Mass once a week or more, and 55% of their fathers. This compares to 42% of Catholic parents reporting weekly Mass attendance in the NSYR (McCorquodale et al., p. 14). These high frequencies of parental participation in weekly religious services and the strong family support for youth group attendance suggest that Catholic youth who attend youth ministry programming are coming from families highly engaged in faith practices. It corroborates the Smith's

conclusion that Catholic youth involvement mirrors the faith practices of Catholic adults. It also raises questions of the validity of the conclusion of the NFCYM report that active participation in parish programming reduces at-risk behaviors in youth. Is it the actual participation in religious education programming that reduces at-risk behaviors? Or is the family culture of religious practice a confounding variable lurking behind the reduction in at-risk behavior for these highly practicing youth?

The *New Directions in Catholic Youth Ministry* study also provides important information about Catholic high school youth and vocations to religious life, ordained ministry, and lay ministry. This study reports that 51% of youth participating in youth ministry have considered working for the church without becoming a priest, brother, or sister, while 30% have considered service as a priest, brother, or sister (p. 12). This study also reports that only one-fifth of these Catholic teens who participate in Catholic youth ministry activities report parental encouragement to consider a religious vocation. Froehle concludes that further study is needed here.

Some exploration needs to be made of the degree to which the lack of parental encouragement may be a symptom of wider social trends that make religious vocation less attractive today—or whether the lack of parental encouragement is in itself a principal reason for the relative low numbers of youth actively pursuing a vocation to priesthood or religious life (p. 14).

*Young Adult Catholics in the Context of Other Catholic Generations*

The Bendyna and Perl (2000) study for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate provides data on religious involvement across four generations of Catholics. Although this information is not directly about Catholic teens, it does provide a context

for understanding the life cycle of U.S. Catholic religiosity. Bendyna and Perl categorize American Catholics into four generations: 1) World War II Generation: Catholics age 76 and older at the time of the study; 2) Silent Generation: Catholics between the ages of 57 and 75; 3) Vatican II Generation: Catholics between the ages of 40 and 57 in 2000; and 4) Young Adult Generation: Catholics between the ages of 18 and 39. This study examines the importance to participants of their Catholic faith, Mass attendance, participation in religious education, parish registration, and consideration of vocations to the priesthood or religious life as a sister.

Table 4

*Catholic Religiosity by Generations*

	Catholic Faith “Very Important”	Weekly Mass Attendance	Attended <u>Neither</u> Catholic School or CCD	Sent Children to <u>Neither</u> Catholic School or CCD	Registered Parishioners
Young Adult	43%	22%	16%	53%	56%
Vatican II	54%	35%	12%	21%	69%
Silent	73%	59%	15%	8%	77%
World War II	85%	63%	27%	7%	85%

The basic trend is that Catholic religiosity diminishes with each successive younger generation. The young adult generation provides an interesting confluence of data: 43% report that their Catholic faith is “very important” to them and 56% are registered members of a Catholic church, yet only 22% attend Mass weekly and surprisingly 53% of those with children have not sent their children to Catholic schools or CCD. Bendyna

and Perl note that the survey did not ask the age of the respondent's children. They caution about the reliability of this frequency: "It is possible that the size of this generational gap is partly due to the likelihood that children of some young adults have not reached school age" (p.36). However, these data basically resonate with the Catholic data from the NSYR on both religious service attendance and participation in religious education variables.

The vocation data in this survey was reported by gender. The percent of men who ever considered being a priest or brother produced these results: Young Adult Generation: 18%, Vatican II Generation: 34%, Silent Generation: 25%, and World War II Generation: 35%. Among women in the survey those who ever considered being a sister or nun, showed similar variation: Young Adult: 17%, Vatican II: 33%, Silent: 35%, and World War II: 17%. The trend from these data show consideration of priesthood or sisterhood dropped by nearly half for both men and women between the Vatican II generation and the Young Adult generation. Comparison with the *New directions* vocation data on Catholic teens is not helpful because the survey population in that study only included teens engaged in Catholic youth ministry. The NSYR also did not ask any questions about careers or vocations in Church ministry or leadership. This points to another area for further research.

#### *American Catholics Today Study*

The D'Antonio et al. (2007) study is the fourth in a series of longitudinal studies of American Catholicism. The authors hired the Gallup organization "to produce a random sample of 875 self-identified American Catholics" (p.7) using random digit dialing. The sample included young adults born between 1979 and 1987 (Millennials).

The researchers developed a commitment index based on frequency of Mass attendance, importance of the Catholic Church in their lives, and whether they would consider leaving the Catholic Church. To score high on the commitment index the subjects stated they attended Mass weekly or more often, the Church was among the most important parts of his or her life, and that they would probably not consider leaving the Church. The American Catholics Today Study did not find a single young adult Catholic (n =79) high on the commitment index:

The Millennials (9% of the total) included nobody who scored high. Whether this is simply an expression of youthful desire to be free of religious bonds that may change later remains to be seen (p. 39).

*Summary of U.S. Catholic Adolescent Religiosity*

An overall profile of U.S. Catholic teenage religiosity includes a nearly universally belief in God (85%). Data from the NSYR (Smith; McCorquodale, et al.) suggest that Catholic teens break into three main groups with approximately 40% strongly affiliated, 40% marginally affiliated, and 20% non-affiliated. A surprising number of the religious variables in the NSYR show about 40% of Catholic teens highly engaged: 42% report religious faith as very important; 31% report feeling very close to God; 41% report making a personal commitment to live life for God; 39% report weekly Mass attendance; 44% report praying every day; 41% report attending religious Sunday school or CCD at least monthly; and 37% report attending at least one religious retreat, rally, or conference.

A second major cohort of Catholic teens is the marginally affiliated group. These Catholic teens might be labeled the “somewhat” group. They represent about 40% of

Catholic teens in the United States: 41% report religious faith as somewhat important; 43% report feeling somewhat close to God; 37% report attending Mass a few times a year to once a month; 25% report praying about once a month or less; 19% report attending religious Sunday school or CCD a few times a year.

This cohort of Catholic youth and parents concerns Catholic educators the most. Will this cohort remain marginally engaged or is this cohort on its way to non-affiliation? Can the Catholic Church take steps to engage this group and increase affiliation? One way or another, it is this “somewhat” group of Catholic teens that will significantly influence the future profile of American Catholicism.

The last cohort of Catholic teens could be described as the “non-affiliated” group. This group is about 15 to 20 percent of Catholic youth in the United States. For all practical purposes, their Catholic religious involvement is non-existent. Their Catholic identity is most likely a cultural marker and not a religious one. The “non-affiliated” cohort includes the following Catholic teens: 18% report religious faith as not very important or not important at all; 26% report feeling very distant to God or do not believe in God (5%); 14% report they would never attend religious services if it was totally up to them; 11% report never attending religious services; 13% report never praying; and 40% report never attending religious Sunday school or CCD.

Depending on one’s perspective this religious profile of Catholic youth in the United States could be viewed as a crisis or as a success. If a person from Western Europe reviewed this data they would likely conclude that the Catholic teen religiosity is vibrantly strong in the United States. For example, data from France, a traditionally Catholic country, had only 62% of teens reporting believe in God, 10% saying religion is



very important to them, 8% attending religious services weekly, and only 10% praying every day. Compared to the French data, U.S. Catholic data look very strong. However, when Catholic teen religiosity is compared to U.S. Protestant teens, one could easily conclude with Smith that Catholic teens are “faring rather badly” (p. 216).

The data on young adults are even more challenging. The findings from both the Bendyna and D’Antonio studies show that Catholic young adults are significantly less affiliated with the church than previous generations. These findings on young adults corroborate the data from the Pew indicating that one-third of adults who were raised Catholic are no longer affiliated with the Catholic Church.

#### Positive Outcomes Associated with Adolescent Religiosity

It is clear from this profile of adolescent religiosity that religious belief and practices are prevalent throughout the world. A growing body of research has begun to associate religious and spiritual engagement with positive outcomes related to health, academic achievement, civic involvement, and family relationships (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Scales & Leffert, 2004). However, Regnerus, Smith, and Fritsch (2003) point out a general neglect of research on the intersection of religion, health, and social behavior (p. 5). This section of the literature review will examine the recent research on positive outcomes associated with adolescent religiosity connected to health, civic engagement, pro-social attitudes and values, academic achievement, and family.

#### *Health Benefits Associated with Religiosity*

There are not an abundant number of studies on the health benefits associated with adolescent religiosity, but enough studies have been conducted that the academy is

starting to take notice of the influence of religiosity on health. Hummer, Rogers, Nam, and Ellison (1999) found that the positive health benefits of weekly church attendance are inversely proportional to the negative effect of smoking a pack of cigarettes a day in adults. This amounts to a health benefit of seven additional years of life for those who attend church weekly. Wallace and Forman (1998) found consistent relationships between religious measures including church attendance and religious salience and the following positive health behaviors: diet, exercise, sleep habit, and seat-belt use. Adolescents who reported no religious affiliation reported higher frequencies of health risk behaviors in these areas.

Jessor, Turbin, and Costa (1998) completed a similar study on the protective factors related to healthy diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, good dental hygiene, and seatbelt use. This was a longitudinal study of 1,493 Hispanic, White, and Black high school students in a large urban school district. The study attempted to find out about how indirect “distal” factors may serve to regulate health behavior (p. 731). Religiosity was one of these seven distal factors. Religiosity was a four-item scale, measuring the importance of religious beliefs and teachings for the direction of daily life along with commitment to conventional values and personal control against non-normative behavior (p. 791). The study concluded that all seven distal factors (including religiosity) correlate with positive health behavior:

Religiosity, a commitment to school, having friends who take part in conventional activities like youth group and community volunteer work, an orientation toward parents, positive relationship with adults, church attendance, and involvement in

prosocial activities all turn out to be protective factors associated with adolescent health behavior (p. 798).

Heath, Madden, Grant, et al. (1999) reported in their study utilizing a national survey that the more adolescents reported a reliance on religious beliefs to deal with daily problems, the less they used alcohol or tobacco. This was after controlling for family socioeconomic factors, ethnicity, church attendance, and religious affiliation.

Harker (2001) documents in a nationally representative study of U.S. adolescents that religiosity reduced levels of depression among immigrant youth. Religiosity was defined in terms of attendance at worship, prayer, and the importance of religion. Harker concluded that religion was an important aspect of adolescent well-being.

Nooney (2005) analyzed data from the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*, Wave I, 1994-1995, which used a nationally representative sample of seventh through twelfth grade schools, to determine the relationship between religious involvement and adolescent depression and suicide. The three dimensions of religion examined in this study were church attendance, frequency of prayer, and importance of religion. Findings from this study show that each religious variable “exhibits a statistically significant, albeit small,” relationship with the outcomes of decreases in the depression scale score and suicide ideation (p. 344). Nooney concludes:

Religiosity is more strongly related to social support, self-esteem, and active problem solving, for example. These intervening variables, in turn, are related—in some cases quite strongly—to outcome variables of depression and suicide ideation (p. 348).

Once again we see in this study a statistically significant yet small relationship between religious engagement and positive health outcomes. However the author does have an interesting endnote on why Wave II data analysis from the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* were not presented in this article:

The effects of Wave 1 religious involvement on Wave II dependent variables were generally weak and not significant, not unlike many longitudinal studies of religion and mental health. Thus, only Wave I results are reported here (p. 352).

This means that over time the statistical effects of religious involvement on the variables of depression and suicide ideation no longer remain significant.

These studies point to numerous health benefits associated with adolescent religiosity. The positive health outcomes include better sleep, diet, exercise, dental hygiene, seatbelt use, and an overall sense of well-being. Religiosity in adolescents is also associated with less tobacco and alcohol use and less depression and suicide ideation among teenagers. This is very good news for religious communities. Multiple studies are showing religious participation as having a positive impact on adolescent health. Should churches use this information in their marketing efforts? Perhaps caution should be advised here because of the limited number of studies in this area and because of the relatively small degree of association shown in most studies between religiosity and health benefits.

#### *Civic Engagement*

Youniss, McLellen, and Yates (1999) utilized data from *Monitoring the Future* to study the relationship between religiosity and service. High school seniors reported the extent to which they completed service during the past 12 months. The *Monitoring the*

*Future* data showed stable rates of service from 1970 through the 1990: “22-24% of the seniors report regular service, defined as monthly, weekly, or daily” (p. 246). They conclude that students who “believe that religion is important in their lives are almost three times more likely to do service than students who do not believe religion is important” (pp.246-247). However, Regnerus, Smith, and Fritsch’s (2003) review of the literature point out that another national study of teenage volunteering by Sundeen and Raskoff (1995) suggests “that teenagers who were committed to religious and spiritual goals were no different in their levels of volunteerism” (p.24).

Churches have the ability to provide both an ideological context and a place to practice skills of civic engagement. Common skills practiced by youth in church settings include community service such as working in soup kitchens or tutoring children after school. Other skills might include writing letters to elected official or even public protest. On the one hand these skills directly relate to civic engagement and on the other hand can be easily transferable to other domains. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) found civic skills such as these significantly associate with civic participation. In other words adolescent involvement in their church may be an important training ground for future civic involvement.

#### *Pro-Social Attitudes and Values*

In a small study of 125 African American and European American low income eleventh grade youth, Markstrom (1999) studied the relationship of three forms of religious involvement to psychosocial values identified in Erik Erikson’s work: ego strengths of hope, will, purpose, fidelity, love, and care. The three forms of religious involvement included attendance at religious services, participation in a Bible study

group, and youth group involvement. Results from this study showed the associations between religious involvement and psychosocial values were most apparent for European American youth. “Levels of religious attendance did not vary the African American scores on hope” while for European Americans “greater hope was found among those who attended religious services more frequently or were in a Bible study group” (p.218). The importance of hope stems from Erikson’s (1980) view that hope is an antecedent to adult faith and to Vaillant’s (1993) claim that resilience relies on hope. Higher degree of will, purpose, ego strength, and care were all positively associated more strongly in the European American group. Generally, religiously engaged youth are more likely to report having a sense of meaning and purpose. Findings for the African American youth showed youth group participation “was associated most strongly with more accepting and open attitudes toward groups other than one’s own” (p. 219). This study highlighted ethnic distinctions in its findings. The author suggests that further research is using race, ethnicity, and social class as focal variables.

A similar small study related church attendance to well-being among adolescents. Demir and Urberg (2004) studied the relationship between church attendance and well-being indicators of happiness and depressed mood. Results from this study showed adolescents “frequently attending church were happier and less depressed than those adolescents who were not attending church frequently” (p. 63). This data was taken from a sample of 618 students in eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade from two large suburban school districts in the Midwest. Ninety-eight percent of this sample was Caucasian.

### *Academic Achievement*

Do empirical studies demonstrate any effect of religion on individual academic achievement? Overall, modest correlations have been found between academic achievement and religiosity. Once again, there are not numerous studies in this area, but what has been done offers some helpful insight.

Lehrer (1999) related denominational affiliation to the number of years of schooling using the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households. He found that Jews have the most years of education and conservative Protestants have the least. Catholic and mainline Protestants are in the middle.

Several studies related academic achievement and religious participation to the concept of social capital. James Coleman utilized this concept of social capital in his massive studies of Catholic high schools. Coleman advanced the notion of social capital in his controversial findings that Catholic schools were “better” at educating disadvantaged students than public schools. Coleman (1990) argued, “The degree of cohesion, sustained by parish or religious organizational ties, had much to do with student’s success. In a closely knit community students enjoyed a ‘social capital’ that enriched the resources of information and oversight available to them” (p. 386). Coleman relates the concept of social capital to achievement. “Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence” (p. 302). Muller and Ellison (2001) use the National Educational Longitudinal Survey in an attempt to determine whether the connection between religious involvement and academic achievement is due to social capital. They

found that engagement in religion is clearly associated with higher levels of social capital in the family and community. Religiously engaged students report higher educational expectations from parents, more parent child interaction, more extensive parental knowledge of child's friends, and closer relationships with academically oriented peers. Regnerus and Elder (2003) report church attendance positively associated with educational progress particularly in economically depressed neighborhoods. They explain this phenomenon in terms of a protective mechanism especially for youth from low-income settings that generate relationships, values, and sanctions that become "a transferable skill set of commitments and routines" (p. 646).

Loury (2004) utilizes data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth in a study of the importance of religious engagement for educational achievement. Loury attempts to correct the ongoing probability of omitted variable bias by including controls for test scores, educational aspiration, and unobservable variables with older sibling educational attainment. Lowry study found that church attendance significantly increases the years of schooling completed. Attending church weekly correlated with an additional three years of schooling.

Negative influences of religion on academic achievement have been documented in authoritarian and anti-intellectual traditions such as the Amish, pre-Vatican II Catholicism and modern day Christian fundamentalists who would certainly be defined as suspicious of modern learning in the area of evolution and Biblical criticism. Darnell and Sherkat (1997) found that youth affiliated with Christian fundamentalist denominations that held the Bible to be literally and historically accurate had lower



educational aspirations. This study also found parents of these adolescents had lower educational aspirations for their daughters than for their sons.

### *Positive Family Outcomes*

Recent scholarship (Regnerus, et. al., 2006; Wilcox, 2005) highlights the association between parental religiosity and adolescent religiosity. A general consensus is that parental religiosity is the most important factor in adolescent religiosity.

Considerable literature exists about the quality of family relationships, child discipline and their relationship to parental religion. Pearce and Axinn's (1998) long-term study of the influence of religion on the relationships between mothers and their children found evidence that as religious salience increased in the mother, the more likely her child reported a closer or higher quality relationship with her. This effect of a closer or higher quality of relationship pertained to both the child and the mother. An interesting finding included that when 18-year-old children reported similar religious attendance, this closer relationship extended for five years.

Chandy, Blum, and Resnick (1996) found that adolescent religiosity served as a protective factor against negative outcomes for adolescents with parents of histories of alcohol or sexual abuse. They found that adolescent self-perception as religious was the greatest predictor of resilience in their model.

Not all family religiosity is positive. Ellison, Bartkowski and Segal (1996) report a positive association between spanking and theological conservatism and Ellison and Sherkat (1993) report conservative Protestant parents disproportionately valued obedience in their children and generally held more negative views about human nature. In extreme instances religion can also be used to justify abusive behavior. Arterburn and

Felton (2001) utilize the term “toxic faith” for parents who justify their abusive behavior in terms of religion.

Wilcox (2005) provides a very insightful conclusion concerning the link between family outcomes and religious institutions in his chapter on the family in the *Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions*:

Religious [institutional] vitality and family vitality will move in concert with one another; in other words religious institutions will not typically be strong in societies and communities where the family is weak and the family will not usually be strong in societies or communities where religious institutions are weak (p.115).

Although there are a growing number of studies that suggest an association between adolescent religiosity and positive outcomes related to health, civic involvement, academic achievement, pro-social attitudes and involvement and family, there continues to be broad debate about the nature, size, and scope of this relationship. Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, and Benson (2003) conducted a study utilizing the Search Institute database isolating religious importance and religious participation in relationship to thriving indicators and risk behaviors. Their study had the following mixed results: Senior high girls with more religious participation reported lower risk behaviors ( $B = -.10$ ). The results for the senior high boys were similar to the senior high girls but at a reduced level ( $B = -.05$ ). The results for the junior high girls showed the absence of this positive effect while the results for the junior high boys showed an actual increase reporting of risk behaviors ( $B = .05$ ) (p. 281). This study is a good example of the complexity of relating adolescent religiosity to a variety of positive outcomes. There

seems to be a positive effect, but it is not consistent. Wagener et al., provide a conclusion to the results of their study that in many ways also provides an appropriate conclusion to the current state of empirical research on the direct and indirect effects of adolescent religiosity.

One may conclude that the absence of strong unique effects for religion upon risk and thriving indicators suggest a modest role for religion. We would argue that the model demonstrates that religious influence is better understood with the network of supportive relationships, personal obligations, and shared values common to religious communities (p.281).

#### Religious Education Theory and Practice

The Vatican document from the Congregation of Clergy (1997) *General Directory for Catechesis* is the official theological reference for religious education in the Catholic Church. The term “catechesis” is basically used within the Catholic Church to refer to all religious educational activities that initiate, form, and educate Catholics of all ages into fullness of Christian living:

The “moment” of catechesis is that which corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalized, and provides a basis for first adhering to him. Converts, by means of “a period of formation, an apprenticeship in the whole Christian life” are initiated into the mystery of salvation and an evangelical style of life (p. 57).

The use of the term “general” in the title of the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) is important since it functions as a general point of reference for catechetical content, pedagogy, and methodology. It is to be used by Catholic churches throughout the world

as a reference for creating national catechetical directories that respond to and adapt these principles to their unique cultural situations. Its basic intention is that of “offering reflections and principles, rather than immediate applications or practical directives” (p.11).

A main principle of the GDC is its situating catechesis within the evangelical mission of the Church. It labels catechesis as a moment within the process of evangelization, but this is a bit confusing because this “moment” is considered a life-long process.

Evangelization is defined as the essential mission of the Church:

The Church exists in order to evangelize, that is the carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men [and women] and renew the human race (p.40).

This renewal of the human race occurs through a process of conversion and catechesis.

Pope Paul VI (1975) explains the two forms of conversion within Catholic theology. The first is the conversion of the individual to faith and the second is conversion of societies to practices and policies of social justice (pp. 15-16). Christian scriptures use the phrase “kingdom of God” to express this ultimate goal of evangelization. This “kingdom of God” concept in Catholic theology is distinct from heaven. It includes heaven, but also includes working here and now to fashion ‘heaven on earth’ through social justice. The critique of Karl Marx that religion co-opts its members away from social justice with its theology of heaven as a reward for earthly suffering is minimized in Catholic theology. Evangelization as the mission of the Catholic Church includes unceasing efforts to end earthly suffering caused by unjust social practices and policies.

This life-long moment of catechesis follows an initial conversion in an individual and helps this conversion mature through education, sacraments, community life, and participation in the mission of the Church. The GDC defines catechesis as a life-long apprenticeship in forming Christian disciples engaged in the mission of evangelization. Ideally, the Catholic Church orients catechesis primarily towards adults (p. 166) because adults have the capacity to live the Church's mission in its fullest form. Realistically, catechesis has been primarily oriented towards children and adolescents. The GDC acknowledges a basic problem of focusing catechesis on children and teens is that it is too often concludes with confirmation when teens "virtually abandon completely the practice of the faith" (p. 173).

According to the GDC, "youth catechesis must be profoundly revised and revitalized" (p. 173). It argues that young people should not merely be considered objects of catechesis, "but also active subjects and protagonist of evangelization and artisans of social renewal" (p. 175). Emphasis in adolescent catechesis should include:

Education in truth and liberty as understood by the Gospel, to the formation of conscience and to education for love. Emphasis should also be placed on vocational discernment, Christian involvement in society and on missionary responsibility in the world (p. 176).

Adolescent catechesis thus becomes a process of apprenticing young people to community of faith engaged in the mission of evangelization.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1997) document *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* provides the operational vision and goals for youth ministry in the Catholic Church in the United States. *Renewing the Vision* became

the first youth ministry document to be officially endorsed by the National Council of Catholic Bishops. Though this document does not recommend program models or specific practices, it does provide a comprehensive vision for Catholic youth ministry that includes three goals:

1. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
2. To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.
3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person (pp. 9-18).

These goals are to be accomplished in a framework for youth ministry called “comprehensive ministry with adolescents.” This framework suggests that it takes a whole church community to accomplish the goals of youth ministry and that it is a mistake to think that these goals can be accomplished solely through the efforts of a youth minister. This “comprehensive” model has eight distinct components: catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care and prayer and worship (p. 26). *Renewing the Vision* situates adolescent catechesis as one of these eight components. Referring to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, this document defines adolescent catechesis as “the totality of the Church’s efforts to make disciples” (p.28).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005) document, the *National Directory for Catechesis*, applies Vatican teaching on evangelization and catechesis as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* to the contextual setting within the

United States. This 314-page document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops simply re-iterates much of what was written in the GDC. It does however break new ground in two ways. First it establishes three goals for adult catechesis:

1. It invites and enables adults “to acquire an attitude of *conversion to the Lord*.”
2. Catechesis for adults helps them make “a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through *membership in the Christian community*.”
3. Catechesis for adults helps them to become more willing and able to be a *Christian disciple in the world*. It enables adult disciples to accept their rightful place in the Church’s mission to evangelize, to hear the cry for justice, to promote unity among Christians, and to bear witness to the salvation won by Jesus Christ for all (pp. 188-189).

The NDC clarifies adult Christian discipleship to include participation in the Church’s mission to evangelize, working for justice, ongoing conversion, and membership in the Church. These three goals for adult catechesis are quite similar to the three goals of Catholic youth ministry. This document also breaks new ground in a four-page section on catechesis of adolescents where it states “effective catechetical programs for adolescents are integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral ministry for youth” (p. 201). This is the first Catholic catechetical document that acknowledges the comprehensive framework of youth ministry espoused in *Renewing the Vision*.

Confusion exists in the definitions of the terms catechesis and evangelization provided by these Catholic Church documents. The GDC designates evangelization as the Church's essential mission in the world and situates catechesis as a life-long process within it. *Renewing the Vision* does not define evangelization and catechesis in this way.

It locates evangelization and catechesis as two of eight components within the framework of comprehensive youth ministry. The theoretical problem is that *Renewing the Vision* does not define comprehensive Catholic youth ministry within the context of the Church's mission of evangelization and catechesis. *The National Directory for Catechesis* acknowledges the role of comprehensive youth ministry in adolescent catechesis, but it does not resolve the confusion highlighted above. These Church documents agree that adolescent catechesis seeks to form adolescent Christian disciples. But nowhere in these documents is a clear profile of adolescent Christian discipleship provided. Nowhere in these documents do we receive extended thinking about the social, cognitive, physical, moral, religious, or cultural development of adolescence in relationship to Christian discipleship. Perhaps this lack of definitional clarity fuels confusion about the distinctive roles religious education, youth ministry, and Catholic schools play in adolescent catechesis.

#### *Adolescent Christian Discipleship*

Theologians do not agree on a comprehensive definition or profile of adolescent Christian discipleship, yet they do provide important insight. Michael Warren provided such insight into adolescent Christian discipleship at two recent lectures at the Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture. In "Youth Ministry in an Inconvenient Church," Warren (2002b) challenges youth ministry to think seriously about the meaning of forming adolescent Christian disciples. Warren argues that youth ministry has become a ministry of fun rather than an apprenticeship in Christian Discipleship:

Its goal is to get the young to love the church and to know that the church loves them. The young are to feel good about the Church and to feel good about



themselves...In some youth ministry programs, the most significant event of the year is the annual ski trip. (p.94).

Warren argues that more attention should be given to Christian discipleship skills than to skills for an annual ski trip.

In a second essay "Cultural Resistance in Youth: Problems and Possibilities," Warren (2002a) addresses how the contexts of peer groups, family, and church shape the hearts of young people. The essay focuses on finding adult communities of faith who do not merely give lip service to Christian values, but live out these values and commitments in visible ways (p.7). "However, I know of no more powerful antidote to the false promises of a consumerist society than that of finding a religious group of persons who live faithfully and wisely in today's world" (p.8). In this lecture Warren questions if youth can find this type of adult faith filled community to teach them.

O'Connell's (1998) research into value-formation and group norms provides interesting information that addresses Warren's question. He argues that since individuals are influenced by groups it may be more accurate "to say that particular value preferences are the possession of groups than that they are the possession of individuals" (p. 77). O'Connell highlighted the research of sociologist Samuel Oliner who as a small boy escaped death in the Holocaust only because he was hidden by Christian neighbors. Oliner studied 682 authenticated rescuers and 126 non-rescuers in an attempt to discover how the rescuers developed personalities characterized by care, universality, and attachment. Oliner discovered a critical influence on rescuer's development was the way in which their parents disciplined them. Group behavioral norms were cited most often for the reason for rescuing behavior. He found that the rescuer's parents depended

significantly less on physical punishment and significantly more on reasoning. Eleven percent of the rescuers explained their behavior on grounds of principle, 37 percent offered explanations utilizing the language of compassion, but most significantly, 52 percent used the language of group norms (O'Connell, pp. 82-86). Oliner and Oliner (1988) write:

Their responses were less explicit conscious choices than characteristic ways of attending to routine events...Many rescuers themselves reflected this view, saying that they "had no choice" and that their behavior deserved no special attention, for it was simply an "ordinary" thing to do (pp. 221-222).

This raises important questions about the interplay between individual and community values and commitments. Is adolescent Christian discipleship primarily about an individual adolescent's commitment to faith practices or is it primarily about the community's living out of these faith practices? Or are the two interwoven in an interactive ecology?

O'Connell notes that discipleship is a central theme in Christian scripture. The Greek word disciple (*mathetes*) appears 261 times and literally means a "learner" or an "apprentice." The role of the disciple is precisely to be a student. In the gospels, Jesus initiates discipleship as an invitation to "follow him." In defining discipleship, O'Connell refers to the work of theologian William Spohn who noted three concrete characteristics of disciples. Jesus taught the disciples to *notice* the overlooked, provided a *motivating* challenge to act, and he formed their *identity* as disciples (p. 16).

Milavec (1982) explores Christian discipleship as a two-fold process of apprenticeship. The first process has apprentices assimilate for themselves the

performance skills that characterize the living masters of the tradition. The second process does not allow the apprenticeship to deteriorate into a benevolent brainwashing because as apprentices become new masters “they dedicate their energies to revealing as-yet-undisclosed manifestations of those realities which they serve” (p.3).

Milavec compares the process of Christian apprenticeship to that of the Suzuki method of music education. Suzuki disagrees with many music teachers who imagine music students require a special gift to excel in music. Such music teachers believe “to endeavor to train someone who doesn’t have ‘the basic gift’ is doomed to frustration” (p. 11) Suzuki strongly disagrees. Likewise apprenticing Christian disciples is not reserved to a religious few, and becomes possible through a disciplined approach of skill attainment.

The four gospels portray Jesus, as viewed by his contemporaries, as a master apprenticing disciples. “The Greek designation for Jesus was *diaskalos* (master), and his principal activity was *didaskein* (to apprentice)” (p. 83).

Careful studies of secular Greek literature reveal that *didaskein* specified the systematic acquisition of a performance skill under the direction of an accomplished master (*didaskalos*)...It is especially important to note that *didaskein* was never employed when the mere transmission of information was implied (p. 84).

Milavec suggests that such a teacher would be recognized by the “profound impact that he/she had upon their personal life-orientation” (p. 84). The personal call the disciple receives from the master as an experience of conversion that “imparts to them a new personal identity” (p. 125), and which leads them to “nothing less than a transformation

of the status quo of religious self-understanding” (p. 126). This is a call to justice and righteousness.

Rademacher (1991) provides the following criteria of a Christian disciple from the New Testament. These five criteria provide a good profile for both an individual disciple and a community of disciples: 1) Disciples are learners; 2) Disciples have a very personal relationship with the master. “A relationship that shapes their entire life” (p.22); 3) Disciples respond to a call from Jesus to follow him; 4) Disciples continue and extend the mission and ministry of Jesus; and 5) Disciples are ordinary people (pp. 21-23).

