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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH MINISTRY
INVOLVEMENT AND FAITH MATURITY IN
FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN A
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Keith Richard Krispin, Jr.

May 2004

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APPROVAL SHEET

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH MINISTRY
INVOLVEMENT AND FAITH MATURITY IN
FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN A
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**

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**THESES Ed.D. .K897r
0199701837627**

In dedication to

my wife, Joy.

You have been a gift to me
and a blessing to our children!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
PREFACE	xiv
Chapter	
1. RESEARCH CONCERN	1
Introduction to the Research Problem	2
Research Purpose	4
Delimitations of the Study	4
Research Questions	5
Terminology	5
Procedural Overview	7
Research Assumptions	7
2. PRECEDENT LITERATURE	9
The Nature of Christian Faith	9
Aspects of Christian Faith	9
Terminology Describing the Nature of Christian Faith	11
Maturity	11

Chapter	Page
Formation	12
Disciple	14
Influences on the Maturation of Christian Faith	14
God	15
The Individual	15
Other Influences	17
Adolescent Religiosity	19
General Characteristics of Adolescent Religious Participation	20
Religious Affiliation	20
Religious Activity	22
Religious Service Attendance	22
Youth Group Attendance	23
Religious Practices and Values	24
Age, Gender, and Regional Differences	27
Effect of Adolescent Religious Participation	28
Theories of Religious Effects	32
Factors Influencing Adolescent Religious Development and Commitment	34
Factor Analysis and Adolescent Religiosity	35
Analysis of Individual Factors	42
Model of Adolescent Religious Development and Commitment	45
Youth Ministry Strategies for Facilitating Spiritual Growth in Adolescents	46

Chapter	Page
Relationships	46
Balanced Programming	51
Balance According to Purpose	52
Balance According to Audience	54
Equipping and Encouragement in the Use of the Spiritual Disciplines	55
Profile of the Current Study	57
3. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN	58
Research Question Synopsis	58
Design Overview	58
Population	59
Sample and Delimitations	59
Limitations of Generalization	60
Instrumentation	61
Faith Maturity Scale	61
Reliability and Validity	62
Youth Ministry Variables	64
Intervening Variables	64
Procedures	65
4. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	67
Compilation Protocol	68
Characteristics of the Sample	69
Question 1 – Involvement with Youth Ministry Factors	73

Chapter	Page
Type of Youth Ministry and Frequency of Attendance	74
Frequency of Involvement with Youth Ministry Factors	76
Perceptions of Youth Ministry Involvement	78
Relationships	78
Balanced Programming	80
Spiritual Disciplines	84
Question 2 – Relationship between Youth Ministry Involvement and Faith Maturity Scale Scores	86
Correlation of Relationship Factor to Faith Maturity	86
Correlation of Balanced Programming Factor to Faith Maturity	89
Worship	89
Instruction	92
Fellowship	93
Evangelism	95
Service	97
Correlation of Spiritual Disciplines Factor to Faith Maturity	99
Gender Comparison of the Relationship between Youth Ministry Involvement and Faith Maturity	101
Question 3 – Influence of Intervening Variables	104
Type of Secondary School	104
Type of Youth Ministry	107
Christian Influence in the Home	110
Christian Influence among Closest Friends	112

Chapter	Page
Number of Years as a Christian	118
Evaluation of Research Design	121
5. CONCLUSIONS	126
Research Purpose and Questions	126
Involvement with the Youth Ministry Factors	127
Relationships with Adults	127
Balanced Programming	128
Spiritual Disciplines	130
Youth Ministry Involvement and Faith Maturity	131
Influence of Intervening Variables	132
Intervening Variables and Faith Maturity	133
Subgroup Analysis – Youth Ministry Factors and Faith Maturity	134
Research Implications	137
Complements Previous Research	137
Examination of Youth Ministry Theory	139
Relationships	140
Balanced Programming	140
Spiritual Disciplines	142
Other Aspects of Youth Ministry Theory	143
Gender Differences	143
Varied Needs	144

Chapter	Page
Family-based Youth Ministry	146
Research Applications	148
Further Research	152
Appendix	
1. THE FAITH MATURITY SCALE	155
2. YOUTH MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY	159
3. YOUTH MINISTRY FACTORS AND QUESTIONS	168
REFERENCE LIST	171

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAO Chief Academic Officer

CCCU Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

FMS Faith Maturity Scale

YMIS Youth Ministry Involvement Survey

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Congregational effectiveness factors	40
2. Youth ministry factors: Frequency of involvement	77
3. Youth ministry factor: Relationships	79
4. Youth ministry factor: Balanced programming	81
5. Youth ministry factor: Spiritual disciplines	84
6. Spiritual discipline factor: Gender differences	85
7. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores	87
8. Relationship factor questions: Correlations with FMS scores	87
9. Balanced programming factor questions: Correlations with FMS scores	90
10. Spiritual disciplines factor questions: Correlations with FMS scores	100
11. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by gender	102
12. Correlation between frequency items and FMS scores by gender	103
13. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by school type	105
14. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by school type	106
15. Comparison of mean FMS scores according to type of youth ministry	108

Table	Page
16. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by youth ministry type	109
17. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by youth ministry type	110
18. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian home influence	112
19. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian home influence	113
20. Subgroup comparison of mean FMS scores according to level of Christian influence among closest friends	114
21. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian peer influence	115
22. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian peer influence	117
23. Subgroup comparison of mean FMS scores according to number of years as a Christian	119
24. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by number of years as a Christian	120
25. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by number of years as a Christian	122

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Model of female adolescent religious belief and commitment	47
2. Model of male adolescent religious belief and commitment	48
3. Ages of subjects	70
4. Type of school attended	71
5. Christian influence in home	71
6. Christian influence of closest friends	72
7. Number of years as Christian	73
8. Number of youth ministry activities attended in an average month	75
9. Type of youth ministry	76

PREFACE

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And finally, thank you to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without you, this would all be pointless. May you use the insights contained in this document to further your kingdom. And may you use me to equip others for ministry in many places around the world.

Keith Richard Krispin, Jr.

Lake in the Hills, Illinois

May 2004

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

Given the purpose of the church and the mandates in Scripture, it is no wonder that youth ministry practitioners – pastors, parachurch youth workers, and volunteers – consider the development of mature faith in adolescents to be one of the central priorities of Christian youth ministry. In a study of 2,130 full-time youth ministers that reflected a wide range of denominations, ages, geographic locations, and experience, Strommen, Jones, and Rahn found that one of the top three priorities for youth ministers today is the “spiritual development of youth” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 119). This is based on an analysis of responses to three survey items included in the cluster “Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Youths.” This cluster includes responses to the following three items: “Helping youths make a commitment to Jesus Christ,” “Providing help for teaching biblical concepts of right and wrong,” and “Seeing that God is at work changing lives.” Among these, 86% rated them at the highest rating, “extremely important,” and another 10% at “very important” (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 129-30).

In evaluating the achievement of this set of priorities, those studied give a positive evaluation:

How well do the youth ministers believe this objective is being accomplished? Their answer, based on averaging their responses to the above three items, ends up halfway between very well and quite well. Though one could wish for a higher evaluation, this rating should be recognized as the highest given for all seven outcomes. (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 157)

When evaluating the outcomes of other related items, the assessment is somewhat less positive. In response to the cluster entitled “Youth Serving Church and Community” which included items related to service, leadership, reaching out to hurting peers, and taking a stand on moral issues, the youth workers in the study responded 35% for “often true” and 48% for “sometimes true.” For the cluster, “Youth Active in Public Witness and Ministry,” which included taking advantage of Bible-study opportunities, praying for non-Christians, and witnessing publicly, they responded with 30% for “often true,” and 43% for “sometimes true,” the lowest ratings of the seven outcomes assessed (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 187-91).

Thus while youth ministers report some effectiveness in the development of adolescent faith, further improvement is needed. This is especially true when considering the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) scores of adolescents in several denominations. The 38-item FMS is designed to assess “the degree to which persons exhibit vibrant, life-transforming faith” (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 54). Within six denominations, the percentage of adolescents demonstrating mature faith, a score of 5.0 or higher with a maximum score of 7.0, ranged from 7% to 28% (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 55).

Introduction to the Research Problem

One reason that efforts to facilitate the spiritual development of adolescents demonstrates limited effectiveness may be that the strategies being used in youth ministry today, though guided by biblical principles, are largely based on the experience of those

working in the field. Little empirical research has been done to guide the development of youth ministry strategies.

Scholars in the field of youth ministry also recognize the need for research in this area. Lambert, in a Delphi study of educators in 70 youth ministry degree programs around the country, identified the research needs within the field (Lambert 1999, n.p.; Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 128). Of the 159 research suggestions that emerged in the study, the three items rated the highest all related to the spiritual development of adolescents. These items are:

1. Longitudinal studies on teen faith after youth group – what factors affect teen faith and how can we better prepare them for life after youth group?
2. Parents' role in faith development
3. What is the profile of a ministry whose students are most likely to remain active in the cause of Christ beyond high school? (Lambert 1999, n.p.)

Some research has begun to examine the factors related to adolescent faith. Of note is the work of Erickson, who explored the relationships between religious belief and commitment, religious behavior, and a variety of variables including parental influence, peer influence, and religious education. Though both parents and peers play a part in the development of religious belief, commitment, and behavior, there was also a strong relationship between adolescent religious education and adolescent faith. Yet the measures used to assess this variable were limited. As Erickson notes, “the nature and content of the religious instruction adolescents received was not addressed directly in this study, but since the religious education variable had such strong relations with the other variables, it will be important in future investigations” (Erickson 1992, 149).

Research Purpose

The purpose of the study is to analyze the relationship between youth ministry involvement and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) affiliated school.

Delimitations of the Study

Because the entrance into college often represents the completion of the high school years, this study was intentionally delimited to first-year college students. These students have the most recent experience with youth ministry programming and are more able to accurately report on their high school experiences. In addition, these students have had the least exposure to post-secondary ministry efforts that may influence their faith maturity.

The study was also delimited to the students' involvement with youth ministry factors. While other factors, such as parental and peer characteristics, relate to adolescent faith maturity (Erickson 1992, 131-52), to make the scope of the study manageable, it was limited to youth ministry involvement, an area in need of further research (Erickson 1992, 149).

Finally, the study was delimited to a Christian college because of the greater likelihood of the students having involvement with youth ministry factors. It is assumed that students attending a religiously-affiliated institution would be more likely to have participated in youth ministry activities than would students at a nonreligious institution. This provides a larger pool of subjects with a variety of youth ministry involvement while maintaining the possibility that some students will have little or no involvement with youth ministry factors.

Research Questions

The following research questions have guided the gathering and analysis of data for this study:

1. What involvement do first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school report with youth ministry factors (relationships, balanced programming, encouragement and equipping in the use of spiritual disciplines)?
2. What is the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school?
3. In what ways, if any, do intervening variables (home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, number of years since conversion, type of youth ministry) influence the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school?

Terminology

The following definitions and terms are offered for the clarification of their use in this research effort:

Adolescent. “Adolescence is the period of growth between childhood and adulthood” (Rice and Dolgin 2002, 1). This period begins at the onset of puberty and ends when the person has reached “fully individuated adulthood” (Dean 2001, 21). The period of adolescence can be further subdivided into early adolescence, usually ages 11 to 14, middle adolescence, ages 15 to 19, and late adolescence, age 19 until adulthood (Rice and Dolgin 2002, 1). Though there is distinction among them, for the purpose of this study, the terms “youth” and “teenager” will be considered synonymous with “adolescent.”

Faith maturity. “Faith maturity is the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives of life-transforming faith, as these have been understood in “mainline” Protestant traditions” (Bensen, Donahue, and Erickson 1993,

3). This includes a horizontal dimension, concerned with one's relationship with others, and a vertical dimension, concerned with one's relationship with God (Bensen, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 4).

First-year college student. Though a person may begin college at any point after completing secondary education, for the purposes of this study, the first-year college student will be considered to be those who are enrolled in the required freshman orientation course at Alpha College. Because transfer students are assigned to a higher level orientation course, the students enrolled in this course are those that would traditionally be considered freshmen, though some may have transferred in some course work based on advanced courses in high school or concurrent enrollment between college and high school.

Parachurch youth ministry. This term refers to organized youth ministry efforts outside the context of the local church. Examples include but are not limited to Young Life, Campus Life/Youth for Christ, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Youth ministry. "Youth ministry is the purposive, determined, and persistent quest by both natural and supernatural means to expose, transmit, or otherwise share with adolescents God's message of good news, which is central to the Christian faith. Its ultimate end is to cultivate a life transformation of youth by the power of the Holy Spirit that they might be conformed to the revealed will of God as expressed in Scripture, and chiefly in the person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Lampert 1996, 62). Cannister also notes that youth ministry includes both missional and educational components, concern with both evangelism and discipleship (Cannister 2001, 77, 90).

Youth ministry factors. The factors in youth ministry that intend to facilitate growth toward faith maturity in adolescents. Based on the literature, these factors have been identified as relationships (Senter 1997a, 123-25; Burns 2001, 23), balanced programming (Fields 1998, 47-51; Dettoni 1993, 29-31; Black 1991, 41-44), and equipping and encouragement in the use of the spiritual disciplines (Fields 1998, 156-58; Marcum 2001, 7-17).

Procedural Overview

Data was gathered through the administration of the Youth Ministry Involvement Survey (YMIS; Appendix 2) to first-year students in a required freshman orientation course at a CCCU-affiliated college. The survey included the FMS instrument (Appendix 1) as well as information related to the participants' involvement in youth ministry factors during high school. There were also questions relating to the intervening variables of home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, type of youth ministry involved with, and the number of years since conversion to Christianity.

Following the completion of the survey, each student's FMS score was calculated. Using a variety of statistical measures, the data was analyzed for relationships between the participants' Faith Maturity Scale scores and their involvement with youth ministry factors.

Research Assumptions

The following assumptions underlie this study:

1. The FMS is a reliable and validated research instrument, suitable for the assessment of a person's faith maturity.

2. Growth towards maturity in faith is a complex process involving a variety of both natural and supernatural factors. Some factors are accessible to empirical research and some are not.
3. College freshmen are able to accurately report on their involvement with youth ministry factors.
4. The development of mature faith is a central purpose of youth ministry and is thus a topic worthy of study.
5. Students attending a Christian college are more likely to have experience with youth ministry programming than would those attending a nonreligiously-affiliated institution.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

Given the priority placed on the spiritual growth of adolescents by both youth ministry academics (Lambert 1999, n.p.) and practitioners (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 129-35), the purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant biblical and theological precedents of Christian faith, the research regarding adolescent religiosity, and the theory underlying youth ministry efforts to facilitate the faith maturity of adolescents. The intent is to establish a foundation for the present study by identifying the gaps in the research and outlining the related theory.

The Nature of Christian Faith

While in many ways the internal workings of faith are mysterious and supernatural, much can be learned by examining the biblical foundations of Christian faith. This section will review a description of the aspects of faith as well as the factors influencing faith formation, as described in Scripture.

Aspects of Christian Faith

Downs suggests that a proper understanding of biblical faith includes cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects (Downs 1994, 11-18). In this, one can see that faith is multidimensional dealing with the mind, heart, and will.

The cognitive or intellectual aspect acknowledges that there is a specific content to be known and believed (Downs 1994, 11-18). This can be seen in various passages that describe the content to be believed: Paul reminds the Thessalonians that “we believe that Jesus died and rose again” (1 Thess 4:14). In another passage, Jesus says to Mary, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” Mary responds with a statement that affirms the central content of Christian faith, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world” (John 11:25-27). These and other passages (John 20:31; 1 Cor 15:1-11) affirm the intellectual aspect of faith, that there is a content to faith.

The affective, or relational, aspect of faith suggests that faith must include more than belief in orthodox doctrine. It must “capture the believer’s heart and will” (Downs 1994, 18). This reflects more than agreement with content but a trust in a person, Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16). Building on the Great Commandment, Downs describes the affective aspect in this way:

This requires a faith that is relational and alive toward God, not a dispassionate intellectualism. What a person believes is important, but heart commitment is equally important. The mature believer will have a heart that loves God, delights in knowing him, and desires to please him in every way. It is not possible to speak of Christian maturity apart from these qualities of the heart. (Downs 1994, 19)

The final aspect of faith, as suggested by Downs, is the volitional aspect, where internal faith is reflected in outward action. True faith expresses itself in obedience to God (John 14:15) and in good works (Jas 2:26). Note that the outward expression of faith does not contradict the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Instead, “true biblical

faith ultimately affects the will, causing a person to desire to obey God” (Downs 1994, 19). This is consistent with Paul’s writing on the relationship between faith and works:

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph 2:8-10)

Interacting with both the Great Commandment and a prayer by St. Richard of Chichester, Boa suggests that each of these aspects interacts within one’s effort to love God:

Loving God completely involves our whole personality – our intellect, emotion, and will. “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). The better we come to know God (“may we know thee more clearly”), the more we will love him (“love thee more dearly”). And the more we love him, the greater our willingness to trust and obey him in the things he calls us to do (“follow thee more nearly”). (Boa 2001, 31)

Terminology Describing the Nature of Christian Faith

Dettoni identifies three biblical terms which also provide insight into the nature of Christian faith – maturity, formation, and disciple (Dettoni 1994, 15).

Maturity

The first term, “maturity,” suggests that faith is something that grows and develops. Just as a person grows toward physical maturity, so too may a person grow toward spiritual maturity, maturity in faith. This understanding of faith can be seen in numerous passages. In Ephesians 4, Paul makes maturity in Christ the primary goal of the church (Eph 4:13, 15). In this passage, the Greek word, “teleios,” translated “mature,” carries with it the connotation of full development (Foulkes 1999, 130). The same is true of Hebrews 5:11-23, where the author exhorts the readers to grow up, particularly in their

understanding of doctrine (Guthrie 1999, 130), and in Philippians 3:15, where Paul refers to those “who are mature” (Martin 1999, 158).

Hebrews 5 also emphasizes the goal of maturity by using an analogy of foods appropriate to different stages of development. Guthrie notes that the contrast between milk and solid food is not intended as mutually exclusive. Both are essential at the proper stage of spiritual development. But “those who never reach the later stage are sadly deficient” (Guthrie 1999, 135). Spiritual maturity is intended for all Christians.

This biblical emphasis on growth and maturity can be seen in numerous other passages as well. Epaphras is mentioned as having prayed that the Colossians would stand firm in maturity (Col 4:12). Paul praises the Thessalonians for their growing faith (2 Thess 1:3) the lack of which had caused him concern (1 Thess 3:10, 12). Twice Peter challenges his readers to grow (1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18), in one instance specifically through feeding on God’s word (1 Pet 2:2; Grudem 1999, 94-95). Based on these passages, faith should be understood as dynamic, changing, and moving toward maturity (Ward 1980, 136).

Formation

The second term that gives insight into Christian faith is “formation” from the Greek root of “morphe,” used in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. To consider the nature of formation in the Christian life “suggests that the inner being of the person is radically altered so that he or she is no longer the same” (Dettoni 1994, 15). Thus there is an inner change that happens, and continues to happen, as the believer is “being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). In commenting on this passage as well as the maturation

process, Richards notes that Christian faith is always in process and that change in the Christian is not instantaneous. The implication is that “Christian education is not to be designed to produce a product. It is designed to supply what is needed for the process of growth to proceed normally and healthily” (Richards 1975, 22).

Mulholland also emphasizes the process of growth in his definition of spiritual formation: “Spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others” (Mulholland 1993, 12). In addition to an emphasis on the process, his definition highlights several other aspects of formation in the Christian life. First, the person is not in control of the process with the ability to conform oneself to the image of Christ. Instead, the person is the one being acted upon, allowing God to stimulate growth (Mulholland 1993, 25-27; 1 Cor 3:7). Second, spiritual formation has a direction, growing toward Christ-likeness, the place where one will find wholeness (Mulholland 1993, 36). Finally, spiritual formation is not a private reality to be enjoyed by the individual. Instead, the internal transformation will also impact the person’s relationships with others:

If you want a good litmus test of your spiritual growth, simply examine the nature and quality of your relationships with others. Are you more loving, more compassionate, more patient, more understanding, more caring, more giving, more forgiving than you were a year ago? If you cannot answer these kinds of questions in the affirmative and, especially, if others cannot answer them in the affirmative about you, then you need to examine carefully the nature of your spiritual life and growth. (Mulholland 1993, 42)

This connection between spiritual formation and one’s relationships with others can also be seen in John 15 where love for Jesus, obedience to him, and love for others is intertwined. John is more direct elsewhere when he says, “Whoever does not

love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8), and “If anyone says, ‘I love God’, yet hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20).

Disciple

The third and final term that gives insight into the nature of Christian faith is “disciple,” which “suggests an active following of Jesus” (Dettoni 1994, 15). In the first century, a disciple was a “student, learner, or pupil” (Lockyer 1986, 302). Thus a person could be a disciple of other teachers. In the New Testament, the term disciple most often refers to those who were followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus called his disciples to much more than what one would traditionally consider the duty of a student. Rather, he calls his disciples to deny self, willingly suffer, make Jesus the top priority in life, allow his teaching to abide within, and to love others (Luke 9:23-26; 14:26-33; John 8:31-31; 13:34-35; 15:1-12).

Dettoni suggests that “one of the most concrete ways of following Jesus involves patterning our life after His. This patterning means that we seek to do what he did; in other words, live a life filled with prayer, quiet service, Scripture reading, meditation, worship, and fasting, to name a few” (Dettoni 1994, 16). It is in these quiet acts of piety that the person is enabled to imitate Jesus’ other characteristics of love, strength, and forgiveness.

Influences on the Maturation of Christian Faith

In considering this process of formation and maturation in Christian faith, the Bible also gives some indication of factors that influence it. This includes the influence of God, the individual Christian, the Christian’s family, the church, and suffering.

God

First, it is clear that God is the one who causes the growth in a person's life. In addressing the problem of divisions in the Corinthian church, Paul directs them to the one who can truly be credited with the change in their lives: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor" (1 Cor 3:6-8). Though other people participate in the process, providing that which is needed for healthy growth, God is ultimately responsible for the growth of a believer. Thus the attention of the Corinthian believers should have been on God rather than his servants (Morris 1999, 63).

This idea of God-centered growth in the Christian faith is consistent with the role of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who brings conviction of sin (John 16:8), guides a person into truth (John 16:13-15), gives understanding of the truth (1 Cor 2:14-16), and produces the "fruit" of Christ-like character (Gal 5:16-25). In regard to the fruit of the Spirit, Cole states, "The use of *karpos*, fruit . . . suggest that all these spiritual qualities, and many more, are the spontaneous product of the presence of the Spirit of God within the heart of the Christian It is a principle enunciated by the Lord himself that a tree could be recognized by the fruit that it bore" (Cole 1999, 219).