#### *Constructing an Operational Definition*

Six criteria of Christian discipleship emerge from the review of the literature (*General Directory for Catechesis, National Directory for Catechesis, Renewing the Vision*, Warren, O’Connell, Milavec, & Rademacher) and can be incorporated into an operational definition. While there is certainly room for disagreement over exact criteria, the following operational definition attempts to identify inherent characteristics of Christian discipleship for assessment purposes. The definition rests on the following six principles:

1. A Christian disciple is a learner. The etymology of the Greek word *mathetes* “means a learner or an apprentice” (O’Connell, p. 16).
2. A Christian disciple experiences and responds to a call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ (*General Directory for Catechesis*, #53).
3. A Christian disciple has a personal relationship or friendship with Christ (Rademacher, p. 22).

4. A Christian disciple is committed to participate in Christ's mission to build the Reign of God (*National Directory for Catechesis*, pp. 98-99 & *General Directory for Catechesis*, #46-47).
5. A Christian disciple is committed to being part of a community of Christians dedicated to this mission (Warren, 2002a, p. 8).
6. A Christian disciple self identifies as a Christian disciple (*General Directory for Catechesis*, #56).

This study will attempt to incorporate these six criteria into a scale that can be used to assess adolescent Christian discipleship growth. It is the first documented operational definition of Christian discipleship.

### *Vocation*

The Catholic Church's understanding of vocation has primarily related vocation to ordained ministry or religious life. This is due to a number of historical, theological, and cultural reasons. Mercer (2002) writes that in the Middle Ages a Christian view of vocation was a "call to a position set apart from others that was so thoroughly ensconced that the very word 'vocation' became restricted to priests or persons in a monastic order" (p.30). In this view priests and those in monastic orders had vocations while everyone else did not. This understanding of vocation as priest was further reinforced during the Reformation as a Catholic reaction against Protestant theology stressing the priesthood of all believers. This priesthood of all believers meant that all Christians had a call from God and a vocation (p.31). As a reaction against a theology of the priesthood of all believers, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) polemically emphasized the hierarchy of the priesthood or steps in the hierarchy of Catholic priesthood. The twenty-third session of

the Council of Trent contained eight canons specifically addressing priesthood. Canon II translated by Waterforth (1848) provides a snapshot of this theological reaction against Protestant thought:

If any one saith, that, besides the priesthood, there are not in the Catholic Church other orders, both greater and minor, by which, as by certain steps, advance is made unto the priesthood; let him be anathema (p. 174).

This historical and theological legacy remains in the Catholic Church today, but a broader notion of vocation has recently emerged to include marriage and sometimes the generous single life as vocations. The addition of more than 30,000 lay ministers working in the Catholic Church in the last forty years as youth ministers, directors of religious education, and directors of worship has also raised the issue of lay ministry becoming a true vocation in the Church.

However, even with these newer notions of vocation within Catholicism, the historical linkage of vocation to priesthood still dominates. Examples of this can be found on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The USCCB department responsible for vocations is named Vocations and Priestly Formation. Within the USCCB Vocations and Priestly Formation website, there is a list of 46 English prayers for vocations that dioceses and parishes from across the United States use in their community worship. Of the 46 prayers listed only seven of the prayers specifically mention prayers for lay ministers. Most of the prayers focus exclusively on vocations to priesthood and religious life. A sample prayer from the website illustrates this point:

Jesus, high priest and Redeemer forever, we beg you to call young men and women to your service as priests and religious. May they be inspired by the lives of dedicated priests, brothers, and sisters (§ 25).

Another factor reinforcing the notion of vocation as a call to ordained or vowed life has been the sharp decline in the numbers of priest and religious women in the United States over the last forty years. Table 4 shows data from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) website.

Table 5

*U. S. Catholic Vocation Data on Priests and Sisters*

	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005
Priests	58,632	58,909	57,317	49,054	42,839
Priestly Ordinations	994	771	533	511	454
Parishes without Resident Pastor	549	702	1,051	2,161	3,251
Sisters	179,954	135,225	115,386	90,809	68,634

This decline in the numbers of priests and sisters within Catholicism over the last 40 years has been defined as a vocation “crisis” and has led to renewed effort to recruit young men to the seminary. Within this crisis mentality about “vocation,” recruitment efforts typically highlight priesthood while marriage, religious life, and lay ministry are often ignored.

The word "vocation" comes from the Latin *vocare*, meaning "to call." Simpson (1989) in the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the following definitional distinctions for vocation:

- The action on the part of God of calling a person to exercise some special function, especially of a spiritual nature, or to fill a certain position.
- Divine influence toward a definite (especially religious) career.
- Natural tendency to, or fitness for, such work.
- The particular function or station to which a person is called by God
- One's ordinary occupation, business, or profession.
- Those who follow a particular business or profession
- A call to a public position (§ 1-7).

Vocation could mean one's natural inclination and abilities (internal) towards a career without a religious sense of call (non-religious). As in: "My vocation is to teach. My natural ability and interest in teaching is my vocational calling." On the other hand vocation can also mean one has been divinely inspired or influenced (religious) to choose a career through some outward sign or experience (external). As in: "I was watching the sun set and I experienced being called by God to be a teacher. Teaching is my vocation."

Two prominent theologians illustrate these distinctions in their definitions of vocation. Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann (1979) defines vocation as "finding a purpose for your life that is part of the purposes of God" (p.126). Frederick Buechner (1993) defines vocation as "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need" (p. 119). Parker Palmer (2000) uses Buechner's definition of vocation to explore its internal religious dimension:



Vocation does not come from a voice “out there” calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice “in here” calling me to become something I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God (p. 10).

Palmer explains this internal discovery of original selfhood is understood differently within different traditions. The humanist tradition relates this concept to identity and integrity. Thomas Merton describes it as discovering one’s “true self,” while the Quaker’s identify it as finding the “inner light” or “that of God” within each person (p.11).

Merton and the Quaker tradition represent an incarnational Christian theology where humans are created in the image of God and are in relationship with each other and God. Incarnational theology does not begin with God out there, but with divinity being enfleshed within the humanity of Christ, within the individual person, and within relationships. The New Testament term for this community of relationships is *ecclesia*, (church) which literally means “the called out ones” (Mercer, p. 32). Fowler (1984) captures this sense of relationship in his definition. “Vocation, seen as a call to partnership with God on behalf of neighbor, constitutes a far more fruitful way to look at the question of our specialness, our giftedness, and our possibilities of excellence” (p. 102).

At the YTM Summer Institute, the high school youth read Palmer’s chapter, “Now I become Myself,” as part of the curriculum focused on vocation. These notions of “true self,” “deep gladness,” or “personal passion” captivated a number of students. In the summative evaluations of 2006 YTM Summer Institute we received the following written responses from youth to a vocation question asking if they have any clearer understanding of God’s call in their lives:

- Through talks about finding our “true self,” I started to deeply think about my vocation.
- Yes, because YTM actually focused on discerning vocation and gave us information on how to do that.
- I know that I have many passions that could lead to discerning my vocation and I feel I can better discern it now, but I still don’t know what my vocation is.
- Yes, I realized that my “future” job wasn’t really what I wanted; it was actually what my parents want.
- No, not at all. I just need to be myself and it will be all right.

Notice the language of adolescent vocational engagement is nearly always oriented towards a future time frame. This suggests that teens do not currently have a vocation and will only arrive at a vocation once they become adults and figure out their career. This is reflected in the significant lack of published research on adolescent vocations. An August 17, 2006 EBSCO Host database search found only 34 academic journal references for searches with the key words vocation and 1) adolescent, 2) adolescence, 3) teen, and 4) youth. Of these 34 references only two entries specifically addressed adolescent religious vocations. This raises a provocative question: “Do adolescents have a vocation precisely as adolescents?”

Richter, Magnuson, and Baizerman (1998) provide insight into this agency-structure debate through a four-fold vision of youth-hood that provides an expanded conceptual framework for understanding youth, vocation, and youth ministry. They identify the following four frames of youth-hood:

- 1) The cultural/symbolic perspective considers youth as an “idea” that has taken different forms for particular cultures during different historical epochs.
- 2) The socio-structural perspective considers youth in terms of their social stations, roles, and scripts made available to teenagers in relations to those made available to other age groups.
- 3) The political perspective considers youth as a generational cohort within a defined system of law and public policy.
- 4) The personal perspective considers youth from the perspective of individual agency, existential meaning making, and religious faith (p.341).

This framework includes both sides of the agency-structure debate. “Vocation is an anthropological and religious interpretation of personhood in relation to others and God” (p. 340) and can assist young people to “transcend social practices that distort their realities and limit their possibilities” (p.340).

The importance of this four-fold vision of youth is that it provides a framework to deepen vocation questions. The Catholic perspective on vocations too often only poses the limited question: “Is God calling you to be a priest or sister?” The definitions provided by Buechner and Brueggemann expand the question to: “What is my true self and how is God calling me to make the world better?” But these questions only address the personal perspective outlined in the Richter, Magnuson, and Baizerman framework. The other three perspectives raise important vocation questions to consider:

- 1) How does our culture’s idea of youth with its fears and idealizations influence teenage vocational discernment?

- 2) How do social scripts and developmental theories influence teenage vocational discernment?
- 3) How does the exclusion of teens from political agency shape their vocational discernment?

These three questions provide a good counterbalance to a strictly personal understanding of vocation. The authors write:

The challenge for youth—as for adults—is to resist being reduced to an individual representation type of some group. The challenge of becoming a person is to resist all social forces that threaten one’s capacity for transcendence (p. 350).

Taking into account the social, political, and symbolic influences on youth provides a much deeper and richer understanding of vocation. Within this framework we have taken a quantum leap from: “Have you thought about being a priest?”

#### *Faith Development Theory*

Faith development theory was conceived as a framework for understanding how human being conceptualize God and its consequent impact on their values, beliefs, and meanings and relationship with others. Building upon the cognitive theories of Piaget and Kohlberg’s theory of moral reasoning, James Fowler (1981) created his theory of faith development that included six stages. Streib (2004) writes that Fowler’s theory has had significant impact on the field of religious education for more than twenty years with over eighty dissertations with a primary focus on this theory (p. 430). Streib also found books on Fowler’s theory “are the absolute bestsellers among religious educators in the United States” (p. 431). The wide dissemination of this theory over the past twenty years argues for its importance, while also providing plenty of time for critique. This section of

the literature review will explore three aspects of Fowler's faith development theory. We will first review Fowler's definition of faith, then give a brief overview of Fowler's six stages, and finally provide a brief analysis and critique of the theory.

Fowler's (1981) definition of faith attempts to be inclusive of all religious and spiritual experiences. Fowler writes that faith "is an integral part of one's 'character' or 'personality'" (p. 92). Following the writings of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Fowler states "faith involves an alignment of the heart or will, a commitment of loyalty and trust" (p. 11). Referring to the Hindu term for faith, *sraddha*, meaning "to set one's heart on," Fowler argues that "setting one's heart" on something requires that one sees or has seen the object or point of that loyalty. This seeing then becomes cognitively appropriated:

Faith, therefore, involves vision. It is a mode of knowing, of acknowledgement.

One commits oneself to that which is known or acknowledged, and lives loyally, with life and character being shaped by that commitment (p. 11).

Faith is defined by Fowler as a way of knowing or a way of making meaning that is distinguished from belief. Belief is the "holding of certain ideas" and may be "one of the ways faith expresses itself" (p. 11). Fowler argues, "One does not have faith in a proposition or concept. Faith, rather, is the relation of trust in and loyalty to the transcendent" (p. 11). Beliefs then become fashioned from this relationship.

Fowler's description of religion flows from Smith's (1963) notion of religion as "cumulative traditions." These are the various expression of the faith and beliefs of people created over time such as texts, myths, creeds, rituals, and rites. In this framework faith and religion become reciprocal:

Faith is awakened and nurtured by elements from the tradition. As these elements come to be expressive of the faith of new adherents, the tradition is extended and modified, thus gaining fresh vitality (Fowler, 1981, p. 10).

Belief, religion, and faith all become interconnected. However, Fowler argues that faith is the most fundamental category that is a “generic, universal feature of human living” (p. 14) that has taken on a variety of forms of religious practice and belief throughout human history.

In summary, Fowler defines faith as a cognitive process that is generic to the human condition. Faith is the construction or shaping of the purposes and meaning of life in light of ultimate reality.

“Whenever we properly speak of faith, it involves people’s shaping or testing their lives’ defining directions and relationships with others in accordance with coordinates of value and power recognized as ultimate (p. 93).

Fowler’s theory of faith development has six stages. These stages are conceived as developmental. According to Fowler’s theory, individuals may reach chronological adulthood but not progress beyond the faith stages associated with childhood or adolescence. The following brief overview of the six stages provides only a rudimentary description of each stage. Prior to the first stage of faith development Fowler describes “primal faith” from birth to age two. Following Erik Erickson’s framework, the primary developmental task is the development of basic trust through the relationship with parents and caregivers.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith. This stage of faith typical occurs between the ages of two to seven. This is the imaginative and imitative time when the child can be

powerfully and permanently influenced by the visible faith of their parents or other primary adults. Fowler (2006) contends that with the development of language “we see the emergence of a style of meaning making based on an emotional perceptual ordering of experience” (p. 38). At this stage the possibility exists of aligning the symbols and images of a religious tradition with the feelings of love and companionship as well as terror and guilt. “Such possibilities give this stage the potential for forming deep and long-lasting emotional and imaginal orientations—both for good and for ill” (p. 38).

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith. The ages of individuals in this stage typically range between seven and puberty or about twelve years old. In this stage the child begins to appropriate the stories, beliefs and rituals that symbolize belonging to his or her community. Meaning making is primarily constructed through these faith stories and appropriated with literal interpretation. Simple fairness and reciprocity becomes the typical moral pattern. “Stories are as close as the mythic-literal stage comes to reflective synthesis” (p. 39).

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith. This stage often begins in puberty and can last throughout life. This is the early stage of abstract thinking and allows for reflection on and synthesis of meaning. “God representations can be populated with personal qualities” (p. 39). It is also a “conformist” stage in the sense that persons conforms to the judgments of significant others and lack the capacity of third-person perspective taking. This means that a person at stage three is dependent on “significant others for confirmation and clarity about one’s identity and meaning” (p. 40) and locates authority within traditional structures or in the norms of a valued group.

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith. This stage can emerge in young adulthood.

This stage includes the capacity for critical thinking about the values, beliefs, and commitments of the community the individual had previously aligned with in Stage 3.

This can be a painful process because “one must struggle with developing a self-identity and self-worth capable of independent judgment” towards the people, institutions, and worldviews “that anchored one’s sense of being up until that time” (p.41). Authority relocates in this stage from an external “they” to within oneself. Fowler writes,

In constructing the individuated-reflective position, inherited familiar symbols, creeds, beliefs, traditions, and religious trappings are scrutinized and those of other traditions may be evaluated for what they have to offer (p. 41).

If traditional religious beliefs and practices are retained after this reflective process, they are typically held with more awareness and intentionality.

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith. This stage of faith can occur in adults who “recognize that truths of all kinds can be approached from multiple perspectives and that faith must balance and maintain the tensions between those multiple perspectives” (p. 41). This is the stage where individuals express an interest and openness to other religious and cultural traditions and think that dialogue can lead to new and deeper understandings and even new insights into their own beliefs and traditions (p. 41). This essentially is the faith stage encouraged by the Diana Eck (2001) and the Harvard Pluralism Project.

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith. This is the stage for rare individuals like Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mohandas Gandhi who non-violently oppose a social injustice on the grounds of the universal dignity of all humans. Action for justice for individuals in this stage transcends divisions caused by race, nationality, economic status, or religious tradition. Fowler states, “They are exceptional in the strength of their passion that all



creation should manifest God's goodness and that all humanity be one in peace" (p. 41).

These six stages of faith begin with ever widening circles of inclusion. The early stages of faith begin with relationship of the child and the parent while Stages 2 and 3 expand to include the local community and significant peer relationships. Stages 4 and 5 expand beyond the local community to include the wisdom of other faiths. Finally stage 6 is inclusive of all people.

Writing about the thirty years of response to faith development theory, Fowler (2004) observes that Catholic religious educators were the first to claim and use it in their practice. The theory offered helpful scaffolding similar to Kohlberg's moral development theory that could be used in shaping the educational aims and teaching methods. He suggests Catholic theological anthropology, which trusts in reason informed by faith, provided an ethos for receptivity (p. 411).

Fowler observed that among Protestants, reaction to faith development theory were decidedly mixed (p. 411). The major theological criticism of the theory came from Protestants (Dykstra and Parks, 1986) who argued that the theory suggested the contents of the Christian faith could be viewed as interchangeable with that of other traditions and that this theory suggested the ultimate goal of faith was essentially pluralism:

They hold faith to be unique and particular to the Christian or to another specific tradition. For them, faith is not generic, and it is not definable apart from the contents and the practices of particular traditions (Fowler, 2006, p. 43).

To this critique, Fowler writes, "It should never be the primary goals of religious education simply to precipitate and encourage stage advancement" (p. 44). He argues that

stage advancement, understood properly, “is a by-product of teaching the substance and practices of faith” (p. 44).

It should be noted that a significant new school of religious education based on faith practices was founded as a result of this critique of Fowler’s theory (Bass, 1997; Dykstra, 1999, Bass & Richter, 2002; and White, 2005). This new school of Christian religious education argues that faith is way of living. Dykstra and Bass define Christian practices in Bass (1997):

Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God’s active presence for the life of the world (p. 5).

A particularly interesting text relating to adolescent youth ministry and religious education is Bass and Richter’s (2002) *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*. It outlines eighteen Christian practices for teens including practices related to stuff, bodies, and prayer. The practices movement argues that faith is ultimately about response and involvement, not simply cognitive reasons for involvement.

Two other critiques of Fowler’s faith development theory should be mentioned. First, developmental theories tend to overlook cultural diversity. Scarlett (2006) writes:

The wealth of information now obtained from new disciplines such as cognitive anthropology suggests that no stage-structural theory can do justice to the rich variety of thinking and acting that is found in and among cultures (p. 29).

A second critique notes the lack of empirical studies validating the theory (Streib, 2004; Leak, Loucks, & Bowlin, 1999). Empirical research is particularly needed to validate the higher stages of the theory.

In conclusion, Fowler's faith development theory has been very influential within Catholic religious education circles, while within Protestant religious education it has spawned a new faith practices approach. Fowler's theory will be of particular benefit to this researcher's evaluation study because it provides a cognitive framework for analyzing the faith meaning making of young adult Catholics. The cognitive delineations between Stages 3 and 4 and perhaps Stage 5 will provide assistance in analyzing the reasons why young adults practice their faith and the meaning they bring to these practices.

#### Evaluating Adolescent Religious Education Curricula

Congregations provide numerous programs and experiences that seek to educate and form adolescents to become faithful adult members (disciples). Catholic religious education and formation curricula broadly conceived (evangelization and catechesis) include all those experiences and programs that help form Christian disciples committed to the Church's mission and engaged in congregational practices. These broadly defined educational experiences could include everything from the architecture of the worship space, to the religious symbols used in worship, to interactions with community members, to practices of prayer, to the beliefs, values, and moral norms of the community. Congregations also typically have religious education programming targeted to teens. These may include structured learning experiences in a parish or Catholic school, community service, mission trips, retreats, sacramental preparation, youth group, social activities, or retreats. This final section of the literature review will specifically review published evaluation studies of religious educational programming and evidence of their success in achieving their learning outcomes. We will start with a review of

evaluation studies of congregational religious educational programming and then focus on Lilly Endowment funded programs for the theological engagement of youth.

### *Evaluating Congregational Religious Education*

How effectively are congregational adolescent religious education programs fostering adult Christian discipleship or meeting their program objectives or outcomes? The answer to this question is a resounding, “We don’t know.” A database search using the Academic Search Premier EBSCO Host Research Database and ERIC revealed an almost non-existent literature evaluating youth ministry and adolescent religious education. Only five articles in this entire database address evaluation of youth ministry, and even this is misleading. When adolescence, adolescent, youth, teen, or teenager are added to the religious education search criteria, only one article out of the original 65 remained. This is similar to results from the ERIC database search that used the following search parameters: evaluating or evaluation or assessment and youth ministry or religious education or catechesis and adolescent or adolescence or teenager. This search produced only eight articles. The date of the most recent article in this ERIC database search was 1993. It is interesting and revealing that the majority of articles in these two database searches were advocating evaluation and assessment of religious education and youth ministry programming (Hess, 2000; Fancourt, 2005; Markuly, 2002) and not published research assessing youth ministry or adolescent religious education curricula. Table 5 provides a summary of this database search.

Table 5

*Summary of Published Literature Assessing Youth Ministry*

	Youth Ministry	Youth Group	Religious Education	Christian Education	Catechesis
Evaluating	1	1	12	2	0
Evaluation	3	5	41	9	1
Assessment	1	4	2	9	1
Assessing	0	0	9	5	0
Totals	5	10	64	25	2

The database search revealed two articles specifically evaluating the outcomes of religious programming for adolescents utilizing control groups. Loman and Francis (2004) conducted an evaluation study of a religious education program designed for year seven (twelve year old) students in Wales with an objective of promoting symbolic thinking and the ability to interpret Biblical narratives symbolically. The results of the study confirmed the effectiveness of this one religious education program. Thananart, Tori, and Emavardhana (2000) completed a study on the effects of intense spiritual practice among teenage male Buddhists. This longitudinal study of teens engaged in a 30-day monastic program of *vipassana* meditation, monastic regulations and rites, and Buddhist religious principles showed positive results related to emotional control, religious practice, and behavioral improvement:

The findings suggest that, with proper supervision and training, adolescents can benefit from culturally appropriate, ardent spiritual practice. Without doubt, the majority of the novices found their daily monastic schedule very demanding (e.g., rising at 3:30

a.m., keeping silent, meditating for extended periods, eating only two daily meals) (p. 289).

It should also be noted that Search Institute conducted one of the few studies of effective Christian education in Protestant congregations. Benson and Eklin (1990) reported that effective Christian education matters more than any other congregational factor in helping congregants grow in faith and loyalty to one's congregation (p. 3). They reported that this was true for adults as well as adolescents:

In examining the religious biographies of youth, the two experiences most associated with higher faith maturity are the level of family religiousness and the amount of exposure to Christian education (p. 4).

This study reported Christian education programming was positively associated with growth in mature faith. Benson and Eklin identified effective educational process factors as those which:

- emphasize intergenerational contact
- emphasize life experiences as occasion for spiritual insight
- create sense of community in which people help each other develop their faith and values
- emphasize the natural unfolding of faith and recognizes each person's faith journey as unique
- strongly encourages independent thinking and questioning
- effectively helps youth to apply faith to daily decisions (p. 56).

The study also identified effective educational content as that which emphasizes:

- educate about human sexuality

- educate about chemicals
- involve youth in service projects
- promote moral values and moral decision making
- promote responsibility for poverty and hunger (p. 56).

The study used a number of scales to measure faith maturity including a vertical and horizontal dimension of faith maturity, a growth in faith maturity over past 2-3 years, a denominational loyalty scale and a congregational loyalty scale. These measurement scales all showed high reliability and internal validity (pp. 71-78).

There are multiple reasons for the limited literature associated with assessing adolescent religious education and youth ministry curricula and the effectiveness of these curricula in fostering Christian discipleship. These include the non-professionalization of the field. The vast majority of youth ministers and catechists are volunteers and relatively few academics are devoted to researching adolescent religious education and youth ministry. It is also likely that much program evaluation and assessment occurs but never gets published. Lampert (2004) suggests reasons for this thin scholarship also include the majority of doctoral dissertations associated with youth ministry were “done to complete the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree” (p. 69). He notes that this is a practical degree in nature and typically has not emphasized empirical research. Lambert designed a study to generate the most urgent research needs according to professors of youth ministry. Based on a Delphi methodology the following three research needs were prioritized by the youth ministry academic community: the long-term effect of youth ministries, the effect of the family, and characteristics of effective programs (p. 77). The

overwhelming conclusion of published research assessing effective youth ministry and adolescent religious education curricula is the need for more research.

*Evaluating Lilly Funded Youth Programs*

The Lilly Endowment Religion Division decided to invest significant funding in youth ministry and adolescent religious education programming. Lilly established a sixty million dollar initiative to encourage Christian seminaries to create theological programs for high school youth. Forty-eight schools across Christian denominations were given grants to achieve the following goals: 1) stimulate and foster an excitement about theological learning and inquiry and 2) identify and encourage talented Christian youth to consider vocations in the ministry (p. 86). The long-term goal was to recruit a cadre of theologically minded Christian youth who will become ordained ministers and committed lay leaders in their churches and society.

Only one of the forty-eight Lilly funded youth programs has completed and published an evaluation of their program. David White (2004) authored Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Youth Theological Initiative's research report, *The Long-term Influence of the Youth Theological Initiative Summer Academy on the Faith Development of High School Youth*. Candler's Youth Theological Initiative Summer Academy (YTISA) was the first of the Lilly funded youth programs. Begun in 1993, more than 700 high school youth from across the nation and various Christian denominations had completed YTISA's month-long residential learning community. Its focus has been to:

create opportunities for youth to explore challenging theological questions, particularly as they relate to public issues, so that they can develop skills which



will enable them to bring heart, soul, and mind together in faithful and critical theological reflection for the public good (p. 3).

The significant findings from this study include: 49.6 percent reported college majors relating to something they studied at the Youth Theological Initiative Summer Academy (YTISA); 22.6 percent are pursuing graduate study in theology or religious studies; 14.8 percent are pursuing ordained ministry; 71.4 percent reported that they are currently part of a faith community or religious group; and 66 percent report either active or very active participation in church, while 48.5 percent hold a leadership role of some kind (pp. 12-16).

The methodology for this study included a four-page mailed survey sent in 2001 to the 500 students who participated in YTISA between 1993 and 2000. A response rate of 29% was achieved with 147 surveys completed. The author cautions the method “may assume some degree of self-selection,” but states it is “beyond the scope of this study to address reasons why” (p. 7).

The main difficulty with interpreting the results of the YTISA program evaluation is its “convenience” sampling methodology. Lohr (1999) writes that a “convenience” sample is often biased because “the units that are easiest to select or that are most likely to respond are usually not representative of the harder-to-select or non-responding units” (p. 5). Selection bias occurs when some part of the target population is “not in the sampled population” (p. 4). White argues “the strong percentages of the responses make them significant in assessing the impact of YTISA” (p. 7). I would contend that even though there was a 29% survey return rate in this evaluation study, the convenience sampling method used by YTISA likely introduced bias and subsequently is not likely to

accurately represent the YTISA population. This means that bias has likely entered into all the frequencies reported in their evaluation report.

### New Catholic Initiatives in Adolescent Catechesis

A crisis of sustaining affiliation is occurring in the Catholic Church in America. Recent research shows that one-third of the adults who were born Catholic in the United States no longer affiliate with the Catholic Church (Pew, 2008). Research also shows highly committed Catholic young adults are nearly impossible to find in national surveys (D'Antonio, et al., 2007). And research also shows Catholic teens are significantly less religious than their Protestant peers (Smith, 2005). This crisis has raised the stakes for adolescent religious education and spurred two new national initiatives.

#### *National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis*

The first new initiative is the National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis. The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, the National Catholic Educational Association, and the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (2008) formed a partnership with support from the U.S. bishops to foster a national conversation on adolescent catechesis. This partnership commissioned and published a series of ten articles with the desire to “support a common vision and language regarding catechesis to, with, by, and for adolescents” (*Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis*, p. 1). In the final article Michael Horan (2008) draws the following foundational insights from his review of the nine prior articles in the series:

1. Catechesis is deeper, richer, wider and more complex than instruction in “things to know” about faith.

2. Mature Christian faith, practiced in a healthy community, is never forced or centripetal; it is joyful and uncomfortable.
3. Ours is not our ancestors' world or culture. The tasks proper to adolescent formation occur on an Internet-linked planet and in a nation informed by a postmodern approach to religion and culture (pp. 56-57).

Horan's first insight highlights a consensus among the authors that adolescent religious education curricula should include more than mere instruction. Many of the articles also explore Christian discipleship as the goal of adolescent catechesis. This heightens the awareness of Christian discipleship within the field. However, it is both interesting and telling that very few references are made in the ten articles about the need for evaluating adolescent catechetical curricula in terms of its effectiveness in fostering Christian discipleship. This need largely remains in the background of Catholic adolescent catechesis.

#### *USCCB Doctrinal Elements of a Curricular Framework*

The second new initiative comes from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2007) who approved and published *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. In the Catholic world this new curricular framework represents a new policy for Catholic youth ministry, religious education, and Catholic School religion curriculum. The introduction explains that this curricular framework is intended primarily for publishers of catechetical curriculums. It represents policy in Catholic circles because all Catholic catechetical curricula must be approved by a committee of bishops who will use this doctrinal framework as criteria for publication. The document states:

It is expected that after developing new materials, publishing houses will submit them for a review as to their conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The process of that review will insure that the materials authentically and completely define and present the teaching of the Church (p.5).

The curricular framework outlines six semesters of core curriculum and five semesters of electives. The core curriculum includes:

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture
2. Who is Jesus Christ?
3. The mission of Jesus Christ (The Paschal Mystery)
4. Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church
5. Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ
6. Life in Jesus Christ (p.3).

It is most interesting that the introduction to the USCCB document does not focus on Christian discipleship formation as the goal of adolescent religious education. Rather the document's introduction quotes Pope John Paul II (1997) statement from *Catechesi Tradendae* stating: "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ" (#5) This failure to highlight Christian discipleship formation as the goal of religious education is a significant omission because it fosters confusion about the ultimate goal of religious education. A word search of the mandated core curriculum reveals that the words "disciple" and "discipleship" are only used 24 times out of 17,120 words. This sparse usage of the term "disciple" in this curricular framework highlights the bishops' failure to connect discipleship formation with doctrinal literacy.

A second major challenge posed by the new *Curriculum Framework* is the

complete neglect of any analysis of how this doctrinally based curriculum actually fosters Christian discipleship. It could be argued that the bishops were simply interested in clarifying the content of instruction and assumed the publishers will adapt curricular materials to foster discipleship. However, since this document makes no attempt to place this doctrinal curriculum within this broader curricular context, it can be rightly assumed that the bishops are seeking solely to improve doctrinal literacy. The following excerpt from the introduction supports this claim: “Publishers and teachers or catechists are to strive to provide for a catechetical instruction and formation which is imbued with an apologetical approach” (p.4). The U.S. bishops appear to be placing all their eggs in the doctrinal instruction basket with the minimal hope that U.S. Catholic teens will be religiously literate. This curricular framework appears to have abandoned any hope for achieving the goal of “empowering discipleship.”

It is fascinating that just when the national initiative on adolescent catechesis sponsored by three national Catholic organizations concludes: “Catechesis is deeper, richer, wider and more complex than instruction in ‘things to know’ about faith” (Horan, p. 56), the Catholic Bishops approve a new national doctrinal curricular framework that is exclusively about cognitive learning. Perhaps this is simply another indicator of the crisis in American Catholicism.

### Conclusions

The focus of this literature review has been on the critical issues associated with evaluating youth ministry curricula and assessing formation of adolescent Christian discipleship. Five main conclusions can be drawn from this literature review:

1. Young people across cultures remain highly religious with nearly universal belief in God and denominational affiliation, high religious salience, and significant numbers engaged in prayer and worship.
2. The crisis of affiliation within American Catholicism impacts all aspects of Catholic life, including adolescent religious education.
3. The limited research assessing the curricula effectiveness of youth ministry and adolescent religious education in forming Christian disciples confirms the need for new research in this area.
4. An operational definition of Christian discipleship could foster efforts in assessing Christian discipleship formation.
5. Research into adolescent religiosity often fails to adequately listen to young people and fails to value their religious experiences and thinking.

The picture of the research base evaluating youth ministry and adolescent religious education is quite bleak. The one published evaluation study of a Lilly funded youth program utilized a sampling method that was likely to introduce bias. Published studies of program evaluations of congregational youth ministry programs or adolescent religious education are almost non-existent. Evaluation by definition seeks to discover the merit or worth of a program. Evaluation seeks to determine how effectively the goals, outcomes, and objectives of the program were accomplished in order to utilize this information for program improvement.

The significant lack of evaluative data on youth ministry and adolescent religious education provides a strong rationale for the proposed study. The good news in the literature suggests an influx of research into to the positive social outcomes associated

with religious practice. Researchers are demonstrating the association of religious involvement with positive health outcomes, relief from depression, and even longevity in the life cycle. Although not specifically evaluation studies, these data support the notion of the value, merit, or worth of adolescent religious programming.

Statistics on the religiosity of adolescents from around the world suggest that religion remains a significant factor in the lives of twenty-first century adolescents. Christian Smith's perspective raised the alarm bells in Catholic circles when he concluded American Catholic youth were "faring rather badly" when compared to the religiosity of Protestant youth. This alarm may be beneficial in drawing attention and perhaps additional funding to adolescent religious programming. Crisis language has frequently been used to drum up such support. However, Catholic youth like all American youth are much more religious than their counterparts in Western Europe and much less religious when compared to Muslim youth in Muslim countries.

Conclusions from the research shows that as high school youth move towards young adulthood they practice their faith less frequently. This seems like a natural consequence of the freedom adolescents experience as they leave home and the religious norms experienced there. Fowler's faith development theory provides an interesting framework to analyze the meaning adolescents bring to this decrease in religiosity. It raises the question of how much of this decrease in religious practice is due to movement toward individuated reflective faith that considers and inculcates the plurality of religious, cultural, and historical points of view and practice?

Analyzing adolescent religiosity from multiple perspectives provides a richer and deeper understanding of young people. The complexity of the interactions within an

adolescent religious ecology centering on the individual youth, yet including family religiosity, school and community, church, peers, and culture can be daunting to unravel. Too often adolescent religiosity is simply equated with belief in God and the frequency of church attendance, much like the Catholic notion of vocation is too often limited to consideration of priesthood. Analyzing this religious ecology as a web of relationships provides a rich opportunity to take into account the social, political, and structural influences on youth.

The final conclusion of this paper is the need to listen to the experiences of youth themselves in interpreting their religiosity. Unfortunately, this literature review discovered very few studies that listened carefully to adolescents and their views on religion, faith practice, vocation, Christian discipleship, or commitment to the mission of their church. If Francis, Robins, and Astley's conclusion is correct that young people are in a process of redefining their religious traditions for themselves and thus may be less visible to the public gaze (p. 11), then it will be essential for researchers to listen carefully to young people to discover the contours of this religious redefinition.



### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Research methodology offers a way to investigate and answer specific questions. Van Manen (1990) writes, “The questions themselves and the way one understands the questions are the important starting points” (p.1). A certain alignment should be evident between the research questions and the methods used to investigate the questions. The research questions in this evaluation study have a dual focus of assessing the intermediate outcomes of an intensive youth ministry program and interpreting the meaning participants make of Christian discipleship.

Mezirow (1994) relates meaning making to his view of learning “defined as the social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to action” (pp. 222-223). This evaluation study seeks to understand learning in terms of participant meaning making and its consequent guide to action. The dual focus in these evaluation questions places this study within Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) functionalist and interpretive paradigms. Worthen and Sanders (1987) provide a schema of six approaches that can be used in educational program evaluation. This study will utilize both Worthen and Sanders objectives-oriented approach (functionalist paradigm) and a naturalistic approach (interpretive paradigm). An objectives-oriented approach has a “focus on specifying goals and objectives and determining the extent to which they have been attained” (p. 60), while a naturalistic approach involves the participants “in determining the values, criteria, needs, and data for the evaluation” (p. 60).

This chapter will utilize basic program evaluation methodology. On the one hand, it will provide important empirical data on intermediate program outcomes to

stakeholders demonstrating the merit and worth of the YTM program. On the other hand it will listen to young adults who had an intensive youth ministry experience as a high school students in an attempt to understand the meaning they are currently making about Christian discipleship, vocation, and church affiliation.

The organization of the chapter will start with an identification of the object description. This examines the programs mission, goals, and outcomes. It will then explore the evaluation context, which examines the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and constraints on the study. The third section of this chapter will explain the study's design, which includes its philosophical foundations and the alignment between the research questions and research methodology. Finally, the fourth section of this chapter will clarify the data collection and data analysis procedures.

### Object Description

Program evaluation methodology begins with a description of the object being assessed. This includes the program philosophy, mission, goals, outcomes, and program design. Essentially, the object description explains what the curriculum hope to accomplish and the basic framework of the curriculum. A logic model of the Youth in Theology and Ministry program will be used to explain the program design.

### *Project Rationale/Philosophy*

In 1998 the Lilly Endowment mailed request for proposals (RFP) to all Christian theological schools and seminaries in the United States and Canada accredited by the Association of Theological Schools seeking to “support theological schools in establishing or sustaining programs for high school youth that stimulate and nurture an

excitement about theological learning and inquiry and identify and encourage a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry” (Lilly Endowment, 2005, p. 87). Lilly posed two questions in the RFP:

1. How can schools of theology encourage bright youth to consider their vocational choices and life commitments in light of Christian ministry?
2. Who will lead the church in the next millennium?

The RFP identified the following goals for the theological programs for high school youth:

The immediate goal is to nurture in young people ways of thinking, practices and disciplines essential to the Christian life and to encourage youth to think theologically about contemporary issues. The long-term goal is to recruit a cadre of theologically minded Christian youth who will become leaders in church and society (p. 87).

In 1999 Saint John’s University School of Theology•Seminary applied for and received a \$1.2 million dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment to establish the Youth in Theology and Ministry program (YTM).

The rationale/philosophy for YTM was described in the opening paragraph of its proposal to Lilly:

As young people seek a vocation that gives meaning to their lives, they need places where they can hear the wisdom of their community. They need space and time to listen to the voices of the tradition. They need the instruction, counsel, and example of adults who take their Christian vocation seriously. They need the friendship and encouragement of their peers. In this web of relationships young

people forge their identities and begin to cultivate the nascent wisdom within them, adding their voices to the chorus that is the church.

The Benedictine monastic setting at Saint John's Abbey and University provides time and space away from the frenetic pace of life for high school age youth to ponder the deep questions of meaning and purpose in life.

Since its inception on January 1, 2000 YTM has operated on the following philosophical principles:

1. Catholic youths can be effectively engaged in academic theological study and have the capacity to seriously reflect theologically.
2. Theological reflection, service, and prayer enrich vocational discernment.
3. Faith practices are nurtured in the context of community.
4. Christian leadership is effectively nurtured through apprenticeship.
5. Adult faith is fostered by engaging youth in critical thinking about contemporary social issues while providing support, care, and freedom (space) to appropriate and/or re-appropriate their faith.

#### *Mission, Goals, and Outcomes*

The mission of the Youth in Theology and Ministry program of Saint John's University's School of Theology•Seminary is to apprentice Catholic leadership youth, counselors, and their adult mentors to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. YTM seeks to cultivate the practices of theological reflection, service, prayer, and leadership while encouraging a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry. The four goals of the YTM program are to:

1. Stimulate and nurture excitement about theological learning among youth and adults;
2. Encourage a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry;
3. Foster the development of pastoral ministry skills among the counselors;
4. Become a laboratory for Catholic youth ministry research.

The initial outcomes for the YTM youth participants include: 1) engaging in theological study, reflection, and prayer; 2) learning service-leadership strategic planning skills to develop and implement a parish project; 3) ongoing discernment of vocational careers in theology and ministry; 4) growing in understanding of social and biblical justice and empathy toward the poor and marginalized; 5) engaging in theological reflection about leadership and service; (6) leading and serving church and society and identifying themselves as agents of change; and (7) experiencing a faith/learning community while establishing a network of relationships.

The intermediate outcomes defined below are a synthesis of the mission, goals, and initial outcomes of the YTM program. Mettessich (2003) describes intermediate outcomes as “changes that occur as a result of the initial outcomes” (p. 28). The YTM curriculum for high school youth has the following four intermediate outcomes for young adults who participated in the program: 1) engagement in faith practices; 2) engagement in theological education; 3) engagement in vocational discernment; and 4) engagement in Christian discipleship.

*Youth in Theology and Ministry Program Design*

The YTM program design is intricate. It has three major inter-related components for youths, adult mentors, and undergraduate counselors. The YTM youth and adult components are designed around parish teams of three people: two high school age leadership youth and their adult mentor who is typically the parish youth minister, director of Christian education, or high school religion teacher. These parish teams participate in the three main parts of the YTM 13-month program:

1. Summer Institute I: Two weeks in June at Saint John's University;
2. Parish Service/Justice Project: Completed in the 12 months between Summer Institute I and Summer Institute II back in their parish or community. The teams return mid-point to Saint John's for a weekend retreat in January to re-engage in theology and give progress reports on their projects;
3. Summer Institute II: Two more weeks in June at Saint John's University.

The adult component essentially consists of youth ministers, directors of religious education, or Catholic high school religion teachers who agree to mentor high school age youth through the YTM 13-month program. These adults also enter a four-year graduate program in theology at Saint John's School of Theology. The adult mentors receive a \$2,000 tuition scholarship each year for recruiting and mentoring high school youth through the YTM program.

The third component in the YTM program is the counselor component. Between eight and sixteen undergraduate theology majors or minors from Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict are hired annually as YTM counselors. Their role is to

supervise youths during the Summer Institutes, apprentice youths in faith practices, and provide leadership through planning and leading the Summer Institute and January Retreat. Appendix A contains the program outcomes for the adult and counselors.

### *Logic Model*

“Logic models offer a method to portray your program theory through the four components: inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes” (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28).

Creating the YTM logic model (Figure 1) fostered the development of the following program theory for the Youth in Theology and Ministry program:

Apprenticing high school age youth in intensive and integrative practices of theological education, service/justice, community, leadership, and prayer will foster Christian discipleship and influence young adults to engage in theological study in college, participate in Catholic faith practices, and define their career paths in terms of Christian vocation.

Logic model inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes provide a simple framework for an object description within an evaluation research methodology.

#### *Inputs*

Logic model inputs refer to “resources a program uses to carry out its activities” (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28). Examples of inputs include staff, setting, volunteers, and budget.

*Staff.* A significant input in the YTM program is its staff and faculty. YTM includes a full time director, Jeffrey Kaster and a part time administrative assistant, Cindy Maile. The director’s responsibilities include the overall administration of the YTM

Figure 1: Logic Model of YTM Program

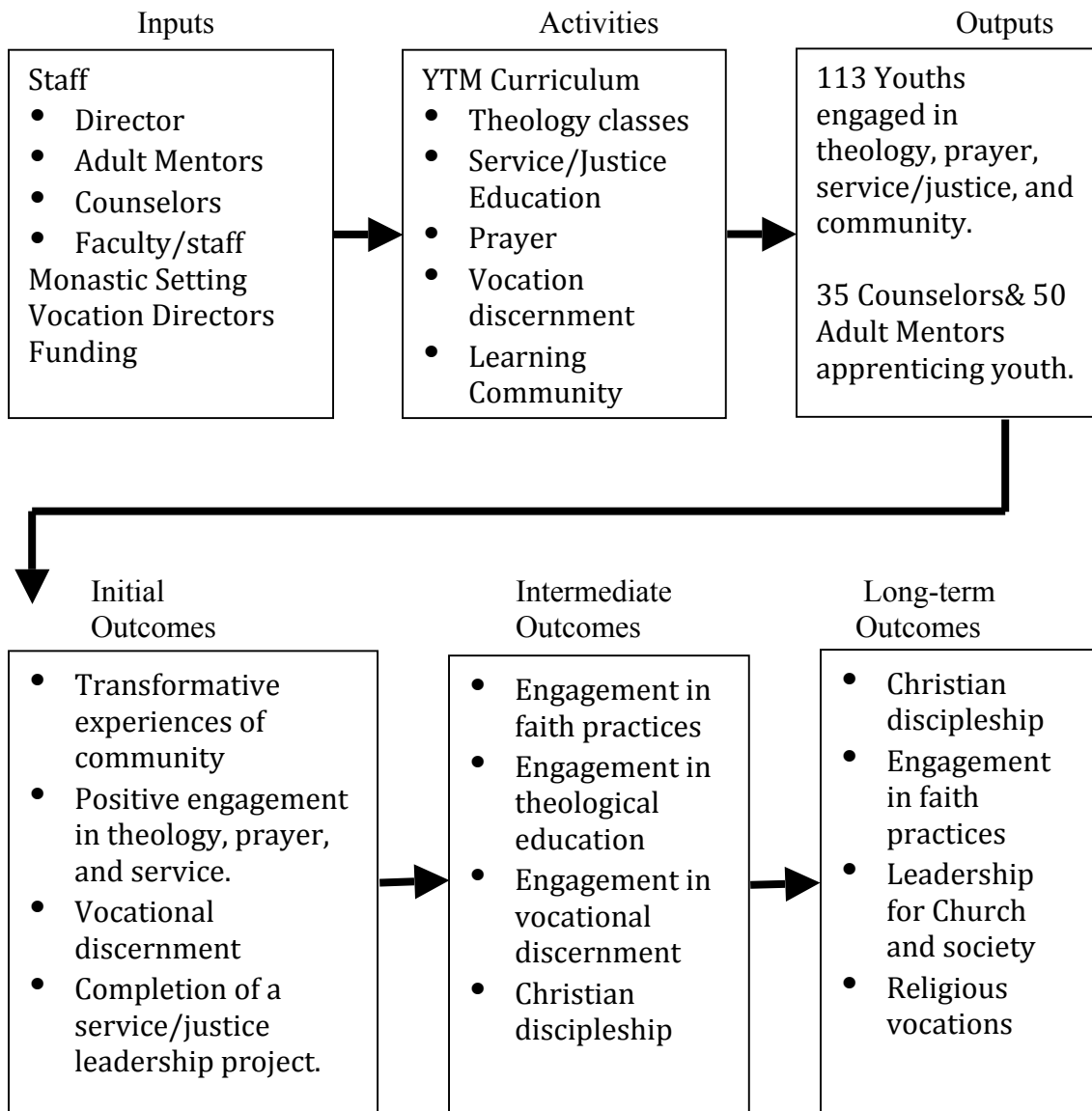


Figure 1. YTM Logic Model depicting inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

program and the adult MA cohort, apprenticing the counselors in leading the Summer Institutes, and development work to sustain the program post grant funding. The YTM staff is part of the broader faculty and staff of Saint John’s School of Theology. It includes 18 faculty, 6 administrators, and 3 administrative assistants.



The YTM Summer Institute hires between 5 and 8 theology faculty each summer to teach high school youth theology for two weeks in the mornings. Each faculty member typically teaches 8 to 10 youth for an hour and 45 minutes daily for two weeks. The Service Learning Coordinator for the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, organizes the service-learning component of the YTM Summer Institute. The coordinator works with community service providers (Boys and Girls Clubs, Nursing Homes, Homeless shelters, and Soup Kitchens) to coordinate the afternoon YTM service-learning component. YTM also hires between 8 and 16 College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University undergraduate theology majors and minors as YTM camp counselors. Their role is to help plan and lead the YTM summer Institute.

Monastic community members from Saint John's Abbey and Saint Joseph Monastery also help facilitate a number of YTM events along with vocation directors from religious communities who are partnering with YTM in sustaining the program financially. These vocation director priests, sisters, and brothers help lead prayer services, mentor counselors, and welcome YTM youth and adults into their lives of prayer and work.

*Setting.* Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota is a Catholic university offering undergraduate liberal arts education in partnership with the College of Saint Benedict. Since its founding in 1857 to serve the needs of the immigrant Catholic community, Saint John's University has worked cooperatively with the Diocese of Saint Cloud and other dioceses of the upper Midwest in offering theological education and ministerial training to seminarians and lay ministers through the Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary. For more than 100 years most of the priests in the Saint Cloud

Diocese and other nearby dioceses received their seminary education and formation at Saint John's. Today the School of Theology•Seminary educates and forms only a few seeking ordained ministry. Its primary focus is theological education for lay ministry students. As part of the School of Theology•Seminary, the YTM program extends this work of theological education and the formation of leaders to high school youth.

Saint John's University is located within the largest Benedictine monastic community in the world. The rural setting with its woods, lakes, and prairies in Central Minnesota nurtures practices of prayer, hospitality, learning, community and justice. Four times daily the bells call the Benedictine monks to community prayer. The motto *Ora et Labora* (prayer and work) captures the ongoing effort of Saint John's Abby to carry out its mission of service grounded in Benedictine spirituality.

*Budget.* The Youth in Theology and Ministry budget from 2000 to 2004 was completely funded through a \$1.2 million dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment. In 2003, Saint John's School of Theology received a second grant from Lilly for \$600,000. YTM has three main budget categories: The youth component accounts for approximately 30% of the budget. Youth are charged a registration fee of \$325 for the two week YTM Summer Institute. The actual costs are close to \$1,500 per youth for housing, food, books, transportation, and programming costs. Second, the adult mentor component accounts for approximately 40% of the budget. The tuition for the four graduate courses is \$5,400. The YTM program and the School of Theology provide grants and scholarships of \$3,800 per student per year. The YTM program pays instructor salaries and travel expenses for faculty. Finally, administration accounts for

approximately 30% of the budget. The yearly budget has been: \$268,606 in 2000; \$297,046 in 2001; \$280,172 in 2002; \$280,520 in 2003; and \$300,812 in 2004.

The Youth in Theology and Ministry program has been cultivating relationships with religious community and diocesan vocation offices since its inception in 2000. The goal of this strategy has been to secure funding partners to help sustain YTM. Thirteen vocation partners have been established with vocational offices since 2004: St. Paul Monastery, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Mankato, The Jesuits, Wisconsin Province, Crosier Fathers and Brothers, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, National Religious Vocation Conference Region 8, Franciscan Friars Third Order Regular, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Visitation Sisters, Minneapolis, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Saint Benedict Monastery, and Saint John's Abbey. Approximately \$65,000 was raised from these vocation partners from 2004 to the end of 2005. The development goal is to raise \$75,000 annually from YTM vocation partners.

### *Activities*

Within a logic model, activities refer to “the actual work or services of a program” (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28). The main youth YTM curricular activities are theology classes, community service, prayer practices, a parish service/justice project, and vocation discernment.

*Theology Courses.* During the YTM Summer Institutes youths attend a one hour and 45-minute theology course each morning (Monday through Friday) for

two weeks. Theology professors from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University teach these courses. Course content is similar to an introductory undergraduate course in theology. Examples of course titles and instructors include:

- *The Bible and the Church: Catholics Read Scripture*. Instructor: Charles A. Bobertz, Associate Professor, Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary
- *Daily Experiences: Where God Meets Us and We Meet God*. Instructor: Diane M. Millis, Assistant Professor, Adjunct, Department of Theology, College of Saint Benedict
- *Food and God (a Catholic Understanding of Sacraments, the Mass and Social Justice)*. Instructor: Juliann Heller, Assistant Professor, Adjunct, Department of Theology, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University
- *Lions and Tigers and Bears . . . and us! -- Catholic identity within creation*. Instructor: Bernie Evans, Virgil Michael Ecumenical Chair in Rural Social Ministry, SOT•SEM.

Besides the morning theology courses, YTM activities engage youth experientially in theological thinking and interfaith dialogue. During the Summer Institutes the YTM youth interact with Jewish and Muslim youth. Field trips are arranged to experience Jewish and Muslim prayer at a Synagogue or Mosque in the Twin Cities or to Jewish or Muslim summer youth camps in Northern Minnesota or Wisconsin. During these field trips ample time is provided for interfaith dialogue, prayer, and

socializing. Another important means of engaging youth participants in theology is through the Vocation Banquet and dialogue. During this meal, presentations are given on vocation and then dialogue is promoted between youth participants and the YTM vocation partners. The theological emphasis of this night utilizes Frederick Buechner's (1993) definition of vocation as "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need" (p. 119). This activity encourages dialogue between youths and priests, sisters, and lay ecclesial ministers focused on identifying one's "deep gladness" for the "needs of the world."

*Service.* A second major activity of YTM is engaging youth in community service activities each afternoon. At the first Summer Institute, youths spend three and a half hours each weekday at service sites. Orientation to service and justice and reflection on service are integrated into this activity. Examples of service sites include: Anna Maries, a shelter for woman who have experienced domestic violence; Good Shepherd, a nursing home; Boys and Girls Clubs; Habitat for Humanity; Camp Friendship, a camp for persons with disabilities; and Place of Hope, a soup kitchen and homeless drop in center. Youth in Summer Institute II do not participate at the service sites. Instead, they reflect on the service and leadership project they completed during the year in their parish. This reflection includes the development of a Power Point presentation on their project and the meaning or significant learning this project and the other YTM activities provided them.

*Prayer Practices.* A third major activity within the YTM program is engaging youth in various forms of Christian worship. Exposure to a variety of prayer practices helps young people realize the vast array of spiritual practices within the Christian tradition. Prayer practices activities at YTM include: *Lectio Divina*, Centering Prayer,

Taize Prayer, pilgrimage, Eucharist, reconciliation, liturgy of the hours, the rosary, and affirmation prayer.

*Parish Service-Justice Project.* The fourth major activity within the YTM program is the parish service-justice project. Teams are expected to complete this project back in their home parish or community in the twelve months between the Summer Institute I and Summer Institute II. It is the adult mentor's responsibility to apprentice their youth through this project. During the first YTM Summer Institute, the teams of youth and adult mentors are oriented to the service/leadership project. This orientation basically provides youth and mentors with the following strategic planning skills: 1) needs/asset statement; 2) project goals and objectives; 3) budget; 4) timeline; 5) means of evaluation; and 6) means of communicating their project to other participants. This activity has the teens utilize these seven strategic planning skills within their project.

In January, the youth and adults return to Saint John's for theological reflection on leadership and for progress reports on their projects. At Summer Institute II, the youth develop presentations on their projects to be given both at YTM and back in their home parish or school. This will include reflection on what they learned about leadership and the Christian life from their service experience. Leadership development is accomplished most effectively through a combination of active learning (developing and implementing a project) and reflection on leadership and service.

*Community.* The fifth major activity within the YTM program is not a program activity. It is more precisely the network of relationships that occur between youth, youth and counselors, and youth and the adult mentors, vocation partners, and theology faculty. It is clear from our Summer Institute youth evaluations that a main reason for YTM's

success is the community that develop. The youth evaluations consistently rank community as one of the most important and meaningful aspects of YTM. Youth evaluation comments confirm that peer relationships are very important, and their relationships with counselors actually inspire them to think more deeply about their vocation and about their course of study in college. The following conversation occurred between a high school student and one of the counselors within the first hour of a Summer Institute.

- Youth            “What do you study in college?”
- Counselor        “I’m a theology major.”
- Youth            “What’s a theology major?”
- Counselor        “My main studies in college include classes on scripture, prayer, and the history of the Church.”
- Youth            “What are you going to do after you graduate?”
- Counselor        “I’m not exactly sure. I’m still figuring it out. Maybe I’ll be a youth minister or volunteer somewhere for a year or two.”
- Youth            “I didn’t know that you could study theology in college. That’s really cool.”

Even though high school teens come to a two-week “theology” camp, they often are surprised and inspired by college students who have made this their college major. The experience of community and the relationships with peers and counselors are meaningful and open up vocational possibilities that many of the YTM youths never considered.

### *Outputs*

In logic models, outputs refer to the “accomplishments, products, or service units of a program, for example, the number of persons receiving training” (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28). The outputs in the YTM program include the numbers of youth participants in the various activities of the YTM program.

*Youth Participants.* One hundred thirteen youth completed the 13-month two-summer YTM program between June 2001 and June 2004. An additional 25 youths attended YTM Summer Institute I but did not return for the two-week Summer Institute II. This means that 82 percent of the high school youth who started the YTM program completed it. The following profile of the 113 youth who completed the 13-month YTM program is from data from the YTM youth intake survey:

- 64 percent were female and 36 percent were male.
- 98 percent of the youths identified themselves as being raised as Catholic
- 64 percent identified themselves as coming from small towns or rural areas, 28 percent from suburban settings, and 8 percent from urban areas.
- The states of residence of youth participants: 66 percent from Minnesota; 16 percent from North Dakota; 10 percent from Alaska; 8 percent from South Dakota, Wisconsin, Florida, and Texas.
- Youth identified their family social-economic class as:
 

Poor or Lower-lower class:	0 percent
Upper lower class:	2 percent



Lower middle class:	13 percent
Middle-middle class:	46 percent
Upper middle class:	28 percent
Upper class:	10 percent

- Age range and proportions as of June 30, 2006:

Age	Population	Frequency
17	1	1%
18	11	9%
19	19	17%
20	30	26%
21	22	20%
22	25	22%
23	5	5%

- Youth indicated an extremely high level of family worship attendance: 90% of the youth attended Mass weekly or more often; 88% of their mothers attended Mass weekly or more often; and 73% of their fathers attended Mass weekly or more often.

*Counselor and Adult Mentor Participants.* Thirty-five undergraduate theology majors and minors from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University were hired between 2000 and 2004 as counselors for the YTM Summer Institute. Ninety percent of the counselors had permanent residence in Minnesota. The majority of the counselors were hired for more than one year: 34 percent served one year as a counselor;

49 percent two years; 14 percent three years, and 3 percent served for four years. Five of the counselors participated in YTM as high school youth, enrolled at the College of Saint Benedict or Saint John's University, and decided to become theology majors or minors.

The 70 adult mentors in the YTM program fall into two categories: adult mentors accepted into 48-credit four-year graduate degree program in theological study at Saint John's University School of Theology and adult mentors accepted into a Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies program. Fifty adult mentors participated in a four-year graduate program between 2000 and 2004.

Cohort	Population Entering	Completed Degree	Percentage Completing Degree
2000-2004	20	13	65%
2001-2005	18	13	72%
2004-2008	12	9	75%

Another 20 adult mentors participated in the undergraduate degree Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies. This certificate included eight undergraduate credits in theology over the two summers and required mentoring a youth in the community service-justice project. Only 50% of these certificate adult mentors completed the 13-month YTM program and the Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies. As a result of the low return rate of adults in the certificate program, this program was discontinued. New MA cohorts now begin every summer.

*YTM Service Units.* All of the 113 youth in this study completed the YTM thirteen-month program. These youth received the following outputs through their participation in the YTM program:

1. Participated in two theology courses taught by college theology professors. This equates to 35 hours of theological instruction at the college introductory level.
2. Participated in 32 hours of community service during YTM Summer Institute I.
3. Were matched with adult mentors. One hundred thirteen youth were matched in parish teams with 50 adult mentors.
4. Completed a parish service-justice project.
5. Participated in 15 hours of reflection on service through the development of their presentation on their service-justice project.
6. Gave a team presentation on their service-justice projects and the significant learning they experienced at YTM
7. Participated in 40 hours of prayer practices.
8. Spent four weeks living in a faith and learning community:
9. Participated in two Vocation Banquets and reflected on discerning their vocation.
10. Spent six hours in interfaith dialogue with Muslims and Jews.

### *Outcomes*

The final component in a logic model is outcomes that are produced from the program inputs, activities, and outputs. Outcomes are “the changes that occur in people, policies, or something else as a result of program activities” (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28). Outcomes are often divided into three categories: initial outcomes or “changes that a program immediately produces,” intermediate outcomes or “changes that occur later as a result of the initial outcomes,” and longer-term outcomes or “changes that a program ultimately strives to accomplish and that follow the intermediate outcomes” (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28).

*Initial Outcomes.* Youth participants assessed the YTM activities very positively. Two evaluations with youth measure the immediate outcomes of the YTM program. At the end of each summer institute a thorough youth evaluation assesses the components of the program: theology, service, leadership, prayer, and community. An intake and exit survey modeled on a national Catholic youth ministry survey done by the Center for Applied Research of the Apostolate, Georgetown University, is also given to youth before they start the program and as they exit the program. Youth evaluations included rating the main YTM activities on a five point Likert scale. From 2000 to 2004, the overall assessment of YTM Summer Institute showed that between 80 to 93 percent rated their experiences as “excellent.” Appendix B provides an evaluation summary of the main curricular activities in the YTM program and data from the intake and exits survey. It is very clear that the youth thought very highly of their theology courses, prayer activities, service activities, leadership activities, vocational discernment, and experiences of community at YTM. What has not been studied is the intermediate change that occurred in YTM participants.

*Intermediate Outcomes.* Intermediate outcomes are changes that result from program participation over time. In this particular study the time frame is three to five years after participation in the YTM program. The focus of this study will be to assess the following four intermediate outcomes of the YTM curricula in young adults who participated in YTM as high school youth: 1) engagement in faith practices; 2) engagement in theological education; 3) engagement in vocational discernment; and 4) engagement in Christian discipleship.

## Evaluation Context

Evaluation methodology begins with the object description to clarify the program's mission, goals, outcomes, activities, and resources. Examination of the evaluation context is the second step in program evaluation. The evaluation context seeks to clarify the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and constraints on the study.

### *Purpose of the Evaluation*

Michael Patton (1997) writes, "I choose to work with clients who are hungry for quality information to improve programs" (p. 366). Patton argues that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is simply to gain useful information for program improvement. The review of literature for this study showed published evaluations youth ministry or adolescent religious education curricula were nearly non-existent. While the primary purpose of this evaluation study, then, is to assess the intermediate outcomes of the YTM curriculum for program improvement, it also seeks to provide useful information for curricular improvement and policy development in adolescent religious education and youth ministry throughout the United States.

Worthen and Sanders (1987) describe the oldest form of evaluation as objectives-oriented evaluation. Based on the work of R. W. Tyler, this approach "conceives of evaluation as the process of determining the extent to which the educational objectives of the school program or curriculum are actually being attained" (p. 63). Gathering accurate data about the four intermediate curricular outcomes of the YTM program will be the means through which this study accomplishes this primary purpose of program improvement.

As stated in the literature review, Christian discipleship is difficult to assess because of a lack of an operational definition. This study seeks to create an operational definition of Christian discipleship and utilize it to assess the influence of the YTM curriculum on fostering Christian discipleship. Essentially, this will be exploratory research because it has not been done before. The intended result of this exploration of Christian discipleship is a better understanding of how it might be assessed effectively. This constitutes the second primary purpose of this study.