The Individual

Since God produces the growth, does this mean then that the Christian is passive in the process of spiritual growth and formation? Of course not! The individual Christian must also be active in this process. Using a similar analogy of fruit production,

Jesus tells his disciples that in order to produce “fruit” they must “remain” in him (John 15:4-5); that is they must maintain consistent contact with him through the use of the spiritual disciplines (Barclay 1975, 176). In many ways this is what Jesus did. He recognized that all that he did was a result of God working through him (John 5:19). Thus he also stayed in contact with the Father through times alone in prayer.

Paul also encourages his protégé, Timothy, to pursue spiritual growth. He instructed him to “train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life, and the life to come” (1 Tim 4:7-8). He also wrote, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). And finally, he instructs Timothy to flee sinful habits and to pursue purity of heart and character (2 Tim 2:22).

It is on the basis of these and other Scriptures that many base the practice of the spiritual disciplines. According to Ortberg, too often Christians view the Christian life as one of trying to eliminate the sin in one’s life through individual effort. Rather, he suggests that the spiritual disciplines offer a way of training for the Christian life, training that places a person before God so that he can transform the person (Ortberg 1997, 46-48). This builds on Paul’s instructions to the Philippians: “As you have always obeyed . . . work out your salvation in fear and trembling. For it is God who is at work within you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil 2:12-14). In this way, a person participates in the process of spiritual formation by the practice of the spiritual disciplines and connects with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (Mullholland 1993, 103) as one brings his or her life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Boa 2001, 79). In this way, a

person follows the example of Jesus Christ, who practiced all of the spiritual disciplines during his life (Boa 2001, 78).

In a similar way, Foster describes the spiritual disciplines using an agricultural metaphor, based in 1 Corinthians 3:6. In this, the spiritual disciplines are a way of “sowing to the Spirit,” a way of planting a person in the ground where God can use his transforming power to shape the person into the image of Christ. Thus, the spiritual disciplines have no power in and of themselves. They serve only as a way of placing a person before God and to allow him to work on one’s life (Foster 1988, 7).

Other Influences

While both God and the individual Christian have central roles, just like Paul and Apollos contributed to the growth of the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:5-8), both the Church and the Christian family play a part in adolescent spiritual formation. First, note that the one purpose of the church is to facilitate spiritual maturity. Paul states this when he says that the role of church leaders is to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). Among the ways the church does this is through teaching (1 Thess 4:1-2; Matt 28:18; Eph 4:21-24), providing models of mature faith (1 Cor 4:15-17; 1 Thess 1:6-7; Heb 6:12), and encouraging each other to live godly lives (1 Thess 2:11-12; Heb 3:12-13; 10:24-25), all within the context of loving relationships (Eph 4:15; 1 Thess 2:8).

Second, the family also has a part to play in facilitating the spiritual maturity of Christian faith, particularly within children. In the Old Testament, the nation was to take

to heart the commands given to them by God and were instructed to “impress them on your children” (Deut 6:6-7). But the way this was to be accomplished placed responsibility squarely on the parents and family: “Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deut 6:7-9). Thus it is only the parents and those immediately involved with the children that would be in a position to follow these instructions.

While this same principle applies in the New Testament and today, the New Testament also affirms the spiritual responsibility of parents by repeating the Old Testament command for children to be obedient to their parents (Exod 20:12; Eph 6:1) and by giving fathers responsibility to bring their children up “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). That this can also apply to mothers and extended family is illustrated by the family of Timothy. While Paul provided spiritual mentoring in his teen and young adult years, the foundation for spiritual growth had been laid by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15).

One final biblical influence on faith maturity is a person’s experience with suffering and difficulties in life. James writes, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (Jas 1:2-4). This testing is not meant in the sense of determining the genuineness of a person’s faith, but more likely refers to a refinement or strengthening of faith. Thus the outcome of suffering is perseverance or steadfastness

(Moo 1985, 60). This growth and benefit of suffering to faith is also expressed in 1 Peter 1:6-7 and Romans 5:3. Consistent with this, Paul also connects the experience of suffering to the development of Christ-like character when he says, “And we know that all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Rom 8:28-29).

Adolescent Religiosity

In reviewing the literature related to adolescent religiosity, this section will address three aspects: the general characteristics of adolescent religious participation, the effects of that participation, and the factors influencing Christian spiritual growth and maturity.

Though some have noted the lack of research into adolescent religiosity (Smith et al. 2002, 597), in recent years several researchers have attempted to address this area of concern. Scholarly research is beginning to contribute to a description of adolescent religious affiliation and practice, as well as analyzing the effect of religious participation on both positive and negative aspects of adolescent behaviors and attitudes. In addition, research has begun to address the factors that influence adolescents’ religious commitments, including the effectiveness of religious education efforts among adolescents. Because of the lack of scholarly data in some areas, information from opinion polls (Barna 1999, Barna 2001, Gallup 1999a, Gallup 1999b, Gallup and Jones 2000) provides some perspective, particularly on adolescents’ religious practices, priorities, and affiliation.

General Characteristics of Adolescent Religious Participation

In describing the general characteristics of adolescent religious participation, this section will review what is known about adolescents' religious affiliation, activity, and priorities, as well as variations in the data related to age, gender, and region of residence.

Religious Affiliation

According to pollster George Barna, 86% of teens identify themselves as Christians (Barna 2001, 119). This is consistent with Gallup's finding that 86% believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Gallup 1999b, 4). Barna also reports that denominational affiliation has only seen small fluctuations over the last few years with the biggest drop in affiliation occurring within the Catholic Church, from 30% of self-described Christians in the early 90's to 22% in 2000. While mainline Protestant churches are maintaining their percentage at 20%, there has been a slight increase in those affiliating with charismatic or Pentecostal churches, to approximately 10%. Of those identifying themselves as Christian, 31% claim to be absolutely committed to Christianity, up from 26% the year prior and 29% in 97 (Barna 2001, 119-21)

Based on a review of religious variables included in three nationally representative surveys, Smith et al. offer a portrait of adolescent religious affiliation that at times contradicts with that given by Gallup and Barna. The studies analyzed are (1) the 1996 Monitoring the Future survey which is administered annually to 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, (2) the 1995 Survey of Adolescent Health, administered to over 90,000 students in grades 7 through 12 at 132 schools in a nationally representative sample, and (3) the

1998 Survey of Parents and Youth, administered through a random-digit-dial telephone survey of youth, ages 10-18, as well as their parents (Smith et al. 2002, 598-600).

Based on this data analysis, 24% of adolescents report affiliation with the Catholic Church, 23% with Baptist denominations, 9% Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ, 6% Methodist, and 4% Lutheran. Other Protestant groups follow with small percentages. Eastern Orthodox, Muslim, Christian Science, Hindu, Unitarian, and Baha'i each represent less than 1%. In the Monitoring the Future survey dealing with broader religious affiliations over a 20-year period, the proportion of Protestant youth has declined by 10%, with much of the loss coming from Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, and the United Church of Christ denominations. The proportion of Catholic youth declined slightly while the proportion of Jewish youth grew slightly. The proportion of adolescents identifying with "other" religions and those who do not consider themselves religious grew 5% each over the 20-year period of the study (Smith et al. 2002, 600-01).

Using a series of questions, Barna further differentiates evangelical and "born-again" teens from those who identify themselves as "Christian." The first question asks "Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in life today?" If the adolescent answers affirmatively, they are asked what they believe will happen after they die. The born again option is "I will go to heaven because I have confessed my sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior." Approximately 60% of adolescents have made a personal commitment to Jesus. Of those, 6 of 10 give the "born-again" answer, representing approximately 33% of all teenagers (Barna 1999, 47).

In a similar manner, Barna also identifies those who would be identified as an evangelical Christian. To qualify as an evangelical is defined as follows:

An evangelical is someone defined by survey data in response to nine questions, all of which relate to beliefs. The scale requires a person to be born again; to describe religious faith as very important in his or her life; to affirm Jesus' sinless life; to believe in God as an omnipotent and omniscient deity who created the world and still rules the universe; to assert that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; to accept personal responsibility to evangelize; to believe that Satan exists; and to believe that salvation is possible by grace alone. (Barna 2001, 122-23)

According to this definition and the survey data, "4% of teenagers can be considered to be evangelicals." This is down from 10% in 1995 and comparable with current adult percentage of 6% (Barna 2001, 123).

Religious Activity

In describing the religious activity of adolescents, this section will address the trends in religious service attendance, as well as a variety of other religious practices and values.

Religious Service Attendance

On the whole, adolescent attendance at religious services varies. According to Smith et al., 38% attend weekly, 16% one to two times per month, 31% rarely, and 15% never. Attendance also varies according to religious affiliation with higher rates of attendance among more conservative groups as well as those with larger proportions of African-Americans. Thus, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, and Pentecostal groups have the highest weekly attendance rates, approximately 60-80%. Adolescents in mainline groups demonstrate more modest weekly attendance rates of approximately 40-50%. Those in non-Christian groups – Islam, Hindu, and Jewish – have the lowest weekly attendance patterns. In examining 20-year trends of 12th graders, there has been an 8% decline in those who report weekly attendance, with a corresponding increase among those who

report that they rarely (4% increase) or never (4% increase) attend religious services (Smith et al. 2002, 601-02). Though difficult to compare, the overall report of Smith et al. seems to be consistent with Gallup who reports that 49% of adolescences attend church on any given weekend (Gallup 1999b, 8) and Barna who reports that 56% had attended a religious service in the seven days prior to taking the survey (Barna 1999, 57).

Regarding motivation for church attendance, Gallup reports that 61% of adolescents attended a church service solely because they wanted to, 24% both because they wanted to and because it would please their parents, and 19% primarily to please their parents (Gallup 1999b, 8).

Youth Group Attendance

In addition to religious service attendance, Barna suggests that in the seven days prior to participating in the survey, 32% had attended a church youth group activity other than a small group or Sunday School class, 35% had attended Sunday School, and 29% had participated in a small group. Further, he reports that approximately two-thirds of all teenagers have some interaction with a church youth program in a given month (Barna 1999, 57-59).

According to Smith et al. approximately half of American adolescents participate in religious youth groups. Among 12th graders, 25% have been in a religious youth group for their entire four years of high school and 31% for 1-3 years; 44% have never been involved in a youth group. Denominational differences in youth group participation largely reflect those of church attendance, with more frequent youth group participation occurring among more conservative groups and those with higher numbers

of African-Americans. Surprisingly 30% of nonreligious adolescents report involvement with religious youth groups (Smith et al. 2002, 602-05).

Religious Practices and Values

In addressing the private religious practices of adolescents, scholarly research is limited and dated. In 1970, Getz and Zuck report results from a nationwide survey of over 3000 Christian adolescents in 1,917 churches related to the National Sunday School Association. The questionnaire was administered in the churches. Among other findings, the researchers report that

many said they pray at least once a day, and more than half said they give ten percent of their income (from salaries and allowances) to the church or other Christian ministries. Furthermore, almost three out of four stated that they feel assured of their salvation, and more than half reported being satisfied that they had a sense of God's nearness. However, only one-fourth of the youths read the Bible at least once a day. (Getz and Zuck 1970, 39)

It is also interesting to note that many of the youth surveyed reported dissatisfaction with their spiritual lives, specifically related to "time spent in Bible study, time spent in prayer, and confidence in witnessing to others about Christ" (Getz and Zuck 1970, 39).

Another study which sheds some light on the spiritual lives of early adolescents, those in 5th through 9th grades, was conducted by Forliti and Benson. The study surveys 8165 early adolescents and 10,467 of their parents. The sample was drawn from "thirteen youth-serving organizations" all of which were related to a Protestant or Catholic congregation (Forliti and Bensen 1986, 199-200).

In regard to early adolescents and religion, the study addressed several areas. In a rank ordering of twenty-four life-goals, Forliti and Bensen report that "to have God at the center of my life" ranks 9th. "To be part of a church or synagogue" ranks 15th. In

comparison, “to have a happy family life,” “to get a good job when I am older,” and “to do something important with my life” ranked first through third respectively (Forliti and Bensen 1986, 201). Thus religion is a priority in the lives of young adolescents, but it is not the primary motivator for many.

The study also explored the ways that young adolescents experience religion. The fourfold typology includes “liberating religion” which emphasizes the acceptance of God and that salvation is a gift; “restricting religion” which emphasizes limits, guidelines, and discipline; “horizontal religion” which sees the priorities of faith to be reaching out to and caring for others; and “vertical religion” which emphasizes the priority of establishing a close relationship with God through things like prayer, worship, and daily devotions. The patterns vary with the possibility that an adolescent could score high in all four areas (Forliti and Bensen 1986, 220-21).

In relationship to the liberating and restrictive aspects, the early adolescents in the study tend to adopt a more liberating position rather than restrictive or to hold both. This tends to remain stable across the grades studied with the exception of a drop that occurs between 8th and 9th grade boys. Girls tend to be higher on liberating religion than boys. Boys are higher on the restrictive religion than girls. In regard to the horizontal and vertical aspects, “about 30 percent of young adolescents tend toward the vertical end of the four-item scale, about 15 percent lean toward the horizontal end, and about 55 percent balance the vertical and horizontal dimensions” (Forliti and Bensen 1986, 221-22).

Given the limited and dated nature of the scholarly research, it is once again helpful to turn to the polling data of Gallup and Barna. According to Gallup, 67% of teenagers say they feel the need to experience spiritual growth and more than 80% say

they consider their religious beliefs very important to them (Gallup and Jones 2000, 117-8). Among nonwhite teens, 53% say that they frequently pray when alone with 31% occasionally doing so. Among white teens, 39% frequently pray when alone and 32% do so occasionally. Among all teens, 12% read the Bible daily, and 24% at least weekly. Another 13% read it frequently when alone while 31% occasionally read the Bible when alone. Frequency drops in the college years. It should be noted that while the publication date of the material is more recent, some of the data regarding prayer and Bible reading comes from surveys conducted in 1988 and 1991 (Gallup 1999b, 10-11).

According to Barna, of nineteen life goals and priorities, “having a close relationship with God” ranked 8th with 66% reporting that this was “very desirable” and 22% saying it was “somewhat desirable.” “Being deeply committed to the Christian faith” ranked 14th on the list with 50% at “very desirable” and 29% “somewhat desirable.” “Having a college degree,” “having good physical health,” “having close personal friendships,” and “having a comfortable lifestyle” were the highest rated items on the list (Barna 2001, 84-85).

Regarding giving of financial resources, approximately 3 of 10 teenagers give to a church or other nonprofit organization during a typical week; 4 of 10 give during a typical quarter; not quite half do so during a typical year. These statistics are similar to those for volunteerism. A larger percentage of “born-again” teens (54%) gave money to nonprofit organizations, other than churches, than did non-Christians (38%). They were also more likely to support organizations involved in social welfare and relief and development (34% vs. 26%), but were only half as likely to give to health and medical nonprofit organizations (15% vs. 30%) (Barna 1999, 30).

Regarding other religious activities, Barna reports the following:

The religious activity of teens is substantial, although it does not necessarily occur as regularly as many adults wish or believe it to occur. The most common religious activities are praying to God (67% say they do so in a typical day) and reading their horoscope (52%). Prolific but less frequent activities include reading from the Bible (35%) and discussing religious matters with friends and family (43%). Even less regularly teens are likely to engage in meditation (12% do so within a month), consulting a medium or spiritual advisor other than a Christian minister (10%), chanting (9%), fasting for religious reasons (9%), or doing yoga (4%). (Barna 1999, 29)

Age, Gender, and Regional Differences

It should also be noted that some researchers report variation in results based on age, region, and gender. In relationship to age, Smith et al. note that religious activity declines during the four years of high school. In regard to religious affiliation, 9.9% of 8th graders report having no religion while 14.8% of 18 years-olds do. The percentage of adolescents reporting weekly attendance at religious services drops 10% over the four years of high school. And those reporting that they rarely attend services increased by 9%. The trend is similar for youth group attendance (Smith et al. 2002, 605-06).

Gender also appears to be a factor in adolescent religiosity with girls being more religiously oriented than boys: 45% of nonreligious youth are girls; 55% are boys; 6% more girls than boys attend church services weekly; 5% more boys than girls never attend church; 14% more 12th grade boys than girls have never participated in a youth group; and 28% of 12th grade girls and 22% of boys have been involved in youth group for the full four years of high school (Smith et al. 2002, 605). Forliti and Bensen also found this gender difference in their research of early adolescents. In their study, girls scored higher on every religious measurement with the exception of one, where boys scored higher on restricting religion than did girls (Forliti and Bensen 1986, 221).

Consistent with this pattern, Erickson, in attempting to construct a structural model of the influences related to adolescent religious development and commitment, found gender-based differences between the relationship patterns of males versus females (Erickson 1992, 143).

Finally, the region of the country in which an adolescent lives appears to be a factor in religious participation. For instance, percentages of youth reporting no religion are 8.4% in the south, 12.1% in the northeast, 15.2% in the midwest, and 17% in the west. Youth in Southern states are more likely to attend religious services weekly and are least likely to never attend. Youth in the North Central and Western states follow the South in attendance. Youth in the northeast are the most likely to never attend church (Smith et al. 2002, 607-08). The influence of regional differences, both national and international, was also noted in several studies included in Hyde's review of literature related to religion among adolescents and children (Hyde 1990, 106, 242-43, 252-54).

Effects of Adolescent Religious Participation

One aspect of adolescent religiosity that has received significant attention has been the relationship with delinquency and well-being. Two reviews of the literature (Hyde 1990, 286-92; Donahue and Bensen 1995, firstsearch.oclc.org) provide a broad perspective on earlier literature. More recent research has also contributed an understanding of this aspect.

In his review of the research regarding adolescent religiosity and delinquency, Hyde found a variety of results. While a few studies found no relationship between church attendance and antisocial behavior, many others report a significant negative

relationship between various measures of religiosity and a variety of delinquent or anti-social behaviors. These include intolerance of deviance, attitudes towards drugs, drug use, nonmarital sexual activity, drinking, smoking, vandalism, and theft. The most common measures of religiosity used were church attendance and stated importance of religion. Other measures found to be significant included family worship, personal prayer, and Sunday school attendance. In one study, religious affiliation was insignificant in relationship to drug use (Hyde 1990, 286-92).

Donahue and Bensen reviewed the literature for relationships between adolescent religiosity and well-being, defined as the presence of positive or “prosocial” characteristics and the absence of negative characteristics. They also explored data obtained through surveys administered in schools throughout the United States as part of a Search Institute effort to assist schools in assessing the perspectives, values, and behaviors of the students in their schools. The study is entitled *The Troubled Journey*. Among the data reviewed, they reported positive relationships between measures of religiosity and altruistic behavior, and negative relationships with binge drinking, marijuana use, smoking, premarital sexual intercourse, virginity, and interpersonal violence. The *Troubled Journey* data also revealed small correlations between suicide measures, including attempts and ideation, and measures of religiosity, but the relatively small size of the correlations, $-.05$ and $-.11$, are likely due to the generic nature of the religious measures (Donahue and Bensen 1995, firstsearch.oclc.org).

More recent research has also supported the positive impact that religiosity has on adolescents. In a study of 217 adolescents from the southeastern portion of the United States, age 12-19 years old, Pullen et al. surveyed adolescents in two groups,

adolescents involved in a “large Protestant church” and those involved with a mental health agency. The study found that those with high religiosity, based on church attendance, were less likely to report alcohol or drug abuse than did those with low religiosity (Pullen et al. 1999, 3-7).

Corwyn and Benda conducted another study of “532 adolescents from three urban high schools in a large metropolitan area on the East Coast of the United States” (Corwyn and Benda 2000, 241). The study attempted to account for the influence of religion on “hard drug” use taking into consideration theoretical and sociodemographic factors. They also tested the possibility that personal religious factors such as private prayer and evangelism were more significant predictors of drug use than is church attendance (Corwyn and Benda 2000, 241). The study found that personal religiosity was a more significant factor in whether adolescents had used hard drugs in the past month than was church attendance, even when considering other factors known to relate to drug use. The authors explain the contrast in this way:

Stated succinctly, church attendance, like attendance in a college classroom, is at best a vicarious indicator of commitment and a poor measure of performance. Church attendance, especially among adolescents, is often a result of parental pressure, social gains, and a belief that attendance leads to eternal security rather than a deep personal commitment to doctrine that restrains behavior like drug use. (Corwyn and Benda 2000, 253)

In an English study, Francis, Jones, and Wilcox explored the relationship between religiosity and happiness in 994 secondary school students, 456 first-year undergraduate students, and 496 adults involved with an informal educational network for senior citizens. Happiness was assessed using the Oxford Happiness Inventory, a twenty-nine item multiple choice instrument. Religiosity was assessed using the Francis Scale of Attitude Toward Christianity. In order to account for personality influences on

happiness, the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire was also included. The study confirms “the significant positive relationship between attitude toward Christianity and happiness and demonstrate(s) that the relationship is independent of individual differences in personality” (Francis, Jones, and Wilcox 2000, 253). This relationship was consistent across all populations (Francis, Jones, and Wilcox 2000, 245-54).

In a similar study, Johnson et al. attempt to analyze the relationship between religiosity and delinquency while controlling for measurement errors. They hypothesize that inconsistent results in studies of this kind are related to a failure to control for measurement errors. To correct this error, the researchers utilized latent-variable structural equation modeling. This study was conducted using data from the longitudinal National Youth Survey, a sample of 1725 adolescents, aged 11-17. The results of this study demonstrate that “the effects of religiosity on delinquency are found independent of the theoretical and statistical controls while being partly mediated by nonreligious variables of social control and socialization” (Johnson et al. 2001, firstsearch.oclc.org). The influence of religiosity is partly due to the fact that religious involvement increases the number of positive friends and the disapproval of delinquent acts (Johnson et al. 2001, firstsearch.oclc.org).

As noted in the previous study, religion interacts with other factors in its influence on delinquency. This interaction of relationships is the focus of a study conducted by Mason and Windle. They sought to examine the direct and indirect effects of the socializing factors such as family, peers, school, and religion on alcohol use. This longitudinal study was conducted with a sample of 840 middle adolescents attending a suburban school district in western New York. Variables addressed included family,

social support, school grades, and alcohol use. Religiosity measures assessed importance of religion and service attendance. Results showed that perceived family support was associated directly and inversely with alcohol use, though through religion, school, and peer variables. Of these secondary influences, religion was the most significant mediator of the relationship between family support and alcohol use. A surprising result was that religiosity was not related to association with alcohol using peers (Mason and Windle 2001, firstsearch.oclc.org).

One final study, conducted among Australian adolescents, ages 15-19, classified risk behaviors into five categories according to perception of risk and level of participation as suggested by adolescents in focus groups (Abbott-Chapman and Denholm 2001, 279-90). The categories proceeded from “Group 1 – high perceived risk/very low participation,” which included sharing needles, injecting heroin, snorting cocaine, and using speed, to “Group 5 – low perceived risk/high participation,” which included drinking alcohol, smoking, binge drinking, and sunbaking without sunscreen. Statistically significant correlations were found between a Religious Involvement Index, which includes religious belief, church attendance, and church group membership, and all risk items and categories with the exception of two individual risk activities, eating disorders and sunbaking without sunscreen (Abbott-Chapman and Denholm 2001, 293).

Theories of Religious Effects

Noting the growing body of research conducted on the effects of religion on adolescents, Smith comments, “Altogether, these many studies are very helpful, but as a whole they present the contemporary researcher with a disjointed and fragmented account for religious influences in the lives of American teenagers” (Smith 2003, 17). Because of

this fragmentation and lack of a theoretical base, Smith sought to develop a “more coherent, systematic account of how and why religion exerts significant positive effects on American youth” (Smith 2003, 17). The result of his effort is a set of nine interrelated factors organized into three groups. It is through these factors that he hopes to provide a partial explanation of the positive influence religion has on adolescents. It should be noted however that he does not see these factors as the complete explanation. Instead, he recognizes that sociology cannot confirm or deny divine influences involved or that divine influences might operate through these factors (Smith 2003, 19). In essence Smith addresses the human side of religious influence.

The first grouping of factors, called “moral order,” suggests that religion provides and promotes normative ideas of morality which guide and direct persons in making life choices. These normative ideas are seen as existing apart from the groups or person’s own preferences because they are received from an external, supernatural source. The factors associated with this category are moral directives which may be internalized by adolescents, spiritual experiences which assist adolescents in internalizing the directives, and role models which provide examples of persons whose lives are shaped by the moral directives.

“Learned competencies,” the second group of factors, suggests that religion increases the skills and knowledge that makes well-being possible. The factors include community and leadership skills, coping skills, and cultural capital. In church contexts, the adolescent has the opportunity to “observe, learn, and practice valuable community life skills and leadership skills that are transposable for constructive uses beyond religious activities” (Smith 2003, 23). The spiritual practices, rites, and rituals included in

the religious environment also help adolescents cope with life stressors. This is consistent with Will, Yaeger, and Sandy who found that religion serves as a buffer for life-stressors in adolescents that protect them from substance abuse (Will, Yaeger, and Sandy 2003, 28-29).

The final grouping of factors, “Social and Organizational Ties,” includes social capital, network closure, and extra-community links which provide relationships and opportunities for adolescents. In particular, in the church, adolescents are able to experience intergenerational relationships, one of the few places in American society that they are able to do so. This provides exposure to ideas and relational resources not available within their adolescent peer group. These people are also in a position to encourage positive life-choices among the adolescents in their midst. Finally, religious organizations link adolescents to broader national and international bodies and to the experiences often provided by these groups. These experiences help to strengthen faith as well as broadening the horizons of adolescents, encouraging personal maturity, and increasing knowledge and life-skills.

Factors Influencing Adolescent Religious Development and Commitment

There have been several research efforts that have sought to determine the factors influencing the spiritual growth and maturity of adolescents. Some have attempted to identify a comprehensive list of or model of factors influencing spiritual growth and maturity. Others have focused on the impact of a specific factor. Some studies have focused on the development of general religious beliefs, values, and commitments. Others have focused their attention on the specific factors in the growth and maturity of

Christian faith. In reviewing the literature, this section will first address efforts to identify comprehensive lists and models of factors. Then attention will be directed to those studies examining isolated factors. Whether the study is exploring religion in general or Christian faith in particular will be noted as each study is addressed.

Factors Analysis and Adolescent Religiosity

One of the earliest efforts to determine factors involved in the spiritual growth of Christian adolescents involved a nationally representative survey of over 3,000 teenagers in 1,917 evangelical churches related to the National Sunday School Association (Getz and Zuck 1970, 38). Among other questions, the adolescents were asked to identify how much each factor, in a list of twenty-four factors, had contributed to their “spiritual life and growth” (Getz and Zuck 1969, 42). Factors were rated on a scale from “Contributed much” to “Contributed none.” The results, in rank order, are as follows:

1. Church services
2. Youth groups
3. Christian camp
4. Church social activities
5. Sunday school classes
6. Personal devotions
7. Influence or example of friends
8. Helping in church activities such as vacation Bible school, camp counseling, etc.
9. Counseling by parent(s)
10. Youth choir

11. Pastor's instruction class
12. Bible conferences
13. Vacation Bible school
14. Church sports
15. Counseling by camp counselor(s)
16. Christian magazines and books
17. Family worship
18. Counseling by youth sponsor(s)
19. Service projects
20. Counseling by pastor
21. Church weekday club program
22. Counseling by Sunday school teacher
23. Taking part in gospel teams
24. Counseling by weekday club leader(s) (Getz and Zuck 1969, 42)

Lamport also addresses factors involved in the spiritual development of Christian adolescents through a study of 229 Christian young adults, ages 18-25. Data was gathered through a survey administered in Christian study groups and church settings in eight states across the United States (Lamport 1990, 19-20). Participants were asked to identify the level of Christian influence in their home during their high school years, as well as the priority they placed on spiritual growth during their high school years. On a scale from "1 – high negative influence" to "7 – high positive influence," participants were also asked to rate the level of influence each of a list of factors had on their spiritual

growth during high school (Lamport 1990, 29-30). The factors listed in descending order based on positive percentages are:

1. Church services
2. Mother
3. Other person
4. Youth group meetings
5. Pastor/Minister
6. Personal devotional time
7. Youth group members
8. Retreats
9. Christian literature
10. Father
11. Sunday school
12. Group Bible studies
13. Youth Pastor
14. Christian concerts/music
15. Siblings
16. Personal crisis
17. Summer camp
18. Service projects
19. Peers in school
20. Teachers
21. School

22. Parachurch organizations
23. Other
24. TV/Radio evangelists (Lamport 1990, 26)

Though there is no significant difference in factors related to gender, the level of Christian influence in the home does make a difference. Lamport notes:

The role of the mother moves from very influential to off the top five responses going from high to no Christian influence in the home. The importance of youth group members and church is even more pronounced for those with little or no Christian home environment. The church and youth ministers must become “surrogate spiritual parents” to those from non-Christian homes. (Lamport 1990, 27)

For those who reported high Christian influence in their home, the top five factors in rank order are mother, church services, pastor/minister, father, and other person. For those reporting medium Christian influence in their home, the factors are church services, mother, youth group meeting, other person, and retreats. For those reporting low Christian home influence, the factors are other person, church services, Sunday school, youth group meetings, and youth group members. And finally, for those reporting no Christian influence at home, the factors are youth group members, retreats, parachurch organizations, church services, and Christian literature (Lamport 1990, 27).

Another effort to understand the factors influencing adolescent faith was conducted with Seventh-day Adventist adolescents. The study, entitled Valuegenesis, was designed to identify the level of faith maturity among students attending Seventh-day Adventist schools as well as to “analyze the relative contributions of the major institutions responsible for educating youth: home, school, and church” (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 50). The sample for the study included nearly 11,000 sixth through twelfth grade Adventist youth in both Adventist and non-Adventist schools. To assess the

level of faith maturity, the researchers utilized the 38-item Faith Maturity Index (Bensen, Donahue, and Erickson 1993).

The study identified 41 “effectiveness factors” associated with families, congregations, and schools. Adolescents “who experience these factors display greater faith maturity and/or denominational loyalty” (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 58). Of most significant interest for this present study are the factors associated with congregations, which are grouped according to congregational climate and religious education programming. These factors are listed in Table 1 along with their correlation coefficients to faith maturity for grades 6-8 and grades 10-12.

In an effort to assess the influence of church-based Christian education efforts on faith maturity, the Search Institute conducted a study of adolescents and adults in five mainline denominations, as well as the Southern Baptist Convention (Bensen and Eklin 1990, 1-3). Though adults were also considered, of interest to this present study are the results related to the 3,121 adolescents who participated. The measure of faith developed for this study is the 38-item Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993).

Aspects of Christian education that were found to correlate with mature faith among adolescents are grouped into seven categories.

1. Teachers High in mature faith; care about students; know educational theory and methods for adolescents.
2. Pastor Highly committed to education program for youth; devotes significant hours to youth program; knows educational theory and practice of Christian education for youth.
3. Educational process Emphasizes intergenerational contact, life experiences as occasion for spiritual insight, and the natural unfolding of faith; recognizes each person’s faith journey as unique; Creates sense of community in which people help each other develop their faith and values; strongly encourages

Table 1. Congregational effectiveness factors

	Grades 6-8	Grades 10-12
<i>Congregational Climate</i>		
Emphasizes learning, discussion, question-asking, and independent thinking	.45	.41
Feels friendly and hospitable	.29	.24
Youth frequently experience support and concern from adults	.35	.34
Youth frequently experience support and concern from peers	.32	.32
<i>Religious Education Programming</i>		
Sabbath school and other church youth programs are viewed as interesting	.36	.34
Sabbath school and other church youth programs are thought-provoking	.37	.37
Emphasizes drug and alcohol education	.21	.08
Emphasizes sexuality education	.15	.18
Emphasizes involving youth in helping the poor and hungry	.23	.23
Emphasizes the teaching Adventist standards	.18	--
Involves the youth in intergenerational programs and events	.30	.35
Religious educators are experienced as warm, caring, and supportive	.36	.34

independent thinking and questioning; effectively helps youth to apply faith to daily decisions

4. Educational content Emphasizes education about human sexuality, chemical (alcohol and other drugs), involving the youth in service projects, moral values and decision making, and responsibility for poverty and hunger; effectively teaches the Bible, core theological concepts, how to make friends or be good friend; and develops concern for other people
5. Peer involvement Has high percentage of 10th to 12th graders active in Christian education

6. Parent involvement Involves parents in program decisions and planning
7. Goals Has clear mission statement and learning objectives
(Bensen and Eklin 1990, 56)

Further analyzing the data gathered in this study, Roehlkepartian notes the need for a “thinking climate” within youth ministry. The study found that, next to the influence of an effective Christian education program, the presence of a thinking climate within the church and youth ministry is the second highest congregational factor related to faith maturity in adolescents (Roehlkepartian 1994, 54). Factors that contribute to the development of a thinking climate include positive relationships with church adults, a warm, safe atmosphere, caring and warm leaders, opportunities to serve and learn, and the development of an interactive learning process (Roehlkepartian 1994, 59-61).

Based on the work and findings of Lamport (Lamport 1990) and Getz and Zuck (Getz and Zuck 1969), Currie, investigated the factors influencing the spiritual growth and maturity of persons converted during adolescence. The sample was drawn from adults in churches in British Columbia, Canada (Currie 1995, 12). Spiritual growth factors were identified based on the findings of Lamport (Lamport 1990) and Getz and Zuck (Getz and Zuck 1969) as well as a review of the spiritual growth literature. Participants were asked to report on involvement with each factor, based on a scale from 0 to 4 with 4 representing “Maximum Involvement: almost all the time.” They were also asked to rate the strength of influence the factor had on his or her spiritual growth during the person’s first five years as a Christian. These ratings, as well as a combined rating for both religion scales, were then correlated with two measures of religiosity, the Shepherd Scale and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale.

The study revealed ten spiritual growth factors that are influential in the spiritual growth of those converted as teenagers:

1. Attending church services
2. Personal time with God in prayer
3. Personal Bible reading
4. Spiritual influence of Christian friends
5. Christian music and concerts
6. Spiritual influence of another significant adult
7. Youth group activities/serving in the church
8. Personally sharing faith
9. Spiritual influence of a pastor
10. Influence of spiritual growth books and literature (Currie 1995, 248)

Analysis of Individual Factors

Lee, Rice, and Bailey examine the relationship between family worship patterns and the behavior and beliefs of adolescents. The study analyzed data collected as part of the Valuegenesis study conducted among Seventh-day Adventists and included youth, in grades 6-12, with both parents in the home. Family worship behavior was drawn from 15 items that included

frequency of family worship (1 item), frequency of prayer, reading something, talking about God by father, mother, and youth respectively (9 items), frequency of family talking “together about some issue or idea” (1 item), and youth judgments regarding whether family worship was “interesting,” “meaningful,” “the same every time,” or “a waste of time” (4 items). (Lee, Rice, and Bailey 1997, newfirstsearch.oclc.org)

Though other outcome variables were addressed, the “Active Faith” variable is most relevant for the current study. This variable was assessed using the vertical and horizontal sub-scales of the Faith Maturity Scale, evangelism, altruism, goal to serve others, and piety. Worship patterns were given the labels “No Worship (27%), Infrequent Father Led (13%), Infrequent Mother/Youth Led (9%), Mother Led (7%), Father Led (15%), Rotated (14%), and Shared (15%)” (Lee, Rice, and Bailey 1997, newfirstsearch.oclc.org).

Results show that “active faith” is highest among family worship patterns that involve the adolescent; the shared, infrequent mother/youth led, and rotated patterns of family worship. Active faith scores were lower for infrequent family worship with low youth participation than it was for those with no worship at all (Lee, Rice, and Bailey 1997, newfirstsearch.oclc.org).

Other researchers have also addressed family influence on adolescent religiosity. Brisben, in a study of older evangelical adolescents, ages 16-20, found a slight correlation between parent-adolescent communication and the spiritual well-being of the adolescent, a moderate correlation between adolescent self-esteem and spiritual well-being, that self-esteem is a stronger predictor of spiritual well-being than is constructive communication, and that the parent’s religious orientation is a stronger predictor of spiritual well-being than is the parent’s marital status (Brisben 1993, 140). Johnson in a qualitative study examined parental and adolescent identification and interaction and how these factors interact with church-taught values. He found that in a majority of cases, the religious values expressed by an adolescent reflected the values of one or both parents and that home environment was never neutral. He also found that the parental perspective

of non-home religious education related to the adolescent's identification with church-taught values. In short, if the adolescent reported a high level of agreement between church-taught and parental values, then parents viewed the responsibility for religious education as a joint responsibility between church and parents and parents encouraged participation in church involvement. If there was a lower degree of correspondence between church and parental values, religious education was not viewed as a high parental responsibility and a lower degree of the child's participation in church-based religious education was allowed or encouraged (Johnson 1994, 192).

Other factors in the spiritual growth of adolescent have been addressed. Jones found no significant difference between the Faith Maturity Scale scores of adolescents from Southern Baptist youth ministries in Tarrant County, Texas, who do and do not listen to Contemporary Christian Music (Jones 2001, 35-36). This seems to contradict the self-assessed influence of Christian music by participants in the study conducted by Currie (Currie 1995, 248). Batten and Oltjenbruns explore the impact of bereavement on an adolescent through interviews with adolescents who had recently lost a sibling to death. Though addressing spiritual development from a cognitive developmental perspective rather than a Christian theological perspective, the change in perspective on self, others, sibling relationships, death, life, and a higher power gives some indication of the potential for spiritual growth in adolescents who experience bereavement (Batten and Oltjenbruns 1999, 538-42). This is certainly consistent with a Christian understanding of faith in that the experience of life difficulties may serve as a stimulus for spiritual growth (Jas 1:2-4; Rom 8:18, 26-29).

Model of Adolescent Religious Development and Commitment

Using the data gathered from adolescents, ages 16-18, during the Search Institute study mentioned above, Erickson developed, tested, and revised a theoretical model of religious development and commitment for adolescents (Erickson 1992, 132). The factors involved parents and family factors, peer influence, and religious education. Parent and family factors were divided into “Parents’ Religious Influence,” which included questions asking the student for his or her perceptions of the religiosity of both mother and father; “Parents’ Religious Activity,” which asked how often the adolescent saw their parents go to church, pray or do “other religious things;” and “Adolescent’s Home Religious Behavior,” related to frequency of Bible reading, prayer, family devotions, and other religious behaviors in the home. “Adolescent’s Religious Education” was measured by the amount of religious education activity in which the adolescent participated and the amount of knowledge he or she believed gained through those activities. “Peer Activity Level in Church” dealt with the adolescent’s participation in programs, a rating of how religious his or her closest friends are, and the perceived influence these friends had on the adolescent’s faith. The outcome variables “Religious Belief and Commitment” and “Religious Worship Behavior” were measured using the Faith Maturity Scale and questions about worship service attendance and hours spent at church in an average week respectively (Erickson 1992, 137-41).

The study resulted in two models (Figures 1 and 2), one for each gender, that reflect the relationships between the various variables. They also indicate the central nature of religious education in the faith maturity of adolescents even though the measurement of this variable was limited. Erickson noted that “the nature and content of

the religious instruction adolescents received was not addressed directly in this study, but since the religious education variable had such strong relations with the other variables, it will be important in further investigations” (Erickson 1992, 149).

Youth Ministry Strategies for Facilitating Spiritual Growth in Adolescents

When examining literature in the field of youth ministry, assessing strategies for facilitating spiritual growth among adolescents can be difficult. Often the emphasis is on the practical, the mechanics and programs of youth ministry, without first identifying the underlying purpose that these programs serve. Thus the researcher must at times draw inferences as to the intentions behind the programs. Though the purpose of facilitating spiritual growth in adolescents is clearly presented in many cases; in others, that purpose seems to be implied.

Nevertheless, a consistent pattern does emerge with emphasis on three aspects – relationships, balanced programming, and the equipping and encouragement to practice the classical spiritual disciplines. In this review, the focus will be on broad principles, such as biblical instruction, rather than specific programs designed to implement the principles, such as Sunday school, camps, or small groups. This will provide a broader foundation for the present study and enable application across contexts.

Relationships

One of the central principles discussed in the youth ministry literature is that ministry to adolescents builds upon a relational foundation, where mature Christian adults build relationships with adolescents in order to direct them to God and to enable them to grow towards spiritual maturity. Senter, in developing a series of axioms describing the

Figure 1. Model of female adolescent religious belief and commitment (Erickson 1992, 144)

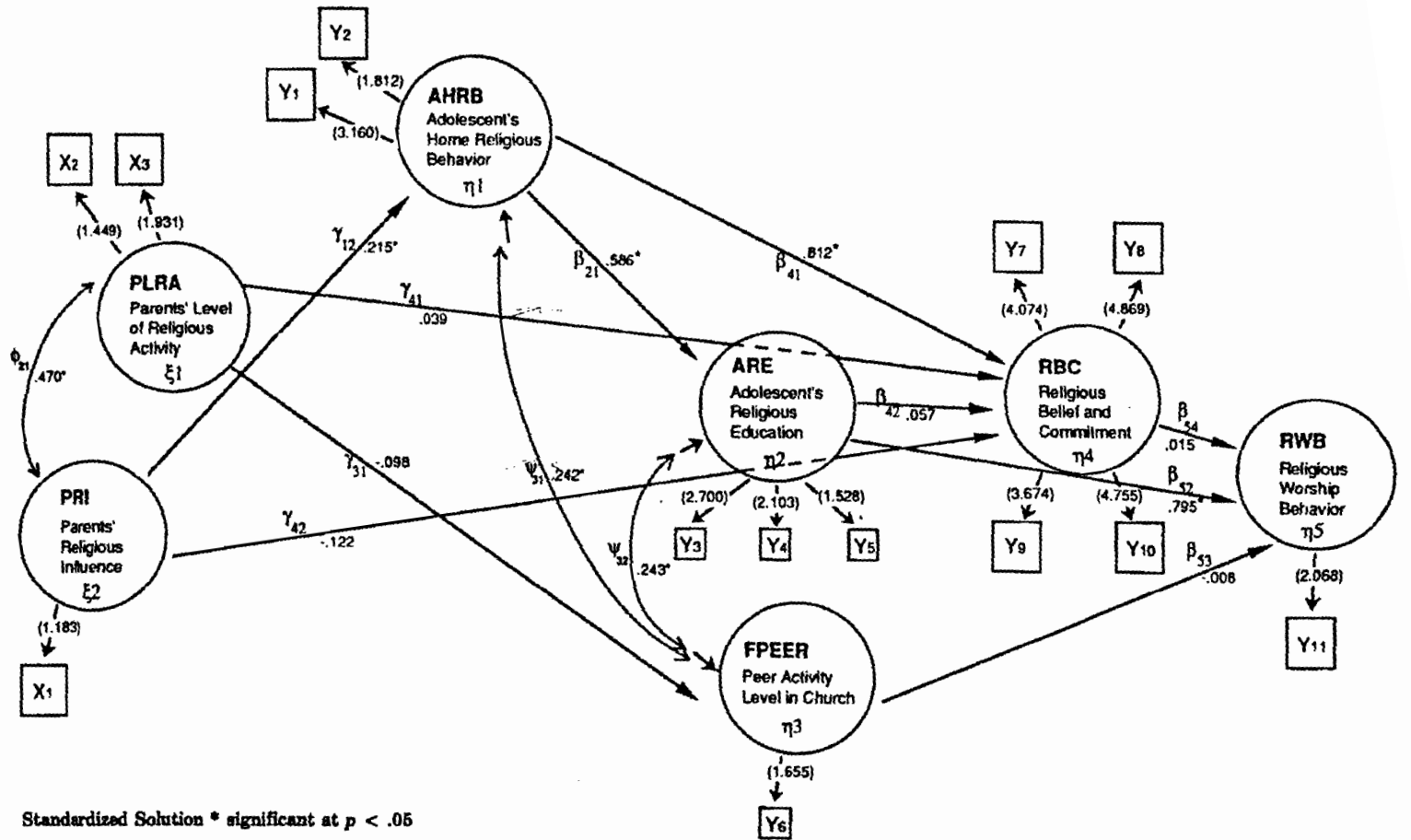
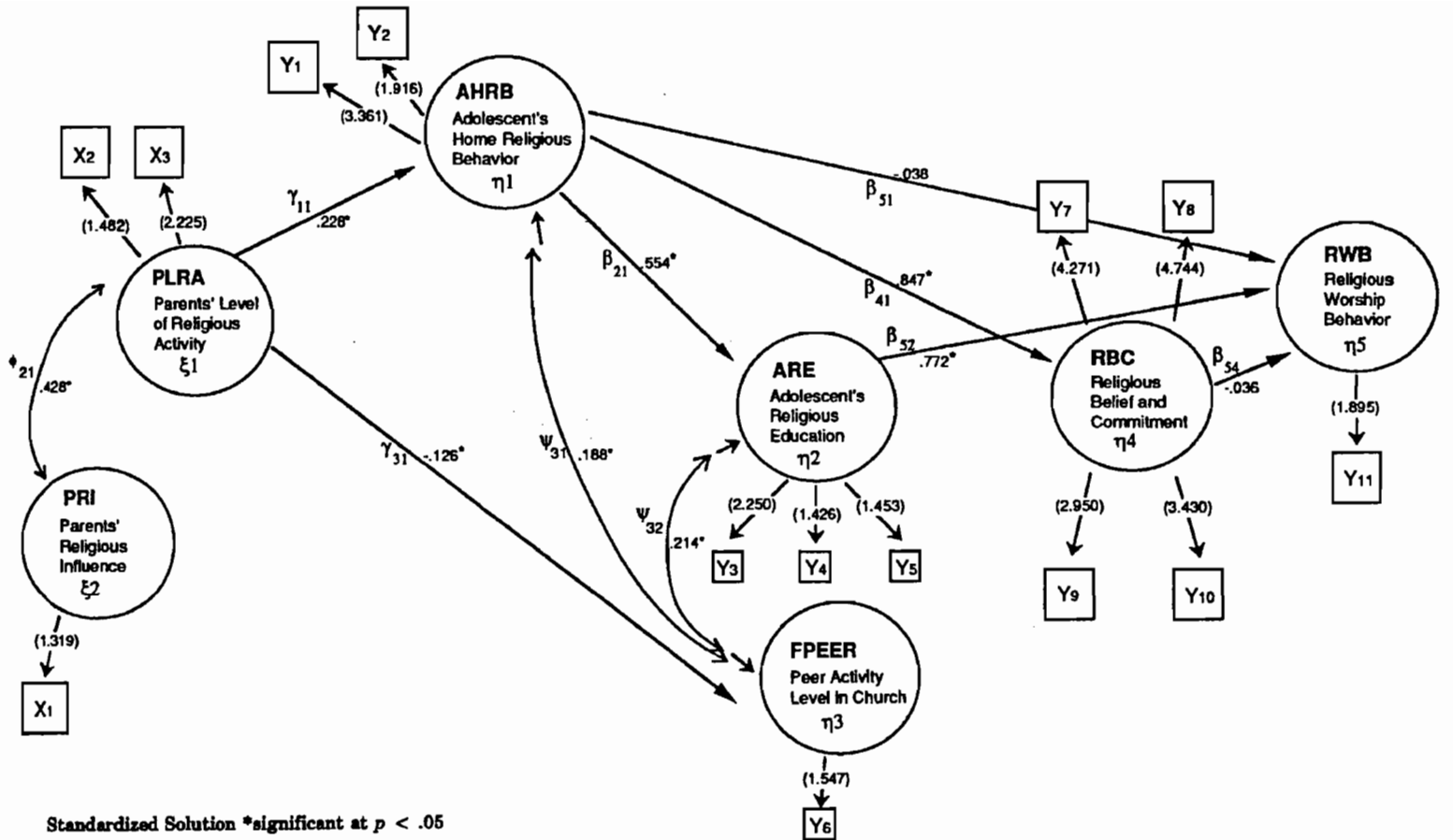


Figure 2. Model of male adolescent religious belief and commitment (Erickson 1992, 145)



principles of effective youth ministry states that “youth ministry begins when a Christian adult finds a comfortable method of entering a student’s world” and uses that contact “to draw that student into a maturing relationship with God through Jesus Christ” (Senter 1997a, 123-25). If the relationship is broken or it fails to encourage spiritual growth within the student, youth ministry has ended (Senter 1997a, 127).