As previously mentioned, the Lilly Endowment has invested more than 60 million dollars in this youth initiative to engage youth in theology and promote vocations in church ministry. To date there have been no published reports that provide accurate longitudinal data evaluating the outcomes of a Lilly funded program. Therefore, a third purpose of this study is to provide the Lilly Endowment and other stakeholders accurate information about intermediate outcome attainment. Program improvement will result from analyzing the data obtained in this research and utilizing them to adjust or change the curriculum. Lilly will be able to use this information in its larger effort to evaluate their youth initiative investment. Christopher Coble, Lilly Endowment Youth Initiative Program Director, described in a recent phone conversation the sort of evaluation information that Lilly would find useful:

Of course, we want to know how many youth who attended your program went on to study theology in college and how many of them are pursuing careers in ministry, but I would also want to know if they are reading theology books or in some way have been captivated by theology.

A final purpose of this study is to listen to young adults to understand what meaning they are making about Christian discipleship, vocation, faith practices, and affiliation with the Catholic Church. Worthen and Sanders naturalistic approach to evaluation “aims at observing and identifying all (or as many as possible) of the concerns, issues, and consequences integral to educational enterprise” (p. 128). This approach includes inductive reasoning and depends greatly on the interpretation of the researcher. It does not seek pure objectivity. Worthen and Sanders write, “Understanding an issue or event or process comes from grass-roots observation and discovery. Understanding emerges; it not the end product of some preordinate inquiry plan projected before the evaluation is conducted” (p. 129).

#### *Audiences and their Concerns*

There are three main audiences for this evaluation study. The first audience is the examining committee from the University of Minnesota Department of Educational Policy and Administration. This evaluation study is being completed in partial fulfillment of a doctorate in education. The examining committee’s interest in this evaluation will be primarily to determine if the scholarship and research presented in this evaluation study meet the degree standards of the University of Minnesota. A second main audience is Saint John’s University School of Theology•Seminary and its partners. As the institutional sponsor of the Youth in Theology and Ministry program, Saint John’s School of Theology will be interested in the data about the long-term impact of the YTM program on youth. Saint John’s Abbey, Saint Joseph Monastery, the College of Saint Benedict, and the department of theology at St. John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict all have participated in funding the program and thus are an important

audience for this study. The major concern for these partners is ascertaining whether the outcomes of the YTM program constitute a funding priority for their institutions. Finally, the Lilly Endowment would be the third main audience for this evaluation study. It has invested nearly two million dollars in the YTM program and will be very interested in whether their investment in theological programs for high school youth produced notable results. These data will be useful to the Endowment as it evaluates the overall merit and worth of their \$60 million initiative.

There are other stakeholders in this study. Stakeholders in the evaluation findings include the YTM vocation partners who have invested money in YTM to help sustain the program. Their particular interest is gaining understanding of what is working to promote vocations with high school youth and young adults. This information may help them determine ways to be more effective in vocation recruitment and in determining any future financial support for the YTM program. Other stakeholders include Catholic youth ministry organizations, Catholic vocation offices, and the part of the academy that focuses on youth ministry, Christian education, and vocation research. The recent research findings by Christian Smith (2005) has raised the stakes concerning what is working to engage Catholic high school youths in Christian practices. Other important stakeholders are the youth, counselors, and adults who participated in the YTM program.

#### *Evaluation Questions*

The following three evaluation questions provide the overall framework for this study:

1. What are the everyday life faith practices of young adults who participated in intensive youth ministry experiences in high school?



2. To what extent did Saint John's University's Youth in Theology and Ministry curriculum accomplish its intermediate outcomes?
3. How might Christian discipleship be operationally defined for assessment purposes?

#### *The Role of the Evaluator*

One of the outcomes of The Youth in Theology and Ministry grant proposal was to internally conduct a five-year follow-up study researching the faith practices and vocational choices of the youth who participated in YTM. The director of the Youth in Theology and Ministry program will be serving as the evaluator and researcher in this internal evaluation that will be used both as a program evaluation and as a dissertation study.

It is important for all stakeholders to be cognizant of the potential ethical conflicts of interest presented in this study. For the sake of establishing the credibility of the evaluator, it is essential to note that the evaluator (program director) is a key stakeholder in the results of this study. The findings have significant bearing on the director's career and the program's long-term sustainability. *The Program Evaluation Standards*, published by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994), therefore, has guided all decisions affecting this study in order to inspire the upmost integrity and transparency of the author's work.

#### *Constraints of the study*

The two major constraints on this study will be time and money. It takes time to update the database, train the research assistants, conduct the telephone surveys, enter data into the SPSS program, and interpret the data. The study has a budget of \$5,000. The

budget will be used to hire three student research assistants from Saint John's University to update the current database of YTM participants and to conduct telephone interviews. The research assistants insure that the study will be completed in a timely manner.

## Research Methodology

### *Design*

A telephone survey will gather both empirical and interpretive data related to the three research questions driving this study. For the survey, 113 youth who participated in the 13-month YTM program between 2000 and 2004 will be contacted. Quantitative data will be gathered on the following variables: 1) engagement in theological learning; 2) faith practices; 3) vocational discernment; 4) church affiliation; and 5) engagement in Christian discipleship.

As informative as quantitative data can be, relying exclusively on such data misses perhaps the essential questions. Von Manen states that a choice of method should reflect "a certain harmony with deep interest" (p. 2) that leads the researcher to ask the question initially. A deeper interest in this study is the question of the meaning these young adults are currently making about vocation, faith practices, discipleship, and affiliation with the Catholic church. Meaning making is essential to human life (Frankl, 1963). Humans naturally make meaning out of their diverse experiences. Dewey (1933) wrote, "Only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing as intentional, deliberate control of them possible" (p. 19). What meaning did the YTM experience have for youth participants as they enter young adulthood? Krauss (2005) argues "meaning is the underlying motivation behind thoughts, actions and even the

interpretation and application of knowledge” (p. 763). This study will utilize open-ended qualitative questions in the telephone interviews to help the researcher understand the meaning these young adults constructed about vocation, church affiliation, and Christian discipleship. These questions also seek to uncover the influence of their YTM experience on this meaning construction. The themes that emerge will hopefully add to the understanding of the processes essential to the construction of new levels of meaning for vocational discernment and Catholic identity.

This research will hopefully be the beginning of a longitudinal study of intensive youth ministry. Evaluation data were collected on youth as part of the YTM intake and exit procedures to measure immediate outcomes. This current study will attempt to understand personal change that resulted three to five years after their YTM experience. It is intended that this population of YTM participants will again be studied in ten years, so that long-term outcomes can also be assessed.

#### *Philosophical Basis*

The research method employed in this study demands analysis from multiple philosophical paradigms. Researchers debate the wisdom of mixing methods. Research method purists (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Smith, 1983) would argue the incompatibility of using multiple philosophical paradigms due to the incompatibility of assumptions about what it is possible to know. House (1994) writes “methodology also depends on ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of reality and best ways of gaining access to that reality, so that knowledge about it can be formulated” (p. 15). Purists argue that using a single paradigmatic anchor provides an important home for the researcher to construct and respond to the data with integrity, meaning and coherence.

Pragmatist Michael Patton (1988) acknowledges these incompatible assumptions when mixing paradigms but argues for grounding the rationale for mixing methods in situational responsiveness and a commitment to an empirical perspective (p. 127). Other theorists defend this mixed method approach with concepts such as “double hermeneutic” (Giddens, 1976), “weaving back and forth” (Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Rowles and Reinharz, 1987), and “shifting frames of reference” (Phelan, 1987). These theorists argue for using methods from multiple paradigms to provide more comprehensive, insightful and logical results than a single paradigm could provide alone.

Richard Bernstein (1993) says that researcher’s task is to “assume the responsibility to listen carefully, to use our linguistic, emotional, and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being expressed and said in ‘alien’ traditions” (p. 65). Greene and Caracelli (1997) synthesize the case for using multiple paradigms in research: “Contrasts, conflicts, and tensions between different methods and their findings are an expected, even welcome dimension of mixed-method inquiry, for it is in the tension that the boundaries of what is known are most generatively challenged and stretched” (p. 12).

#### *Alignment between Research Questions and Methodology*

The empirical evaluation method used in this study will respond to the data needs and concerns of key stakeholders and decision makers. This study’s quantitative questions provide data within the positivistic paradigm. This research seeks to respond empirically to program funder questions about the success of intensive youth ministry programming. Interpretivist evaluation methods generally respond better to the data needs and concerns of participants and perhaps program staff. This study’s qualitative questions seek to listen to young adults and ground the knowledge obtained in their lived

experience. This is also a very Benedictine concept. The prologue to the *Rule of Benedict* begins with the admonition to “listen carefully with the ear of your heart” (Fry, 1982, p. 15). This research seeks to listen carefully to young adults who as high school youth had an intensive youth ministry experience at YTM. It seeks to understand the meaning these young adults are making of their vocation and Catholic identity. This study’s mixed-method design attempts to obtain “knowledge claims that are grounded in the lives of the participants studied and that also have some generality to other participants in other contexts, that enhance understanding of both the usual and the typical case” (Greene and Carcelli, p. 13).

#### Data Collection and Analysis

##### *The Christian Discipleship Scale*

A significant part of the data collection and data analysis in this study involves the Christian Discipleship Scale created for this study. The literature review highlighted the need for an operational definition of Christian Discipleship. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an operational definition is “a method of mathematically based analysis for providing a quantitative basis for management decisions.” The literature review also highlighted six criteria for Christian discipleship (pp. 63-64). The following scale is an initial attempt to synthesize principles of Christian discipleship into a workable framework for assessment purposes.

The Christian Discipleship Scale consists of six questions with three response options: disagree; neither agree nor disagree; or agree. Responses to each question (categorical variable) are given ordinal values: 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, and 3 = agree. When these six variables are combined, a scale is created with

scores ranging from a minimum of six (all six responses being “disagree”) to a maximum of 18 (all six responses being “agree”). The following six questions are used in the YTM telephone survey to create the Christian Discipleship Scale:

Q24: I am interested in **learning** about Christ and his ways?

Q25: I have experienced a **call** to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his ways?

Q26: I have a **personal relationship or friendship** with Christ?

Q27: I am committed to participate in Christ’s **mission** to build the Reign of God?

Q28: I am committed to being part of a **community** of Christians dedicated to this mission?

Q29: I think of myself as a **disciple** of Jesus Christ?

YTM survey participants who “agree” to all six questions would score the maximum on the Christian Discipleship Scale, while those who “disagree” to all six questions would score the minimum. As an operational definition of Christian discipleship, the scale will hopefully prove useful for assessment purposes.

The scale raises interesting data collection questions. How will the young adults who participated in the YTM program score on this scale? Did the YTM curriculum have any impact on scale scores? Will those with higher scores on the Christian Discipleship Scale attend Mass more frequently? Will they pray more often? Will they be more engaged in leadership? Will results from the scale correlate with faith practice variables? Will the scale have internal consistency? Ultimately, it raises the bigger question: Does the Christian Discipleship Scale actually measure Christian discipleship?

The creation and utilization of the Christian Discipleship Scale takes this research beyond a simple program evaluation. It moves it into the arena of exploratory research.

This study will use the Christian Discipleship Scale for data collection and for data analysis. Hopefully, it will answer the questions above and show merit and worth for further study.

### *Sampling Plan*

The study's sampling plan seeks to complete a census telephone survey of the 113 young adults between the ages of 18 and 23 who as high school youth completed the thirteen-month YTM program between June 2001 and June 2004.

1. The list of the 113 YTM high school participants' addresses, email addresses, and current and permanent phone numbers will be updated and corrected.
2. If it is not be possible to complete the census sampling because of the difficulties associated with contacting 113 individuals, efforts will be made to generate a representative sample.
3. Prior to conducting this survey, the researcher will conduct 5 pilot-test survey interviews with non-YTM participant young adults to finalize the construction of the survey instrument.
4. All members of the research team will receive training on the purpose of the survey, the meaning of all the survey questions and answer categories, the proper enunciation of religious terms, and the ethical treatment of human subject. Included in this training will be information about informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to refuse to answer questions. All survey interviewers will complete the Course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects (CITI).

5. Survey interviewers will be monitored for accuracy and debriefed about survey performance.

#### *Telephone Survey Procedures*

1. The survey will be conducted over the telephone. The complete YTM Telephone Survey can be found in Appendix C.
2. Expert review by key stakeholders.
3. Pilot testing survey and revision of survey.
4. Approval will be sought from the IRB at the University of Minnesota.
5. A pre-notice letter and consent form will be mailed or emailed to the population listed above. A form for setting dates and times for the telephone interview will be included in this mailing.
6. Researchers will follow up pre-notice letter with a phone call to set date and time for telephone survey if the form has not been returned.
7. Postcard or email reminder of interview date and time.
8. Conduct Surveys. Research assistants will conduct the telephone surveys. For the open-ended survey questions the research assistants will take copious notes of the comments provided. The telephone surveys will not be tape recorded, so transcripts of all comments provided will not be made.
9. Mail postcard thank-you
10. Data Analysis

#### *Telephone Survey Data Analysis*

The empirical data analysis of the YTM Telephone Survey will be descriptive in nature. The first level of analysis will begin with the tabulation of frequencies of



responses for all the questions. This will be organized around the five main variables assessing the evaluation questions: 1) engagement in theological learning; 2) faith practices; 3) vocational discernment; 4) church affiliation; and 5) engagement in Christian discipleship. This analysis will continue with an exploration of the interplay between these survey variables. Cross tabulations will attempt to discover meaningful relationships. For example, a cross tabulation of responses from a question about religious faith salience with a question about the frequency of Mass attendance may provide interesting and useful data. Other variables like gender will also be used in this level of quantitative analysis.

The qualitative data analysis of the YTM Telephone survey will also be descriptive in nature. Analysis of the qualitative data will focus on responses related to the impact of the YTM curriculum on the five main variables. Language coding will be utilized to aggregate individual responses into larger units of meaning. These larger units of meaning related to the impact of the YTM curriculum will then be compared to the empirical data on this variable. The qualitative data analysis will provide narratives or thicker descriptions of the meaning associated with the research findings. Particular attention will be given to qualitative responses related to church affiliation and Christian discipleship.

The third level of analysis, and perhaps the most interesting, will be analysis associated with the operational definition of Christian discipleship. The Christian Discipleship Scale, described below, operationally defines Christian discipleship and seeks to be useful in providing assessment data about discipleship formation. Analysis of findings from the Christian Discipleship scale will begin with descriptive statistics and

then move to an investigation of Pearson correlations between the scale and other survey variables. Finally, the qualitative data about affiliation with the Catholic Church will be compared with the empirical data from the scale to provide a rich description of Christian discipleship among these young adults.

#### SUMMARY

The overall purpose of this evaluative study is to provide research data to encourage curricular improvement in youth ministry and adolescent religious education in the United States. This study seeks to accomplish this through the assessment of the intermediate outcomes of Saint John's School of Theology's YTM curriculum and through exploratory research into the assessment of Christian discipleship. This study also has the purposes of being accountable to the funding agents and listening to young adults about vocational discernment and Christian discipleship. The study will follow basic program evaluation methods. It will conduct telephone surveys with the 113 young adults who completed Saint John's School of Theology's Youth in Theology and Ministry program between 2000 and 2004. It seeks to gather data to assess the extent to which YTM accomplished its intermediate outcomes and explore and assess Christian discipleship. The study will prove useful and helpful for improving youth ministry in the United States.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Evaluative studies seek to judge a program's merit and worth with the purpose of program improvement. The overall purpose of this evaluative study is to judge the merit and worth of the Youth in Theology and Ministry curriculum. Specifically this study seeks to assess the extent to which the four intermediate outcomes of the Youth in Theology and Ministry program are accomplished. It also seeks to explore the extent to which the Christian Discipleship Scale, created for this study, can be useful for the assessment of Christian discipleship. Ultimately, the purpose of this research is to provide research data that encourages curricular improvement in youth ministry and adolescent religious education in the United States. The framework for this study is guided by the following three research questions:

1. What are the everyday life faith practices of young adults who participated in intensive youth ministry experiences in high school?
2. To what extent did Saint John's University's Youth in Theology and Ministry curriculum accomplish its intermediate outcomes?
3. How might Christian discipleship be operationally defined for assessment purposes?

The research design includes a telephone survey seeking both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey incorporated a Christian Discipleship Scale in an attempt to operationally define Christian discipleship for assessment purposes. Two-thirds of the participants in the Youth in Theology and Ministry program (YTM) between 2000 and 2004 participated in the telephone survey conducted from January through July of 2007.

The structure of this chapter will begin with a brief review of the methodology employed in the telephone survey and a general profile of the sample and participants. Following will be a presentation of data evaluating the intermediate outcomes of the YTM program. Finally, the concluding section of the chapter will explore Christian discipleship and results from the Christian a discipleship.

### Telephone Survey Methodological Framework

#### *Telephone Survey Procedures*

The sampling plan for the YTM Telephone Survey intended to conduct a census telephone survey. The following procedures were used in conducting the telephone survey. For a more comprehensive description of methods refer to chapter 3.

1. The research team members all received training on the purpose of the survey, the meaning of all the survey questions and answer categories, the proper enunciation of religious terms, and ethical treatment of human subject. The research team members completed the CITI Course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects by December 2006.
2. The YTM telephone survey was pilot tested with five individuals. Changes in the survey were made to improve its coherence and readability.
3. On December 20, 2006 the University of Minnesota IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined the study (number 0612E98608) was exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101b category #2.
4. The list of the 113 YTM high school participant's addresses, email addresses, and current and permanent phone numbers was updated. The most accurate contact information was the participant's permanent address and phone number.

5. A letter was sent from Dr. William Cahoy, Dean of Saint John's School of Theology, to the permanent addresses of all the 113 YTM high school participants informing them of the survey, inviting them to participate, and asking them to update their contact information. An informed consent form was included in this mailing. Five letters were returned as undeliverable.
6. To obtain accurate phone numbers, the research team searched internet phone books, Facebook, contacted parents, and contacted YTM participants. In the end accurate telephone numbers were obtained for 105 of the 113 YTM participants. A few of the parents of participants refused to share contact information with the researchers.
7. Initial calls or emails were used to make appointments for the telephone surveys.
8. Each of the 105 subjects whom we had contact information, was contacted a minimum of three times to conduct the survey.
9. Between January 1, 2007 and July 30, 2007 the research team completed 76 interviews. All but five of the surveys were conducted using the telephone. The internet was used to complete these five for YTM participants either studying abroad or serving abroad in the military.
10. Monthly meetings were held with the research team to monitor accuracy and discuss problems associated with survey procedures.

#### *Representative Sample*

Telephone survey data was collected on 76 of the 113 participants for a return rate of 67.3%. This sample is not a random sample, nor a census sample. However, it may be considered a representative sample, which is defined as having approximately the same

distribution of characteristics as the population from which it was drawn. The data below make a case for this being a representative sample of the entire YTM population as it compares the sample with the entire YTM population (see Table 7). YTM records from Table 7

*Age, Gender and Geographic Distribution in Population and Sample*

Characteristics	Population Percent	Sample Percent
Gender		
Females	64%	58%
Males	36%	42%
Age <sup>a</sup>		
18	1%	1%
19	9%	13%
20	17%	24%
21	26%	24%
22	20%	17%
23	22%	17%
24	5%	4%
Geographic Origin		
Minnesota	66%	66%
North Dakota	16%	13%
Alaska	10%	13%
Other <sup>b</sup>	8%	8%

<sup>a</sup> Age as of June 30, 2007. <sup>b</sup> Participants from South Dakota, Florida, Wisconsin, & Texas.

application forms provide a profile of the population of 113 YTM participants in terms of gender, age, and geographic location.

These data show that the sample has a slightly higher percentage of males and tends to be slightly younger than the population as a whole, but overall the sample closely resembles the population in terms of gender, age, and geographic origin. A very important measure also to consider is participation by cohort. A cohort is a group of students who start and finish the thirteen-month two-summer program together. If the sample was significantly skewed toward recent participation, it would decrease its ability to represent the population over the entire time span. Table 8 provides data on participation rates by cohorts.

Table 8

*Cohort Participation Rate*

Student Cohort	Percent of Population	Percent of Sample Population
2000-2001	27%	26%
2001-2002	33%	29%
2002-2003	19%	28%
2003-2004	16%	17%

The sample percentage rates for the first cohort in 2000-2001 and the last cohort in 2003-2004 nearly match the population. Combining the populations of cohorts 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 equals 60% of the entire population, while the sample is 55%. These data provide good evidence of the sample being representative of the YTM population throughout the cohort time periods.

Is this sample representative of the entire YTM population? This study could not achieve a census sample nor is it a random sample. However, it is not a convenience sample either. Although a certain amount of bias enters through self-selection into the survey, a review by the research team of survey participants and non-participants did not reveal any major differences. It seems reasonable to conclude from the demographic data above that the YTM telephone survey sample is likely representative of the entire YTM population and can thus be used to draw conclusions about the population.

The argument about the sample being representative of the population is particularly important because it will be the first major Lilly Endowment Inc. funded youth program evaluation to be able to make this claim. Other youth program evaluations utilized convenience sampling methods that do not allow accurate claims to be made about the population.

### Description of the Survey Sample

#### *General Profile*

This telephone survey sampled Catholic young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who had an intensive youth ministry experience as high school youth. The sample has a gender ratio nearly 60% female and 40% male. Nearly two out of three individuals in the sample are 21 or older. When asked about their college status, 24% indicate they graduated from college, while another 45% said they are in their third, fourth, or fifth year of college. Only 3% indicate they have never attended college, and only 5% are married.

Nearly 60% of the sample attended a religiously affiliated college. Catholic colleges or universities were attended by a little more than half of those surveyed. Humanities



majors accounted for 36% of the sample; science and math majors 23%; social science majors 23%; business majors 8%; undecided majors 8%; and pre-professional majors 3%.

Of the eighteen individuals who graduated from college nearly half are employed in the field of education as teachers, paraprofessionals, or a sign language interpreter. Other occupations include production scientist, cartographer, volunteer coordinator, social worker, and general business. Only two have entered graduate school. Both of these are studying theology.

#### *Profile of Church Affiliation*

Previous YTM research on these subjects showed 98% identifying themselves as Catholic when they were in high school. It also showed an extremely high level of family worship with 90% of the youth attending Mass weekly or more often, 88% of their mothers attending Mass weekly or more often, and 73% of their fathers attending Mass weekly or more often. These familial practices coupled with the youth's engagement in the YTM thirteen-month intensive youth ministry educational program suggest that these youth are among Catholic elite from highly practicing religious parents with significant religious education inputs. These factors suggest that the population being studied here represents the best hopes for the future of the Catholic Church.

Survey findings show very high levels of religiosity with nearly 7 out of 10 indicating that religious faith is "very" or "extremely" important to them and 54% saying they are "very" or "extremely" committed to the church. Almost 9 out of 10 of the young adults from the sample continue to affiliate themselves with the Catholic Church, while the other 10% indicate no church affiliation or a general affiliation with Christianity.

The telephone survey included the question: “Do you think you will be an active member in the Church in ten years? Seventy-three percent responded they would, 24% did not know, and three percent said no. These data combined with the statistic that 39% of the sample indicate they attend Mass weekly or more often suggest a high level of religiosity among these Catholic young adults.

The high level of religiosity among this population is further substantiated by comparing this data to 2005 data from the D’Antonio et al. (2007) study of American Catholics that included research on young adults born between 1979 and 1987 (Millennials). The D’Antonio study developed a commitment index based on frequency of Mass attendance, importance of the Catholic Church in their lives, and whether they would consider leaving the Catholic Church. To score high on the commitment index the subjects stated they attended Mass weekly or more often, the Church was among the most important parts of his or her life, and that they would probably not consider leaving the Church. Amazingly, D’Antonio’s study did not find a single young adult Catholic (n =79) high on the commitment index:

The Millennials (9% of the total) included nobody who scored high. Whether this is simply an expression of youthful desire to be free of religious bonds that may change later remains to be seen (p. 39).

Although this is only one study, D’Antonio’s data suggest that highly committed young adult Catholics are very rare. The YTM telephone survey data suggest that many of the YTM young adults would fit into D’Antonio’s high commitment index.

Table 9 illustrates an interesting nuance of participant religiosity by comparing frequency of Mass attendance with religious faith salience. It shows nearly 70%

Table 9

*Crosstabulation: Frequency Mass Attendance \* Religious Faith Salience*

Frequency Mass Attendance	Religious Faith Salience					Total
	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important	
Once a week or more	17	11	2			30
2-3 times a month	1	11	3			15
Once per month		5	3			8
A few times per year		7	6	4	4	21
Never			1	1		2
Total	18	34	15	5	4	76

indicating their faith as “very important” or “extremely important.” However, when analyzing salience in terms of the behavior of Mass attendance, 17 out of 18 (94%) who indicate religious faith as “extremely important” attend Mass weekly or more often, while only 11 out of 34 (32%) who say religious faith is “very important” attend Mass weekly or more often. This perhaps highlights a significant cultural differentiation in the minds of young adult between “extremely important” and “very important.” Frequency of Mass attendance is only one behavioral practice, so one must approach this with a grain of salt, but perhaps by combining the counts of frequent Mass attendance (once a week or more) with religious faith salience as “extremely” or “very important” one gets a more accurate picture of religious commitment and perhaps Christian discipleship among survey participants. Table 9 shows nearly 40% of YTM participants (28 of 76) have a very high

religious salience and attend Mass once a week or more often. This will be explored further in the final section of this chapter.

Summarizing these data produces a general profile of 76 individuals who participated in the YTM program (n=113) as a high school youth between 2000 and 2004 and participated in this telephone survey. These are mainly self-identifying Catholic young adults (90%) between 20 and 24 years of age (86%), not married (95%), a recent college graduate or in their last two years of college (68%), and likely attending or attended a religiously affiliated college (58%). They also have a familial history of parents highly engaged in the life of the Catholic Church. In many ways this sample represents the small and elite segment of Catholic young adults who grew up in church affiliated families, participated in significant religious educational experiences as high school youth, and attended a religiously affiliated college.

#### Evaluating Intermediate Outcomes of YTM

The Lilly Endowment established the Theological Programs for High School Youth grant initiative with the overall goals to “support theological schools in establishing or sustaining programs for high school youth that stimulate and nurture an excitement about theological learning and inquiry and identify and encourage a new generation of young Christian to consider vocations in Christian ministry” (Lilly Endowment, 2005, p. 87).

A venerable form of evaluation is objectives-oriented evaluation. This approach founded by R. W. Tyler, “conceives of evaluation as the process of determining the extent to which the educational objective of the school program or curriculum are actually being attained” (Worthen and Sanders, 1987, p. 63). The first part of this study is

an objectives-oriented assessment of the intermediate youth outcomes of the YTM program derived from Lilly's grant initiative. Outcomes are "the changes that occur in people, policies, or something else as a result of program activities" (Mattessich, 2003, p. 28). This study focuses on intermediate outcomes because it is conducted three to five years after completion of the YTM program. The intermediate outcomes being evaluated in this study are derived from the program's mission and goals:

1. Engagement in theological education
2. Engagement in faith practices
3. Engagement in vocational discernment
4. Living as Christian disciples.

Reporting the research findings assessing these outcomes will be organized around the following five questions:

- To what extent are these young adults interested and engaged in theological learning?
- To what extent are these young adults engaged in faith practices?
- To what extent are these young adults considering vocations in Christian ministry?
- To what extent are these young adults living as Christian disciples?
- To what extent has the YTM program influenced the behaviors and attitudes reported above?

After reporting telephone survey data on the questions above, this chapter will turn its attention to exploring Christian discipleship within these individuals. This will include a

description of a Christian Discipleship Scale created by this researcher and the resulting correlations associated with this scale.

### *Evaluating Theological Engagement*

The telephone survey sought data on participant interest and engagement in theological learning utilizing fourteen survey items consolidated into the following four categories: 1) continuing excitement for theological learning; 2) reading theological books; 3) undergraduate theological study; and 4) graduate theological education. A fifth section will explore the influence of YTM on theological learning and the influence of theology on career choices.

### *Interest and Excitement for Theological Learning*

The young adults who participated in YTM in high school continue to be significantly engaged in theological learning as young adults. Highlights from the survey show continued interest and excitement about theological learning:

- 90% agreed: “I am interested in learning about Christ and his ways”
- 80% agreed: “I think about God in my everyday life”
- 74% agreed: “I continue to be excited about theological learning”

### *Reading Theology*

Three items in the survey specifically addressed reading theology. A little more than half of the respondents (53%) agreed with the survey statement: “I read theology books.” Of those reading theology books 16% reported reading 1-3 books, 30% reported reading 4-10 books, 19% reported reading 11-20 books, and 35% reported they had read more than 20 theology books. Unfortunately, this question was not qualified with a time

frame, so we do not know if these books were read recently or not. When asked to identify their favorite theology books or authors, those mentioned most often included:

- 13% Henri Nouwen (*Out of Solitude, Prodigal Son, Way of the Heart*)
- 11% C.S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity, Screwtape Letters, Great Divorce*)
- 7% St. Augustine (*Confession & City of God*)
- 4% G.K. Chesterton
- 3% Thomas Aquinas (*Summa*); Catechism of the Catholic Church; Paulo Coelho (*The Alchemist*); Therese of Lisieux; and Romano Guardini (*The Lord*).

#### *Undergraduate Theological Education*

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of continuing interest and engagement in theological learning is theology or religious studies courses taken in college. Nearly two out of three of the YTM participants (66%) have taken theology or religious studies courses in college and nearly one out of three (22%) have taken a minimum of four theology courses:

- 32% have taken 0 college theology/religious studies courses
- 46% have taken 1-3 college theology/religious studies courses
- 6% have taken 4-5 college theology/religious courses
- 6% have taken 6-10 college theology/religious courses
- 10% have taken 11 or more college theology/religious courses

Consistent with the number of theology courses taken is the finding that 9% said their college major was theology, Catholic studies, or religious studies with an additional 4% indicating a major in philosophy. An additional 9% indicated theology as a college minor.

An important clarification regarding the quantity of theology courses taken is that religiously affiliated colleges typically require two or three theology courses as a graduation requirement. With 58% of the sample attending religiously affiliation colleges, it is difficult to judge the level of interest and excitement for theological learning when such courses are required. This suggests that the important statistic to consider here is the 22% who took 4 or more theology courses in college. Perhaps it is safe to assume here that those taking more than three theology courses were for reasons of interest and excitement for theological learning rather than simply fulfilling a graduation requirement. Another important clarification is that over 75% of the sample had not graduated from college at the time of the survey. This leaves the possibility for many participants to take additional theology classes in their remaining years of college. This means the study's findings represent the lowest possible quantity of college theology courses taken by participants. A comprehensive understanding of undergraduate theological education would need all YTM participants to have completed college or ended their collegiate study.

#### *Graduate Theological Education*

Other significant findings related to formal theological learning are about participant's interest in graduate theological education. Findings from the telephone survey include:

- 15% considering graduate theological education;
- 8% planning on graduate theological education;
- 3% currently attending graduate theological education.