Other writers contrast a relational youth ministry with a more program-focused form of youth ministry.

But what is effective youth ministry? What does it look like? In the past, good youth ministry was often seen as primarily program-oriented: rallies, events and other elaborately orchestrated gatherings. However, today we have come to realize that long-term influence with lasting impact comes from significant relationships and role models. Of course programming has its place in youth ministry, but the long-term positive influence on the lives of students comes from people not programs. Programs don't minister – people minister. (Burns and DeVries 2001, 23)

Dean and Foster suggest that the relational emphasis in youth ministry is actually a return to an earlier model of ministry:

Relational ministry – contact ministry, showing up, hanging out, earning the right to be heard, or whatever you may call it - is nothing more than good, old-fashioned pastoral visitation in Nikes As long as programs integrate young people into the overall mission of the church and builds significant relationships between youth and Christian adults and peers, we're all for them. (Dean and Foster 1998, 26)

It is important to note that relationships and programming are not mutually exclusive. Instead, programs provide ways that Christian adults can begin to build relationships with adolescents (Senter 1998, 6-7; Dean and Foster 1998, 26). In addition, Dettoni suggests that relationships, between adolescents, the youth pastor, and other Christian adults, serve as the foundation from which programs can be established (Dettoni 1993, 54). In this, the youth pastor obtains an understanding of the needs of adolescents that can inform program development.

The importance of relationship in youth ministry builds on the theological foundation of the incarnation of Jesus Christ (Senter 1997a, 125; Dettoni 1993, 121; Burns and DeVries 2001, 24-25; Dean and Foster 1998, 27-29; Stevens 1985, 19-37). Just as Jesus Christ entered into the world of humanity, so too must adults enter into the world of adolescents. As Burns and DeVries state:

Theologically, Jesus is the incarnation of God. He is God in the flesh (see Colossians 1:15). As the ministry of Jesus was incarnate in the Gospels, so our life must be incarnate in youth ministry. Jesus stepped into our world to identify with us: to walk as we walk, to experience what we experience, to talk and relate to us in relationship. So it is with us as we enter into an incarnate relationship with our students. If we are ever to have a positive influence on our young people, we must build relationships with them and live out our faith in their midst. (Burns and DeVries 2001, 25)

Relationships between Christian adults and adolescents for the purpose of ministry can be established in a variety of ways, often called “contact work.” Senter describes five types of contact work, though there may be more. Natural contacts occur because the adult is naturally involved in the life of the adolescent. Examples include teachers, employers, and coaches. Adult-initiated contact involves those who may not normally be in contact with adolescents but who use a skill or interest to establish a connection with the student. This would include tutors, nonprofessional coaches, mechanics, computer specialist, and musicians, among others. Program-initiated contact occurs when adults gain access to the lives of adolescents through ministry programs such as youth group activities, Sunday school, and retreats. Though parental contact could be classified as a natural contact, the significant influence that parents exercise in the lives of their teens as well as the potential for ministry with the friends of their children, suggests that this is a category of contact work in and of itself. Finally, need-driven contact occurs based on the special needs of an adolescent. These needs include

teen pregnancy, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, gang involvement, along with many other at-risk factors in the lives of adolescent. It must be remembered that, however achieved, the contacts provide the opportunity to encourage spiritual growth in the lives of adolescents (Senter 1997a, 123-25).

Relationships between adults and students is also at the center of DeVries' family-based youth ministry (DeVries 2001, 148-51). The emphasis in this approach to youth ministry is to surround adolescents with a community of caring Christian adults, including parents and others in the church. He states,

It's about churches doing the one thing they are best equipped to do: build supportive, nurturing relationships across the generations, in essence, an extended Christian family. . . .When a student makes it to mature Christian adulthood, she can almost always point either to the influence of godly parents or the influence of a least one available, durable, non-exploitive Christian adult who modeled for them what being an adult Christian was all about. (DeVries 2001, 148)

Seeing this approach as complementary to other ministry models, DeVries suggests that this approach is foundational to youth ministry and does not necessarily replace other models. Instead, he seeks to foster adult-adolescent relationships through inviting parents to volunteer with the ministry, by planning events for families, and by involving adolescents in worship services and other ministries of the church (DeVries 1994, 175-91).

Balanced Programming

Beyond serving to facilitate relationships between youth and Christian adults, according to the literature, programming also facilitates spiritual growth in adolescents in other ways. In particular, it appears that balance in programming, serving a variety of

purposes and targeted at a variety of levels of spiritual maturity, is essential for effective youth ministry.

Balance According to Purpose

Fields suggests that all youth ministry strategies and programming should be designed to achieve five purposes – evangelism, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry (Fields 1998, 47-51). In his context, programming to fulfill the purpose of evangelism involves challenging and training Christian students to share Christ with their friends as well as offering a program that the Christian student can invite their friends to attend. In this case it is a weekend worship service that is designed to appeal to non-churched teenagers (Fields 1998, 103-36). Fellowship, the building of spiritually-encouraging relationships between Christians, is accomplished through involving students in small groups. Though the study of Scripture is part of what the small group does, the emphasis is on intimacy, accountability, and spiritual encouragement (Fields 1998, 137-54). Discipleship, the process of helping students learn to follow Jesus on their own, involves encouraging and equipping students to practice spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and personal Bible study (Fields 1998, 156-72). Finally, ministry, enabling adolescents to serve within the ministry, is accomplished by helping students discover and utilize their spiritual gifts to serve others (Fields 1998, 173-93).

Dettoni also suggests that balanced programming is a foundational principle of effective youth ministry. Based on the description of the early church (Acts 2:42-47), he proposes four basic elements of a youth ministry program – instruction, worship, fellowship, and service. The goal of instruction is more than the acquisition of biblical content. It begins with knowledge, and is followed by “accepting information for oneself,

making initial behavior changes and, eventually, being a different person. Effective teaching is for the transformation of the person, not just the delivery of information to the person” (Dettoni 1993, 30). Instruction can occur through a variety of youth ministry programs – Sunday school, youth group, in small groups, on retreats, even in one-on-one mentoring (Dettoni 1993, 29-30). Worship enables the adolescent to contemplate God, his actions, and what they mean for one’s life. It is a time when the adolescent can love, praise, and express gratitude to God. Ultimately worship should motivate the adolescent to live for God (Dettoni 1993, 73-74). Fellowship, the building of genuine, open relationships with other Christians, is facilitated through social activities that meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual needs of adolescents. This may include recreational activities, but only to the extent that these activities contribute to the spiritual growth of those involved (Dettoni 1993, 95-103). The element of service is accomplished through service-learning projects where adolescents meet the needs of others. In a sense, it is an active form of learning and can also facilitate fellowship (Dettoni 1993, 31, 105-11).

For Black, the program of the church and youth ministry is “not just an event or activity. It is the way a church organizes itself to worship, witness and proclaim, educate and nurture, and minister to people” (Black 1991, 41). His categories of programs specific to the youth ministry include Bible teaching, discipleship, missions education, along with recreation and evangelism (Black 1991, 42-44). In many ways Black’s tasks mirror those of other writers with two exceptions. First, evangelism is not restricted to events targeted at non-believers. Instead it should permeate all other programming for adolescents (Black 1991, 44, 209). Also, his emphasis on missions

education involves more than service-learning and preparing students for personal witness. It also involves giving adolescents a vision for God's work around the world as well as encouraging them to consider missions vocationally (Black 1991, 43, 206-08).

While others offer similar categories for youth ministry emphases and programming (Livermore 2001, 59-68; Martinson 1988, 20-27), the central elements of a balanced youth ministry program can be seen from the examples provided. The balanced youth ministry will involve some form of each of the following: worship, biblical instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service.

Balance According to Audience

Some writers also organize programming according to the audience for which a particular program is intended. This is often conceptualized as a "Funnel of Programming." The concept suggests programming at different levels: Come Level which offers an initial contact with the program; Grow Level for those with "a willingness to attend programs where spiritual growth is involved"; Disciple Level for those with "a desire to take the initiative for their own spiritual growth"; Develop Level for those with "a willingness to assume responsibility for other students' spiritual growth"; and the Multiply Level for those adolescents with "an ability to assume some responsibility for a personal ministry" (Clark 2001, 112).

The funnel of programming is compatible with the focus on balancing the programming according to biblical purposes or activities. For example, in describing his conception of the "Community Building/Disciple Level" Clark states:

This is where the spiritual disciplines, Bible study, and instruction are functionally inserted. This is where relatively deep and relevant contextual discussions take

place. It is in this setting where Christian community is developed, and where singing becomes a real expression of worship and praise. (Clark 2001, 123)

Livermore also does this by placing the priorities of “Word,” “Worship,” “Community,” and “Serving” in the “Build” level of Sonlife’s “Win-Build-Equip” model, another version of the programming funnel (Livermore 2001, 59-61). The two approaches are consistent and complementary, approaching youth ministry programming from two perspectives – the level of spiritual growth of the target audience and the primary biblical programming priorities of youth ministry.

Equipping and Encouragement in the Use of the Spiritual Disciplines

Equipping and encouraging students to practice the classical spiritual disciplines is also seen as a way to facilitate spiritual growth in adolescents. Though some make mention of this aspect of youth ministry within the above mentioned categories, others make it an explicit focus of the ministry.

For example, Fields decided to reevaluate his ministry efforts after a conversation with a former student. This student had been heavily involved in the youth ministry and had even been in Fields’ discipleship group. But at the point of this encounter, the student was not living the Christian life. In fact, "he was living in complete opposition to God's ways. He had graduated not only from our youth ministry, but he had also graduated from his faith" (Fields 1998, 156). In reevaluating the youth ministry, Fields realized that students like this one had learned about Christianity, and may have even made a decision to follow Jesus, but had not learned how to maintain his faith and grow on his own. In a sense the student’s faith had become dependent on the programs.

This reevaluation of his youth ministry led to a reconceptualization of his strategy for facilitating spiritual growth in adolescents. Initially, his strategy had included two components, education and relationship, which combines a component of teaching with an element of adult attention. In his reassessment, Fields realized that with his own disciples, Jesus did something in addition to these two elements; he prepared them for his departure. Now Fields includes a strategy of helping "committed students develop the habits, or spiritual disciplines, necessary to grow on their own when they are no longer in the youth ministry" (Fields 1998, 158). His revised strategy includes three components – education, relationship, and the development of spiritual habits, also known as spiritual disciplines. This emphasis serves to fulfill the discipleship component of his youth ministry and targets the “committed” level of students. To do this, the ministry provides resources to help students build several habits such as prayer, tithing, accountability, and Scripture memorization. The youth pastor and other adult volunteers such as small-group leaders then strive to encourage the adolescents within their care to utilize the tools (Fields 1998, 156-64).

Marcum also focuses on the development of spiritual disciplines, though with a different strategy. Instead of providing tools for the practice of the spiritual disciplines, he suggests ways that youth workers can integrate the spiritual disciplines into their growth level programming (Marcum 2001, 7-17). The assumption seems to be that the corporate experience with these disciplines opens the adolescent to the power of God and teaches them how to practice the disciplines on an individual basis.

Though encouragement and equipping in the spiritual disciplines is not common as a central strategy within youth ministry, it should be noted that from the

perspective of literature on spiritual formation, the disciplines are essential. With this in mind, encouraging the practice of the spiritual disciplines must be considered in any effort to facilitate spiritual growth in adolescents.

Profile of the Current Study

This review of the literature has shaped this present study in several ways. First, the biblical foundations of faith provide a description of faith that can guide the measurement of faith maturity. In this, faith is viewed as including but not limited to the understanding and acceptance of central biblical tenants of Christianity. It also includes relational components, where maturity of faith is demonstrated in how the person relates with both God and others. And finally mature faith should be expressed in the actions and priorities of an individual.

Second, the review of the literature has identified a gap in the existing research base. Though adolescent religious education has been identified as a significant influence on the faith maturity of adolescents, little is known about the nature of its influence. This study proposes to address this deficiency.

Finally, the review of the literature related to youth ministry provides a theoretical foundation for the selection of variables considered in this study. Specifically, this study considers the relationship between adolescent involvement with youth ministry factors (relationships, balanced programming, and equipping and encouragement in the use of the spiritual disciplines) and their faith maturity.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This chapter describes the methods used in this study to analyze the relationship between youth ministry involvement and the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) scores of first-year students attending a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) affiliated school.

Research Question Synopsis

The following research questions guided the gathering and analysis of data for this study:

1. What involvement do first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school report with youth ministry factors (relationships, balanced programming, encouragement and equipping in the use of spiritual disciplines)?
2. What is the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school?
3. In what ways, if any, do intervening variables (home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, number of years since conversion, type of youth ministry) influence the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school?

Design Overview

Data was gathered through the administration of the Youth Ministry Involvement Survey (YMIS; Appendix 2) to first-year students in a required freshman

orientation course at a CCCU-affiliated college. This survey includes the FMS instrument (Appendix 1) as well as a series of Likert-response and frequency items related to the participants' involvement in youth ministry factors (Appendix 3) during high school. There are also questions relating to the intervening variables of home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, type of youth ministry involved with, and the number of years since conversion to Christianity.

Following the completion of the survey, each student's FMS score was calculated. Using a variety of statistical measures, the data was then analyzed for relationships between the participants' FMS scores and their involvement with youth ministry factors.

Population

The population in this study consisted of all first-year students attending a college affiliated with the CCCU. There are 105 CCCU member institutions (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities 2003a, cccu.org). Among other criteria, the CCCU requires that its members "offer comprehensive undergraduate curricula rooted in the arts and sciences," have a mission statement that is Christ-centered and rooted in the Christian tradition, and whose programs seek to integrate "scholarship, biblical faith and service" (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities 2003b, cccu.org).

Samples and Delimitations

This study utilized a nonprobabilistic sampling procedure based on the convenience of access to the institution. The use of this procedure precludes the drawing of statistical inferences to the larger population.

The sample consisted of all first-year students at “Alpha” College, a CCCU member institution in the Midwest region of the United States. In the last three years, 2000-2002, Alpha College has enrolled approximately 800 students in its traditional student programs. The school also has an adult degree completion program for nontraditional students over the age of 23. This program is not included in the above mentioned figure. For the 2002-2003 year, the ethnic mix on campus included approximately 78% Caucasian, 8% unknown, 5% non-resident alien, 4% Hispanic, 2% African-American, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. The proportion of males to females was 45% to 55% respectively. Students attending Alpha College are primarily from the Midwest region of the United States, with the majority of students coming from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Minnesota.

Denominational affiliation within the institution is also mixed, with the top five designations including Baptist, Nondenominational, Evangelical Free Church of America, Roman Catholic, and “None Stated.” The high number of students who did not indicate a denominational affiliation may be a reflection of the school’s admissions policy that does not require students to submit or sign a statement of faith. Thus, an unknown portion of the students may not consider themselves Christian. Because of the diversity in denominational affiliation and churches attended by the students attending Alpha College, this sample provides data from a variety of youth ministry programs.

Limitations of Generalization

The data from this sample will not necessarily generalize to other CCCU-affiliated institutions, to other institutions of higher education, or to students who have advanced beyond the first-year of undergraduate study. The data will also not necessarily

generalize to persons who may have participated in youth ministry programming during their years in secondary school, but did not continue their education to the undergraduate level.

Instrumentation

The research instrument used for this study is the YMIS which collected data related to the participants' experience with youth ministry during their senior high school tenure, their faith maturity, and other intervening variables. Demographic data collected includes age and gender.

Faith Maturity Scale

Faith maturity was assessed through the use of the 38-item FMS, developed by researchers at the Search Institute as part of a national study conducted among six denominations – Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and the Southern Baptist Convention. One purpose motivating the creation of this scale was to provide a “primary criterion variable for evaluating the impact of religious education and its many separate dynamics” (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 3).

The definition of faith guiding the development of the FMS is as follows:

Faith maturity is the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives of vibrant and life transforming faith, as these have been understood in “mainline” Protestant traditions. This definition placed the focus on indicators of faith rather than on faith itself. (Benson, Donahue, Erickson 1993, 3)

Eight core dimensions of faith maturity build on this definition, dimensions that serve as the foundation for the questions included in the scale. Thus a person with mature faith:

1. Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace.
3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life.
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others.
5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another.
6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others.
7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice.
8. Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice. (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 6)

The FMS also includes two subscales (Appendix 1) assessing the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationships with others, both of which are aspects of faith maturity (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 18-21).

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the FMS, using Cronbach's alpha, is strong across a variety of factors, ranging from .84 to .90. Of particular interest for this study, reliability for adolescents is .87, for males ages 20-29 is .87, and for females ages 20-29 is .88. Reliabilities across the five mainline denominations in the study ranged from .87 to .89

(Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 12). Reliability for the Southern Baptist Convention was not reported because on almost every item considered in the survey, the Southern Baptist data scored significantly higher (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 10). Since the initial validation of the scale, it has been used effectively with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, a more conservative group than the mainline denominations included in the initial study. In that study, the FMS scores were comparable to that of the Southern Baptists. The percentage of adolescents demonstrating mature faith, based on a score of 5.0 or higher with a maximum score of 7.0, are as follows: Southern Baptist Convention, 28%; Seventh-day Adventists, 22%; Presbyterian Church (USA), 11%; United Methodist Church, 10%; Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 9%; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, 7% (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 55).

Evidence supporting the validity of the FMS includes the involvement of expert panels representing seminary scholars, denominational experts, and clergy from the participating denominations, including the Southern Baptists. Prior to use in other studies, the scale has also been reviewed by other regional and nationally representative expert panels from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Catholic Church, Episcopal Church, American Baptist Conference, and the Reformed Church of America (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 13).

In addition, validity has been established in a variety of other ways. A comparison of different groups (pastors, Christian education coordinators, teachers, adults, and youth) revealed expected differences. Scores were compared with those of raters with previous knowledge of the participants, with a correlation of .61. Scale scores are strongly tied to age, with higher scores coming with advancing age. And finally, the

scale correlates with other measures of religiosity such as self-reported importance of religion, frequency of prayer, and reading religious literature (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 13-14).

Youth Ministry Variables

Youth ministry factors (relationships, balanced programming, and equipping and encouragement in the use of the spiritual disciplines) were measured using a series of Likert-response and frequency items to assess the participant's involvement with and perception of his or her experience with each factor. Each factor was measured using one or two frequency items and two to four Likert-response items assessing various aspects of the factor. In assessing the factor of balanced programming, items were addressed toward the various aspects of a balanced youth ministry – worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service – as suggested in the precedent literature. A list of the questions associated with each factor can be found in Appendix 3.

Intervening Variables

In order to determine the relationship between youth ministry involvement and faith maturity, it is important to consider the impact of other factors that have been shown to or may be expected to influence faith maturity. Such factors include home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, and number of years since conversion. In addition, since this study considers the general characteristics of youth ministry involvement rather than specific programs, it may be helpful to include the type of ministry the participant was involved in, specifically whether the youth ministry is based in a church or parachurch organization.

Procedures

Permission to conduct the study at Alpha College was requested from and granted by the faculty member responsible for coordinating and overseeing the required freshmen orientation course where the survey instrument will be administered. This faculty member also set aside time for the administration of the survey in the course schedule used by the instructors of the various sections. The coordinating faculty member will be sent a summary of the completed study, along with a copy for the Chief Academic Officer (CAO). In addition, the researcher has agreed to keep confidential the name of the institution in all reports of the findings. In the weeks prior to the time scheduled for the administration of the YMIS, the instructors for the required freshman orientation course were contacted via email to provide information regarding the study and to request their assistance in administering the survey instrument.

During the second week of class of the fall 2003 semester, the survey instrument was field tested with students in a similar orientation course intended for transfer students. While these students have had some education at the undergraduate level, they were able to provide feedback on the nature of the instrument. Based on the feedback gathered during the field test, the YMIS was modified in several ways. For question number eight, examples of “activities” were provided. The range of options was also broadened including the addition of a zero option. For question number nine, subjects were given the option to indicate that they were equally involved in both a church and para-church youth ministry. Finally in question twenty-one, “youth pastor/administrator” was changed to “youth pastor/director” to make it consistent with the previous question. In addition, changes were made to the written instructions

provided to those administering the survey. A stronger emphasis was placed on the need to answer every question and to give only one answer per question. That is because a few subjects in the field test failed to follow the instructions as provided. A statement, to be read to the subjects, was added that explained that the study took into account that people had a wide range of youth ministry experience and that all experiences were needed to accomplish the purpose of the study.

Packets including instructions for the faculty member and sufficient copies of the modified instrument (Appendix 2) were distributed to the various faculty members who administered the YMIS to all students enrolled in the required freshman orientation course. This included 165 students in 11 sections. To administer the survey, faculty members were directed to read a set of instructions to the students and distribute the surveys. Once completed, participants inserted their completed surveys into the envelope, which was then returned to the researcher via mail or hand-delivery. At that point, the surveys were reviewed to determine their validity and the data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Finally, the data was imported into SPSS for statistical analysis related to the purpose and research questions in this study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between youth ministry involvement and the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) scores of first-year students attending a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) affiliated school. The analysis of findings will be presented in several sections. The first section will describe the process in which the data was gathered and analyzed. The second section will present the demographic characteristics of the research sample. Attention will then be turned to analysis of the data in relation to each research question. The final topic addressed in this chapter will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and make suggestions for replication.

Data for this study was collected through the use of the Youth Ministry Involvement Survey (YMIS), a paper-based survey instrument. The YMIS was distributed to students in the required freshman orientation course at Alpha College. The survey included a cover page which described the nature of the study, provided instructions for the completion of the study, and requested the participant's informed consent to participate in the study. The specific form of the informed consent protocols was approved by the Institutional Review Board of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Compilation Protocol

The returned surveys were reviewed to determine whether each would be included in the following data analysis. Of the 156 surveys returned, one subject elected not to participate in the study by checking the informed consent box which stated “I do not agree to participate.” Another subject did not check either of the informed consent boxes and was thus eliminated from the study. Five subjects were not able to complete the study because they were under the age of 18. Finally, 24 surveys were eliminated for some form of error. Surveys lacking answers for one or more questions were excluded. Similarly, surveys with questions that received more than one answer to any question were also excluded. Also, a few surveys were excluded because they did not follow the directions in the survey which instructed those who indicated no youth ministry involvement to skip the questions related to youth ministry. The fact that they indicated no involvement on one question but some involvement in others suggests that they did not understand the survey and were thus eliminated. The final total of valid surveys was 125.

In calculating the FMS score for each survey, the reverse scored items were first marked with a highlighter. The score, the mean of the 38 responses in the scale, was calculated with the assistance of a calculator and written in the box provided in the survey. The total of the responses used to determine the score was also noted on top of the box. Following the calculation of the FMS scores, the data gathered via the YMIS was entered into an Excel spreadsheet for statistical analysis. For nonnumeric items, such as the questions related to gender and youth ministry type, numbers were assigned in order to facilitate statistical calculations. To ensure the accuracy of the data input process,

the spreadsheet containing the data was reviewed a second time and compared with each survey. Seven errors were found and corrected. Finally, the data was imported into SPSS.

With the assistance of a statistician, analysis began with the calculation of means, standard deviations, frequency counts, and percentages related to the sample characteristics and involvement with youth ministry factors. The relationship between involvement with each of the youth ministry questions in the survey, along with the composite scores for the youth ministry factors and sub-factors, and the FMS scores of participants was determined using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, a statistical technique used to determine the magnitude of relationship between two variables expressed as continuous scores (Gall, Borg, and Gall 1996, 427). The examination of these relationships also included analysis of several subgroups based on gender and the intervening variables (Gall, Borg, and Gall 1996, 453). Since none of the intervening variables achieved a statistically significant Pearson correlation for the sample of those with involvement in a youth ministry, multiple regression analysis (Gall, Borg, and Gall 1996, 433-42) was not used to determine the contributions that the respective youth ministry variables and the intervening variables make to the faith maturity of participants, as was planned.

Characteristics of the Sample

This section will describe the sample according to information gathered by the YMIS. This will include statistics and charts related to the age, gender, Christian influence in the home, Christian influence of closest friends, type of school attended, length of time the person has been a Christian, and the type of ministry attended. Much of this data will be reported in the form of frequency counts and percentages of the total

population. Pie charts will also be used to provide a visual representation of some data. For some variables, the mean may also be calculated and presented as appropriate.

Of the 125 subjects in the sample, 63 were male and 62 female resulting in a nearly even distribution. Regarding age, 70% were 18 years old, 22% were 19 years old (, and 8% indicated that they were age 20 or older (Figure 3). Also examined was the type of secondary school attended by each subject. In this category, a significant majority of 78% attended a public or private non-Christian secondary school. Sixteen percent attended a private Christian school while 6% were schooled at home (Figure 4).

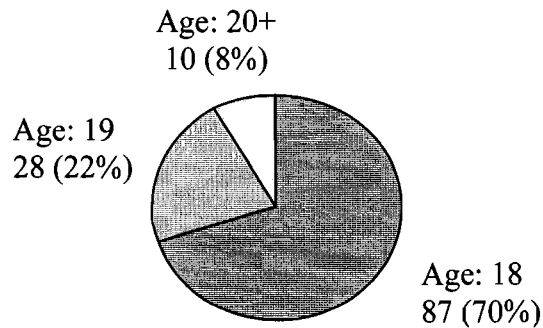


Figure 3. Ages of subjects

Regarding the level of Christian influence of the subjects' home environment, 6% report "no Christian influence" in their home, 9% report "little Christian influence," 32% report "medium Christian influence," and 53% report "strong Christian influence" (Figure 5). The Christian influence of their closest friends was also assessed with 14% reporting that their friends provided "no Christian influence," 28% reporting "little Christian influence," 40% reporting "medium Christian influence," and 18% reporting "strong Christian influence" (Figure 6). Thus, as a whole, the subjects in the sample report a high level of Christian influence in their homes with 80% assessing their home

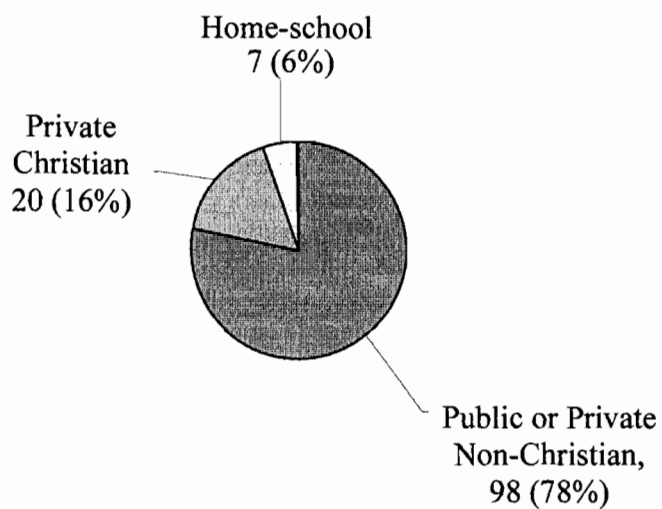


Figure 4. Type of school attended

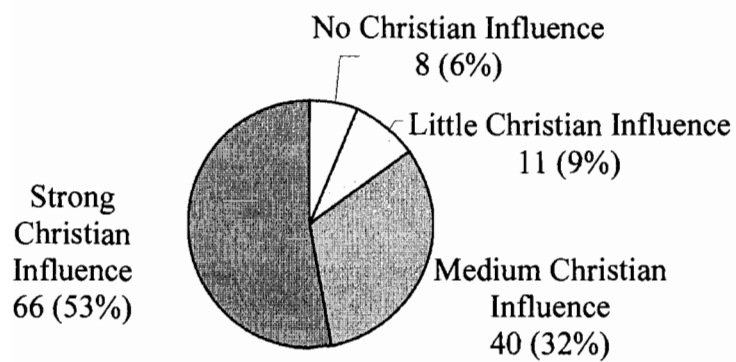


Figure 5. Christian influence in home

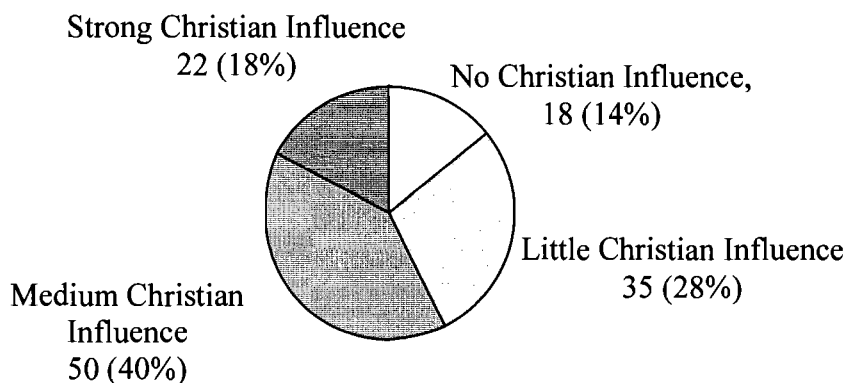


Figure 6. Christian influence of closest friends

influence as either strong or medium. Though somewhat lower, the subjects also report a significant level of Christian influence among their closest friends with 58% reporting peer Christian influence as either strong or medium.

The final characteristics of the sample to be discussed include the length of time subjects reported being a Christian, if they consider themselves a Christian at all, as well as the level of faith maturity as assessed by the FMS. Of the 125 subjects, 3% did not consider themselves to be a Christian, 8% report being a Christian from “0-3 years,” 24% report “4-7 years,” and 65% report being a Christian for “8 or more years” (Figure 7). It should be noted that this measure was based on self-assessment by the subjects, allowing them to define “Christian.” Thus, there may be a broad understanding of the concept which may influence the results.

The FMS scores may provide a more refined assessment of the faith of those in the sample. Based on a scale from 1 to 7, the mean for the sample was 4.86 with a standard deviation of 0.694. This mean is significantly higher than “the combined five-denomination adult average” of 4.63 and the 16-18 age group mean of 4.09 that was

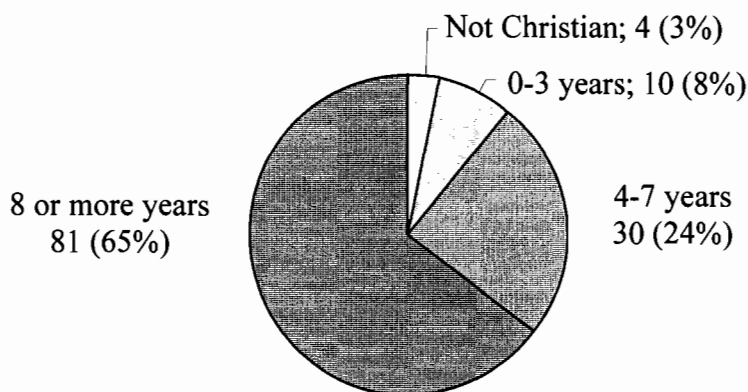


Figure 7. Number of years as Christian

found in the National Study of Protestant Congregations, the study for which the FMS was created (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993, 12). The percentage of the sample which demonstrated mature faith, defined as 5.0 or higher, was 44%. Again, this is significantly higher than denominational figures for youth in previous studies which range from 7% in the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America to 28% in the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 55). This difference may be due to differences in the samples, with the possibility that adolescents with more mature faith might be more likely to attend a Christian college. There were no statistically significant differences in the FMS scores based on gender as determined using a one-way ANOVA.

Question 1 – Involvement with Youth Ministry Factors

This section provides an analysis of the data as it relates to research question one: What involvement do first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school report with youth ministry factors (relationships, balanced programming, encouragement and

equipping in the use of the spiritual disciplines)? The frequency related questions will be presented first including both the frequency of attendance at youth ministry activities, along with the type of youth ministry attended, and the frequency with which the subjects participated in the youth ministry factors. The data related to the questions will be displayed in the form of summary tables.

Following the exploration of frequency of involvement, the participants' perceptions of their youth ministries, gathered through a series of Likert-response items, will be presented in a series of tables addressing each of the factors in turn. There will also be composite scores based on all questions related to a given factor (Appendix 3). For the youth ministry factors, factor scores were calculated for each subject based on the mean of all questions related to each factor. The mean factor score listed in each table represents the mean of all the factor scores for all participants related to that factor. For the balanced programming factor, there were also scores calculated for the sub-factors of worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service.

Type of Youth Ministry and Frequency of Attendance

When asked about the number of youth ministry activities attended in an average month, 40% reported attending a youth ministry activity seven or more activities (Figure 8). An additional 12% reported attending 5-6 activities in a given month. In contrast, only 20% reported attending 1 or 2 activities in an average month and 10% said that they attended no youth ministry activities in an average month. Thus, a significant percentage of those in the sample were actively involved in youth ministry activities during their senior high years, attending at least once per week on average. There were no

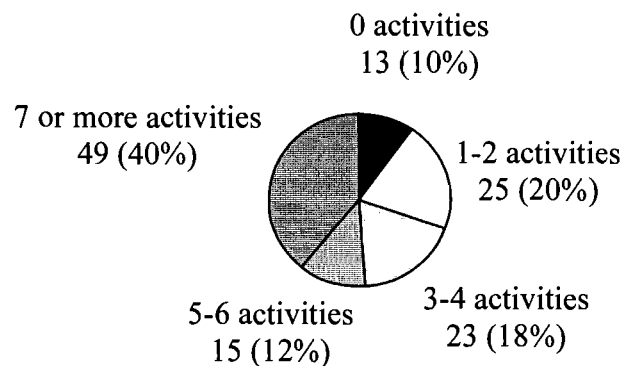


Figure 8. Number of youth ministry activities attended in an average month

statistically significant differences in the frequency of youth ministry activity attendance based on gender.

When asked about the type of youth ministry they were most involved with, 75% reported that they were most involved with a “youth ministry as part of a local church” (Figure 9). Only two respondents indicated that they were most involved with a “youth ministry that is not a part of a local church (such as Young Life, Campus Life/Youth for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes. . .).” It is interesting to note that 12% indicated that they were “equally involved with both a church-based youth ministry and a non-church-based youth ministry.” Thus 87% had involvement with a church-based youth ministry. Eleven percent reported that they had no involvement with Christian youth ministry and were instructed to skip the sections related to the youth ministry factors. Thus the following analysis of involvement with the youth ministry factors is conducted only with those who indicated involvement in some form of youth ministry, a sample of 111 subjects.

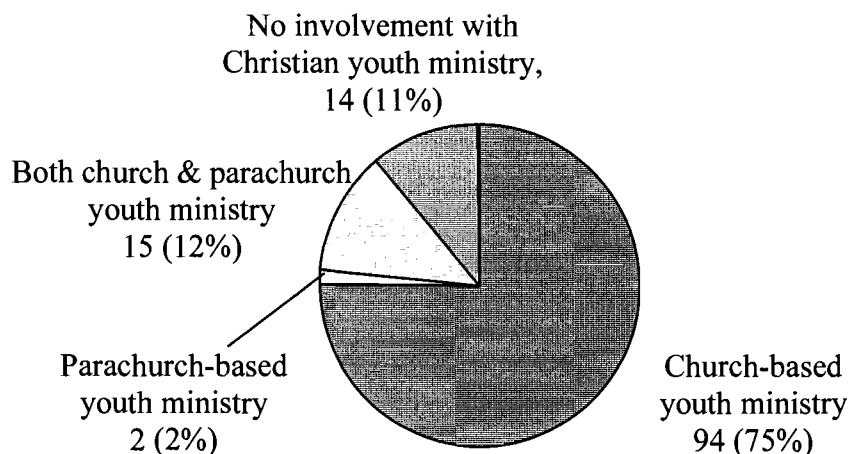


Figure 9. Type of youth ministry

Frequency of Involvement with Youth Ministry Factors

This study also examined the frequency that those in the sample had with the different factors and subfactors of youth ministry, as theorized in the precedent youth ministry literature to stimulate growth in faith maturity – relationships, balanced programming, and equipping and encouragement in the practice of spiritual disciplines. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of involvement with the factors using the following options: “never,” “occasionally,” “monthly,” “weekly,” and “more than once per week.”

Based on the mean scores for involvement (Table 2), “worshipping God through singing” in the youth ministry was the most frequently experienced factor at 4.23, or somewhat more than once per week on average. This was the only factor to average greater than once per week. Examining the frequency of responses for this item further illustrates the extent of involvement. Ninety-two of the subjects marked either “weekly” or “more than once per week” for this item, while 2 reported “never,” 9

Table 2. Youth ministry factors: Frequency of involvement

Question (<i>n</i> = 111)	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	4.5	29.7	23.4	31.5	10.8	3.14	1.102
11. Worshiping God through singing	1.8	8.1	7.2	31.5	51.4	4.23	1.015
12. Teaching/Learning activities	2.7	8.1	18.9	46.8	23.4	3.80	0.980
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	1.8	18.9	34.2	27.9	17.1	3.40	1.038
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	6.3	21.6	12.6	30.6	28.8	3.54	1.285
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	18.0	45.0	23.4	9.9	3.6	2.36	1.007
16. Serving within the ministry	17.1	21.6	21.6	20.7	18.9	3.03	1.372
17. Serving others outside the youth group	11.7	45.9	30.6	5.4	6.3	2.49	0.990
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	8.1	17.1	20.7	32.4	21.6	3.42	1.233
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	3.6	16.2	15.3	27.9	36.9	3.78	1.209

Note: Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which they participated with each factor; they could choose from the following options: 1 = Never, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Monthly, 4 = Weekly, 5 = More than once a week

reported “occasionally,” and 8 reported “monthly” involvement with worship in youth ministry.

On two items, subjects reported being involved more often than “occasionally” but less than “monthly” with mean scores of 2.36 for “inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them” and 2.49 for “serving others outside the youth group.” This would be consistent with the common youth ministry practice of having quarterly or monthly outreach and service oriented activities. For the remainder of the items, subjects

report involvement somewhere between “monthly” (3.0) and “weekly” (4.0) based on the mean scores. It may be a positive sign that those who report “never” being involved with any given factor are generally low in numbers with only three items exceeding 10% of the sample.

Subgroup analysis according to gender suggests only one statistically significant difference in mean scores (.007 significance using a one-way ANOVA) between males and females in regards to frequency of involvement with the youth ministry factors. Males in the sample are more likely to report “attending fun/recreational activities” than are females with mean scores of 3.67 ($n = 54$) and 3.14 ($n = 57$) respectively.

Perceptions of Youth Ministry Involvement

In addition to the frequency of involvement with the factors, subjects also assessed their youth ministries through a series of Likert-response items. The following sections present the data related to these questions and the composite scores for each factor and subfactor.

Relationships

The first factor is relationships (Table 3). As noted in the precedent literature review, youth ministry theory suggests that the establishment of relationships between adolescents and Christian adults is central to success in youth ministry. For the questions related to this factor, the mean response of subjects ranged from 3.80 to 3.85 on a 5-point scale, with “3” representing “neutral” and “4” representing “agree.” The endpoint of the scale, “5,” represents “strongly agree.” Thus the mean responses suggest that the subjects

Table 3. Youth ministry factor: Relationships

Question ($n = 111$)	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	m	sd
7. I developed a strong relationship with a Christian adult, not including my parents or those involved with a youth ministry.	9.9	14.4	18.0	31.5	26.1	3.50	1.292
20. I developed a strong relationship with my youth pastor/director.	2.7	14.4	16.2	28.8	37.8	3.85	1.161
21. I developed a strong relationship with an adult involved with the youth ministry other than the youth pastor/director.	2.7	11.7	22.5	28.8	34.2	3.80	1.119
22. If I had a personal problem, there was an adult involved with the youth ministry that I would have felt comfortable talking with about it.	4.5	10.8	18.0	32.4	34.2	3.81	1.156
<i>Relationships Score</i>						<i>3.61</i>	<i>0.880</i>

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement; they could choose from the following options: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree; Numerical values were assigned to each response starting with 1 for SD, 2 for D, and so on

on the whole have a positive relationship with the youth pastor and with another adult within the youth ministry, though the agreement with these statements could be stronger. They also report that there is an adult in the youth ministry that they could talk with if they encountered a personal problem. In the related question of having a relationship with a Christian adult outside of the youth ministry, the results are somewhat weaker with a mean of 3.50. Thus, it appears that one result of youth ministry involvement is the opportunity to connect with Christian adults. Finally, the mean score for this factor,

including the above mentioned questions and the related frequency of involvement question, mentioned in the previous section, is 3.61.

Balanced Programming

The second factor noted in the precedent literature and examined in this study is balanced programming (Table 4). It is believed that in order for a youth ministry to be successful, the programming should include elements of worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service. In analyzing this factor, these aspects of a balanced program will also be considered.

Worship is the strongest aspect of balanced programming addressed in the study with a score of 4.13 on a 5-point scale. The means for the Likert-response items suggests that the worship in their youth group was contemporary, “using a band and up-to-date musical styles” (3.99), and involved adolescents in leading worship (4.17).

Instruction also seemed strong with a slightly lower score of 4.04. The Likert-response items dealt with various aspects of teaching with a mean of 4.23 for “the teaching in my youth ministry dealt with real life issues” and 4.24 for “the teaching in my youth ministry included opportunities for discussion.” Somewhat lower is the response for “the teaching in my youth ministry helped me understand the Bible” with a mean of 3.89. This suggests that those providing the teaching in youth ministry are better at making the teaching relevant and involving students in the lesson than they are in helping students understand the Bible.

Though the fellowship score of 3.75 is lower than those for worship and instruction, this may reflect the influence of the frequency related questions, “attending fun/recreational activities” and “talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual

Table 4. Youth ministry factor: Balanced programming

Question (<i>n</i> = 111)	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
<i>Worship Score</i>						4.13	.897
23. The worship time in my youth ministry was teen friendly, using a band and up-to-date musical styles.	6.3	8.1	11.7	27.9	45.9	3.99	1.217
24. Students were involved in leading worship within my youth ministry.	1.8	9.0	7.2	34.2	47.7	4.17	1.026
<i>Instruction Score</i>						4.04	0.660
25. The teaching in my youth ministry helped me understand the Bible.	1.8	5.4	20.7	45.9	26.1	3.89	0.918
26. The teaching in my youth ministry dealt with real life issues.	0.9	3.6	8.1	45.9	41.4	4.23	0.820
27. The teaching in my youth ministry included opportunities for discussion.	0.9	3.6	10.8	39.6	45.0	4.24	0.855
<i>Fellowship Score</i>						3.75	0.773
28. The students in my youth ministry were welcoming to new people.	3.6	6.3	19.8	45.0	25.2	3.82	1.002
29. I felt close to the other students in my youth ministry.	2.7	6.3	18.0	31.5	41.4	4.03	1.048
30. The students in my youth ministry were supportive of group members who were experiencing problems.	3.6	3.6	15.3	47.7	29.7	3.96	0.962

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement; they could choose from the following options: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree; Numerical values were assigned to each response starting with 1 for SD, 2 for D, and so on

Table 4—Continued. Youth ministry factor: Balanced programming

Question (<i>n</i> = 111)	<i>SD</i> (%)	<i>D</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>A</i> (%)	<i>SA</i> (%)	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
<i>Evangelism Score</i>						3.41	0.695
31. My youth group taught me how to explain the Christian faith to a non-Christian.	2.7	10.8	21.6	46.8	18.0	3.67	0.985
32. My youth group encouraged me to share my faith with my non-Christian friends.	0.9	8.1	14.4	48.6	27.9	3.95	0.913
33. My youth group was a comfortable place to bring my non-Christian friends.	2.7	8.1	29.7	37.8	21.6	3.68	0.992
<i>Service Score</i>						3.39	0.724
34. My youth group helped me identify my spiritual gifts.	1.8	12.6	35.1	31.5	18.9	3.53	0.998
35. My youth group provided opportunities to serve within the group.	0.9	3.6	16.2	52.3	27.0	4.01	0.815
36. My youth group provided opportunities to serve others outside the group.	0.9	5.4	18.9	54.1	20.7	3.88	0.828
<i>Balanced Programming Score</i>						3.71	0.569

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement; they could choose from the following options: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree; Numerical values were assigned to each response starting with 1 for SD, 2 for D, and so on

topics.” The responses to the Likert-response items related to this subfactor are generally stronger with a mean of 3.82 for “the students in my youth ministry were welcoming to new people,” 4.03 for “I felt close to the other students in my youth ministry,” and 3.96

for “the students in my youth ministry were supportive of group members who were experiencing problems.”