Of those currently attending graduate theological education, one is a priesthood candidate and the other is a religion teacher in a Catholic school seeking an MA in Catholic Studies.

These findings help us understand our research query: “To what extent are these young adults interested and engaged in theological learning?” More than 9 out of 10 are interested in learning more about Christ and his ways and nearly 75% continue to be excited about theological learning. Over half of these young adults who participated in the YTM program read theology books and two-thirds have taken theology courses in college. Nearly 2 out of 10 are majoring or minoring in theology in college and nearly one in ten is planning on graduate theological study.

#### *Influence of YTM on Theological Learning*

A difficulty in all research is determining cause and effect. This research is not claiming that participation in the thirteen month YTM program caused the high level of theological engagement summarized above. Too many developmental and outside variables exist to make this claim. For example, it is likely that a program that engages high school youth in theological study will also recruit precisely those individuals who are also most likely to study theology in college. Because of the research design, this study never sought to determine cause and effect; however, it does seek to ascertain the influence of participation on program outcomes. The telephone survey contained two items exploring influence related to theological engagement. The first question asked, “YTM stimulated and nurtured in me an excitement for learning theology.” The results were that 97% agreed and 3% neither agreed nor disagreed. This nearly universal agreement that the YTM program stimulated and nurtured excitement for theological

learning suggests at the very least that participants were clearly aware of this program goal and activity. As the highest positive response to any survey question (97%), it also suggests that the YTM program was influential in supporting and encouraging theological inquiry. The second survey question attempted to understand the influence of theological learning on one specific and important aspect of life. This question relates influence of theological learning on career choice. The question asked: “My career choice(s) has been influence by the study of theology.” Forty-five percent of the participants agreed with the questions, 17% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 38% disagreed. These data seem particularly important. Almost half of the YTM participants are saying that one of the most important decisions in their lives (career choice) has been influenced by the study of theology. This is a different quality of influence. Influencing career choice indicates a core level of influence because career choice represents, especially within this culture, a central task in the movement to adulthood.

These responses provide good evaluative data on an intermediate outcome of the YTM program to stimulate and nurture and excitement for theological learning. Three to five years after completion of the YTM program, nearly all participants believe the YTM program “stimulated and nurtured an excitement for theological learning” and almost half of them believe theological learning influenced their career choice. Once again it is important to recall that claims of causality cannot be made here, but it is also reasonable to argue that these findings not only show positive program influence of engaging young people in theology but also show subsequent influence on significant life decisions.

### *Evaluating Faith Practices*

A way of assessing the intermediate program outcomes of the intensive YTM youth ministry program is through an investigation of the current faith practices of these young adults. Understanding their faith practice and the meaning associated with it will provide insight into their Christian discipleship. The performance skills (faith practices) specifically assessed in this study include not only theological learning and frequency of Mass participation (reported above) but also the practices of prayer, reading scripture, volunteer service, political activity for justice, leadership, and participation in religious groups. Understanding the faith and leadership practices of this population will provide insight into their Christian discipleship and their leadership for church and society. Related to this are findings shown above on religious salience and commitment to the Church. Although these variables represent attitudes and values, and not specific faith practices, they do provide important contextual data related to their community connection.

#### *Prayer Practices*

The faith practice of prayer is very evident in the survey population. Nearly 6 out of 10 indicate that they pray every day, while only about 5% say they never pray. The telephone survey included the question: “How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone?” Responses show:

- 58% pray once a day or more often
- 30% pray about once a week to a few times per week
- 4% pray about once or twice per month
- 4% pray less than once a month

- 5% never pray

Those who do pray describe their favorite ways to pray in response to an open-ended survey question. The findings about their preferred methods of prayer are interesting:

- 44% prefer silence, meditation, listening, centering prayer, being still, contemplation, and/or Eucharistic adoration.
- 25% prefer conversation, talking, or dialoguing with God.
- 17% prefer singing or listening to music.

Perhaps more important than these statistics is the language these young adults used to describe their favorite ways to pray. Besides naming prayer forms that nearly every Catholic would know, such as the rosary or Eucharistic adoration, many of these young adults (17%) used terms like *lectio divina*, centering prayer, Ignatian meditation, liturgy of the hours, and Taize prayer. It is safe to say these prayer forms are not widely known among Catholics. It should be noted that a main component of the YTM curriculum was introducing high school youth to these and other prayer forms.

The extent to which the YTM's prayer curriculum caused their current prayer practices cannot be determined here, but it is important to point out that almost one out of five is using language about prayer and practicing prayer forms that were taught at YTM. The telephone survey included one question specifically about YTM's influence on their prayer practices: "To what extent, if any, did YTM influence your prayer life?" The results show:

- 74% "YTM influenced me to pray more often"
- 26% "YTM had little to no influence on my prayer life"
- 0% "YTM influenced me to pray less often"

These findings show that nearly three of four from the sample of YTM participants believe YTM did positively influence their frequency of prayer.

### *Reading Scripture*

A maxim about Catholics is that they don't read the Bible. Barna Group (2006) research shows 62% of Protestants compared to 28% of Catholics report reading from the Bible in the past week. The data from the YTM telephone survey suggests this maxim contains some truth. Only a little more than 10% of those surveyed indicated their preferred method of prayer utilized the Bible. They specifically mentioned *lectio divina*, liturgy of the hours, or psalm prayer as methods of prayer that use the Bible. In the telephone survey we asked a question about the frequency of reading scripture. Survey results show one out of four reads from scripture about once a week or more often and that nearly half of the young adults read scripture about once a month or more often. Perhaps most telling is that a little more than 30% state they never read scripture. These findings show that the practice of reading scripture among YTM population is not substantially different from the population of Catholics in the United States.

### *Volunteer Service*

Three questions in the telephone survey address the practice of serving others. One question explores the frequency of volunteer service, a second question inquires about the type of community service, and a third question asks about the extent YTM influenced their participation in service. These findings from the survey show these young adults to be highly engaged in volunteer service with nine out of ten indicating they had served others at least once in the last year and a little more than four out of ten regularly engaged in volunteer service.

What type of volunteer service are these young adults doing? Three areas of volunteering were most often mentioned: Forty-three percent of those who volunteer indicate that they are involved in social service such as volunteering at a Boys and Girls club, soup kitchen, or homeless shelter; 18 % volunteer in education, mentoring, or tutoring; and 13% were involved in social justice, with the majority of these involved in environmental justice.

A major focus of the YTM curriculum was on service. YTM young adults are volunteering at high levels with 90% of this population involved in some service and more than 40% being highly engaged in this practice. When asked about the influence of YTM on their frequency of participation in service, 70% state that YTM influenced them to participate more often in community service.

### *Political Activity*

Closely related to the practice of volunteer service is the practice of working for social change through political activity. The YTM curriculum includes education on the theological distinctions between service and justice, along with an introduction to Catholic Social Teaching. This YTM curricular focus has the objective of encouraging participants to expand their understanding of faith from merely personal belief in God to social action and social justice as constitutive dimensions of faith. Three items in the telephone survey addressed the practice of political activity. The first question simply asked if they had been involved in any political activity. The second question asked them to explain the activity. The third question asked about the extent of influence YTM had on their political activity.

Compared to national averages, the political involvement of YTM young adults is

very high. Nearly 8 of 10 of the YTM survey participants said they were engaged in political activity, while the U.S. Census Bureau (2008) reported that only 47% of 18 to 24-year-olds voted in the 2004 presidential election. The most common political activity mentioned was voting at 80%; however 45% of those surveyed indicated additional political activity such as signing petitions, contacting legislators, protesting, or working for a political candidate.

With these very high levels of political engagement it would be affirming if participants report YTM was very influential in motivating them to be politically active and faith was a key motivation for this political activity. Unfortunately, the survey did not ask any questions about the link between their political activity and faith. This is an area for further investigation. It is also quite interesting that only 13% of the YTM survey population said YTM influenced them to be more politically active. This is the lowest level of influence reported among the seven survey questions asking directly about the influence of YTM. Although the data show high levels of political activity, it also strongly suggests that YTM had little significant influence on this practice.

In summary, the young adults who participated in YTM as high school youth are highly engaged in the faith practices that characterize Christian discipleship. This provides evidence of achieving the intermediate outcome of the YTM program “to apprentice Catholic leadership youth to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.” It is clear that the majority of the YTM participants are participating in practices associated with Christian discipleship such as theological learning, reading theology, praying, community worship, volunteer service, and justice (political activity).

*Leadership in Church and Society*

Are these young adults also practicing leadership roles in Church and society? A program outcome for YTM is that youth participants will lead and serve Church and society and identify themselves as agents of change. The telephone survey included nine items related to leadership practices. The first three relate to leadership in a religious organization (participation, role, and type of organization). The next three were similar, but relate to leadership in any non-religious organization. Two other survey items are less directly associated with leadership but relate to practices that augment leadership in religious settings. The survey included one question on financial stewardship and one question on participation in a religious group (outside of Mass) for prayer, service, justice, or learning. The final question asked about the influence of YTM on their leadership.

The findings show that the YTM participants are highly engaged in leadership roles in church and society. When asked if they were currently taking a leadership role in any specifically religious organization, 25 percent said they were, and 75 percent said they were not. When asked if they were currently taking a leadership role in any other type of organization, 52 percent said yes, 44 percent said no, and four percent did not know. Combining these findings reveals that 66 percent indicate that they are currently taking a leadership role in either a religious or non-religious organization. One in ten report that they are currently taking leadership roles in both religious and non-religious organizations.

These leadership roles in religious organizations happen in parish and campus settings. The parish roles cited most often are pastoral council member, catechetical



leader, liturgical leader, or youth ministry leader. Campus leadership roles include campus ministry, dorm chaplain, liturgical leadership, and YTM counselor. The leadership roles for organizations that are not specifically religious include a wide range of settings from student senate at their university to police volunteer search and rescue.

A survey question related to leadership in a religious organization specifically asked about participation in any religious group, outside of Sunday worship, for prayer, service, justice or learning. One out of three of the respondents answered this question in the affirmative. This frequency corroborates the religious organizational leadership findings that showed 25% engaged in leadership in a religious organization. A crosstabulation of leadership roles with current age (Table 10) reveals that as participants

Table 10

*Crosstabulation of Age and Leadership Role in any Organization*

Current Age	Leadership role in an Organization (Religious and Non-Religious Combined)		Total
	Yes	No	
19	3	7	10
20	11	7	18
21	14	4	18
22	9	4	13
23	10	3	13
24	2	1	3
Total	50	26	76

get older, they are taking on more organizational leadership. It shows 22-24 year old YTM participants are twice as likely than 18-19 year olds to take on organizational

leadership roles. Four out of eleven (36%) of 18-19 year-olds are taking a leadership role in an organization while 21 out of 29 (72.4%) of the 22-24 year-olds are doing so.

This is likely the natural order in college that often limits organizational leadership to juniors and seniors. It is also important to note that survey responses made it clear that participants did not always understand organizational leadership as being an official leader such as chairperson or president of the organization.

A related leadership practice is stewardship. The survey asked a simple question: “In the last year have you given any of your own money to any organizations or causes, totaling more than \$30 (including giving money to the church)? A little more than 7 out of 10 responded “yes” to this question. This is a positive finding. This faith practice of stewardship is consistent with the other data on leadership.

These findings on leadership show that two out of three of the YTM participants are demonstrating leadership in the Church and society. They also show that as the participants get older they take on substantially more leadership. The findings also show stewardship practices indicating 70% saying they donate money to various causes. One out of three indicates they participate in religious groups, and one out of four is taking leadership in a religious organization. A survey question asked the extent to which YTM positively influenced their current leadership:

- 47% “YTM had a significantly positive influence on my leadership”
- 47% “YTM had some positive influence on my leadership”
- 5% “YTM had little to no influence on my leadership”

While making no claims that the current levels of leadership by these young adults are caused by participation in the YTM program, the above data provide important data

about the participants' perception of the influence that YTM had on their current leadership. Nearly 95% say YTM had some positive influence on their current leadership, and nearly 50% say YTM had a significantly positive influence.

### *Evaluating Vocational Discernment*

The Lilly Endowment has invested significant resources in theological program for high school youth "to identify and encourage talented Christian youth to consider vocations in ministry" The Endowment's long-term hope was to recruit a cadre of theologically minded Christian youth who will become ordained ministers or committed lay leaders in their churches and society.

An intermediate outcome being assessed in this study is the extent to which the YTM program encouraged a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry. The survey included fourteen survey items devoted to the study of vocation. Six aspects of vocation are addressed in this study: 1) definition of vocation; 2) vocational discernment salience; 3) vocational discernment activity; 4) consideration of and commitment to religious vocations; 5) discernment help; and 6) YTM's influence on vocational discernment. Two of fourteen survey items utilize an open-ended format. One focuses on the definition of vocation and the other on what participants view as most helpful in their process of discerning their vocation.

### *Defining Vocation*

The following open-ended question was asked during the telephone survey: "Define your understanding of the word 'vocation.'" A definition was provided by 85% of those surveyed. A word search analysis of responses provided the following key concepts in participant definitions:

- 66% included the concept of *call* in their definition
- 58% indicated vocation came from *God, the church, or faith*.
- 55% indicated vocation was about *loving, serving, or helping God and/or others*.
- 23% included traditional views of vocation including *priesthood, religious life, or married life*.
- 23% did not include a religious connection to vocation.
- 20% specifically mentioned *gifts, talents, or passions*.
- 17% focused their definition of vocation on *career*.
- 13% specifically incorporated all or most of theologian Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation: "*where one's deep gladness meets the world's deep need.*"

The following six sample definitions from participants attempt to capture the essence of the key definitional concepts listed above:

- "Vocation is something you feel you were created, called, or meant to do. It means acknowledging God put you on the journey to be something."
- "Vocation is an understanding of talents given by God or acquired over the years, to serve the community."
- "Vocation is deep gladness meeting deep need. It is finding the intrinsic "you" – that it may benefit others. It is larger than you and makes one happy."
- "Vocation means people who have chosen to participate in a specific path following Christ, such as priesthood. A vocation is religious people who have found a calling to participate in service and ministry through the Church."
- "A vocation is a career path best suited to do or called to do."

- “It is a present you unwrap piece by piece. It is always there. It ends up being the ‘authentic you.’ This is what I am called to do – sometimes we are afraid of this or only do it partway.”

These definitional distinctions provide insight into the different perspectives these young adults bring to the term “vocation.” As we describe these vocational findings, it is important to note the variety of perspectives on the meaning of the term “vocation.” Almost 25% do not including any religious language in their definition of the term. For this group vocation is associated primarily with career choice.

#### *Importance of Vocational Discernment*

Two survey questions ask about the importance of vocational discernment. One item relates to the salience of vocational discernment: “Discerning my vocation is important to me.” Frequencies of responses show that 93% agreed, 3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4% disagreed with the statement. For the majority discovering God’s call for one’s life is important, but for a minority (25%) this item does not contain this religious connotation. For this minority group it is more likely only about the importance of discovering one’s career path. A second survey question asks about the significance of vocational discernment as part of one’s career pursuit: “Vocational discernment is a significant part of my career pursuit.” Seventy-eight percent agreed, 15% neither agreed nor disagreed and 8% disagreed. Nearly 8 of 10 in the sample connect vocational discernment to career pursuit. This is positive evidence that the YTM participants have integrated vocational thinking into their lives. A plausible explanation for the slightly more than 2 of 10 who do not “agree” with this statement could be that respondents interpreted vocational discernment here to mean contemplating becoming a priest or a

nun. However, in reviewing the definitions of vocation by the 17 participants who responded this way, no evidence of such a connection was discovered. Overall, these findings show vocational discernment is important to YTM participants, and it is a significant part of their career pursuit.

#### *Discernment Activity*

A survey item sought information on the behavior or practice of vocational discernment. The survey item stated: “I am actively discerning my vocation. I am reflecting on how my gifts and talents can be used to meet the world’s deep needs.” The responses show:

- 88% Agree
- 8% Neither agree nor disagree
- 4% Disagree

It is an important finding that nearly 9 of 10 are actively discerning their vocation. The different perspectives from the definitions of vocation again need to be considered for an accurate interpretation. These data could also have been included in the faith practices section because active discernment of vocation could be considered a constitutive practice of Christian discipleship. These findings once again suggest that more than 75% of the respondents are actively discerning their vocation from the perspective of faith.

The survey also asked questions about discernment activities related to married life and single life with the following results, “I am discerning a vocational call to married life.” (79%) and “I am discerning a call to single life” (23%). As stated above, the intermediate outcome being assessed here is the extent to which the YTM program encouraged a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian

ministry. The vast majority of participants are discerning their call to married life, but a significant minority (23%) are discerning a call to single life. This is important within the Catholic context because vocations to ordained ministry and religious communities demand a single lifestyle.

### *Religious Vocations*

The phrase “religious vocations” will be used here to mean a call to ordained ministry as a priest or permanent deacon (limited to males in the Catholic Church), a vocational call to join a religious community as a sister, or a vocational call to serve the church as a lay ecclesial minister. A lay ecclesial minister is a non-ordained professional minister of the church, such as a youth minister or liturgy coordinator. Six survey items attempt to determine the scope of vocational discernment among the YTM young adults. Four items ask if they are considering religious vocations and two asked if they are committed to these vocations. The data show:

- 19% of the male participants are considering a vocation as a priest
- 16% of male participants are considering a vocation as a permanent deacon
- 20% of the female participants are considering a vocation as a sister
- 20% of all the participants are considering a vocation as a lay ecclesial minister

Basically, one out of five of the YTM participants are considering religious vocations. An interesting observation from these results is that consideration of religious vocations did not diminish across age. A crosstabulation of those considering religious vocation by age of participants show no drop-off in consideration of vocation between those aged 18-21 and those aged 22-24. This seems important because one would likely assume that as

young people progress through college consideration of religious vocations would likely diminish, but this is not the case for this population.

Not only did the survey ask if YTM participants were considering vocations to religious service, but it also asked if they were committed to becoming a priest, permanent deacon, sister, or lay ecclesial ministry. The following are the response frequencies to the survey item: “I am committed to become a lay ecclesial minister, priest, permanent deacon, or sister.”

- 5% Agree
- 20% Neither agree nor disagree
- 75% Disagree

Six percent of the males indicate they are committed to becoming priests, while five percent of the females are committed to becoming lay ecclesial ministers. These data show that 1 out of 20 of the YTM participants are committed to religious vocations in the church. It is not possible to fully interpret the meaning of the 20% who responded, “neither agree nor disagree,” to the question of commitment to a religious vocation. The fact that they did not disagree with this question suggests that to some degree this group may still be considering a commitment to a religious vocation. This interpretation would be consistent with data showing an identical percentage considering religious vocations.

The YTM program collected intake vocation data on this population when they were high school students as part of their admission process into the program. Two specific questions were asked on the intake survey: 1) Have you ever, even briefly, considered becoming a priest, sister, or brother? 2) Have you ever, even briefly, considered working for the church in some capacity, without becoming a priest, sister, or brother? The intake



data show that when these young adults were high school youth, nearly 6 out of 10 had considered (even briefly) becoming a priest, sister, or brother and nearly 8 out of 10 had considered (even briefly) working in the church in some capacity. This is an important comparison because it shows that coming into the program the majority of YTM participants had considered at least to a minimal degree vocations in church ministry.

The results from the telephone survey show that that 5% have made a commitment to religious vocations and between 20-25% are still considering vocations to ordained ministry, religious life, or lay ecclesial ministry. It will most likely take another ten to fifteen years before accurate data on religious vocations will be available for this population because most women are not currently joining religious communities under the age of 35. Overall, these are positive data, but it is difficult to claim these findings as a program success, especially when the great majority of youth came into the YTM program open to this possibility. An essential assessment question to consider is what influence or impact did YTM have on fostering religious vocations? The following two sections provide some insight into this question.

### *Discernment Help*

Another of the items in the telephone survey was an open-ended question about what was most helpful to them in the process of discerning their vocation. This item was added to the telephone survey after a discussion about this research with the YTM vocation partners who identified this question as a particular point of interest. Vocation partners are vocation directors from religious communities who participate in the YTM program and also help fund it. The survey item specifically asked: “What, if anything, was most helpful to you in discerning your vocation?” The qualitative data revealed:

- 49% use religious language such as prayer, God, Christ, sisters, priests, spiritual direction, faith, or social justice in their response
- 24% identify parents or family as being most helpful
- 22% identify prayer and/or reflection as being most helpful
- 18% identify friends and/or community as being most helpful
- 17% identify college, classes, and/or education as being most helpful.

These data show that supportive parents, prayer, friends, and education are most helpful to this population in discerning their vocation. Three other items were mentioned less frequently, but are important to consider:

- 8% specifically mention YTM as being most helpful in their vocational discernment.
- 7% mention sisters and priests (live ins with the community) as being most helpful.
- 5% mentioned social justice or ministry experiences as being most helpful.

#### *YTM Influence on Vocational Discernment*

As stated above, 8% specifically mentioned YTM as being most helpful in their vocational discernment. The last survey item focusing on vocation asked about the influence of YTM on their vocational discernment. The survey question read: “To what extent did YTM help foster serious reflection about your vocation?”

- 46% said that YTM provided significant help
- 43% said that YTM provided some help
- 11% said that YTM provided little to no help.

These findings show that almost 9 of 10 YTM participants say YTM provided some help in fostering serious reflection about vocation and nearly half say YTM provided significant help.

Digging a little deeper reveals that 67% of those considering religious vocations to the priesthood and 78% of those considering a religious vocation as a sister stated that YTM provided significant help in fostering serious reflection about vocation. In addition 75% of those committed to religious vocations reported that YTM provided significant help. This indicates that those young adults currently considering or committed to religious vocations are much more likely to view the YTM program as providing significant help in vocational discernment than the sample as a whole.

A summary of these findings provides important evidence to help answer the assessment question: “To what extent did the YTM program encourage a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry?” First and foremost among the findings is the importance of vocational discernment to nearly the entire population with almost 90% actively discerning their vocation. Survey participants report that parents, prayer, friends, and education provided the most help in discerning their vocation. The findings on religious vocations to ordained ministry, religious life as a sister, or lay ecclesial ministry show that one in five of these young adults are considering vocations in Christian ministry and one in twenty have already made commitments to these religious vocations. Qualitative data assessing the impact of the YTM program on encouraging vocations include 8% specifically mentioning YTM as being most helpful to them in discerning their vocation and 46% saying YTM provided significant help in fostering serious reflection about their vocation. Data supporting the influence of YTM

on encouraging religious vocations show that 75% of those considering or committed to vocations of ordained ministry, religious life as a sister, or lay ecclesial ministry, say YTM provided significant help.

### *Evaluating Overall Program Impact*

What overall impact did the YTM thirteen-month intensive youth ministry program have on participants? As stated above, this evaluative study cannot make causation claims about participant beliefs, decisions, and practices. Further, although the sample is representative particularly along demographic variables, such claims of representation made in the realm of religiosity could be influenced by selection bias. The methodology of this study does not include a control group of high school youth who were very similar to this group, but did not attend YTM. This research assesses the impact of YTM on participants by asking multiple questions in the survey about participant perception of the influence of YTM on their religiosity. Seven of these questions were quantitative questions and one was qualitative.

### *Quantitative Data*

A summary of the seven quantitative survey questions assessing the impact of the YTM program show:

Q. 11: “YTM stimulated and nurtured in me excitement for theological learning.”

97% Agree

3% Neither agree nor disagree

0% Disagree

Q. 42: “To what extent, if any, did YTM positively influence you current leadership?”

47% YTM had a *significantly positive influence* on my leadership.

47% YTM had *some positive influence* on my leadership.

4% YTM had *little to no influence* on my leadership.

Q. 44: “To what extent, if any, did YTM influence the frequency of your Mass attendance?”

41% YTM influenced me to attend Mass *more often*.

58% YTM had *little to no influence* on my Mass attendance.

1% YTM influenced me to attend Mass *less often*.

Q. 46: “To what extent, if any, did YTM influence your prayer life?”

74% YTM influenced me to pray *more often*.

26% YTM had *little to no influence* on my prayer life.

0% YTM influenced me to pray *less often*.

Q. 50: “To what extent, if any, did YTM influence your participation in service?”

71% YTM influenced me to participate *more often* in community service.

28% YTM had *little to no influence* on my community service.

1% YTM influenced me to participate *less often* in community service.

Q. 52: “To what extent, if any, did YTM influence your participation in political activity?”

13% YTM influenced me to be *more politically active*.

87% YTM had *little to no influence* on my political activity.

0% YTM influenced me to be *less politically active*.

Q. 68: “To what extent did YTM help foster serious reflection about your vocation?”

46% YTM provided *significant help*.

43% YTM provided *some help*.

11% YTM provided *little to no help*.

These findings show that the YTM participant’s perception of the impact of YTM is highest (70% or higher) in the areas of nurturing excitement for theological learning, fostering participation in community service, and fostering prayer. These are precisely the three main curricular foci of the YTM program. Close to half of the participants report YTM having a significantly positive influence on their leadership, influencing more frequent Mass attendance, and providing significant help in fostering serious reflection on vocation. These findings also show that very few YTM participants (11% or less) assess YTM’s influence as non-existent or negative across these seven variables.

Viewing these data through the lens of gender reveals a few interesting findings. In response to a question about YTM’s influence on leadership, 55% of females compared to 38% of males indicated that YTM was a significantly positive influence on their current leadership. In response to a question 44 about YTM’s influence on Mass attendance, 32% of females compared to 53% of males responded that YTM influenced them to attend Mass more often.

### *Qualitative Data*

The quantitative findings above provide an overview of the impact of the YTM program, while the qualitative findings below provide narratives that describe the impact. The qualitative survey item asked: “What impact, if any, did YTM have on your life?”

One survey participant gave the following response in the phone interview. It provides rich insight into the depth of impact of YTM:

It had a profound impact. It did chart a course for my life. Before I was unsure of where I was going. [At YTM] I decided: I am going to a Catholic university and will study theology. It is like Frost's *The Road Less Traveled*. My life would be fundamentally different without this experience. I would not be as involved in the Church. YTM helped me realize a deeper current beneath my life. [YTM] gave or put inside me motivation to follow this current...a constant aim of living an authentic Christian life.

Seventy-four of the seventy-six subjects who participated in the survey answered this open-ended question about the impact of YTM. Language coding was utilized to aggregate individual responses into larger units of meaning. It is striking to see how often phrases such as “huge impact,” “big impact,” “major impact,” “significant impact,” “very significant impact,” “changed my life,” or “caused” is used by the subjects. However, a few also use language such as “very short term,” or “at first” to describe an initial but not sustained impact. This range of responses can be divided into three categories of impact: high impact, moderate impact, and low impact. Because these responses provide rich data about the impact of YTM, all the responses in each category will be provided in appendix D.

*High Impact.* The criteria for placement in the high impact group include: 1) superlative language describing the impact; 2) the impact relates to a significant decision such as college choice, vocational discernment, or career path; 3) the impact relates to Christian discipleship growth such as praying more frequently or ongoing theological study, and 4) the impact relates to growth in leadership or some aspect of personal

identity. It should be noted that use of superlative language alone without explanation of impact did not qualify the subject for this group. Forty individuals (53% of the survey population) gave responses that fit two or more of these criteria. More than half of the YTM participants give responses that put them in the “high impact” group.

High impact is described most frequently in relationship to Christian discipleship practices (16 participants or 21% of the population). Sample responses include:

- “[YTM] had a lot of impact on my life. I learned that I loved theology [and] learned that I was called to help other people.”
- “[YTM] had a big impact on different types of prayer—I learned so much about prayer that it has really helped my prayer life as well.”
- “[YTM] helped me know that being gifted with faith was something to be shared, not hidden. Lifelong journey—we are all working toward the greater good and it will come.”
- “[YTM] impacted me to continue being involved in the Church.”
- “YTM helped me put God in the front of my life.”

A second main theme that emerged within the high impact group described YTM’s impact on vocation or career choice. Sample responses from the 14 individuals (18% of sample) include:

- “YTM is responsible for me entering college with a clear vision and sense of vocation. I knew my major was theology for college.”
- “It had a profound impact. It did chart a course for my life.”
- “YTM caused me to choose my future career path as a counselor.”



- “[YTM] opened up a direction (vocation). That possibility of priesthood. I would not have been open to enter college seminary without YTM.”
- “[YTM] brought me to where I am now, got me thinking theology, priest.”

Theological engagement is a third main theme that describes the high impact group. Nine individuals (12% of sample population) included statements relating directly to the impact of YTM on their study of theology.

- “YTM influenced me to study theology/Catholic studies in college.”
- “Major impact – [I] realized that people studied theology - amazed – [I] figured out this was [my] passion - this has shaped my life today.”
- “Given me lifelong thirst for theology.”

Four individuals mentioned that YTM specifically impacted their choice of college, and five individuals stated YTM generated a greater capacity for leadership. Notice the language used in these responses:

- “It is where I started to shine. It helped me lead in college.”
- “I wouldn’t have gone to St. Ben’s without YTM.”
- “It had a positive impact on my leadership capability. Learned to be more open and assertive. Made my faith stronger—all those kids taking an active role in faith.”

In summary, more than half of the YTM survey participants described in their own words that YTM impacted their lives in a highly significant way. Most often this impact was expressed in terms of helping them live their faith, discern their vocation, engage in theological study, choose college, and/or enhance their leadership. This qualitative evidence supports the quantitative findings that YTM’s impact was highest

(70% or higher) in the areas of nurturing excitement for theological learning and prayer practices.

*Low Impact.* In stark contrast to the high impact responses are those that reveal little impact or indicate that the change they experienced was short lived. Only six subjects (8%) fall into this “low impact” group. The following three comments reveal minimal impact:

- “Effects of YTM were very short term. Booster shot feeling of euphoria in the beginning but it begins to wear off. Helped for short term but lacked connections for long term.”
- “It really didn't because I don't really think about it anymore.”
- “Colleges appreciated service background.”

Three other responses indicate the impact of YTM was short lived; however these responses point out some positive aspects of YTM:

- “[YTM] pushed me to be a faithful Christian servant, even though I don't really do it now. It is there inside me.”
- “At the time, YTM caused me to think more deeply about the impact people can have on a community and fostering solidarity within the community.”
- “At the time it helped me to grow in my faith but it wasn't something that I carried through - after high school didn't really affect me anymore - for where I was then it was really good.”

Two subjects did not answer this question. If one were to include these non-responses in the low impact group then 11% of the survey population would be in the low impact group.

*Moderate Impact.* There were responses that did not fit either the high or low impact category. Twenty-eight individuals (37% of those surveyed) fall into this group. These responses suggest YTM was a positive experience that helped them grow or taught them important things, but generally did not lead to significant behavior change. Sample responses include:

- “It definitely made me think more about the impact I can have on the world in positive ways.”
- “Yes, it impacted me through my service project at the Red Lake Indian Reservation - to help people and make a big difference by doing little things.”
- “YTM gave me a confidence boost that helped me be more a "go-getter" and provided me with a foundation from which to build more knowledge about the relationship between the community, God, and myself.”
- “Positive impact because something I could be involved in -part of my story - Did it help me realize anything? [YTM] taught me that there are really intelligent people in the world who actually care about doing good things.”
- “It helped me grow - active in the community - Boys' and Girls' Club - service project in your Church - public speaking - knowing what I want in life. [YTM] helped the process along.”