The next subfactor, evangelism, has a score of 3.41, again lower than the three previous areas. This may be related to the lower frequency of evangelistic programming elements in a ministry, but the responses to the Likert-response items also seem less positive. Subjects generally “agree” with the statement “my youth group encouraged me to share my faith with my non-Christian friends” with a mean of 3.95. They were somewhat more “neutral” on the related items of “my youth group taught me how to explain the Christian faith to a non-Christian” (3.67) and “my youth group was a comfortable place to bring my non-Christian friends” (3.68).

The last subfactor, service, has the lowest score of the five subfactors with a score of 3.39. Though this is likely due to having the lowest responses to the frequency related questions, it also included the lowest response to a Likert-response balanced programming item with 3.53, midway between “neutral” and “agree,” for “my youth group helped me identify my spiritual gifts.” The responses were somewhat more positive regarding the opportunities the ministries provided for service within the youth ministry (4.01) and outside the ministry (3.88).

Examining all items related to this factor, the mean score for the balanced programming factor is 3.77. Subgroup analysis utilizing an ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the means for the related questions, the subfactor scores, or the youth ministry factors, related to gender, type of school attended, or type of ministry attended.

Spiritual Disciplines

The final factor identified in the precedent literature and addressed in this study is the encouragement and equipping that subjects received in the practice of the spiritual disciplines (Table 5).

Table 5. Youth ministry factor: Spiritual Disciplines

Question ($n = 111$)	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	m	sd
37. My youth group taught students how to pray on their own.	0.9	14.4	18.0	47.7	18.9	3.69	0.970
38. My youth group taught students how to study the Bible on their own.	0.9	16.2	16.2	44.1	22.5	3.71	1.021
39. My youth group encouraged students to set aside time daily to pray and read the Bible on their own.	0.9	6.3	8.1	37.8	46.8	4.23	0.914
40. My youth group provided resources, such as journals and Bible study guides that students could use for individual prayer and Bible study.	6.3	21.6	25.2	29.7	17.1	3.30	1.172
<i>Spiritual Disciplines Score</i>						3.77	0.779

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement; they could choose from the following options: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree; Numerical values were assigned to each response starting with 1 for SD, 2 for D, and so on

Participants on average reported experiencing strong encouragement to “set aside time daily to pray and read the Bible on their own” in their youth ministries, with a mean response of 4.23. They also report that they experienced “praying aloud with others in the group” and “spending time in silent meditation/prayer” on average nearly weekly with

means of 3.42 and 3.78 respectively. In regards to how well their youth ministries equipped them to practice these spiritual disciplines, the subjects responded with mean responses of 3.69 for “my youth group taught students how to pray on their own” and 3.71 for “my youth group taught students how to study the Bible on their own.” The respondents were more neutral in their perception of the resources that youth groups provided for the practice of these disciplines with a mean response of 3.30.

Subgroup analysis did reveal some significant gender related differences in the responses to three of the four Likert-response items related to this factor (Table 6).

Table 6. Spiritual discipline factor: Gender differences

<i>Question</i>		<i>Males</i> <i>n = 54</i>	<i>Female</i> <i>s n = 57</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
37. My youth group taught students how to pray on their own.	<i>m</i>	4.02	3.39	.000*
	<i>sd</i>	0.739	1.065	
38. My youth group taught students how to study the Bible on their own.	<i>m</i>	4.15	3.30	.000*
	<i>sd</i>	0.737	1.085	
39. My youth group encouraged students to set aside time daily to pray and read the Bible on their own.	<i>m</i>	4.46	4.02	.010*
	<i>sd</i>	0.693	1.044	
40. My youth group provided resources, such as journals and Bible study guides that students could use for individual prayer and Bible study.	<i>m</i>	3.43	3.18	.262
	<i>sd</i>	1.109	1.227	

Note: * Significance based on a one-way ANOVA at .05

Male subjects reported stronger agreement with their perception of whether or not their youth ministries encouraged them to set aside time to pray and read the Bible daily and whether or not the ministries taught them how to practice these disciplines. There were no other significant differences related to school type or youth ministry type.

Question 2 – Relationship between Youth Ministry Involvement and Faith Maturity Scale Scores

This section will provide an analysis of the data as it relates to research question two: What is the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school? The magnitude and direction of the relationship between youth ministry involvement and the FMS score were analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficients. The correlations were calculated for each question, factor, and subfactor. Each factor will be discussed in turn, followed by an examination of the differences in correlations according to gender.

Correlation of Relationship Factor to Faith Maturity

Of the factors theorized in the youth ministry literature to stimulate faith maturity in Christian adolescents, the factor of “relationships” emerged in this study as the most significant youth ministry correlate with the FMS scores of first year students at a Christian college (Table 7). With a correlation of .480, significant at the 0.01 level, this research suggests that as adolescents experience strong relationships with Christian adults their faith matures. Examining the individual questions within this factor, “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics” within the context of the youth ministry correlates strongly with adolescent faith maturity with a correlation coefficient of .478, significant at the 0.01 level (Table 8). The person the subject has a relationship with also seems to make a difference in the strength of the correlation. Having a strong relationship with an adult involved in the youth ministry other than the youth pastor is a stronger correlate of faith maturity (.404, .000 significance) than is having a strong relationship with the youth pastor (.245, .010 significance). Having a strong relationship

Table 7. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>
	All (<i>n</i> = 111)
Relationships	** .480
Balanced Programming	** .401
Worship	.066
Instruction	** .341
Fellowship	** .296
Evangelism	** .411
Service	** .396
Spiritual Disciplines	** .356

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 8. Relationship factor questions:
Correlations with FMS scores

Question (<i>n</i> = 111)	<i>r</i>
7. I developed a strong relationship with a Christian adult, not including my parents or those involved with a youth ministry.	** .295
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics.	** .478
20. I developed a strong relationship with my youth pastor/director.	** .245
21. I developed a strong relationship with an adult involved with the youth ministry other than the youth pastor/director.	** .404
22. If I had a personal problem, there was an adult involved with the youth ministry that I would have felt comfortable talking with about it.	** .382
<i>Relationship Factor</i>	** .480

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

with a Christian adult in the church who is not involved in the youth ministry also has a slightly stronger correlation with faith maturity (.295, .002 significance) than a relationship with the youth pastor.

The correlation between faith maturity and having a relationship with a Christian adult is consistent with much of the previous research on youth ministry and the faith of adolescents. Rice and Gillespie, in a study of Seventh-day Adventist youth, identified “religious educators are experienced as warm, caring, and supportive” and “youth frequently experience support and concern from adults” in the congregation as congregational effectiveness factors related to faith maturity (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 61). Lamport asked young Christian adults to identify the factors that influenced their spiritual growth during adolescence. Respondents identified relationships with “other person” and “Pastor/Minister” in the top five factors. “Youth Pastor” ranked twelfth (Lamport 1990, 25).

The findings of this study may also complement the models of adolescent religious belief and commitment developed by Erickson (Erickson 1992, 144-45). His model examines the influence of family, peer, and religious education on adolescent faith but does little to examine the complexities of religious education. The importance of relationships within the church and youth ministry may provide insight into how religious education is related to adolescent faith.

Finally, these findings regarding the correlation between the relationship factor and faith maturity in first year students at a Christian college supports the relational emphasis within youth ministry theory. Burns summarizes this emphasis well when he says:

In order to have an important influence in the lives of young people, you do not need to be a dynamic speaker, know all the latest music, or even dress in the latest fashions. You must, however, love kids and be willing to spend time with them, which is what effective, relational youth ministry is all about. Effective youth workers....need to have a heart of compassion, a listening ear and a willingness to get to know the students in their youth ministry. Genuinely caring for your students is the primary prerequisite for working with them. (Burns 2001, 24)

Correlation of Balanced Programming Factor to Faith Maturity

The second factor in youth ministry that is theorized to facilitate faith maturity in adolescents is that of balanced programming. Here the emphasis is on programming that involves youth ministry participants in worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service. The balanced programming factor, the mean of the composite scores for each of the five areas, has a correlation coefficient with faith maturity of .401 with a significance of .000 (Table 7). This supports the theory that youth ministry programming that incorporates each of the five areas is related to the faith maturity of adolescents. Further insight can be gained from examining each of the balanced programming subfactors and the associated questions (Tables 7 and 9).

Worship

Of the five subcomponents of balanced programming, worship is the only one that did not demonstrate any correlation to faith maturity, whether with the subcomponent or with any of the related questions. The correlation between worship and the FMS scores of subjects in the study is .066 with a significance of .490. Similarly, the frequency of involvement in worship within the youth ministry demonstrates no correlation with faith maturity with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .108 and a significance of .258. Also, neither the extent to which subjects described the worship in

Table 9. Balanced programming factor questions:
Correlations with FMS scores

Question ($n = 111$)	r
11. Worshiping God through singing	.108
23. The worship time in my youth ministry was teen friendly, using a band and up-to-date musical styles.	.056
24. Students were involved in leading worship within my youth ministry.	-.001
12. Teaching/Learning activities	*.220
25. The teaching in my youth ministry helped me understand the Bible.	** .340
26. The teaching in my youth ministry dealt with real life issues.	*.231
27. The teaching in my youth ministry included opportunities for discussion.	*.212
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	** .306
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	*.223
28. The students in my youth ministry were welcoming to new people.	.108
29. I felt close to the other students in my youth ministry.	** .292
30. The students in my youth ministry were supportive of group members who were experiencing problems.	.129
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	** .419
31. My youth group taught me how to explain the Christian faith to a non-Christian.	*.230
32. My youth group encouraged me to share my faith with my non-Christian friends.	** .265
33. My youth group was a comfortable place to bring my non-Christian friends.	** .253
16. Serving within the ministry	** .272
17. Serving others outside the youth group	*.219
34. My youth group helped me identify my spiritual gifts.	** .370
35. My youth group provided opportunities to serve within the group.	** .325
36. My youth group provided opportunities to serve others outside the group.	** .253

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

their youth ministry as “teen friendly, using a band and up to date musical styles” (.056, .566 significance) nor whether “students were involved in leading worship” (-.001, .995 significance) correlated with faith maturity. These two items did, however, correlate with the frequency with which students experienced worship in their youth ministry. The use of a band and contemporary music correlated with frequency of involvement in worship with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .502 and a significance of .000. Student leadership in youth ministry worship correlated with frequency of involvement with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .355 and a significance of .000. Thus, the data suggests that student leadership and the use of contemporary music increases the involvement of adolescents in worship within the youth ministry.

This lack of correlation between worship in youth ministry and the faith maturity of youth is contrary to the theory of youth ministry. As an example, Dettoni suggests that because worship is communion with God, “the act of worship motivates us to be and live for God, and the feelings of worship lead to the actions of life” (Dettoni 1993, 74). Livermore also notes the spiritually formative aspects of worship when he says that “a healthy ministry moves believers toward maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28-29) through teaching, fellowship, prayer, mutual care and concern and praise and worship (Acts 2:42-47)” (Livermore 2001, 41). The lack of correlation should cause theorists to examine the foundations of the theory to see if it is sound and consistent with scripture. It should also spur an examination of how worship is practiced within youth ministry. Senter notes, “In recent years...more time has been designated for worship . . . , where worship has become synonymous with praise songs and prayer. Yet the question must be raised: is this what

God intended worship to be?” (Senter 2001, xi). The data from this present study echoes his question.

Instruction

The second subfactor of balanced programming is instruction which correlates with the FMS scores with a .341 Pearson correlation coefficient and a significance of .000. The frequency of experiencing “teaching/learning activities” in the youth ministry has a somewhat weaker correlation coefficient (.223) and a lesser degree of significance (.020) suggesting that other aspects of teaching play a stronger role in the relationship of instruction with faith maturity. One of those factors could be “the teaching in my youth ministry helped me understand the Bible” which had a correlation coefficient of .340 (.000 significance) with faith maturity. Teaching that related to “real life issues” and “opportunities for discussion” also related to faith maturity, though less strongly, with correlation coefficients of .231 (.015 significance) and .212 (.026 significance) respectively. This suggests that while discussion and life application are important elements of instruction in youth ministry, helping students understand the Bible should be the central focus.

These findings related to instruction complement the findings of other research in the field of youth ministry. The importance of biblical instruction may explain why the subjects in Lamport’s study of young Christian adults identified “church services” and “youth group meetings” as influencing factors in their spiritual growth (Lamport 1990, 25). These two factors, ranked first and fourth respectively, typically involve significant amounts of instruction. It is interesting that “Sunday school” and “group Bible studies,” which are often focused exclusively on biblical instruction, ranks eleventh and twelfth.

These findings are also consistent with the findings of Benson and Eklin whose research identified “effectively teaches the Bible” and “effectively teaches core theological concepts” as characteristics of Christian education programs for youth (Benson and Eklin 1990, 56). They also list content emphases on human sexuality, alcohol and drug use, moral decision making, and friendship; areas that may coincide with the idea of “real life issues” identified in this present study.

Though these findings related to instruction also seem to support the theory of youth ministry which places instruction as a central priority (Livermore 2001, 59-60; Dettoni 1993, 30; Black 1991, 42-44), the relatively low correlation between the experience of teaching/learning activities in youth ministry and the faith maturity of adolescents suggests that more can be done to increase the effectiveness of these instructional activities. This is consistent with Robbins critique of teaching in youth ministry and his call to embrace sound teaching technique and theory which will help youth workers engage rather than “bore” students in youth ministry (Robbins 2001, 331-32).

Fellowship

The third subfactor of balanced programming is fellowship which correlates with the FMS scores with a .296 Pearson correlation coefficient and a significance of .002. Examining the individual questions related to this subcomponent also reveals some interesting correlations. The more frequently that a subject participates in “fun/recreational activities” the higher their faith maturity is likely to be with a correlation of .306 and a significance of .001. Surprisingly, “talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics” reveals a lesser correlation and a lower level of

significance (.223, .019 significance). Talking with peers is also weaker in correlation and significance than is talking with an adult (.478, .000). Having a feeling of closeness to the other students in the youth ministry also correlated with faith maturity with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .292 and a significance of .002. Neither of the other two Likert-response items in this subcomponent, “the students in my youth ministry were welcoming to new people” and “the students in my youth ministry were supportive of group members who were experiencing problems,” correlated to faith maturity. Based on this data, it appears that recreational activities serve a significant purpose within the youth ministry, furthering faith maturity. Stimulating significant conversation with peers and developing a close-knit community also seems to be important.

The concept of fellowship, particularly the aspect of recreational activities, seems to be limited in previous research. Benson and Eklin note the importance of creating a “sense of community in which people help each other develop their faith and values,” which tends to emphasize spiritual conversation rather than having fun together (Benson and Eklin 1990, 56). Of the ten spiritual growth factors that emerge in Currie’s study, the “spiritual influence of Christian friends” may coincide with the spiritual conversation aspect of the fellowship subfactor, but only “youth group activities/serving in the church” may contain the recreational aspect (Currie 1995, 171). Lamport identifies “youth group meetings,” “retreats,” and “summer camp” as factors in the spiritual growth of adolescents, which may contain aspects of fellowship (Lamport 1990, 25). Finally, Rice and Gillespie make no mention of fellowship related items in their congregational effectiveness factors for the religious education of youth (Rice and Gillespie 1992, 61).

Youth ministry theorists also seem to emphasize the more obviously spiritual aspects of fellowship, such as the discussion of spiritual topics and life issues with peers. For some, this is programmatically concentrated in formal small groups where adults meet with a limited number of students for Bible study, prayer, and encouragement to live the Christian life (Fields 1998, 137-54; Burns and DeVries 2001, 99-108). For others, “community” is something that is fostered in the youth group as a whole (Livermore 2001, 41, 60-61; Powell 2001, 195-207). Only Black (Black 1991, 42-44) and Dettoni (Dettoni 1993, 99) intentionally address recreational and fun activities. Dettoni recognizes that recreational activities break down barriers, which allows for deeper relationships to develop, and also provides a different context in which Christian faith and values are transmitted relationally (Dettoni 1993, 99). The data from this present study suggests that youth ministry theorists and practitioners need to be more intentional in their consideration and use of recreational activities, activities which are prevalent in today’s youth ministries.

Evangelism

The fourth subfactor of balanced programming is evangelism which correlates with the FMS scores with a .411 Pearson correlation coefficient and a significance of .000. Also correlating with faith maturity is the frequency with which subjects invited their non-Christian friends to outreach oriented activities (.419, .000 significance). In some respects, the strength of these correlations is to be expected given that the FMS includes some questions related to personal evangelism (Appendix 1). Such questions include “I help others with their religious questions and struggles” and “I talk with other

people about my faith.” Thus, while evangelism is an aspect of youth ministry, it is also one measure of faith maturity.

Though inviting non-Christian friends may be a result of faith maturity rather than a cause, it is also interesting to note that students who agreed with the Likert-response evangelism related items were also more likely to have a higher faith maturity. These correlations are .230 (.015 significance) for “my youth ministry taught me how to explain the Christian faith to a non-Christian,” .265 (.005 significance) for “my youth ministry encouraged me to share my faith with my non-Christian friends,” and .253 (.007 significance) for “my youth ministry was a comfortable place to bring my non-Christian friends.” The fact that these characteristics of the ministry correlate with faith maturity suggests that an intentional focus on evangelism within a youth ministry is important in facilitating faith maturity in youth.

The interrelationship between the evangelism items is also interesting. Encouraging students to share their faith has no correlation with inviting their non-Christian friends to outreach activities (.160, .094 significance), while teaching students how to share their faith and facilitating a comfortable environment for non-Christian friends demonstrate correlations of .251 (.008 significance) and .436 (.000 significance) respectively. Most significant though is the correlation of “inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them” with “attending fun/recreational activities.” The Pearson correlation coefficient between these two items is .532 (.000 significance) suggesting that recreational activities serve a purpose in evangelism as well as fellowship.

Most theory and research into the spiritual growth of adolescents ignores the influence of evangelism on faith maturity, relying on the relationships and activities within the youth ministry to facilitate growth. Evangelism is considered only from the perspective of reaching those outside the faith community. The one exception is the research of Rahn and Linhart. Their research focuses primarily on discovering the characteristics of adolescents and youth ministries that had demonstrated effectiveness in evangelism. Connecting faith maturity and evangelism, the results of their study placed emphasis on developing the faith and personal maturity of the adolescent, primarily through mentoring, which led to greater effectiveness in evangelism (Rahn and Linhart 2000, 46-47). In addition to focusing the spiritual maturation of the adolescent, adults ministering to youth can also increase evangelism effectiveness by modeling evangelism, providing quality programs, talking with spiritually curious teenagers, and training student leaders in evangelism (Rahn and Linhart 2000, 51). Though the focus of this present study is on faith maturity, the correlation between faith maturity and inviting non-Christian friends to evangelistic activities supports the contention of Rahn and Linhart. From a biblical perspective, Philemon 6 suggests that the relationship between the two may also be reciprocal, with evangelism fostering faith maturity as well.

Service

The fifth and final subfactor of balanced programming is service which correlates with the FMS scores with a .396 Pearson correlation coefficient and a significance of .396. The frequency with which subjects participated in “serving within the ministry (Examples: performing a drama, setting-up for youth group, running the soundboard, or leading a small group discussion)” correlated with faith maturity with a

Pearson correlation of .272 and a significance of .004. “Serving others outside the youth group (Examples: painting the home of an elderly person and/or helping at a soup kitchen for the homeless)” related to faith maturity with a Pearson correlation of .219 and a significance of .021. Interestingly, helping students identify their spiritual gifts and providing opportunities to serve within the group correlated more strongly with faith maturity than did the frequency with which they participated in service opportunities. “My youth ministry helped me identify my spiritual gifts” related to faith maturity with a Pearson correlation of .370 (.000 significance). “My youth ministry provided opportunities to serve within the group” had a Pearson correlation of .325 (.001 significance) with faith maturity. Providing “opportunities to serve outside the group” also correlated with faith maturity, though not as strongly, with a correlation of .253 (.007 significance). Thus, this research suggests that youth ministries that foster an environment conducive to service, both inside and outside the youth ministry, tend to encourage faith maturity as well.

Prior research regarding service in youth ministry has been mixed, with most examining service outside the church or youth ministry rather than inside the youth ministry. In Lamport’s study, 46% of respondents gave a positive response to the item “service project” when asked about factors influencing their spiritual growth while 51% gave a neutral response to this item (Lamport 1990, 25). Benson and Eklin note that one characteristic of effective Christian education, as identified in their study, is that the Christian education program involves youth in service projects (Benson and Eklin 1990, 56). Neither of these studies notes the need for service within the youth ministry or church. In contrast, Currie’s study of Christians converted as teenagers does not mention

service projects or service outside the youth ministry or church, but does identify “youth group activities/serving in the church” as a spiritual growth factor (Currie 1995, 171). Rice and Gillespie make no mention of either aspect of service (Rice and Gillespie 1992) nor does Erickson who focuses on broader factors such as religious education programming rather than the aspects of programming which may include service (Erickson 1992). The results of this present study complement the existing research by emphasizing the need for creating an environment of service both inside and outside the youth ministry.

The understanding of service is also varied in the youth ministry literature. Fields envisions helping adolescents to discover their spiritual gifts and use them to serve within the ministry (Fields 1998, 173-93). Dettoni, in contrast, suggests that the use of service projects is an alternative method to teach students about the faith and to facilitate fellowship within the group (Dettoni 1993, 105-11). Finally, Black proposes missions as a way to increase adolescents’ vision for the world and to encourage them to consider missions as a vocation (Black 1991, 43, 206-08). Though these various understandings of service overlap, the results of the study suggest that a multidimensional understanding of service is needed.

Correlation of Spiritual Disciplines Factor to Faith Maturity

The final factor in youth ministry that is theorized to facilitate faith maturity in adolescents is the encouragement and equipping of adolescents to practice the spiritual disciplines. This factor correlates with faith maturity with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .356 (.000 significance) (Table 10). The frequency of prayer in the

Table 10. Spiritual disciplines factor questions:
Correlations with FMS scores

Question ($n = 111$)	r
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	** .336
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	** .332
37. My youth group taught students how to pray on their own.	* .224
38. My youth group taught students how to study the Bible on their own.	.175
39. My youth group encouraged students to set aside time daily to pray and read the Bible on their own.	* .193
40. My youth group provided resources, such as journals and Bible study guides that students could use for individual prayer and Bible study.	* .228
<i>Spiritual Disciplines Factor</i>	** .356

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

ministry, whether aloud or silent, also correlates with faith maturity with Pearson correlations of .336 (.000 significance) and .332 (.000 significance) respectively. Several characteristics of the youth ministry, assessed through the Likert-response items, demonstrate weaker, though still significant, correlations with faith maturity. Ministries that taught students to pray on their own had a Pearson correlation of .224 and a significance of .018. Those that encouraged students to pray and read the Bible daily had a correlation of .193 with a significance of .042. And those that provided resources had a correlation of .228 with a significance of .016. Teaching students how to individually study the Bible had no correlation with faith maturity. Thus, it seems that involving students in the practice of prayer during youth group meetings has the most significant

relationship to faith maturity, though teaching the students how to pray, encouraging them to practice the disciplines, and providing resources also contribute to faith maturity.

In the existing research on adolescent faith, little mention is made of the spiritual disciplines and the role that youth ministries play in encouraging and equipping adolescents to practice them. Currie includes “personal time with God in prayer” and “personal Bible reading” as two of the ten spiritual growth factors in young adults converted as adolescents (Currie 1995, 171-72). Seventy-four percent of respondents in Lamport’s study also identify “personal devotional time” as a spiritual growth factor in their lives (Lamport 1990, 25). Neither these nor other researchers address the way that youth ministries encourage and equip adolescents to practice spiritual disciplines. This present study supports those youth ministry theorists (Fields 1998, 156-64; Marcum 2001, 7-17) who suggest that one aspect of youth ministries which facilitate faith maturity is encouragement and equipping in the spiritual disciplines.

Gender Comparison of the Relationship between Youth Ministry Involvement and Faith Maturity

Similar to previous studies regarding the religiosity and faith of adolescents, this study found striking gender-based differences in the relationship between involvement with the youth ministry factors and the FMS scores. For females, there was a strong correlation, at the 0.01 level, with all the composite and sub-composite scores for the youth ministry factors with the exception of worship (Table 11). In contrast for males, only four of the eight composites had statistically significant relationships with faith maturity: relationships, balanced programming, and the subfactors of evangelism and service. Yet even these correlations were weaker than the corresponding Pearson

Table 11. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by gender

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>	
	Males (<i>n</i> = 54)	Females (<i>n</i> = 57)
Relationships	*.287	** .603
Balanced Programming	*.311	** .442
Worship	.117	.037
Instruction	¹ .263	** .381
Fellowship	.158	** .382
Evangelism	*.298	** .479
Service	*.281	** .454
Spiritual Disciplines	.242	** .375

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

¹ Close to significance at .056

correlation coefficients of the females and were significant at the 0.05 level rather than the 0.01 level.

The same is true with the frequency related items where there were statistically significant relationships for only three of the ten items, with two additional items nearing significance (Table 12). The frequency of “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics” had a Pearson correlation coefficient of .301 (.027 significance) compared with .588 (.000) for females. “Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them” had a correlation for males of .343 (.011 significance) and .503 (.000 significance) for females. The only item for which the relationship was stronger for males than for females was the frequency of “praying aloud with others in the group” with a correlation of .364 (.007 significance) compared with .323 (.014 significance) for

Table 12. Correlation between frequency items and FMS scores by gender

<i>Question</i>	<i>r</i>	
	Males (<i>n</i> = 54)	Females (<i>n</i> = 57)
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	*.301	** .588
11. Worshiping God through singing	.164	.073
12. Teaching/Learning activities	.055	*.333
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	.076	** .428
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	.068	*.328
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	*.343	** .503
16. Serving within the ministry	¹ .261	*.271
17. Serving others outside the youth group	.013	** .358
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	** .364	*.323
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	¹ .261	** .403

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

¹ Close to significance at .056

females. These differences were found in spite of the fact that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean FMS scores of males and females, and few statistically significant differences in the experiences of males and females with the youth ministry factors.

The differences in the patterns of correlation suggest that there is a greater fit between youth ministry theory, as well as practice, and the needs of females than there is for males. More research is needed to further understand these gender differences and to improve the understanding of the way that youth ministry relates to male adolescents.

Question 3 – Influence of Intervening Variables

This section provides an analysis of the data as it relates to research question three: In what ways, if any, do intervening variables (home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, number of years since conversion, type of youth ministry) influence the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school? Analyzing the data related to this question includes an analysis of the relationship between each of the intervening variables and the FMS scores using either a Pearson correlation or a one-way ANOVA with a Bonferroni post hoc test as appropriate. It also includes an analysis of the Pearson correlations between the youth ministry factors and faith maturity, according to the various subgroups. Though some insights were revealed through this subgroup analysis, the small size of many subgroups limited the ability to draw significant conclusions.

Type of Secondary School

Based on a comparison of the means for subjects in three different types of schools – non-Christian public or private, private Christian, and home school – there does not appear to be significant differences in FMS scores among the subgroups. Those who attended a non-Christian high school had a mean FMS score of 4.87 ($n = 98$). This score is comparable with those attending a private Christian school with a mean of 4.76 ($n = 20$) and with those schooled at home with a mean of 4.92 ($n = 7$). Statistical comparison of these means using an ANOVA with a Bonferroni post hoc test found no statistically significant differences between any of the three mean scores.

Though type of school attended may not have a significant influence on the FMS scores of subjects, there are differences in the ways that the youth ministry factors, both in the frequency items (Table 13) and in the composite scores (Table 14), correlate with faith maturity according to the different subgroups.

Table 13. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by school type

<i>Question</i>	<i>r</i>		
	Non-Chr. (<i>n</i> = 87)	Christian (<i>n</i> = 17)	Home (<i>n</i> = 7)
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	** .448	** .749	.469
11. Worshiping God through singing	.067	.328	.236
12. Teaching/Learning activities	* .240	.249	-.226
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	* .273	** .621	-.055
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	.137	** .702	.462
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	** .423	* .505	.254
16. Serving within the ministry	* .257	.439	-.026
17. Serving others outside the youth group	.195	.461	-.007
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	** .322	* .498	.211
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	** .309	* .518	.277

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The largest of the school-type subgroups, the public or private non-Christian group (*n* = 87), revealed a pattern of significance that is similar to the overall sample. This is understandable since this subgroup makes up by far the largest portion of the overall sample. For the frequency related items, the only differences are that several items

Table 14. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by school type

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>		
	Non-Chr. (<i>n</i> = 87)	Christian (<i>n</i> = 17)	Home (<i>n</i> = 7)
Relationships	** .510	.222	.362
Balanced Programming	** .388	* .552	.243
Worship	.042	.311	.158
Instruction	** .342	.254	.613
Fellowship	* .257	** .729	.057
Evangelism	** .422	.443	.091
Service	** .406	.405	.020
Spiritual Disciplines	** .332	* .604	.633

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

correlate at the 0.05 level versus the 0.01 level and two items that had significance at the 0.05 level fail to reach significance based on a subgroup sample. The correlations between the youth ministry factors and FMS scores for the public or private non-Christian group are also comparable with that of the overall sample. Here six of the eight scores reach significance at the 0.01 level and one is significant at the 0.05 level. This is comparable to the overall sample where seven of the eight composite scores reach significance (Table 7). For both groups, worship fails to reach significance.

None of the frequency items or the composite scores demonstrates a significant correlation with faith maturity for those schooled at home. This is likely due to the small sample size (*n* = 7) for this subgroup. Though the sample size for the Christian high school subgroup is also small (*n* = 17), some statistically significant correlations with the FMS scores emerge. For the frequency items, three questions reach significance at the

0.01 level – “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics,” “attending fun/recreational activities,” and “talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics.” Of these, two demonstrate more significant correlations with faith maturity than exist with the larger non-Christian high school group – “attending fun/recreational activities” and “talking with peers about life issues and spiritual topics” – both part of the fellowship subfactor of balanced programming. In addition, fellowship is the only one of the eight factors or subfactors that is significant at the 0.01 level. This could mean that for those attending a Christian school, the social aspects of youth ministry offers a compliment to the teaching and adult influence they receive in the school environment.

One additional peculiarity is also seen in examining the Christian school subgroup. While “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics” has the strongest correlation of all the frequency related questions, the relationship factor does not demonstrate a correlation with faith maturity for the Christian school subgroup. Examining the Likert-response items included in the relationship factor reveals no correlation between having a strong relationship with either the youth pastor, an adult involved in the ministry, or even another Christian adult outside the ministry. This apparent inconsistency may suggest that for this group, the strength of the relationship with adults involved in the youth ministry is not as important as having conversations with them.

Type of Youth Ministry

An analysis of the means for the subgroups based on youth ministry type using an ANOVA with a Bonferroni post hoc test found a statistically significant difference

between the mean FMS scores for those with no youth ministry experience and those in a church-based youth ministry and between those with no youth ministry experience and those who were equally involved with both a church-based youth ministry and a parachurch-based youth ministry (Table 15).

Table 15. Comparison of mean FMS scores according to type of youth ministry

(I) YM Type	(J) YM Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Church	Parachurch	-0.391	0.458	1.000	-1.618	0.837
	Both	-0.169	0.178	1.000	-0.647	0.308
	No YM	*0.841	0.183	0.000	0.349	1.332
Parachurch	Church	0.391	0.458	1.000	-0.837	1.618
	Both	0.221	0.482	1.000	-1.072	1.514
	No YM	1.231	0.484	0.073	-0.067	2.530
Both	Church	0.169	0.178	1.000	-0.308	0.647
	Parachurch	-0.221	0.482	1.000	-1.514	1.071
	No YM	*1.010	0.238	0.000	0.371	1.648
No YM	Church	*-0.841	0.183	0.000	-1.332	-0.349
	Parachurch	-1.231	0.484	0.073	-2.530	0.067
	Both	*-1.010	0.238	0.000	-1.648	-0.372

Note: Bonferroni post hoc test; YM = youth ministry; Both = Involved equally in both a church-based and parachurch-based youth ministry

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The mean FMS scores are 4.92 for church-based youth ministry ($n = 94$), 5.09 for those involved equally in both church and parachurch youth ministries ($n = 15$), and 4.08 for those with no youth ministry experience ($n = 14$). Thus, as would be expected, those

involved in some type of youth ministry have a higher FMS score than those not involved in a youth ministry. The limited size of the parachurch subgroup ($n = 2$) makes it difficult to analyze this mean in conjunction with the other subgroups.

An analysis of the correlations between the frequency-related items, the composite scores, and the FMS scores of subjects, according to the type of youth ministry, revealed no helpful data. The significance of these items for the church-based subgroup parallels that of the overall sample (Tables 16 and 17).

Table 16. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by youth ministry type

<i>Question</i>	<i>r</i>		
	Church ($n = 94$)	Parach. ¹ ($n = 2$)	Both Equally ($n = 15$)
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	** .502	--	.376
11. Worshiping God through singing	.100	--	.381
12. Teaching/Learning activities	* .258	--	.063
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	** .363	--	-.188
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	* .234	--	.228
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	** .462	--	.068
16. Serving within the ministry	** .284	--	.191
17. Serving others outside the youth group	* .243	--	.050
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	** .345	--	.329
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	** .302	--	.492

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

¹ Unable to calculate correlation coefficients due to small sample size

Table 17. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by youth ministry type

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>		
	Church (<i>n</i> = 94)	Parach. ¹ (<i>n</i> = 2)	Both Equally (<i>n</i> = 15)
Relationships	** .502	--	.254
Balanced Programming	** .414	--	.427
Worship	.031	--	.471
Instruction	** .376	--	.171
Fellowship	** .321	--	.099
Evangelism	** .407	--	.507
Service	** .415	--	.234
Spiritual Disciplines	** .352	--	.480

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

¹ Unable to calculate correlation coefficients due to small sample size

This is to be expected since this subgroup includes 94 of the 111 subjects in the overall sample. The subgroup that reported being equally involved in both church and parachurch youth ministries demonstrated no significant correlations with faith maturity, likely due to the small subgroup sample size. Correlations for the parachurch group were not able to be calculated, also due to the small sample size.

Christian Influence in the Home

Though the mean FMS scores increase numerically based on the perceived Christian influence in the subjects' homes, the differences between the means are not statistically significant when analyzed using an ANOVA with a Bonferroni post hoc test. The mean FMS scores are 4.58 (*n* = 8) for those with no perceived Christian influence in

the home, 4.64 ($n = 11$) for those who report “little Christian influence” in the home, 4.85 ($n = 40$) for those who report “medium Christian influence” in the home, and 4.93 ($n = 66$) for those who report “strong Christian influence” in the home. Likewise, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the subjects’ perceptions of the level of Christian influence in their homes and their FMS scores is not statistically significant with a correlation of .153 (.089 significance, $n = 125$). This apparent lack of influence may mean that the home environment does not have a significant influence on the faith maturity of first-years students at a Christian college. It may also suggest that the measures for Christian influence in the home used in this study were inadequate.

Once again, the limited size of some of the subgroup samples makes analysis of the correlations between the youth ministry factors and faith maturity somewhat tentative. Yet some patterns are evident. “Talking with an adult about life issues and spiritual topics” demonstrates statistically significant correlations for all subgroups with correlations at the 0.05 level for those with no, little, or medium Christian influence in the home and a correlation at the 0.01 level for those with strong Christian influence in the home (Table 18). For those with strong Christian influence in the home, the pattern of correlation between the FMS scores and the youth ministry factors is identical with the pattern for the overall sample (Table 19). This is also true for those with medium Christian influence in the home with the exception of the relationship factor, which demonstrates no correlation with faith maturity, even though there is a correlation for the other three subgroups, and there is a less significant correlation for the instruction and fellowship subfactors. One final interesting finding regarding home influence and the youth ministry factors is that the evangelism subfactor correlates strongly, at the 0.01

Table 18. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian home influence

<i>Question</i>	<i>r</i>			
	No Infl. (<i>n</i> = 6)	Little (<i>n</i> = 8)	Medium (<i>n</i> = 33)	Strong (<i>n</i> = 64)
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	*.865	*.816	*.435	** .453
11. Worshiping God through singing	.057	.197	.171	.107
12. Teaching/Learning activities	.040	.012	*.369	.214
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	.735	.419	** .539	.072
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	-.101	.500	.197	** .395
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	*.862	.306	** .522	*.267
16. Serving within the ministry	-.034	.340	*.440	*.290
17. Serving others outside the youth group	.526	.403	.190	.146
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	.425	-.260	** .622	*.265
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	.627	.071	.342	** .355

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

level, for three of the four subgroups, demonstrating no correlation for those with little influence in the home. These differences in correlation patterns are possibly due to the limited sizes of some subgroups and the nature of the measures for home influence.

Christian Influence among Closest Friends

Subgroup analysis of the sample based on the subjects reporting of Christian

Table 19. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian home influence

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>			
	No Infl. (<i>n</i> = 6)	Little (<i>n</i> = 8)	Medium (<i>n</i> = 33)	Strong (<i>n</i> = 64)
Relationships	*.912	*.761	.227	** .497
Balanced Programming	.635	.294	** .473	** .407
Worship	.109	.283	.137	.024
Instruction	.361	.375	*.436	** .336
Fellowship	.596	-.117	*.393	** .334
Evangelism	** .923	.310	** .464	** .332
Service	.568	.465	** .472	** .371
Spiritual Disciplines	.633	-.219	** .522	** .357

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

influence of their closest friends suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between the FMS scores and the strength of Christian influence among their peers. Subjects who report medium or strong Christian influence from their closest friends have a higher FMS score mean than those who report no Christian influence among their closest friends. The mean FMS scores is 4.42 (*n* = 18) for those with no perceived Christian influence among their closest friends, 4.77 (*n* = 35) for those who report “little Christian influence” among their closest friends, 5.01 (*n* = 50) for those who report “medium Christian influence” among their closest friends, and 4.99 (*n* = 22) for those who report “strong Christian influence” among their closest friends. The level of significance is stronger for the mean difference between those with medium Christian influence and those with no Christian influence (.010 significance) than it is for the mean

difference between strong Christian influence and no Christian influence among their closest friends (.050) (Table 20).

Table 20. Subgroup comparison of mean FMS scores according to level of Christian influence among closest friends

(I) Peer Influence	(J) Peer Influence	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No Christian Influence	Little	-0.354	0.194	0.426	-0.876	0.167
	Medium	*-0.592	0.184	0.010	-1.086	-0.098
	Strong	*-0.572	0.213	0.050	-1.143	0.000
Little Christian Influence	No influence	0.354	0.194	0.426	-0.167	0.876
	Medium	-0.238	0.148	0.660	-0.634	0.158
	Strong	-0.217	0.182	1.000	-0.707	0.272
Medium Christian Influence	No influence	*0.592	0.184	0.010	0.098	1.086
	Little	0.238	0.148	0.660	-0.158	0.634
	Strong	0.020	0.172	1.000	-0.440	0.481
Strong Christian Influence	No influence	*0.572	0.213	0.050	-0.000	1.143
	Little	0.217	0.182	1.000	-0.272	0.707
	Medium	-0.020	0.172	1.000	-0.481	0.440

Note: Bonferroni post hoc test

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient between these two factors is also significant with a correlation of .266 and a significance of .003 ($n = 125$).

There are two likely explanations for this relationship. It is possible that the presence of Christian friends strengthens the faith maturity of the subjects thus impacting their FMS scores. It is also possible that those with more mature faith are more likely to

choose Christian friends or that some sort of reciprocal relationship exists. Regardless, the presence of medium or strong Christian influence among their peers is a statistically significant predictor of faith maturity among first year students at a Christian college. It is also noteworthy that for the sample of those with youth ministry involvement ($n = 111$), there is no statistically significant relationship between faith maturity and peer influence using either an ANOVA or a Pearson correlation coefficient.

An examination of the correlation between FMS scores and the youth ministry factor composite scores based on the peer influence subgroups reveals a few noteworthy findings (Table 21).

Table 21. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian peer influence

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>			
	No Infl. ($n = 10$)	Little ($n = 31$)	Medium ($n = 49$)	Strong ($n = 21$)
Relationships	-.032	.265	** .476	** .798
Balanced Programming	-.148	* .378	** .506	.425
Worship	.070	.000	.028	.034
Instruction	-.210	** .496	.273	.373
Fellowship	-.326	.247	** .492	.147
Evangelism	-.103	* .418	** .371	* .513
Service	.024	.349	** .461	.408
Spiritual Disciplines	-.239	** .457	* .319	.372

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

First, those who reported “medium Christian influence” among their closest friends had the pattern of significance that most closely matched the overall sample. As with the

overall sample, there was a Pearson correlation at the 0.01 level for the factors of relationships, balanced programming, fellowship, evangelism, and service. Also similar to the correlations for the overall sample, there was no correlation between worship and faith maturity. The differences in correlation patterns were that the spiritual disciplines factor correlated only at the 0.05 level and that instruction failed to reach a level of statistical significance. The second noteworthy finding was that for those who reported “strong Christian influence” among their peers, only the relationship factor, which only included relationships with adults involved with the church or youth ministry, and evangelism reached the level of statistical significance. This may be because the sample size for the subgroup was small ($n = 21$). But it may also indicate that those with strong Christian friends benefit less from the elements of a balanced program or the instruction in the use of the spiritual disciplines. The third and final noteworthy finding was that for those reporting “little Christian influence” among their closest friends the factors with the strongest correlations with faith maturity were instruction, which did not reach the level of significance for the other three subgroups, and spiritual disciplines, which reached significance at the 0.05 level for those in the medium Christian influence group and no significance for the strong Christian influence group. It is also interesting to note that for the medium group, the relationship factor did not reach a level of significance. This suggests that for those with little Christian influence among their peers, instruction and the spiritual disciplines plays a more prominent role in growth toward faith maturity, compensating for the lack of a peers who support the adolescent’s faith.

An examination of the frequency related questions also revealed a few noteworthy findings (Table 22). First, though the composite score for instruction reached

Table 22. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by level of Christian peer influence

<i>Question</i>	<i>r</i>			
	No Infl. (<i>n</i> = 10)	Little (<i>n</i> = 31)	Medium (<i>n</i> = 49)	Strong (<i>n</i> = 21)
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	.422	.318	** .446	** .717
11. Worshipping God through singing	-.010	.164	-.013	.224
12. Teaching/Learning activities	.018	.294	.173	.171
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	.134	.211	.265	* .468
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	-.258	-.011	** .465	.118
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	.398	.348	* .351	** .576
16. Serving within the ministry	.457	.164	* .361	.146
17. Serving others outside the youth group	.040	.016	.226	.421
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	-.037	* .434	** .384	.148
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	.263	.320	.171	** .591

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

significance at the 0.01 level for those with “little Christian influence” among their closest friends, the frequency of instruction did not reach significance. The strength of this factor seems to be based on the related Likert-response items with “the teaching in my youth group helped me understand the Bible” reaching a significance of .002 and “the teaching in my youth group dealt with real life issues” a significance of .043. Thus, for

those with little Christian influence among their peers, frequency of teaching is not as significant as the qualities of the teaching activities.

Second, the frequency of “praying aloud with others in the group” was significant at the 0.05 level for those with little Christian influence among their peers and at the 0.01 level for those with medium Christian influence among their peers, but did not demonstrate a significant correlation for those with strong Christian influence among their peers. Instead, those with strong Christian influence among peers demonstrated a strong correlation between faith maturity and “spending time in silent prayer/meditation” but no correlation for “praying aloud with others in the group.” Here it seems that those with less Christian influence among their friends benefit from the social interaction that comes from praying aloud with others in the youth group, compensating for the lack of support for their faith from their friends. Whereas those with strong support for their faith from their peers need this less and benefit more from silent prayer and meditation.

Number of Years as a Christian

Contrary to what one would expect, there is little relationship between the number of years subjects considered themselves to be a Christian and their FMS scores. In analyzing the means for the four groups – “I do not consider myself to be a Christian,” “0-3 years,” “4-7 years,” and “8 or more years” – using an ANOVA with a Bonferroni post hoc test the only statistically significant difference (.034) is between “0-3 years” and “4-7 years” (Table 23). All other comparisons of means among these subgroups are not statistically significant. The Pearson correlation between the number of years as a Christian and their FMS scores also reveals no correlation. This lack of relationship may be due to the fact that “Christian” is a broad concept with most American adolescents

Table 23. Subgroup comparison of mean FMS scores according to number of years as a Christian

(I) Years Christian	(J) Years Christian	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Not Christian	0-3 years	0.397	0.399	1.000	-0.674	1.469
	4-7 years	-0.297	0.359	1.000	-1.262	0.667
	8+ years	0.057	0.346	1.000	-0.870	0.985
0-3 years	Not Chr.	-0.397	0.399	1.000	-1.469	0.674
	4-7 years	*-0.695	0.247	0.034	-1.356	-0.033
	8+ years	-0.340	0.226	0.815	-0.947	0.267
4-7 years	Not Chr.	0.297	0.359	1.000	-0.667	1.262
	0-3 years	*0.695	0.247	0.034	0.033	1.356
	8+ years	0.355	0.144	0.092	-0.032	0.742
8 or more years	Not Chr.	-0.057	0.346	1.000	-0.985	0.870
	0-3 years	0.340	0.226	0.815	-0.267	0.947
	4-7 years	-0.355	0.144	0.092	-0.742	0.032

Note: Bonferroni post hoc test

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

identifying themselves as such (Smith et al. 2002, 600). This could also explain why there is a significant difference for those who had been a Christian four to seven years. Given that the sample is made up of first year college students, those in the “4-7 year” category would likely have had some experience to mark the beginning of their life as a Christian that would have come when they were 11-14 years of age. This suggests that they have a greater understanding of Christianity than one who considers oneself to be a Christian but has no understanding of or commitment to the Christian life. It is also

possible that those with a conversion experience have greater faith maturity, but that is beyond the scope of this research and data.