#### *Program Impact Summary*

A main purpose of this research is to assess the extent to which the YTM program accomplished its four intermediate outcomes: 1) Engagement in theological education; 2) Engagement in faith practices; 3) Engagement in vocational discernment; and 4) Christian discipleship. The following summary of the quantitative and qualitative

research findings will be reported in response to the questions that framed this assessment of the YTM intermediate program outcomes. Notice that the fourth outcome, Christian discipleship will be explored in the following section of this chapter. Question 1: To what extent are these young adults interested and engaged in theological learning?

- 90% continue to be interested in learning about Christ and his ways
- 80% think about God in their everyday life
- 74% continue to be excited about theological learning
- 53% read theology books
- 68% have taken at least one college theology course
- 22% have taken more than four college theology courses
- 15% are considering graduate theological education
- 3% are currently attending graduate theological education.

Question 2: To what extent are these young adults engaged in faith practices?

- 39% attend Mass once a week or more often
- 58% pray once a day or more often
- 25% read scripture once a week or more often
- 42% volunteering on a regular basis (six or more times per year)
- 45% are highly engaged in political activity
- 66% are taking a leadership role in an religious or non-religious organization
- 71% have donated \$30 or more to an organization

Question 3: To what extent are these young adults considering vocations in Christian ministry?

- 75% define the word “vocation” utilizing theological concepts
- 93% say vocational discernment is personally important
- 78% say vocational discernment is a significant part of their career pursuit
- 88% say they are actively discerning their vocation
- 79% are discerning a call to married life
- 23% are discerning a call to single life
- 20% are considering a religious vocation as a priest, deacon, sister, or lay ecclesial minister
- 5% are committed to a religious vocation

Question 4: To what extent has the YTM program influenced these dispositions and behaviors?

- 97% YTM stimulated and nurtured excitement for theological learning
- 47% YTM had a significantly positive influence on their leadership
- 41% YTM influenced them to attend Mass more often
- 74% YTM influenced them to pray more often
- 71% YTM influenced them to participate more often in community service
- 13% YTM influenced them to be more politically active
- 46% YTM provided significant help in fostering serious reflection about vocation
- 53% give qualitative responses that indicate the YTM program had a highly significant impact on their lives. The impact centered on fostering behaviors associated with faith practices, vocational discernment, theological engagement, and college choice.

Three to five years after participation in the 13-month YTM program 90% of respondents report YTM had positive impact on their lives and only 10% report little impact or short-lived impact. More than half of the participants report a significant impact on major life decisions such as college choice or course of study in college, vocational discernment, frequency of religious practices, or participating in leadership. Analysis and recommendations related to these findings will be explored in the next chapter of this dissertation.

### Assessing Christian Discipleship

The third research question driving this study asks how Christian discipleship can be operationally defined for assessment purposes. A significant part of this research seeks to make progress on the problem of defining and assessing this overarching goal of youth ministry and adolescent religious education. The literature review in chapter two explored and identified six basic criteria that could be used in an operational definition of Christian discipleship. Chapter three explained how these criteria were incorporated into a Christian Discipleship Scale and used to assess the Christian discipleship of the YTM survey participants. The following exploration of Christian discipleship will be organized into the following five sections: 1) a brief review of the Christian Discipleship Scale; 2) descriptive statistics of the scale; 3) correlations between the scale and faith practice variables; 4) YTM results; and 5) insights concerning likes and dislikes about the Catholic Church.

*The Christian Discipleship Scale*

In review, six criteria of Christian discipleship emerged from the review of the literature and were incorporated into the following six questions in the YTM telephone survey:

Q24: I am interested in **learning** about Christ and his ways?

Q25: I have experienced a **call** to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his ways?

Q26: I have a **personal relationship or friendship** with Christ?

Q27: I am committed to participate in Christ's **mission** to build the Reign of God?

Q28: I am committed to being part of a **community** of Christians dedicated to this mission?

Q29: I think of myself as a **disciple** of Jesus Christ?

Responses to each question (categorical variable) were given ordinal values: 3 = agree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, and 1 = disagree. When these six variables are combined, a scale is created with scores ranging from a minimum of six (all six responses being “disagree”) to a maximum of 18 (all six responses being “agree”). A score of 18 indicates a subject meets the 6 criteria for Christian discipleship as defined in this study. A score of 17 means participants “agree” to five of the criteria for Christian discipleship and “neither agreed nor disagreed” to one. A score of 6 means they “disagreed” with the six criteria for Christian discipleship.

Do higher scores on the Christian Discipleship Scale suggest higher levels of Christian discipleship? Does this scale actually have merit and worth in assessing Christian discipleship? A look at the descriptive statistics from the Christian Discipleship Scale can help answer these questions.

*Descriptive Statistics for the Christian Discipleship Scale*

Data were collected from the YTM Telephone Survey from young adults (n=76) who participated in the YTM program as high school youth. Descriptive statistics for each of the six variables in the scale are shown in Table 11. The scale had six items with a

Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipleship Scale Variables*

Discipleship Variable	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interest in Learning	76	1	3	2.86	.411
Experienced Call	76	1	3	2.71	.561
Friendship with Christ	76	1	3	2.59	.696
Commitment to Mission	76	1	3	2.68	.657
Commitment to Community	76	1	3	2.61	.675
Identity as Disciple	76	1	3	2.63	.670
Christian Discipleship Scale	76	6	18	16.91	2.95

minimum of 6 and a maximum of 18, a mean of 16.91 and a standard deviation of 2.949.

SPSS calculates the scale reliability analysis of alpha (Cronbach) =.8819. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency (correlations) of the variables in the scale.

According to J.C. Nunnally (1978) the alpha of a scale should be greater than .70 for items to be used together as a scale. This suggests the Discipleship scale has sufficient

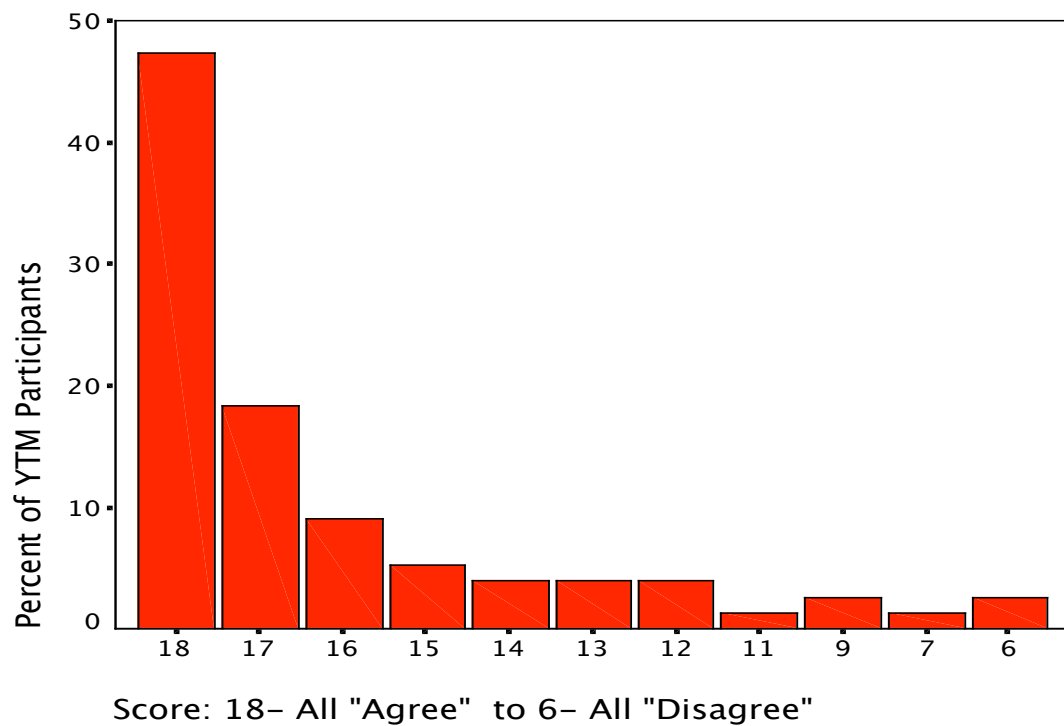


internal consistency within its six variables to be useful in exploring the latent variable called Christian discipleship.

Figure 2 shows the YTM survey population scores very high on the Christian

Figure 2

Distribution of Christian Discipleship Scale



Discipleship Scale with 47% of YTM respondents agreeing with all six criteria for Christian discipleship. Considering this elite population of Catholic youth who attended a 13-month intensive youth ministry program, it makes sense that the distribution on a Discipleship scale is skewed to the left with three out of four of the survey sample scoring a 16, 17, or 18 on the scale.

*Correlation with Faith Practices Variables*

If the Christian Discipleship Scale encompasses a significant part of the reality known as Christian discipleship, then it could be hypothesized that it should correlate with religious behaviors or faith practices. The criteria used in the Discipleship Scale are not behaviors. Interest in learning, experience of a call, personal relationship or friendship with Christ, commitment to mission, commitment to community, and self-definition could more accurately be labeled as dispositions. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines disposition as:

The state or quality of being disposed, inclined, or 'in the mind' (*to* something, or *to do* something); inclination (sometimes = desire, intention, purpose); state of mind or feeling in respect to a thing or person; the condition of being (favourably or unfavourably) disposed *towards*.

Christian discipleship, similar to all learning or apprenticeships, requires that dispositions become embodied in behaviors in some shape or form. For example, if one agrees to the statement "I am interested in learning" about pottery, but never actually takes time to learn how to make pottery, then the disposition remains a disposition and does not become embodied in practice. Likewise, if the Christian Discipleship Scale has merit or worth in describing at least some aspect of authentic Christian discipleship, then it should also embody faith practices. To test this hypothesis, the research correlated the Discipleship Scale with the faith practice variables in the survey.

Using SPSS to calculate Pearson correlations, the research discovered correlations with the following five faith practice variables: 1) Frequency of Mass Participation; 2) Frequency of Prayer; 3) Frequency of Reading Scripture; 4) Involvement in Religious Groups; and 5)

Leadership in Religious Groups. Each of these correlations is significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed). Table 12 provides the statistical correlations. These correlations means as subjects

Table 12

*Significant Correlations of Discipleship Scale with Faith Practice Variables*

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Significance (2-Tailed)	N
Frequency of Mass Participation	.613a	.000	76
Frequency of Prayer	.595a	.000	76
Frequency of Reading Scripture	.413a	.000	76
Involvement in Religious Group	.332a	.003	76
<u>Leadership in Religious Group</u>	<u>.343a</u>	<u>.002</u>	<u>76</u>

Note. a. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed)

agree with more of the criteria on the Christian Discipleship Scale they more frequently attend Mass, pray, read scripture, are involved in religious groups, and lead religious groups. These findings support the hypothesis that the Discipleship Scale actually measures part of the reality known as Christian discipleship because the dispositions in the Discipleship scale are statistically associated with faith practices.

The crosstabulation of the variable “frequency of Mass attendance” with the Discipleship Scale demonstrates this association (see Table 13). Twenty-nine out of fifty participants scoring high on the Discipleship scale (18 or 17) attend Mass weekly or more often, while 100% of those scoring low on the Discipleship scale (13-18) attend Mass a few times per year or less.

Table 13

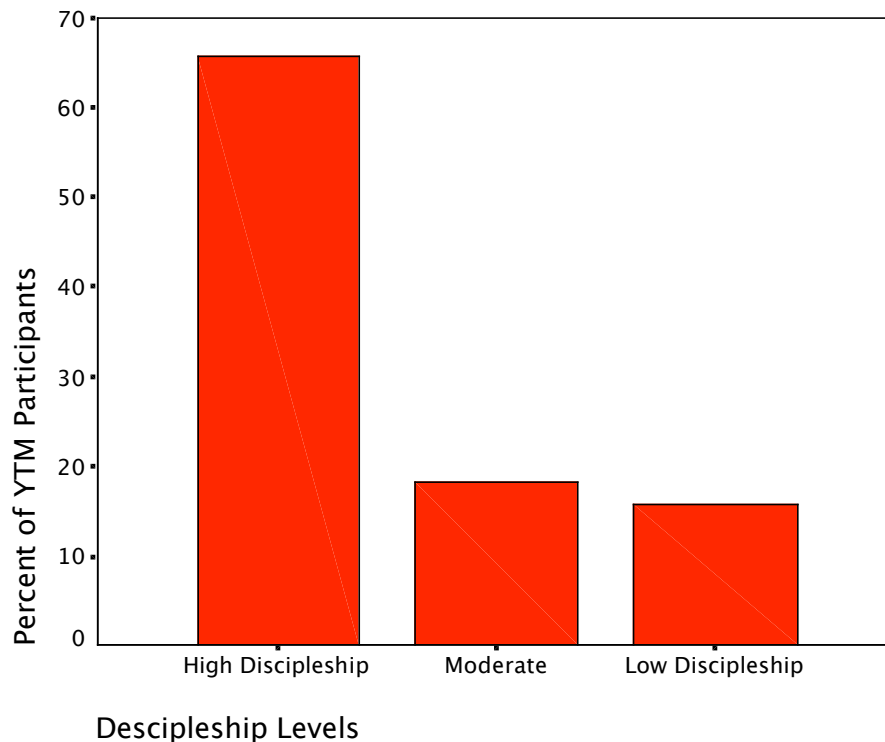
*Crossstabulation: Discipleship Scale \* Frequency Mass*

Discipleship Level	Frequency of Mass Attendance				
	Weekly or More	2-3 times per Month	Once per Month	Few Times per Year	Never
High Discipleship Scores 18-17	29	10	4	6	1
Moderate Discipleship Scores 16-14	1	4	4	5	
Low Discipleship Scores 13-6		1		10	1
Total	30	15	8	21	2

The distribution of the Discipleship Scale is clearly skewed to the left (see figure 2) with a scale mean of 16.91 with a scale range of a maximum of 18 and a minimum of 6. Because of this distribution, it seemed prudent to utilize a second method to statistically compare the relationship between variables. A one-way ANOVA comparison of means for the discipleship scale and the five faith practice variables listed above also showed the mean differences for these five faith practice variables to be significant at the .05 or .01 level. This statistical analysis (Tukey and LSD) also revealed little to no statistical difference between scores of 18 and 17 on the discipleship scale. A second distribution the Discipleship Scale (Figure 3) consolidates the 13 scores (6-18) of the scale into three groups. Group 1: High Discipleship (18-17); Group 2: Moderate Discipleship (16-14); and Group 3: Low Discipleship (13-6). This second iteration of the scale addresses the skewed distribution. However, SPSS provides quite similar statistical results using either Pearson correlations

Figure 3

## Christian Discipleship Scale #2



or ANOVA comparison of means using both distributions of the Discipleship Scale. This suggests that the correlations between the Discipleship Scale and faith practice variables have not been significantly influenced by the skewed distribution of the population.

The correlations described above provide good evidence that the Discipleship Scale has some value in actually describing Christian discipleship because of its statistical relationship with faith practices. However, this is not the entire story. Further investigation shows five other faith practice variables explored in the telephone survey do not statistically correlate with the Discipleship Scale: 1) quantity of theology books read; 2) quantity of theology courses taken; 3) frequency of political involvement; 4) stewardship; and 5) frequency of volunteer

service. Table 14 shows the Pearson Correlation for these five additional faith practice variables with Discipleship Scale 1.

Table 14

*Non-Significant Correlation of Discipleship Scale with Faith Practice Variables*

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Significance (2-Tailed)	N
Quantity of Theology Books Read	.224	.051	76
Quantity of Theology Courses	.192	.096	76
Frequency of Political Involvement	.031	.794	76
Stewardship: Donating \$30 or more	.031	.790	76
Frequency of Volunteer Service	.027	.818	76

What might be the essential difference between the faith practice variables that correlate at a significant level and those that don't? The five variables that do have significant correlations with the Discipleship Scale seem to be explicitly reported religious behaviors. Frequency of Mass participation, prayer, and reading scripture, along with involvement in religious groups or leadership in such groups are all overtly religious practices. While the variables of political involvement, stewardship, and volunteer service can certainly hold religious motivations, they can also be viewed as less explicitly religious. Perhaps a simple explanation of correlation differences among these variables could be that the Christian Discipleship Scale only correlates with those practices that are explicitly religious.

Two other faith practice variables that do not correlate with the discipleship scale are to be considered. These variables are theology courses taken and theology books read. Table 15

is a crosstabulation of Discipleship Scale #2 and theology courses taken. It provides important information about those participants who are likely majoring in theology in

Table 15

*Theology Courses \* Discipleship Scale 2 Crosstabulation*

Theology Courses Taken	Discipleship Scale 2 Scores			Total
	High Discipleship (18-17)	Moderate Discipleship (16-14)	Low Discipleship (13-6)	
8-20 College Courses	8	1	0	9
4-6 College Courses	3	1	2	6
1-3 College Courses	24	5	5	34
0 College Courses	15	7	5	27
Total	50	14	12	76

college. It shows that nearly 90% of participants who have taken 8 or more theology courses and 73% of those students taking 4 or more theology courses are in the High Discipleship group. Even though statistically these variables do not correlate, these high frequencies provide evidence of a relationship among those participants most engaged in theological coursework in college. The rationale for the argument is that most religiously affiliated colleges have curricular requirements of two to three theology courses. Those taking more than three theology courses are more likely motivated by interest in the subject than those who may simply be fulfilling curricular requirements.

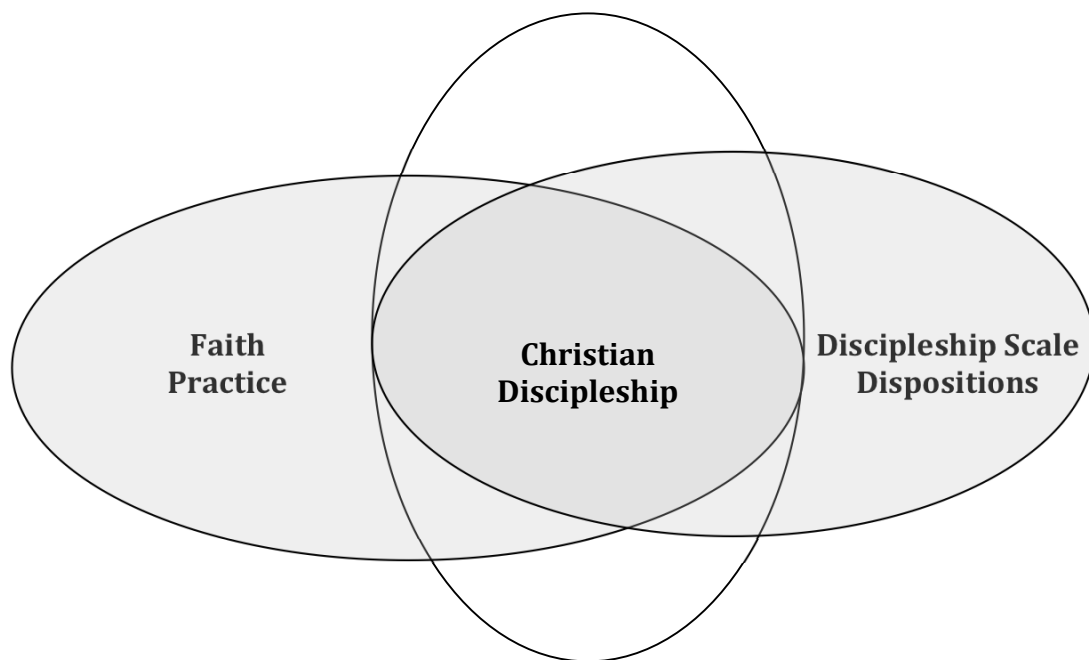
A concern with the Discipleship Scale is whether the items in the scale are simply another way of stating the same variables as the faith practices. For example, is the variable in the Discipleship Scale, "I am committed to being part of a community of Christians dedicated to

this mission,” another way of asking about Mass participation? This is a valid concern. Possibly, the combination of dispositions and the behaviors identified in the faith practice variables actually move us closer to understanding and assessing Christian discipleship.

The discrepancies in correlations among the ten faith practice variables suggest Christian discipleship extends beyond both faith behaviors (as seen in the faith practice variables) and faith dispositions (as seen in the Discipleship Scale). Perhaps the intersection of dispositions and practices identifies an authentic aspect of Christian discipleship. Figure 4 provides a Venn diagram of the possibility of these relationships. The diagram suggests that Christian

Figure 4

Venn Diagram of Christian Discipleship



discipleship in actuality is greater than the dispositions of discipleship measured in the Discipleship Scale and the behaviors measured through the faith practices variables. The



diagram suggests that the intersection of the faith practices variables with the Discipleship Scale could capture part of the reality known as Christian discipleship.

If this is the case, then it appears the Discipleship Scale could provide interesting insight into one of the questions underneath this research: “What is Christian discipleship and how might we measure it?” At the very least it generates significant discussion on the question. It also seems this research could be a step forward towards better understanding of how to assess religious education for Christian discipleship. A basic conclusion from these statistical findings is that the Discipleship Scale has value and warrants for assessment of Christian discipleship and merits further study.

#### Profile of YTM Christian Discipleship

Not only does this research seek to explore possible ways to define and measure Christian discipleship, it also seeks to specifically measure Christian discipleship in the YTM population. The measurement of Christian discipleship among YTM participants constitutes assessment of the fourth intermediate outcome of the YTM program.

#### *YTM Discipleship Findings*

The research shows the vast majority of YTM participants report the dispositions of Christian Discipleship identified in the Christian Discipleship Scale:

- 90% are interested in learning about Christ and his ways
- 76% have experienced a call to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his ways
- 71% have a personal relationship or friendship with Christ
- 79% are committed to participate in Christ’s mission to build the Reign of God
- 71% are committed to being part of a community of Christian dedicated to this mission
- 74% identify themselves as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Data combining these responses into the Christian Discipleship Scales show 66% of YTM participants score in the high discipleship group. This means they agree to at least five of the six criteria for Christian discipleship. The scale's descriptive statistics provide strong evidence this population strongly possesses the interior dispositions of Christian Discipleship.

As illustrated in Figure 3, this research argues that Christian discipleship is not simply a matter of possessing the dispositions of discipleship. It would not be correct to conclude that 66% of YTM survey respondents are Christian disciples even though they score very high on the Christian Discipleship Scale. Integrated Christian discipleship requires the combination of both discipleship dispositions and faith practice behaviors. Crosstabulations of those scoring high on the Discipleship Scale (18-17) with correlated faith practice behaviors will provide useful data in determining integrated Christian Discipleship within this population. To cross test that assertion, crosstabulations looked at those with high discipleship (18-17) scores in terms of their faith practice behavior. This revealed the following about high discipleship scale scorers:

- 45% pray daily
- 38% attend Mass weekly or more often
- 30% participate in religious groups
- 21% read scripture once a week or more often
- 24% have a leadership role in a religious organization

These findings suggest that approximately one out of three of YTM participants integrate Christian discipleship dispositions with faith practice behaviors. Accordingly, about one third of the YTM participants are living as Christian disciples as young adults.

It is important to acknowledge that this is exploratory research grounded in perceptual data. As exploratory research the Discipleship Scale identifies six dispositions of Christian discipleship and creates a scale to measure this goal of Christian education. Nothing like this has been published to date. Arguments might be raised that the Discipleship Scale does not capture the essential dispositions of Christian discipleship or the faith practice behaviors measured do not adequately represent the authentic practices of Christian faith. Nevertheless, as exploratory research the Christian Discipleship scale could be an important new step in both defining and assessing Christian discipleship.

At one level it is difficult to judge these results because there are virtually no published religious education program evaluations with which to compare them. Data do not exist or have not been published to compare these results to Catholic high school religious formation efforts, parish religion education programs, or other intensive summer youth ministry programs. As exploratory research this study may provide initial benchmarks for other programs to use for comparison. The interpretation of these findings will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

#### *Likes and Dislikes About the Catholic Church*

An important discovery in the literature review conducted for this research is that rarely do Catholic religious education researchers actually listen to the experiences of young people. The final question in this study on Christian discipleship focuses on the question: “What insights can these young adults provide the institutional Catholic Church about Christian discipleship?” Specifically, two open-ended questions were asked in the telephone interviews: “What do you like best about the Catholic Church?” and “What do you most dislike about the Catholic Church? Variations in responses by discipleship groupings provide interesting information.

The discipleship groupings are based on the crosstabulation of the faith practice variable frequency of Mass attendance and the Discipleship Scale (see Table 12). This produced three groups. The first group is High Discipleship/High Practice (HD/HP) and includes 29 subjects (38%) who scored 18 or 17 on the Discipleship Scale and who attend Mass weekly or more frequently. The second group is High Discipleship/Low Practice (HD/LP) group and includes 11 subjects (14%) who scored 18 or 17 on the Discipleship Scale and attend Mass once per month or less. The third group is the Low Discipleship/Low Practice (LD/LP) group and includes eleven subjects (14%) who scored 13-6 on the Discipleship Scale and attended Mass a few times per year or never. Responses to the two questions about the likes and dislikes of the Catholic Church will be reported by three groupings. A method of word search analysis and concept coding of responses is used to provide the following results.

#### *High Discipleship/High Practice Group*

The HD/HP group identified the sense of community, Eucharist/sacraments, and tradition as things they especially liked about the Catholic Church. Liking the sense of community was mentioned most frequently by the HD/HP group (45%). Participants said, "I like community and how open and welcoming the parish is," and "I like how it's a tight knit family feeling." Liking the Eucharist or sacraments was mentioned by 34% of the HD/HP group. Participants said, "I like the continuity both in history and throughout the world; The Eucharist is the best part, though!" and "The Mass is perfect in every way." Thirty-one percent of the HD/HP group also said they especially liked the tradition within the Catholic Church. Participants commented, "I like the tradition and deep roots tracing back to Christ" and [I like] "tradition - I see an immense value in the 2000 years of tradition and the communal value of ritual - Unity at mass throughout the world."

The HD/HP group also identified things they disliked about the Catholic Church. The major dislike centered on the Church being closed minded and slow to change teachings and structures. Forty-eight percent of HD/HP group specifically mentioned disliking this closed mindedness. Three specific aspects of closed mindedness were mentioned most frequently: towards homosexuals (14%); towards women (14%); and towards other religions and people (10%). Participants said, “I dislike how closed minded it is. Gay rights and gay marriage, women's rights and limited roles, two big issues,” and “I disagree with certain Catholic doctrines, a lot of teachings on homosexuality, and women in the Church - Church claims to be inclusive however some doctrines are not this.” The concept coding also revealed two other groups of responses. One HD/HP subgroup indicated there was nothing they disliked about the Catholic Church (14%). One participant simply stated, “I can't think of anything I dislike about the Catholic Church.” Another subgroup said they disliked how the Catholic Church is often ridiculed by outside sources. One participant said, “I think the Church is complacent about our perception of the Church. We take a lot of making fun of. The Church could do more to educate what we are about.” It is interesting to note that these sub-group comments do not described actual dislikes of the Catholic Church. Combining these comments shows that about 20% of the HD/HP group could be labeled as church defenders or church apologists.

#### *High Discipleship/Low Practice Group*

The HD/LP group consisted of eleven individuals who scored a 6 or 7 on the Discipleship Scale, but unlike the previous group do not attend Mass frequently. They attend Mass once a month or less. The most frequently mentioned things the HD/LP

group liked about the Catholic Church were identical to the HD/HP group, but with different frequencies. This group most often mentioned liking Church tradition (45%), Eucharist or sacraments (36%), and community (27%).

The HD/LP group also identified the things they most disliked about the Catholic Church. These include dislike of Church teaching on homosexuality (36%) and dislike of the exclusion of women as priests (27%). Once again a sub-group indicated that there was nothing they dislike about the Catholic Church (27%). One particular comment from a subject in the HD/LP group poignantly narrates the most common dislike in this group:

This sense of belonging can be completely betrayed when I am shown complete lack of support, and sometimes even hatred, as a homosexual. A lot of people in the Catholic Church are supportive and that is great, but the ones who aren't tend to go a little overboard with unfriendliness and it is difficult not to take it personally. For example, Archbishop Harry Flynn denying Communion to the supports of the gay community. Given that the official stance of the Catholic Church is contradictory to what I believe to be true, I am sometimes discouraged and look to other more accepting denominations for worship.

#### *Low Discipleship/Low Practice Group*

The LD/LP group consisted of eleven individuals who scored low on the Discipleship Scale (11-18) and attended Mass once a month or less often. The aspects of the Catholic Church this group most liked included the moral guidance the church provides (36%). A participant said, "I like how the church fosters good moral guidance for people in life and the world." The LD/LP group also liked the sense of community found in the Church

(18%). This group also had 18% who gave no answer or were not sure what they like about the Catholic Church.

Nearly half of the LD/LP group stated they disliked the Catholic Church teaching on homosexuality (45%) while a second group identified other Church teachings they disliked (36%), and a third group mentioned that the Church was anti women (18%).

*Discipleship Insights from Youth Adults*

There is no statistical relevance to the frequencies associated with the responses provided by these groups concerning likes and dislikes of the Catholic Church. This is because the group numbers are so low. However, as exploratory research and as an attempt to listen to young adult Catholics, there are some interesting trends to consider in this information. There is a consistent pattern concerning what participants like about of Church community:

<u>Discipleship/Practice Group</u>	<u>Like Church Community</u>
High Discipleship/High Practice	45% of group members
High Discipleship/Low Practice	27% of group members
Low Discipleship/Low Practice	18% of group members

The frequencies represent the percent of participants who specifically included the word or concept of “community” in open-ended responses to the question about what they “like the most about the Catholic Church. The data suggest an experience of community or belonging is valued to a greater degree as Christian Discipleship dispositions (Discipleship Scale scores) increase and the frequency of Mass Participation increase. It is important to listen to the most highly affiliated group of Catholic young adults who are saying their favorite aspect of the Catholic Church is the sense of community it provides.

It is also important to recognize that the sense of community is also liked by those less affiliated with the Church, but to a lesser extent. It raises the question of the importance of experiences of community for teens and young adults for Christian Discipleship and Church affiliation. The relationship between experiences of community, Christian discipleship, and Church affiliation seems like an important area for future research.

A second related trend concerns Church teachings on homosexuality.

<u>Discipleship Group</u>	<u>Dislike Church Homosexuality Teaching</u>
High Discipleship/High Practice	14% of group members
High Discipleship/Low Practice	36% of group members
Low Discipleship/Low Practice	45% of group members

As groups of individuals become less affiliated with the Church (lower discipleship and lower practice), the frequency of their dislike for Church teaching on homosexuality increases. It is not possible to determine from the data if this issue is a significant factor in their Church affiliation, but the data suggest that it something to seriously consider.

#### Conclusion

One YTM participant who grew up Catholic, but no longer affiliates with Catholic Church stated the following:

Would you join a country club that didn't allow Jews to join? Of course you wouldn't! How can I be part of a Church that does not welcome gays or lesbians and does not share power with women? I can't do it.

Obviously more study is needed here, but it causes one to wonder about the long-term impact on the Catholic Church in the United States if many of its best and brightest young members identify its teachings on homosexuals and women as what they most



dislike about the Catholic Church. Perhaps young people have a wisdom the Church should listen to as it continually seeks to scrutinize the signs of the times. This research suggests that Christian discipleship for this elite Catholic population of young adults is significantly about a sense of community and about who gets included or excluded from the community.

Overall, the findings in this chapter suggest the YTM program is successfully achieving its intermediate program outcomes. The exploratory research on Christian discipleship shows some merit and warrants further discussion and research. Finally, it seems very important to listen to these elite young adult Catholics who highly value Church community and tradition, but highly dislike Church teachings on homosexuality and women. Chapter five will provide a brief summary of these findings and then discuss the implications of these findings for practice, policy, and future research.

## CHAPTER 5: MAJOR FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides a brief description of the major findings and key implications derived from this study. The overall purpose of the study was to evaluate the influence of intensive youth ministry programming on forming Christian disciples. More specifically, it was a follow-up study identifying the faith practices in the everyday life of Catholic young adults who participated in Saint John's University School of Theology's Youth in Theology and Ministry program (YTM) as high school youth. It was also exploration into the nature of Christian discipleship as espoused by these respondents and exploratory research seeking to operationally define Christian discipleship for assessment purposes. The research questions framing this study were:

1. What are the everyday life faith practices of young adults who participated in intensive youth ministry experiences in high school?
2. What intermediate outcomes (3-5 years later) resulted from participation in Saint John's University's Youth in Theology and Ministry intensive youth ministry program?
3. How might Christian discipleship be operationally defined for assessment purposes?

There are two contextual issues in Catholic youth ministry and adolescent religious education that impact this study. The first is a lack of published research assessing youth ministry and adolescent religious education, and the second is the lack of a clear definition of Christian discipleship. After this brief review of these contextual issues, chapter five will provide a description of the major findings from this study and highlight the implications for practice, policy, and research.

The literature review uncovered the lack of published research on program evaluations in youth ministry and adolescent religious education. Anecdotal stories of success are plentiful about the effectiveness of a variety of religious education and youth ministry programs. However, published research systematically evaluating youth ministry and adolescent religious education curricula are nearly non-existent. The Academic Search Premier EBSCO Host Research database search found only six journal articles evaluating youth ministry or adolescent religious education. This is similar to results from the ERIC database search that produced only eight articles. The date of the most recent article in this ERIC database search was 1993. It is revealing that the majority of articles found in this search did not focus on actual curricular assessment, but rather simply asserted the need for evaluation and assessment within this field (Hess, 2000; Fancourt, 2005; Markuly, 2002). It is important to note that research on student achievement in Catholic schools exists (Coleman et al, 1982) but does not specifically assess religious outcomes. It should also be noted that the National Catholic Education Association offers an assessment tool (ACRE: Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education) to parishes, schools, and dioceses for religious education, but published data are rarely available outside the diocese. Additionally, national norms related to the ACRE tool have not been established. Published research assessing particular religious education curricula utilizing the ACRE assessment tool are simply not available.

This lack of published research assessing the effectiveness of youth ministry and adolescent religious education makes it virtually impossible to make valid claims about the effectiveness of any particular youth ministry or religious education curriculum. If one were to ask: what does research tell us about the effectiveness of youth ministry and

adolescent religious education programming? A response based on current literature would likely be that we simply don't know. This contextual problem impacts the description of this study's findings because it makes it impossible to compare these findings to other studies.

A second contextual problem associated with assessing youth ministry is the lack of definitional clarity in official Catholic Church documents about "Christian discipleship." This is the stated goal of Catholic youth ministry and implied goal of adolescent religious education. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1997) identified as the principle goal of youth ministry "to empower young people to live as Christian disciples in our world today" (p.9). Although numerous other official church documents identify Christian discipleship as the goal of adolescent religious education and youth ministry, none of these Church documents provide a clear description or definition of the term. Nowhere in church documents are educational outcomes correlated with Christian discipleship. If the goal of Catholic youth ministry and adolescent religious education is Christian discipleship, yet the term itself remains vague and undefined, then it becomes impossible to assess the overall effectiveness of any religious education curricula in forming Christian disciples. It was precisely this contextual issue that fostered this study's creation of the Christian Discipleship Scale, with the intent to operationally define Christian discipleship for assessment purposes.

### Major Findings

The findings reported below are from a telephone survey of young adults (ages 18-24) who participated in YTM's thirteen-month intensive youth ministry program between the years 2000 and 2004. The sample (n=76) from a population 113 appears to

be a representative sample of the population based on demographic evidence. The telephone interviews were conducted between January 1, 2007 and June 30, 2007. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions. A summary of major findings will be presented in relationship to the three questions driving this research. The first section will explore the everyday life faith practices of young adults who participated in intensive youth ministry experiences through the findings assessing the intermediate outcomes of the YTM program. The second section will report the findings related to the operational definition of Christian discipleship and its use in assessment of the YTM program.

#### *Assessment of Intermediate Outcomes*

The Lilly Endowment established the Theological Programs for High School Youth grant initiative to “support theological schools in establishing or sustaining programs for high school youth that stimulate and nurture an excitement about theological learning and inquiry and identify and encourage a new generation of young Christian to consider vocations in Christian ministry” (Lilly Endowment, 2005, p. 87). A summary of findings is shown below for the first three intermediate outcomes of the YTM program. 1) stimulating and nurturing excitement about theological learning; 2) fostering engagement in faith practices; and 3) encouraging a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry. The finding for the fourth intermediate outcome, Apprenticing Catholic leadership youth to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, will be summarized in the section assessing Christian discipleship.

*Stimulating and Nurturing Theological Learning*

To what extent did the YTM program achieve its intermediate outcome of stimulating and nurturing excitement about theological learning? A summary of the survey data indicates the YTM program successfully achieved this outcome. The data show more than 9 out of 10 of those surveyed reported being interested in learning more about Christ and his ways and nearly 75% reported ongoing excitement about theological learning. Over half of these young adults read theology books and two-thirds have taken theology courses in college. Nearly 2 out of 10 are majoring or minoring in theology in college and nearly one in ten is planning on graduate theological study. Key findings include:

- 74% agreed that they continue to be excited about theological learning.
- 53% agreed that they read theology books. Of those reading theology books 16% reported reading 1-3 books, 30% reported reading 4-10 books, 19% reported reading 11-20 books, and 35% reported they had read more than 20 theology books.
- 66% of the survey participants took at least one theology or religious study courses in college: 45% took 1-3 courses; 5% took 4-5 courses; 5% took 6-10 courses; and 9% took 11 or more theology or religious study courses in college.
- 9% said their college major was theology, Catholic studies, or religious studies with an additional 4% indicating a major in philosophy and 9% indicated theology as a minor area of study in college.

- 3% report currently attending graduate theological education, 8% are planning on attending graduate theological education, and 15% are considering graduate theological education.

The age of the sample population skews this data. At the time the survey was administered less than one in four had graduated from college. Of those who have graduated from college 11% entered graduate theological study.

This summary suggests that the YTM program has successfully achieved its intermediate outcome of stimulating and nurturing excitement for theological learning. This research is not claiming that participation in the thirteen month YTM curriculum caused the high level of theological engagement summarized above. Too many outside variables exist to make this claim. However, it should be noted that nearly all the survey participants (97%) agreed with the statement, “YTM stimulated and nurtured in me an excitement for learning theology.” It should also be noted that nearly half (45%) of the survey participants indicated a secondary effect of this engagement in theological learning at YTM; agreeing that their career choice(s) have been influenced by the study of theology.

#### *Engagement in Faith Practices*

To what extent are the young adults who participated in the YTM program as high school youth engaged in faith practices, and how influential was the YTM curriculum in fostering this engagement? These two questions provide the framework for assessing the second intermediate outcome of the YTM curriculum.

The findings from this study show these young adults reported high levels of engagement in faith practices and also high levels of institutional affiliation. Nearly nine

out of ten of these young adults report continued affiliation with the Catholic Church with 54% indicating they are “extremely” or “very” committed to the Church. Also seven out of ten indicated that religious faith is “extremely” or “very” important to them, and 73% indicated they think they will be active members in the church in ten years. A summary of the main findings related to the faith practices of this sample of young adults includes:

- 39% reported attending Mass once a week or more often
- 58% reported praying about once a day or more often, while only 5% say they never pray
- 25% reported reading scripture once a week or more often
- 90% reported involvement in some volunteer service with 42% volunteering on a regular basis (six or more times per year)
- 79% reported involvement in political activity with 45% highly engaged
- 71% reported stewardship practices (donated \$30 or more in the last year)
- 66% reported taking leadership roles in organizations.

Comparing these findings to the D’Antonio et al. (2007) national study of American Catholics provides perspective on the level of religiosity among these YTM young adults. The D’Antonio study developed a commitment index based on frequency of Mass attendance, importance of the Catholic Church in their lives, and whether they would consider leaving the Catholic Church. Surprisingly, the D’Antonio study did not find a single young adult Catholic (n=79) who scored high on the commitment index. The findings from this research show the YTM survey respondents reporting high levels of engagement in religious practices as young adults, at least when compared to national statistics for Catholic young adults.



The findings from this research suggest that the YTM curriculum was influential in fostering these faith practices.

- 41% agreed that YTM influenced them to attend Mass more often
- 74% agreed that YTM influence them to pray more often
- 71% agreed that YTM influenced them to participate more often in community service
- 47% indicated that YTM had a significantly positive influence on their leadership
- 13% indicated that YTM influenced them to be more politically active.

#### *Encouraging Vocations*

The third intermediate outcome assessed in this research was the extent to which the YTM program encouraged a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry. Six survey items attempted to determine the scope of religious vocational discernment among the YTM young adults. Four items asked if they were considering religious vocations and two asked if they were committed to these vocations.

The data show:

- 19% of the male survey participants are considering a vocation as a priest
- 16% of male survey participants are considering a vocation as a permanent deacon
- 20% of the female survey participants are considering a vocation as a sister
- 20% of all the survey participants are considering a vocation as a lay ecclesial minister

- Only 5% of survey participants agreed that they were committed to become a lay ecclesial minister, priest, permanent deacon, or sister, while 20% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

It will likely take another ten to fifteen years before accurate data on religious vocations will be available for this population because most women do not currently join religious communities before the age of 35. Overall, these are positive findings, but it remains impossible to claim the YTM program caused these results. However, the YTM curriculum appears to be influential in fostering religious vocations. The findings show that 46% of the sample population said that YTM provided significant help in fostering serious reflection about their vocation. More significantly, 75% of those considering religious vocations said YTM provided significant help in their vocational discernment. Responses from a qualitative question about what was most helpful to them in discerning their vocation show:

- 24% identified parents or family as being most helpful
- 22% identified prayer and/or reflection as being most helpful
- 18% identified friends and/or community as being most helpful
- 17% identified college, classes, and/or education as being most helpful
- 8% specifically mention YTM as being most helpful in their vocational discernment
- 7% mentioned sisters and priests (live ins with the community) as being most helpful
- 5% mentioned social justice or ministry experiences as being most helpful.

In summary, the findings show that one out of twenty is committed to a vocation of ordained ministry, religious life, or lay ecclesial ministry and about one out of five of the

YTM sample population is still considering such a vocation. The findings also show that 75% of those considering religious vocations found the YTM program to be significantly helpful in vocational discernment while 8% of the survey populations indicated that the YTM program was “most helpful” in their vocational discernment process. These results suggest that the YTM program has been successful in encouraging a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry.

#### *Assessment of Christian Discipleship*

The fourth intermediate outcome assessed in this research was the extent to which the YTM program engaged Catholic leadership youth to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the most important aspect of this research was the creation of the Christian Discipleship Scale for the purpose of assessing Christian discipleship. Assessment of this program outcome is therefore closely intertwined with the third research question driving this study: “How might Christian discipleship be defined for assessment purposes?” Discussion of the scale and how it attempts to operationally define Christian discipleship will be discussed prior to a summary of findings related to this outcome of apprenticing discipleship.

#### *Operational Definition of Christian Discipleship*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an operational definition is “a method of mathematically based analysis for providing a quantitative basis for management decisions.” A key learning in this research is that an operational definition of Christian discipleship is an important step in advancing effective youth ministry and adolescent religious education. It is important because an operational definition

differentiates a variety of characteristics of a larger phenomenon or goal that can be measured to determine progress. Without this differentiation of measurable characteristics it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine learning, growth, or progress towards an established goal. The Christian Discipleship Scale created in this research basically provides an operational definition of Christian discipleship that can be used for assessment.

Six Christian discipleship characteristics or dispositions established the six variables in the Christian Discipleship Scale: 1) A Christian disciple is a learner; 2) A Christian disciple experiences a call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ; 3) A Christian disciple has a personal relationship or friendship with Christ; 4) A Christian disciple is committed to participate in Christ's mission to build the Reign of God; 5) A Christian disciple is committed to being part of a community of Christians dedicated to this mission; and 6) A Christian disciple has a self-identity as a Christian disciple. Six survey questions incorporated these variables into a six-item Christian Discipleship Scale.

The statistical analysis employed in this research shows the Christian Discipleship Scale has internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .8819) and statistically correlates (Pearson Correlations significant at the 0.01 level, two tailed) with five faith practice variables:

1. Frequency of Mass Participation (.613)
2. Frequency of Prayer (.595)
3. Frequency of Reading Scripture (.412)
4. Leadership in Religious Groups (.343)
5. Involvement in Religious Groups (.332)

The correlation of the Christian Discipleship Scale with these faith practices is potentially very useful for assessment because it suggests the scale captures part of the intersection between Christian discipleship dispositions and actual faith practices. The merit and worth of the scale is not only that it operationally defines Christian discipleship for assessment, but also statistically correlates with a number of key faith practices. It is argued here that an operational definition of Christian discipleship is accurately understood as the intersection of faith practices and discipleship dispositions. The Christian Discipleship Scale appears to capture part of this intersection and warrants further study.

#### *YTM Christian Discipleship Assessment Findings*

To what extent did the YTM program achieve its fourth intermediate outcome to apprentice participants to live as disciples of Jesus Christ? If authentic Christian discipleship integrates faith practices with the dispositions of Christian discipleship, then assessment of Christian discipleship requires data on both. The data from the Christian Discipleship Scale show the vast majority of YTM survey participants gave responses indicating they possess the dispositions of Christian Discipleship:

- 90% report interest in learning about Christ and his ways
- 76% report experiencing a call to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his ways
- 71% report having a personal relationship or friendship with Christ
- 79% report being committed to participate in Christ's mission to build the Reign of God
- 71% report being committed to a community of Christian dedicated to this mission
- 74% identify themselves as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Aggregating these variables into the Christian Discipleship Scale shows 66% of survey participants fall into the high discipleship group. This means they either “agreed” with all

six Christian discipleship dispositions, or “agreed” to five dispositions, but were unsure of one. An additional 18% of the survey participants are in the moderate Christian discipleship group and 16% of the survey participants are in the low Christian discipleship group.

Since the Christian Discipleship Scale correlated with a number of faith practices it makes sense that the data on faith practices are quite similar. The earlier reported faith practice data showed 39% of survey participants indicated they attend Mass once a week or more often, 58% prayed about once a day or more often, 53% read theology books, 42% volunteered at least six times per year, 45% were highly engaged in political activity, and 71% engaged in stewardship practices.

Clearly, these data suggest that many YTM participants are living as Christian disciples, but the question remains: How might we assess the extent to which the YTM program fostered this Christian discipleship? One specific item in the YTM telephone survey addressed this issue. When asked if YTM fostered growth in Christian discipleship, 96% of the survey participants agreed that YTM fostered such growth. This assertion is corroborated by data showing survey participants perceived YTM to be a positive influence in the following areas related to discipleship:

- 97% said YTM stimulated and nurtured excitement for theological learning
- 74% said YTM influenced them to pray more often
- 71% said YTM influenced them to participate more often in community service
- 47% said YTM had a significantly positive influence on their leadership
- 46% said YTM provided significant help in fostering serious reflection about vocation

- 41% said YTM influenced them to attend Mass more often
- 13% said YTM influenced them to be more politically active
- 53% gave qualitative responses that indicate the YTM program had a highly significant impact on their lives fostering behaviors associated with faith practices, vocational discernment, theological engagement, and college choice.

Overall, these findings suggest the YTM curriculum of theological study, service learning/justice education, and prayer successfully achieved its four intermediate outcomes of 1) stimulating and nurturing excitement about theological learning; 2) fostering engagement in faith practices; 3) encouraging a new generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry; and 4) engaging Catholic leadership youth to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is fitting to conclude this assessment of the influence of the YTM curriculum on fostering Christian discipleship with the words of a young adult who reflected on its impact:

It had a profound impact. It did chart a course for my life. Before I was unsure of where I was going. [At YTM] I decided: I am going to a Catholic university and will study theology. It is like Frost's *The Road Less Traveled*. My life would be fundamentally different without this experience. I would not be as involved in the Church. YTM helped me realize a deeper current beneath my life. [YTM] gave or put inside me motivation to follow this current...a constant aim of living an authentic Christian life.

### Implications

This research assessing the effectiveness of YTM's intensive youth ministry curriculum in fostering Christian discipleship has significant implications for practice, policy, and future research. This second major part of chapter five will be organized into

three sections highlighting the implications of this research. The first section will explore the implications for practice. The next section will explore policy implications from this study with a special focus on the new curricular framework for adolescent religious education published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. A third section will highlight implications for future research.

### *Implications for Practice*

A hallmark of utilization focused evaluation methodology is that assessment data be useful for program improvement. This section on the implications for practice will start with a local discussion of YTM program improvements suggested from these findings and then shift to a much broader discussion of implications for adolescent religious education and youth ministry curricula in the United States. Finally, we will explore the implications of the Christian Discipleship Scale for assessment purposes.

### *Implications for YTM Program Improvement*

The findings from this research suggest two specific areas for program improvement in the YTM curriculum. The first area is in justice education. The telephone survey included seven quantitative questions asking about the influence of the YTM curriculum on participant learning. The findings showed survey participants to be highly active politically, while only 13% said YTM influenced them to be more politically active. This was by far the lowest frequency of influence for any curricular area. The findings revealed this was a much lower level of influence than even the second lowest level of influence in the curriculum (attending Mass more frequently at 41%). Although many unknown variables could account for this finding, it suggests that curricular changes are warranted in the area of justice education.



The good news is that even before these data were gathered, significant changes had been introduced within the YTM justice education curriculum. Over the last two years these curricular changes include a stronger educational focus on Catholic social teaching and political engagement for social change. The theme for the 2007 Summer Institute focused on the seven themes of Catholic social teaching. In 2007 and 2008 all the Summer II youth spent an afternoon at the state capital talking to Minnesota legislators about legislative initiatives related to immigration, health care, education, and the environment. This was organized through staff at the Minnesota Catholic Conference, which lobbies on behalf of the Catholic bishops of Minnesota. It is challenging to help adolescents recognize that Christian discipleship demands engagement in the political arena for social change. The Catholic social teaching on the dignity of all people challenges young people to be politically engaged so all (especially the poor and marginalized) have adequate food, housing, health care, work, and educational opportunity. Although significant inputs have been added within this curricular area, evaluation data will need to be gathered to assess the influence of these changes on participants.

The second implication for program improvement within the YTM curriculum relates to the sustainability of the YTM program. A Saint John's School of Theology Board member recently said, "YTM is one of the best programs that nobody knows about." The findings from this research suggest that the YTM curriculum is effective in engaging youth in theology and promoting religious vocations. Saint John's School of Theology has relied on the Lilly Endowment for significant funding of the YTM program since its inception in the year 2000. With Lilly funding scheduled to conclude in 2011,

the sustainability of YTM will depend in large measure on both communicating the positive results of this research to key stakeholders and expanding the number of key stakeholders.

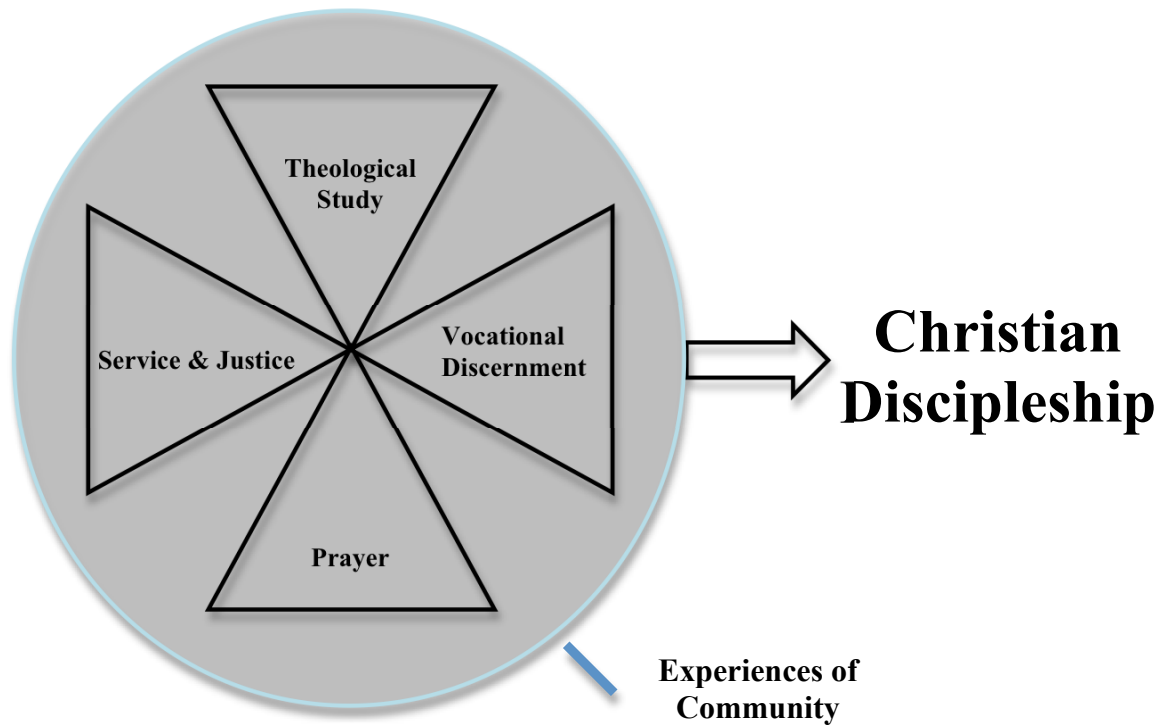
*Implications for Adolescent Religious Education Curricula*

As stated throughout this dissertation, the lack of published evaluative studies and the lack of an operational definition of Christian discipleship create a context of uncertainty about effective curricula for forming Christian disciples. The findings from this study suggest the YTM curriculum effectively fosters growth in Christian discipleship. This has major implications for adolescent religious education and youth ministry curricula in the United States. Understanding, adapting, and implementing the basic components of the YTM curriculum may assist youth ministry and adolescent catechetical leaders in improving their curricula.

A quick review of the YTM curriculum could prove helpful. Figure 5 is a visual representation of this integrated curriculum fostering Christian discipleship within an environment of meaningful experiences of community. The four basic curricular components of the YTM curriculum include theological instruction, service learning and justice education, vocational discernment, and prayer. However, experiences of community seem to be the catalyst for significant learning within these four curricular areas. Qualitative responses from survey participants regarding significant experiences at YTM nearly universally relate one of the four curricular areas to some aspect of community. One student said, “Two things at YTM were most significant for me. The first was the community base of kids (getting to know them and the faith base) and the second was learning from different professors (theology and leading

Figure 5

## YTM's Curriculum for Discipleship Formation



prayer). Another student's comment integrates community, theological study, vocational discernment, and Christian discipleship:

I was with a group of peers excited about theology and faith in God. Talking with some people about their faith and vocational choices changed how I viewed what I wanted to do with my life. I felt compelled to really follow Christ and really try to live out what he asks us to do.

YTM's curriculum intentionally fosters community through a network of relationships. Not only do the adolescent participants experience like-minded peers, but they also experience significant mentoring relationships with camp counselors (college

theology majors) and with adult mentors who are their parish youth ministers or religious education leaders. The YTM program provides time and space away from everyday life for relationships with peers, counselors, and adult mentors to flourish. The youth, counselors and adult mentors all participate in theological learning, prayer, vocational discernment, and service-learning and justice education. Essentially, YTM offers an experience of a community of Christian learners.

The findings from this study suggest that the combination of theological study, service learning and justice education, vocational discernment, and prayer, within this network of relationships, represents an effective curricular ecology for forming adolescent Christian disciples. A brief exploration of these four components of this curriculum strengthens this conclusion.

*Theological Study.* Each morning at the YTM Summer Institute high school youth spend two hours studying theology with a college theology professors from Saint John's University or the College of Saint Benedict. The findings from this research show that this aspect of the curriculum was highly influential for the YTM survey participants. For some it had the major influence of inspiring them to study theology in college (22% taking four or more theology classes in college), but for most (nearly 75%) it fostered continued excitement generally about theological learning. One young person commented, "It was so exciting to have teachers who actually knew something."

It should be noted that having college theology professors teach high school youth is not easily duplicated in Catholic school or parish settings. However, it does suggest the significant importance of youth ministers and religious educators having strong academic backgrounds in theology. A question that remains to be researched is the level of

theological competency among Catholic youth ministers and religious education leaders. The findings from this research suggest that highly competent theological educators are very influential in fostering Christian discipleship.

*Service Learning and Justice Education.* The YTM curriculum engaged youth in service learning and justice education for thirteen months. During the afternoons of Summer Institute I, youth participated in community service at various sites including nursing homes, battered women's shelters, boys and girls clubs, and homeless shelters. Between Summer I and Summer II the youth completed a service-justice project back in their home community with the help of their adult mentor. During Summer II the youths reflected on their service and then created a presentation on what they learned from their service-justice project. Summer II youth were also engaged in justice education and advocacy for social change as part of Christian discipleship. This curriculum of engaging youth in experiential learning and reflection impacted YTM participants with 71% saying YTM influenced them to participate more often in community service.

This type of service-learning curriculum is being utilized in many youth ministry, religious education, and in Catholic school curricula in the United States. In the last twenty years this curricular area has received significant attention with an abundance of opportunities for Catholic youth to attend service and mission trips sponsored by parishes, schools, or dioceses. An aspect of the YTM curriculum that often seems to be neglected in other settings is serious theological reflection on service experiences. Service experiences have positive impact on adolescents, but service followed by reflection appears to have greater impact. Many YTM survey participants indicated that their service-justice project (with abundant time spent on reflection) was influential in

developing their leadership in college and beyond. Finally, nearly every parish and Catholic school likely shares the need with YTM to improve its justice education.

*Prayer.* The YTM curriculum teaches young people a variety of Christian prayer forms. These prayer forms include *lectio divina*, centering prayer, liturgy of the hours, Taize, journaling, and pilgrimage, as well as sacramental prayer in Eucharist, and reconciliation. The findings show that 74% of survey participants said YTM influenced them to pray more often. This curricular area can easily be incorporated into curricula in parishes or Catholic high schools.

*Vocational Discernment.* Theological instruction, prayer, and service learning/justice education all have specific programmatic time slots in the YTM curriculum. Students take theology classes in the morning, do service learning and justice education in the afternoons, and explore a variety of prayer forms in the evening at the YTM summer institute. Vocational discernment does not have a specific daily time slot, but is infused throughout the curriculum. As discussed previously the YTM curriculum utilized theologian Frederick Buechner's (1993) definition of vocation as "the place where one's deep gladness meets the world's deep need" (p. 119). Throughout the curriculum YTM encourages youth to reflect on their gifts and passions (their deep gladness) and encourages youth to reflect on how they might utilize these gifts and passions to make the world a little better. The curriculum explicitly addresses vocational discernment in the opening session of the YTM Summer Institute, in reflection on their service-justice project, in the summative Summer Institute evaluations, and at the Vocation Banquet where religious vocations to ordained ministry, religious life, and lay ecclesial ministry are specifically explored and discussed. The YTM curriculum implicitly addresses

vocational discernment in the prayer sessions and when the counselors have time to reflect about the day's learning with youth before retiring for the evening. Two examples of youth being engaged in vocational discernment occurred at the 2008 YTM Summer Institute. One youth shared that her service-justice project was to direct the play *Joseph and the Amazing Technical Dream Coat* at Saint Stephen's Parish in Minneapolis. She shared during her presentation on her project that she realized her passion for drama and her passion for theology could both be part of her vocation. She said she never realized before her love of drama had anything to do with her vocation. A second student stated something very similar during her presentation about her project on immigration and justice she did at her church in Waseca. She shared that she connected her passion for law with her passion for social justice and Catholic social teaching. She too said she realized that this was part of her vocation. The two stories were recent reminders of how the YTM curriculum encourages reflection on vocation. Utilizing Buechner's definition of vocation aligns vocational discernment closely with personal identity. Vocational identity, personal identity, and identity as a Christian disciple all appear to be closely connected. This is another area where future research could be useful.

A key learning from this research is the importance of including vocational discernment within a comprehensive adolescent youth ministry or religious education curriculum. This has significant implications for parish and Catholic school curricula. It is unlikely that many parishes or Catholic high schools currently integrate vocational discernment within their religious curriculum. If they do cover this topic, then it would most likely be a one-time session on specifically religious vocations to ordained ministry or religious life. The research from the YTM program suggests that broadening the

understanding of vocation and integrating it throughout the curriculum can be an effective and influential in fostering vocational discernment and forming Christian disciples.

The findings from this study argue for a curriculum that promotes community and fosters cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning through theological study, service learning, justice education, and prayer. The integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning appears to produce synergy within the curriculum where the sum of learning is greater than the individual curricular parts. Theoretically, these conclusions about effective religious education curriculum are not particularly new, but they do seem difficult for parishes and Catholic schools to accomplish. Too often parishes or schools focus on one of these curricular areas or perhaps two, but neglect the others. This research suggests the integration of these four curricular components imbued with experiences of community fosters Christian discipleship formation.

However, it should be noted that there are a few special challenges associated with this YTM ecology that could make it difficult to duplicate within a parish curriculum.

1. The theology instructors for the youth courses were college theology professors.
2. The youth are away from home for four weeks in a monastic setting.
3. The actual cost per student for the 13-month YTM program is approximately \$3,000.



4. The Catholic youth who attended YTM were likely to be more open to theological learning, service learning, prayer, community, and service learning than typical Catholic youth.
5. Adults who were completing a master's degree in theology and counselors who were theology majors in college provided mentoring for these high school youth.

Because of these factors it may prove difficult, if not impossible, for Catholic parishes and Catholic high schools to replicate the YTM curriculum within their parish or school. However, it seems possible to utilize these findings for curricular adaptation.

Specific recommendations for advancing effective adolescent religious curricula for publishers, youth ministry leaders, religious education leaders, and Catholic School leaders are to:

1. Evaluate the extent to which the curriculum fosters Christian discipleship. Utilize the Christian Discipleship Scale as a pre-test and post-test with all adolescent religious curricula for assessment of Christian discipleship growth.
2. Assess the current curriculum in relationship to the integrated components of the YTM curriculum: theological study, prayer, service-learning/justice education, and vocational discernment within a vibrant experience of a learning/faitth community.
3. Create a plan to incrementally advance an integrated curriculum for discipleship formation.
4. Publish the results of program improvements to broaden the knowledge base of effective curricula for Christian discipleship formation.

These recommendations for advancing Christian discipleship formation within religious curricula are certainly challenging but not impossible to achieve. Essentially, these recommendations seek to advance the professionalization of youth ministry and adolescent religious education.

#### *Utilizing the Christian Discipleship Scale for Assessment*

The Christian Discipleship Scale has merit and worth for assessment of curricula because of its simple design and its statistical qualities. As a six-item questionnaire, it can be easily administered as an assessment pre-test and post-test. It also has the benefit of focusing religious educational curricula on Christian discipleship. Utilization of the Christian Discipleship Scale for assessment purposes would pose an essential pedagogical question for religious education leaders: “How is this particular curriculum fostering Christian discipleship?” This could foster the linkage of Christian discipleship formation to the wide variety of curricula used in youth ministry and religious education. Since the ultimate goal of adolescent religious education and youth ministry is empowering young people to live as Christian disciples, all religious education efforts should in some way be linked to this goal.

While the data related to the Christian Discipleship Scale are positive, it should be restated that the Christian Discipleship Scale represents exploratory research. As a first attempt at an operational definition of Christian discipleship, its greatest value may be in generating dialogue about Christian discipleship within the field. Further research is needed to test whether the scale’s reliability and correlations hold for more diverse populations of youth. The most significant implication here is the essential need for advancing the measurement of Christian discipleship within curricular assessment.

#### *Policy Implications*

Recently the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2007) approved and

published *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. In the Catholic world this new curricular framework represents a new policy for Catholic youth ministry, religious education, and Catholic school religion curricula. The introduction explains that this curricular framework is intended primarily for publishers of catechetical curricula. It represents policy in Catholic circles because a committee of bishops must approve catechetical curricula before they are published. The document states:

It is expected that after developing new materials, publishing houses will submit them for a review as to their conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The process of that review will insure that the materials authentically and completely define and present the teaching of the Church (p.5).

There are clear implications from this study for this new curricular policy for Catholic youth ministry and adolescent religious education.

A review of historical background may be helpful here. As a result of the alarming data about the religiosity of Catholic youth from Christian Smith's (2005) National Study of Youth in Religion, the bishops of the United States became gravely concerned about adolescent religious education. Smith's conclusion about the religious lives of Catholic youth bears repeating:

Both our quantitative survey data and qualitative personal interview evidence point to the same conclusion: compared both to official Catholic norms of faithfulness and to other types of Christian teens in the United States, contemporary U.S. Catholic teens are faring rather badly. On most measures of

religious faith, belief, experience, and practice, Catholic teens as a whole show up fairly weak (p. 216)

Smith's conclusions clearly caught the attention of Catholic leaders. As a response, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved and published its new doctrinal framework intended to provide "guidance to catechetical publishers in the creation of instructional material" (p.4). It outlines six semesters of core doctrinal content and five elective semesters "designed to shape a four year, eight semester course of catechetical instruction" (p. 4).

Since the National Study of Youth and Religion showed significant deficiencies in religious literacy and religious practice in Catholic teens, it seemed prudent to mandate a curriculum of doctrinal literacy for all U.S. Catholic teens. However, the research findings associated with this study of intensive youth ministry suggest a number of significant problems are likely to face this new curricular framework proposed by the bishops.

The first challenge is the lack of connection of the bishops' framework to Christian discipleship formation. It is most interesting that the introduction to the bishops' document does not highlight Christian discipleship as the goal of catechetical instruction. It uses the word "disciple" only once in the introduction: "In this way, disciples not only participate deeper in the life of the Church but are also better able to reach eternal life with God in Heaven" (p.4). Rather than focus on Christian discipleship formation as the goal of religious education, the introduction quotes Pope John Paul II's (1997) statement from *Catechesi Tradendae* to explain the goal: "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion and intimacy with Jesus

Christ” (#5). This failure to highlight Christian discipleship formation as the goal of adolescent religious education is a significant omission because it exacerbates the confusion about the ultimate goal of religious education. A word search of the first 47 pages of the document exploring the mandated core curriculum reveals that the words “disciple” and “discipleship” are only used 24 times out of 17,120 words. This sparse usage of the term “disciple” in this curricular framework highlights the document’s failure to highlight discipleship as a catechetical goal or connect it with doctrinal literacy.

A second major challenge posed by the new *Curriculum Framework* is the complete neglect of any analysis of how this doctrinally-based curriculum actually fosters Christian discipleship. It could be argued that the bishops were simply interested in clarifying the content of instruction and assumed the publishers will adapt curricular materials to foster discipleship. However, since this document makes no attempt to place this doctrinal curriculum within a broader curricular context of discipleship formation, it is perhaps safe to assume that the bishops are solely seeking to improve doctrinal literacy. The following excerpt from the introduction supports this claim: “Publishers and teachers or catechists are to strive to provide for a catechetical instruction and formation which is imbued with an apologetical approach” (p.4). The U.S. bishops appear to be placing all their eggs in the doctrinal instruction basket with the hope that U.S. Catholic teens will be religiously literate.

The results from this study raise doubts about the success of this new curriculum’s ability to foster adolescent Christian discipleship. The new curriculum will likely fail to foster discipleship for two reasons: 1) it does not clearly identify discipleship as a curricular goal; and 2) it does not integrate doctrinal literacy with prayer, service-

learning/justice education, and vocational identity within meaningful experiences of community. A curriculum focused primarily or exclusively on doctrinal literacy may produce religiously literate adolescents, but most likely will not foster the formation of adolescent Christian disciples. The findings from this research suggest that forming Christian disciples is much more difficult than simply focusing on cognitive learning. Perhaps the new *Curriculum Framework* established by the U.S. bishops is a wrong answer to the right question. Perhaps it is a response born of fear, not careful discernment.

The U.S. bishops can remedy this problematic policy by re-writing the introduction to the new curriculum with a thorough explanation of how doctrinal literacy is only one of the essential curricular components in the formation of Christian disciples. It could then delineate the other curricular components necessary for a comprehensive curriculum foster Christian discipleship and require that publishers incorporate them into new curricula for young Catholics.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

The findings from this study have implications for future research. The first area for further study is the need to test the Christian Discipleship Scale with non-elite Catholic youth populations. Legitimate questions can be raised concerning the validity of the scale and its ability to statistically correlate with faith practices within more diverse populations. A related second area of further study relates to the operational definition of Christian discipleship. Since this study was a first attempt at an operational definition of Christian discipleship, it will be essential for the academy to discuss and perhaps amplify the criteria used to measure Christian discipleship. As a product of exploratory research,

this operational definition of Christian discipleship is viewed as a first step in a long journey. A third area for further research is the production and publication of program evaluation research utilizing statistically valid methodologies. With almost no published curriculum evaluations, it is nearly impossible to determine what is working in forming adolescent Christian disciples. A fourth area for further research is for the American bishops to sponsor research into the effectiveness of a doctrinal curriculum framework in forming adolescent Christian disciples. A fifth area for further research is for the National Catholic Education Association to research and publish national religious education norms for religious literacy and Christian discipleship. A sixth area for future research centers on the question of whether non-inclusion issues (gay, lesbian, and women) will influence future Church affiliation among young people. Finally and perhaps the most important area for future research is for religious educational leaders to assess their current curricular efforts in terms of fostering Christian discipleship. This includes further assessment of an integrated curriculum that fosters a community of learners through theological study, prayer, service-learning/justice education, and reflection on vocational identity. It is likely that only when significant numbers of catechetical leaders begin to utilize assessment as a means of program improvement, that such improvement will happen.

### Conclusion

Church leaders often envision religious education as an activity much akin to pouring water into an empty bowl. This metaphor for youth ministry and religious education consists of pouring doctrinal information into the heads of young people while hoping it doesn't leak out, pouring in moral instruction while hoping young people make

moral decisions, and pouring in faith practices while hoping young people will incorporate these practices throughout their lives. The problem with this metaphor is that it assumes that young people are empty vessels needing to have Christ poured into them rather than recognizing with profound respect that Christ is already present. How might adolescent religious education be different if church leaders sought to “draw out” the faith of young people rather than pour in doctrine with an apologetic approach? Isn’t this the very essence of education?

Perhaps the most important new learning from this research is that young people are not empty bowls. God is at work in their lives, and they have rich experiences and knowledge to share with the world. Certainly, adults have much to share with young people about God and tradition and young people have much to learn, but adults also have much to learn from young people.

Much was learned as a result of listening to the 76 young adults who participated in this study. It was fascinating to hear that community and belonging were so highly valued by young adults. It was equally fascinating that issues related to the non-inclusion of gays and lesbians and women within the community of faith were listed as things they most disliked about the Catholic Church. Perhaps these young Catholics have a wisdom the Church should listen to as it struggles with the major problem of maintaining institutional affiliation. A key learning from this research is that listening to the young church is essential as the Catholic Church seeks to scrutinize the signs of the times.

The old joke about a doctoral dissertation is that the researcher knows more and more about less and less until they know everything about nothing. It is likely that many dissertations resemble this statement. One can not know with certainty the impact of



their research, but it is this researcher's hope that this evaluative study of an intensive youth ministry program and this inquiry into Christian discipleship will advance youth ministry and adolescent religious education. Distilling the knowledge gain from this research is an arduous task. The following seven points represent the key learnings from this research:

1. The scarcity of published assessment research reveals a serious lack of knowledge concerning effective teaching and learning within youth ministry and adolescent religious education.
2. A lack of definitional clarity exists in Catholic Church documents about the stated goal of youth ministry and adolescent religious education: forming Christian disciples.
3. The Christian Discipleship Scale operationally defines Christian discipleship and has merit and worth for assessing youth ministry and adolescent religious education.
4. Vocational discernment is an important curricular area to include in an integrated or comprehensive curriculum designed to foster Christian discipleship.
5. The YTM curriculum of theological study, prayer, service-learning/justice education, and vocational discernment within a vibrant faith/learning community is effective in forming Christian disciples. Specifically, this curriculum is influential in sustaining engagement in theological learning, faith practices, and discernment of religious vocations.

6. It is likely that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's (2007) *Doctrinal Elements of a Curricular Framework* will not foster adolescent Christian discipleship because of its exclusive focus on cognitive learning.
7. Listening to the young people is essential in attempting to assess effective youth ministry and adolescent religious education.

The hope of this research is that youth ministry and adolescent religious education curriculum can more effectively foster Christian discipleship. It is perhaps fitting to conclude this dissertation with the voice of a young adult who reflected on the impact of the YTM curriculum, highlighting the essence of Christian discipleship:

YTM was the first thing that caused me to ask what vocation meant and how I was called to live it out. YTM made me realize that I was called to contribute to the world. The components - leadership, theology, and prayer - gave you a good view of being Catholic. YTM influences me to study theology/Catholic studies in college. It set me on the track where God wanted me to go.

## Appendix A

### YTM Program Outcomes for Adults and Counselors

Adult Outcomes. The adult participants will...

- (1) Gain competency in mentoring youth in theological discussions, journaling, reflection, prayer, and service-leadership
- (2) Experience a faith community of learning while establishing a network or relationships consisting of youth, theology professors, undergraduate theology majors, youth ministers, religious education coordinators, and diocesan directors of youth ministry
- (3) Complete an MA in Pastoral Ministry or Certificate of Completion in Youth Ministry Studies.
- (4) Develop a portfolio, which meets United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved standards for certification.

Counselor Outcomes. The undergraduate theology major counselors will...

- (1) Gain competency in practical ministerial skills
- (2) Integrate theological study, service/justice, and prayer into their theology of ministry
- (3) Discern their ministerial vocation.

## Appendix B

## YTM Summer Institute Youth Evaluations

			Excellent				Poor
			5	4	3	2	1
<b>Theology Component</b>							
2000	(35 Youth)	Cohort 1	74%	26%	0%	0%	0%
2001	(72 Youth)	Cohorts 1 & 2	79%	21%	0%	0%	0%
2002	(78 Youth)	Cohorts 2 & 3	62%	36%	1%	0%	0%
2003	(50 Youth)	Cohorts 3 & 4	57%	39%	3%	0%	0%
2004	(37 Youth)	Cohorts 4 & 5	60%	32%	8%	0%	0%
<b>Prayer Component</b>							
2000	Cohort 1		78%	22%	0%	0%	0%
2001	Cohorts 1 & 2		72%	25%	3%	0%	0%
2002	Cohorts 2 & 3		64%	26%	10%	0%	0%
2003	Cohorts 3 & 4		77%	23%	0%	0%	0%
2004	Cohorts 4 & 5		55%	40%	5%	0%	0%
<b>Service Component (Summer I Only)</b>							
2000	(35 Youth)	Cohort 1	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
2001	(42 Youth)	Cohort 2	63%	37%	0%	0%	0%
2002	(38 Youth)	Cohort 3	57%	38%	5%	0%	0%
2003	(22 Youth)	Cohort 4	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Leadership Component (Summer II Only)</b>							
2001	(30 Youth)	Cohort 1	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
2002	(40 Youth)	Cohort 2	29%	53%	18%	0%	0%
2003	(28 Youth)	Cohort 3	40%	36%	20%	4%	0%
2004	(18 Youth)	Cohort 1	39%	56%	5%	0%	0%
<b>Community Component</b>							
2000	Cohort 1		89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
2001	Cohorts 1 & 2		89%	6%	5%	0%	0%
2002	Cohorts 2 & 3		77%	21%	1%	0%	0%
2003	Cohorts 3 & 4		77%	23%	0%	0%	0%
2004	Cohorts 4 & 5		86%	14%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Overall YTM Evaluation</b>							
2000	Cohort 1		93%	7%	0%	0%	0%
2001	Cohorts 1 & 2		93%	7%	0%	0%	0%
2002	Cohorts 2 & 3		80%	19%	1%	0%	0%
2003	Cohorts 3 & 4		80%	18%	2%	0%	0%
2004	Cohorts 4 & 5		83%	17%	0%	0%	0%

## Appendix C

**YTM Telephone Survey**

As one of 113 participants in the two summer Youth in Theology and Ministry program (YTM) at Saint John's University between 2000 and 2004 you have been selected to participate in the Youth in Theology and Ministry Survey on theology, vocation, and faith practices. This telephone survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It is part of Jeff Kaster's doctoral dissertation and will foster better understanding of the influence of YTM on vocational choices, theological engagement, faith practices, and Christian discipleship.

**I. Background Information**

The following fourteen questions ask basic information about you and your education after high school.

1. What is your gender?

- Male  
 Female

2. What years did you participate in YTM?

- 2000 to 2001  
 2001 to 2002  
 2002 to 2003  
 2003 to 2004

3. What grade had you just completed in high school when you started YTM?

- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 10<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 11<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

4. How old were you when you started the YTM program?

- 14  
 15  
 16  
 17  
 18  
 If other age, then please list: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your current age?

- 18  
 19  
 20  
 21  
 22  
 23  
 24  
 Other: List Age:\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your marital status?

- Not Married  
 Married

7. What is your status as a college student?

- Not currently attending college  
 Graduated from college  
 1<sup>st</sup> Year  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Year  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Year  
 4<sup>th</sup> Year

8. What are the names, locations, and religious affiliation (if any) of the colleges you attend or attended?

Name	Location	Religious Affiliation
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

9. What is/was your major in college? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What is/was your minor in college? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## II. Theology

The following statements are about your engagement in theology after YTM. Please respond to each question with agree, neither agree nor disagree, or disagree.

	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE
11. YTM stimulated and nurtured in me an excitement for learning theology.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I continue to be excited about theological learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I think about God in my everyday life. If agree, are there particular times of day or occasions during which you think about God?  _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I read theology books.  If agree, how many? _____ List your favorite books or authors: A. _____ B. _____ C. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. My career choice(s) has been influenced by the study of theology.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE
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If you **have attended college** answer questions 16 to 22. If not, skip to question 23.

16. I have taken at least one theology or religious studies class in college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If agree, then how many courses?

\_\_\_\_\_

Skip to Question 18 if a theology major in college.

17. My college major is not theology, but it is related to theology.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Please explain:

18. I am <b>considering</b> theological study in graduate school or seminary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

19. I am not only considering, but actually <b>planning</b> on pursuing theological study in graduate school or seminary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

20. Are you currently in graduate school?

No

Yes

If yes, what is the name and location of the graduate school?

\_\_\_\_\_



21. What is your course study in graduate school? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Are you currently in seminary?

No

Yes

If yes, what is the name and location of the seminary?

\_\_\_\_\_

23. If you are not currently a full time student, what is your occupation?

\_\_\_\_\_

### III. Christian Discipleship

The following questions are about Christian discipleship. For each statement respond with agree, neither your current faith practices.

	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>
24. I am interested in <b>learning</b> about Christ and his ways.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I have experienced a <b>call</b> to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his ways.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. I have a personal relationship or friendship with Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. I am committed to participate in Christ's <b>mission</b> to build the Reign of God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. I am committed to being part of a community of Christians dedicated to this mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. I think of myself as a <b>disciple</b> of Jesus Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. YTM fostered growth in my Christian discipleship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### IV. Church Affiliation & Leadership

The following 12 questions are about your connection with the Church and your leadership practices. A variety of question responses will be requested in this section of the survey. These include “yes or no” responses, degree of importance responses, and open-ended responses.

31. Do you believe in God?

- No
- Yes
- Unsure

32. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping how you live your daily life?

- Extremely important
- Very
- Somewhat
- Not very
- Not important at all

33. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping your major life decisions?

- Extremely important
- Very
- Somewhat
- Not very
- Not important at all

34. How committed are you to the Church?

- Extremely committed
- Very committed
- Somewhat committed
- Not very committed
- Not committed at all
- Does not apply

35. Is this the Catholic Church?

- Yes
- No

If response above is no, then what Church (denomination) if any, are you committed to?

---

36. What do you like best about the Catholic Church?

37. What do you dislike about the Catholic Church?

38. Do you think you will be an active member in the Church in ten years?

No

Yes

Don't know

39. Why did you answer the question 38 the way you did?

40. Are you currently taking a leadership role in any specifically religious organization?

No

Yes

Don't Know

If yes, what type of group? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of organization? \_\_\_\_\_

41. Are you currently taking a leadership role in any other type of organization?

No

Yes

Don't know

If yes, what type of group? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of organization? \_\_\_\_\_

42. To what extent, if any, did YTM positively influence your current leadership?
- YTM had little to **no influence** on my leadership
- YTM had **some positive influence** on my leadership
- YTM had a **significantly positive influence** on my leadership.

## V. Faith Practices

The following questions are about your current faith practices.

43. About how often do you usually attend Mass or Sunday Worship?
- Never
- Few times a year
- Many times a year
- Once per month
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week
44. To what extent, if any, did YTM influence the frequency of your mass attendance?
- YTM influenced me to attend Mass **less often**
- YTM had **little to no influence** on my Mass attendance
- YTM influenced me to attend Mass **more often**
45. How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone?
- Never
- Less than once a month
- One or two times a month
- About once a week
- A few times a week
- About once a day
- Many times a day
46. To what extent, if any did YTM influence your prayer life?
- YTM influenced me to pray **less often**
- YTM had **little to no influence** on my prayer life
- YTM influenced me to pray **more often**

47. How often, if ever, do you read from Scriptures to yourself alone?

- Never  
 Less than once a month  
 One or two times a month  
 About once a week  
 A few times a week  
 About once a day  
 Many times a day

48. If you pray, describe your favorite ways to pray.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_

49. In the last year, how often, if at all, have you done organized volunteer work or community service not required for school or church?

- Never  
 Between one and five times per year  
 Six or more times per year

Please explain the type of community service: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

50. To what extent, if any, did YTM influence your participation in service?

- YTM influenced me to participate **less often** in community service  
 YTM had **little to no influence** on my community service  
 YTM influenced me to participate **more often** in community service

51. In the last year have you been involved in any political activities, such as voting, signing a political petition, attending a political meeting, or contracting an elected official?

- No  
 Yes  
 Don't know

If yes, please explain your political involvement activities: \_\_\_\_\_

52. To what extent, if any, did YTM influence your participation in political activity?

- YTM influenced me to be **less** politically active
- YTM had **little to no influence** on my political activism
- YTM influenced me to be **more** politically active

53. In the last year have you given any of your own money to any organizations or causes, altogether totaling more than \$30 (including giving money to the church)?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

54. Outside of attending Sunday worship, are you currently participating in any religious group for prayer, service, justice, or learning?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

**VI. Vocation**

The following questions are about vocation and vocational discernment.

55. Define your understanding of the word "vocation."

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	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE
56. Discerning my vocation is <b>important</b> to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
57. I am <b>actively discerning</b> my vocation. I am reflecting how my gifts and talents can be used to meet the world's great needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
58. I am <b>discerning</b> a vocational call to married life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
59. I am <b>discerning</b> a vocational call to single life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
60. Vocational discernment is a <b>significant</b> part of my career pursuit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
61. I am <b>considering</b> a vocation as a Priest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
62. I am <b>considering</b> a vocation as a Permanent Deacon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
63. I am <b>considering</b> a vocation as a Sister.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
64. I am <b>considering</b> a vocation as a Lay Ecclesial Minister.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
65. I am <b>committed</b> to become a Lay Ecclesial Minister, Priest, Deacon, or Sister.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
66. <b><u>If you marked "agree" to the previous question</u></b> , then to which of the following vocations are you committed?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Lay Ecclesial Ministry			
<input type="checkbox"/> Priest			
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Deacon			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sister			
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother			

67. What, if anything, has been most helpful to you in discerning your vocation?

68. To what extent did YTM help foster serious reflection about your vocation?

YTM provided **significant help**

YTM provided **some help**

YTM provided **little to no help**

## **VII. Open Ended Questions**

This section of the survey includes five open-ended questions specifically about your experience in the Youth in Theology and Ministry program. We will take notes on what you say and review these notes with you to insure their accuracy.

69. What was most significant about your YTM experience?

70. What impact, if any, did YTM have on your life?



71. Do you have any suggestions for improving the YTM experience for future participants?

72. Have you remained in contact with any other YTM participants?

- No
- Yes

If yes, then describe the extent of the contact and its importance to you.

73. Were you hired as a YTM counselor?

- No
- Yes

If yes, then briefly explain the impact, if any, this experience had on you?

74. Is there anything else that you think is important about your YTM experience that you would like to share?

### **VIII. (Optional Questions)**

YTM is planning on following up this study in another 5 to 10 years and would be interested in maintaining contact with you through the years. These final three optional questions are about maintaining contact.

75. Are you open to be contacted again in 5-10 years as part of this study?

- No
- Yes
- Unsure

76. Are you willing to update your contact information as it changes?

- No
- Yes
- Unsure

77. Are you familiar with the YTM website and how to use it to update your YTM contact information?

- No
- Yes
- Unsure

Thank-you for your time in completing this survey! We are deeply grateful for the information you provided and believe it will be very helpful in improving the YTM program.

## Appendix D

Responses to Question 70: "What impact, if any, did YTM have on your life?"

- It had a huge impact. My spiritual journey would not have been complete without YTM. I wouldn't have gone to St. Ben's without YTM. It influenced so many decisions because I went to CSB - It helped me transition to be a volunteer religion teacher. It was a path that leads to many other paths. It never told me what way to go, but equipped me to make decisions.
- It helped me grow - active in the community - Boys' and Girls' Club - service project in your Church - public speaking - knowing what I want in life. Helped the process along.
- YTM changed my life perspectives. When applying to college used YTM in my cover letters. I wrote about the Boys' and Girls' Club at YTM and realized how much my family loved me. All the kids at Boys' and Girls' Club showed me so much love. I still look at my picture.
- Effects of YTM were very short term. Booster shot feeling of euphoria in the beginning but it begins to wear off. Helped for short term but lacked connections for long term.
- Open up a direction (vocation) that possibility of priesthood. I would not have been open to enter college seminary without YTM.
- It definitely made me think more about the impact I can have on the world in positive ways.
- Yes it impacted me through my service project at the Red Lake Indian Reservation - to help people and make a big difference by doing little things. The service.
- Some influence that is not able to be directly linked
- A large impact. YTM provided leadership skills that I needed to start my life. YTM is one of the best places, where you get the most positive feedback from peers and superiors.
- Pushed me to be a faithful Christian servant, even though I don't fully do it now. It is there inside me. I feel good when I go to church and am involved. YTM gave me that feeling, that spiritual high. Reminds me of what it means to be a Christian servant. I missed those days. It was a priceless experience.
- YTM gave me a confidence boost that helped me be more a "go-getter" and provided me with a foundation from which to build more knowledge about the relationship between myself, the community, and God.
- Quite a bit, Carried on lessons - impacted my life, chain effect
- A lot - Service, social justice learned at YTM. Treat others as you want to be treated.
- It had a profound impact. It did chart a course for my life. Before I was unsure of where I am going. Decided: I am going to a Catholic university and will study theology. It is like Frost's The Road Less Traveled. My life would be fundamentally different without this experience. I would not be as involved in

- the church. YTM gave me motivation to follow the current beneath my life, a constant aim at living an authentic Christian life.
- YTM is responsible for me entering college with a clear vision and sense of vocation. I knew my major was theology for college.
  - The leadership concept. It is where I started to shine. It helped me lead in college.
  - Impacted me to continue being involved with Church. Figure out where I can be of help in the world - can continue to show people about my faith and how it can be a positive thing. Also say that if you stay involved in the Church it can give you a sense of belonging and completion. Makes me feel more whole the fact that I go to church and know about my faith.
  - It really didn't because I don't really think about it anymore.
  - YTM was the first thing that caused you to ask what vocation meant and how I as Maria was called to live it out. YTM made me realize that I was called to contribute to the world. Components - leadership, theology, prayer. Gave you a good view of being Catholic. YTM influences me to study Theology/Catholic studies in college. Set me on the track where God wanted me to go.
  - YTM it made me a better person all around and more involved in the Church.
  - I still have friends from YTM
  - In general: Theological reflection, interest in finding how I stand/work with the Church, God and Christ
  - Very big impact, raised Sunday School, raised Catholic - post YTM SJU was the only school
  - Big, huge, changed my direction
  - Colleges appreciated service background
  - Prepared me for the world, for faith challenges, able to express faith.
  - Following YTM, everything is because of YTM, friends still with YTM folks
  - Level of accountability - revolve around Christ calling. Made good friends that kept in contact with. Social justice class 1st summer.
  - Fairly good impact. Helped focus on positives, God. Helped prevent me from bad kid or doing bad things.
  - Some profs opened eyes to global view. The people - interaction
  - Brought me to where I am now, got me thinking theology, priest. Like reading theology. Engage in the discussions of theology
  - Helped me to put God in the front of my life. Religion part of everyday life.
  - YTM caused me to choose my future career path as a counselor. I love listening to people and helping them. It was I came out knowing a lot more. I got closer to God. I was thinking I wanted to be a canon lawyer.
  - It did. YTM was a bridge from ND to Alaska. It held me together to look forward...burst of energy. Helped me with my inner person. Introvert. Hit home inside of me.
  - College choice, broader definition of word vocation, empowering to become a leader and make change.
  - Belonging to Church in a crucial point in my life

- Appetite for social activism, service, theology study - all religions
- Becoming a bigger part of the Church
- Big impact. It helped me decide what I wanted to do with my life.
- Really humbling for me - first summer I was in a strange place - didn't know who I wanted to be - wanted to be good - saw all these model Christians - I learned that by wanting to be the best at all I did I lost what I wanted to be in life. I sort of learned that... I thought I wanted to be just like all these people b/c they were the best at religion. Came back the second summer and realized that it wasn't just about being the best, it was about vocation and what you wanted to be what you were called to and how that could help the world. Saw how screwed pre-conceptions were. How I needed to change and I became a much happier person.
- It taught me a lot about the importance of a relationship with God. It made me more comfortable to foster a relationship with God without \_\_\_\_ (?) Going to church
- More focused on faith, religion. I learned more about prayer, vocation, living with your faith.
- At the time YTM caused me to think more deeply about the impact people can have on a community and fostering solidarity within the community.
- Helped me know that being gifted with faith was something to be shared not hidden. Lifelong journey - we are all working toward the greater good and it will come.
- The service aspect - understanding others and how they are not as lucky as I am. It helped me realize there were other people beside myself - made me less self-centered.
- Significant impact - couple of counselors helped me step outside of comfort zone - be your own person, be faithful.
- Very significant - met someone I was romantically involved with. Cornerstone of what I have reflected on in college when I think about something that is missing in my life. 4 weeks not only 4 weeks of my life, 4 weeks that affected the rest of my life.
- Such a big impact and still I think about it - with the people I still keep in contact with. Definitely had a significant impact - things I learned that people taught me play significant role - my prayer life - my decision making.
- Had a lot of impact on my life. I learned that I loved theology, learned that I was called to help other people. Crucifixion walk, Celtic prayer, Anna Marie's, nature walks, different ways to pray that I enjoyed. How to find meaning in a spiritual life.
- The service component was valuable. Overall it made me question my commitment to Catholicism.
- Positive impact because something I could be involved in -part of my story - Did it help you realize anything? Taught me that there are really intelligent people in the world who actually care about doing good things.

- Refer to 69. Made me re-evaluate a lot of things. Really focus on faith finding vocation in Christ.
- Brought me closer to God in the time I was there and soon after I was there. Helped me like going to church more and pray more also.
- Helped me define my identity. Great impact at first on life toward family. Gave me generally happiness. Reminds me now of a center of people. Given me a perspective that I don't always retain, but when I find it again it's very peaceful and stabilizing. Lost feeling of happiness. Can come back to it.
- Helped, encouraged a spiritual renewal. Went to church because my parents went. Made me incorporate more service. Encouraged me to live out my faith.
- Major impact - realize that people studied theology - amazed - figured out this was passion - this has shaped her life today.
- Definitely had one, cannot verbalize
- Helped me come out of my shell. I was no longer afraid to express who I am and what I believe. Had a big impact on the different types of prayer - I learned so much about prayer that it has really helped my prayer life as well.
- It had a positive impact on my leadership capability. Learned to be more open and assertive. Made my faith stronger - all those kids taking an active role in faith.
- Given me lifelong thirst for theology about God and his will. Lifelong friends
- At the time it helped me to grow in my faith but it wasn't something that I carried through - after high school didn't really affect me anymore - for where I was then it was really good.
- All that we did planted seeds - Classes: Prayer, meditation - take a step back look inward at time didn't appreciate - authors are now heroes. Catholic Social Teaching - At time thought it was slow - now CST is something I feel is one of most important teachings to life. Environmental Stewardship essential to faith.
- Made more excited about her faith and what she can do with it.
- A lot - best experience
- Built a stronger image of self - reclaimed assertiveness and communication - confidence!
- I think it gave me a mindset that going through the motions of being religious might just be as good as truly believing and having faith in the practices. I've stepped away from that sort of Confucian philosophy now, but I do feel that YTM led me to appreciate community service projects that I had previously been unacquainted with.

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