Analyzing the patterns of correlation between the youth ministry factors and faith maturity according to the subgroups based on the number of years as a Christian, the subgroup of eight years or more, the largest of these subgroups ($n = 73$), matches the correlation pattern of the overall sample with seven of the eight factors demonstrating significance at the 0.01 level (Table 24).

Table 24. Youth ministry factors: Correlation with FMS scores by number of years as a Christian

<i>Youth Ministry Factors</i>	<i>r</i>			
	Not Chr. ¹ ($n = 1$)	0-3 yrs. ($n = 8$)	4-7 yrs. ($n = 29$)	8+ years ($n = 73$)
Relationships	--	*.765	*.376	** .441
Balanced Programming	--	-.011	** .495	** .448
Worship	--	-.240	.117	.106
Instruction	--	.211	*.368	** .388
Fellowship	--	-.367	*.395	** .366
Evangelism	--	.288	** .623	** .330
Service	--	.119	*.409	** .437
Spiritual Disciplines	--	-.038	.292	** .460

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

¹ Unable to calculate correlation coefficients due to small sample size

As with the overall sample the only factor that did not demonstrate a statistically significant correlation was the worship subfactor of balanced programming. For the subgroup of “4-7 years” as a Christian ($n = 29$), the pattern shifts with only the factor of

balanced programming and the subfactor of evangelism reaching a Pearson correlation that was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. For this subgroup, the spiritual disciplines factor, like the worship factor does not reach statistical significance. The differences between the two patterns may be due to the limited size of the sample. Sample size also likely explains why only one factor reached significance for the subgroup of “0-3 years” as a Christian which had a sample size of 8.

Examining the correlations of the frequency related questions with the FMS scores according to these subgroups also reveals some interesting comparisons, particularly for the “8+ years” subgroup (Table 25). For this subgroup, eight of the ten questions demonstrate a correlation at the 0.01 level, two more than for the overall sample. Thus, the factors, as theorized by youth ministry writers, demonstrate a closer fit for those who have been a Christian longer.

It is also surprising that the item “worshiping God through singing” demonstrates a statistically significant correlation at the 0.05 level for this subgroup, the only place in the study where this factor rises to the level of significance. As longtime Christians, possibly never knowing themselves not to be a Christian, this group is likely to have more experience with worship. This experience may give them a deeper understanding of the nature and forms of worship, enabling them to appropriate its benefits more effectively. Those with less experience may need more instruction in worship in order to experience its transformative aspects. Those who plan and lead worship may also need to take into consideration the needs of those with less experience.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the relationship between youth

Table 25. Frequency questions: Correlation with FMS scores by number of years as a Christian

Question	<i>r</i>			
	Not Chr. ¹ (<i>n</i> = 1)	0-3 yrs. (<i>n</i> = 8)	4-7 yrs. (<i>n</i> =29)	8+ years (<i>n</i> =73)
10. Talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics	--	** .909	* .462	** .473
11. Worshiping God through singing	--	-.131	-.001	* .240
12. Teaching/Learning activities	--	-.021	.193	** .357
13. Attending fun/recreational activities	--	.406	.190	** .308
14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics	--	-.198	.020	** .421
15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them	--	.483	** .476	** .343
16. Serving within the ministry	--	-.276	.296	** .388
17. Serving others outside the youth group	--	.359	.157	.158
18. Praying aloud with others in the group	--	-.068	.257	** .407
19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer	--	.324	.087	** .465

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

¹ Unable to calculate correlation coefficients due to small sample size

ministry involvement and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school. The design for this study was quantitative in nature and utilized a paper based survey, the YMIS, to collect data for statistical analysis related to the purpose and research questions. This survey was then administered to students enrolled in a required freshmen orientation course at “Alpha College,” a CCCU-affiliated school in the Midwest region of the United States. The following evaluation of the research design will

address the strengths and weaknesses of this study, as well as make recommendations for replication.

The foundational nature of this study reflects both a strength and a weakness. Because little formal research has been conducted into the nature of youth ministry, this study addressed multiple characteristics providing a broad perspective on youth ministry theory and direction for future research. This may also be seen as a weakness of the study in that these variables are examined with limited depth. While further measures could have been added to the study to gain additional data, this might have made the survey too long to complete given the time constraints and may have further complicated statistical analysis. Additional research will be needed to examine each variable in greater depth.

The size of the sample, with 125 surveys accurately completed and 111 respondents having had experience in a Christian youth ministry, was adequate for statistical analysis of research questions one and two. However, the sample size was not large enough or diverse enough to allow for extensive subgroup analysis based on school type, youth ministry type, home influence, peer influence, and number of years since conversion in research question 3. Yet some insight was gained by comparing the patterns of correlation of the larger subgroups with the patterns for the overall sample. The participation rate for the survey was also high with only one subject declining to participate and five subjects unable to participate due to the age limitation. The nearly even division between males and females allowed for significant analysis based on gender.

In a replication of this study, a larger sample might be obtained by administering the survey at additional colleges, possibly with larger numbers of students.

This increase in numbers may make some subgroup analysis possible, particularly with the peer influence variable and number of years since conversion. It may also be necessary to administer the survey to a different population using a stratified random sampling technique. This might make it possible to examine the school type, since the majority of adolescents attend public schools, and youth ministry type.

The measurement of the multiple variables was also effective, though some measures could be improved. The combination of frequency related questions and Likert-response items used to measure the subjects involvement with the youth ministry variables provided multiple insights into the nature of youth ministry. This combination allowed the study to explore aspects that would have been missed with only one type of question. The questions were also written in a way that was understandable to the subjects. The FMS also seemed to be a strong measure of faith maturity and was understandable for the subjects. The two variables that could have been examined more effectively are Christian influence of peers and Christian influence of the home. The measures for each of these variables each included one question, which was based on the subjects' assessment of these influences. Though this may be adequate, addressing other more objective measures such as peer church attendance and family devotional practices may increase the reliability of these measures.

Other suggestions for improvement of the research design involve the instrument and a few of its questions. The questions regarding the number of years as a Christian and the number of youth ministry activities attended in an average month could benefit from a broader range of response items since distribution of the responses in the study skewed to the top end of each range. Since several surveys were eliminated because

subjects missed an item, the survey may also benefit from the use of a larger font and more spacing between some items. Finally, tabulation of the data would be more efficient through the used of an optical mark reader form and/or the inclusion of numerical values for the Likert-response items and categorical data.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the findings of this current study of the relationship between youth ministry involvement and Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) scores are analyzed in light of previous research and the practice of youth ministry. Specifically, this concluding chapter reviews the findings of each research question, discusses implications for an understanding of the precedent literature, proposes applications for the practice of youth ministry, and makes suggestions for further research in this area of interest.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the relationship between youth ministry involvement and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) affiliated school. The following research questions have guided the gathering and analysis of data for this study:

1. What involvement do first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school report with youth ministry factors (relationships, balanced programming, encouragement and equipping in the use of spiritual disciplines)?
2. What is the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school?
3. In what ways, if any, do intervening variables (home influence, peer influence, type of school attended, number of years since conversion, type of youth ministry) influence the relationship between involvement with youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of first-year students attending a CCCU-affiliated school?

Involvement with the Youth Ministry Factors

The first research question examined the involvement that first-year students at a Christian college had with the youth ministry factors during their secondary school years. This included two aspects of involvement – the frequency with which the subjects experienced these factors and the subjects’ assessment of these factors within their youth ministries. An analysis of the findings related to this research question may reveal areas of relative strength and weakness in the practice of contemporary youth ministry and provide direction for the future training of youth workers and the development of their ministries. The youth ministry factors addressed include relationships, balanced programming, and encouragement and equipping in the use of the spiritual disciplines. The data related to this question is presented in Tables 2-6.

Relationships with Adults

In this study, subjects report considerable interaction with Christian adults and strong relationships with the youth pastor/director, with other adults within the youth ministry, and even to some extent with Christian adults outside the youth ministry. Though the majority (53.1%) report “talking with an adult in the youth ministry about life issues and spiritual things” only “occasionally” or “monthly,” they do report some level of interaction with youth ministers and/or adult leaders. An additional 42.3% report having these conversations “weekly” or “more than once per week.” Only 4.5% report “never” having significant conversations with an adult in a youth ministry. Given the importance placed on relationships in youth ministry in the precedent literature, it is encouraging to see the level of interaction between adolescents and Christian adults.

The one aspect of the relationship factor that may need attention is helping adolescents develop connections within the church as a whole. Among those involved in a youth ministry, 42.3% report that they are neutral or disagree with the statement regarding whether they have a strong relationship with a Christian adult not including their parents or those involved in a youth ministry. Most youth ministry theorists acknowledge the need to help students establish a broader network of relationships within the church. In this sample, a significant percentage does not appear to have such a network.

Balanced Programming

The balanced programming factor examined the aspects of youth ministry programming experienced by the sample as well as some qualities of these programs. These aspects include worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service.

The findings of this research suggest that “worshipping God through singing” is the most frequently experienced of youth ministry factors and the balanced programming sub-factors with 82.9% saying that they experienced this either “weekly” or “more than once a week.” The subjects also “agree” (27.9%) or “strongly agree” (45.9%) that worship is “teen friendly” with a band and contemporary music, and that youth are involved in leading worship (81.2% “agree” or “strongly agree”). Though the precedent literature writers may applaud this high frequency of worship, the lack of a correlation between participation in worship and faith maturity, discussed under research question two, calls into question this frequency of worship or at least the way that worship is conducted within contemporary youth ministries.

Instruction, the second aspect of balanced youth ministry programming, is also frequently experienced with 70.2% of subjects reporting that they experienced “teaching/learning activities” in their youth ministries either “weekly” or “more than once per week.” They also report that instruction within their youth ministries dealt with issues relevant to their lives and that the instruction included opportunities for discussion. The lowest rated item related to instruction was whether the teaching in their youth ministries helped them to understand the Bible, though a significant percentage responded with either “agree” or “strongly agree” (72%). Thus instruction seems to be strong both in frequency and in the qualities explored.

Fellowship, the third aspect of balanced youth ministry programming, was also strong, even though it was experienced somewhat less frequently. Subjects attended fun/recreational events monthly on average with 45% attending “weekly” or “more than once per week.” They engaged in conversation with their peers in the youth ministry about life issues and spiritual things more often with 69.5% reporting having such conversations “weekly” or “more than once per week.” And at least 70% agreed or strongly agreed that the students in their youth group were welcoming to new people, that they felt close to the other students, and that their peers were supportive of group members experiencing problems.

Regarding evangelism, the fourth aspect of balanced youth ministry programming, the results of the study were mixed. Though the majority of subjects agreed or strongly agreed that their youth ministry taught them how to explain their faith (64.9%), encouraged them to share their faith (76.6%), and that their youth ministry was a comfortable place to bring friends (59.5%), 63.1% either “never” or “occasionally”

invited their non-Christian friends to outreach activities. This may be because activities designed for this purpose were not planned often or because the training was ineffective or insufficient in overcoming interpersonal barriers to participation in evangelism. Regardless of the reason, this aspect of balanced programming requires further attention in youth ministries.

Subjects were also involved less often in service related activities, the fifth and final aspect of balanced programming, than in the first three aspects. The average response of subjects suggests that they serve “monthly” within the youth ministry with only 38.6% serving “weekly” or “more than once per week.” The frequency of serving outside the youth group was lower with 76.5% serving “occasionally” or “monthly” and only 11.7% serving outside the youth group “weekly” or “more than once per week.” This lower frequency of service outside the group is likely due to the lower frequency of this type of activity being planned in youth ministries. Despite this lower frequency of service, high percentages of subjects agreed or strongly agreed that the youth ministry provided opportunities for service within the group (79.3%), provided opportunities to serve outside the group (74.8%), and helped them identify their spiritual gifts (50.4%).

Spiritual Disciplines

The third and final youth ministry factor is the encouragement and equipping of students to practice the spiritual disciplines. In this area, subjects report high frequencies of prayer both aloud (54% either “weekly” or “more than weekly”) and silently (64.8%) within the youth ministry. They also report strong encouragement to practice the spiritual disciplines daily (84.7% either “agree” or “strongly agree”), but lesser assistance in developing these disciplines. A majority of subjects agreed or

strongly agreed that their youth ministries taught them how to pray (66.6%) and study the Bible (66.6%) on their own. Less than half (46.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that their youth ministries provided resources to practice the spiritual disciplines. Thus, while the encouragement to practice the spiritual disciplines is strong, more could be done to help youth ministry students follow through on that encouragement.

Youth Ministry Involvement and Faith Maturity

The second research question analyzed the relationship between the subjects' involvement with the youth ministry factors and their FMS scores. Using the Pearson correlation coefficients, for those involved in a youth ministry ($n = 111$), there were statistically significant relationships at the 0.01 level between the composite scores for each of the three youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of subjects. This is also true for four of the five balanced programming sub-factors. The only aspect of balanced programming that did not demonstrate a correlation was the worship subfactor. Data related to this research question is presented in Tables 7-12.

The correlations for the frequency items generally follows this same pattern with statistically significant relationships between faith maturity and nine of the ten items. Again, the frequency of worship failed to reach significance. Also, the frequency of participating in "teaching/learning activities," "talking with peers about life issues and spiritual topics," and "serving others outside the group" were significant only at the 0.05 level.

Gender-based subgroup analysis of the correlations between involvement with the youth ministry factors and the FMS scores of subjects also revealed some interesting gender-based differences. The pattern of correlation for females largely followed the

pattern of correlation for the overall sample. All three factors and four of the five balanced programming subfactors demonstrated Pearson correlations at the 0.01 level, with worship not demonstrating a correlation. The only differences between females and the overall sample for the frequency of involvement were that “serving within the ministry” and “praying aloud with others” demonstrated a correlation at the 0.05 level instead of the 0.01 level and “serving others outside the group” demonstrated a correlation at the 0.01 level instead of the 0.05 level. These minor differences aside, for females, involvement with the youth ministry factors demonstrates a strong correlation with faith maturity.

In comparison, for males, none of the youth ministry factors or balanced programming subfactors achieves significance at the 0.01 level. Only the relationships and balanced programming factors and the evangelism and service subfactors achieve significance at the 0.05 level. For the frequency items, only “praying aloud with others in the group” achieves significance at the 0.01 level, though “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics” and “inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them” demonstrates significance at the 0.05 level. Thus, in spite of the fact that the two gender-based subgroups had nearly equal sample sizes, comparable mean FMS scores, and similar involvement with the youth ministry factors, the relationship between youth ministry involvement and faith maturity is significantly different.

Influence of Intervening Variables

The third research question analyzed the influence that intervening variables – type of secondary school attended, type of youth ministry attended, home influence, peer influence, and number of years as a Christian – had on the relationship between

involvement with the youth ministry factors and the FMS scores. This research question was approached by first analyzing the relationship between the intervening variables and faith maturity, and second by conducting subgroup analyses of the relationship between involvement with the youth ministry factors and faith maturity based on each of the intervening variables. The data for this question is presented in Tables 13-24.

Intervening Variables and Faith Maturity

First, the relationship between each intervening variable and faith maturity was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA, with a Bonferroni post hoc test, as well as the Pearson correlation coefficient when appropriate. Based on this analysis, three of the five intervening variables demonstrated some level of relationship with faith maturity. The two intervening variables that did not were the type of secondary school attended and the level of Christian influence in the home.

For the intervening variable of youth ministry type, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean FMS scores for those involved with a church-based youth ministry and those not involved in a youth ministry and between those equally involved in both a church-based and parachurch-based youth ministry and those not involved in a youth ministry. In both cases, the mean FMS scores for those involved in youth ministry were higher than for those who were not. Also for this variable, the size of the sample for the parachurch subgroup was not large enough to calculate meaningful relationships.

For the entire sample ($n = 125$), there is also a statistically significant relationship between faith maturity and the strength of Christian influence among their closest friends. Those who report medium or strong Christian influence among their

closest friends have higher mean FMS scores than those who report no Christian influence among their closest friends. This relationship is also seen in the Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables, which is .266 with a significance of .003. However, for the sample of those involved in a youth ministry ($n = 111$), no statistically significant relationship was found using either the ANOVA or the Pearson correlation coefficient.

When considering the relationship between faith maturity and the number of years as a Christian, the only statistically significant difference in mean FMS scores is between those who reported being a Christian “0-3 years” and those who reported being a Christian “4-7 years” with the later having the higher mean. No relationship was found between the number of years as a Christian and faith maturity using a Pearson correlation coefficient.

Subgroup Analysis – Youth Ministry Factors and Faith Maturity

Second, the relationship between involvement with the youth ministry factors and faith maturity was examined based on the intervening variable subgroups. Though some insights were gained through this analysis, the small size of some subgroups limited the ability to draw significant conclusions.

For the type of secondary school attended, the public or private non-Christian subgroup, the largest of the school-based subgroups ($n = 87$), revealed a pattern of correlation similar to that of the overall sample. Though the small size of the Christian school subgroup ($n = 17$) limited analysis, the most significant youth ministry factors related to faith maturity were relational in nature, with the frequency items of “talking

with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics,” “attending fun/recreational activities,” and “talking with peers about life issues and spiritual topics” all correlating with faith maturity at the 0.01 level of significance. For the youth ministry factors, only fellowship, which deals with peer relationships within the youth group, achieved this level of significance. No statistically significant relationships between involvement with the youth ministry factors and faith maturity were found for the home-schooled subgroup, likely due to the small sample size ($n = 7$).

Subgroup analysis based on youth ministry type revealed no helpful data since the church-based subgroup ($n = 94$) made up such a large portion of the overall sample ($n = 111$). As would be expected, the patterns of correlation for the church-based subgroup matched the overall sample and left the other subgroups with samples that were too small for meaningful analysis.

For the subgroups based on the level of Christian influence in the home, a few interesting insights emerge. Though the relationship factor achieves significance for three of the four subgroups, it does not for those with “medium Christian influence” in the home and it is stronger for those with “strong Christian influence” in the home with significance at the 0.01 level. The correlations between faith maturity and frequency of involvement with “teaching and learning activities” and “attending fun/recreational activities” are only significant for those reporting “medium Christian influence” in the home. The relationships between faith maturity and “talking with peers about life issues and spiritual topics” and between faith maturity and “spending time in silent meditation/prayer” within the youth group are only significant for those reporting “strong Christian influence” in the home. Few statistically significant relationships emerge

between faith maturity and the youth ministry factors for those reporting little or no Christian influence in the home. This is likely due to the small size of these subgroups.

For the subgroup analysis according to the level of Christian influence among their closest friends, the “medium Christian influence” subgroup demonstrated a pattern of correlation between faith maturity and the youth ministry factors that most closely matched the pattern of correlation for the overall sample. The two exceptions were that the subfactor of instruction failed to reach significance and that the spiritual discipline factor was significant at the 0.05 level instead of the 0.01 level as with the overall sample. For the “strong Christian influence” subgroup, the only factor that reached significance at the 0.01 level was the relationship factor. Finally, for the “little Christian influence” subgroup, the factors which achieved significance at the 0.01 level were the spiritual disciplines factor and the instruction subfactor. This is interesting in that these factors had a stronger correlation than did the relationship factor, which tended to have the strongest correlation throughout the study. For the frequency items, it is interesting to note that “praying aloud with others in the group” correlated at the 0.01 level for the “medium Christian influence” subgroup while there was only a correlation at the 0.05 level of the “little Christian influence” subgroup and no correlation for the “strong Christian influence” subgroup. In contrast, “spending time in silent meditation/prayer demonstrated a correlation at the 0.01 level for the “strong Christian influence” subgroup but no correlation for the other subgroups.

Finally, for the subgroup analysis according to the number of years as a Christian, the pattern of correlation between involvement with the youth ministry factors and faith maturity for the “8+ years” subgroup matched that of the overall sample with

only the worship subfactor not reaching a statistically significant correlation. For the “4-7 years” subgroup, only the balanced programming factor and the evangelism subfactor reach a correlation with faith maturity at the 0.01 level, while four additional factors and subfactors reach significance at the 0.05 level. The only factor in addition to worship that does not reach statistical significance is the spiritual discipline factor. Examining the correlations between faith maturity and the frequency of involvement with the youth ministry factors, for the “8+ years” subgroup, all items reach significance with the exception of “serving others outside the youth group.” Also, this is the only place in the study where involvement with worship demonstrates a statistically significant relationship with faith maturity. It was not possible to calculate meaningful correlation coefficients for the “not Christian” and “0-3 years” subgroups related to this variable due to the small size of the sample.

Research Implications

In light of the concern that youth ministry theoreticians, practitioners, and other church leaders have for the maturation of faith among adolescents, the intent of this study has been to examine the role that youth ministry plays in that maturation process. In doing this, it addresses a gap in the research on adolescent faith and provides empirical insight into the validity of contemporary youth ministry theory.

Compliments Previous Research

Existing research approaches the topic of adolescent faith from a variety of perspectives and approaches. One group of studies examines the factors influencing the faith of adolescents by asking subjects to identify the experiences, programs, and

relationships that most influenced their faith (Getz and Zuck 1969, 42; Lamport 1990, 19-20; Currie 1995, 12). The factors identified included such things as relationships with various Christian adults such as a pastor, parent, or teacher; participation in specific programs such as Sunday school, Christian camp, choir, and youth group; and the influence of peers.

This present study complements this research by focusing on specific aspects of youth ministry programming, aspects that may be common among a variety of types of activities. Thus, while other studies may have identified youth group meetings, Sunday school, and camps as factors influencing adolescent faith, the findings of this study identify the aspects of these programs that may account for this influence. In these programs, adolescents are enabled to establish relationships with Christian adults, experience the balanced programming elements of instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service, and are encouraged and equipped to practice the spiritual disciplines.

This study also complements these research efforts by providing a more reliable measure of relationship between the factors and faith maturity. In some cases, researchers asked subjects to rate or rank a variety of factors for their influence on their faith. This provides an indication of the perception of influence of the subjects in the studies. But it does not measure the relationship between involvement with the factor and faith maturity. Currie, in his study of adolescent faith, utilized an approach similar to this by analyzing the relationship between involvement and two other measures of religiosity, the Shepherd Scale and the Spiritual Well-being Scale (Currie 1995, 248). But his study focuses on more general factors as well as a different population; adults who were converted during adolescence.

Another set of studies examined congregational factors influencing the faith maturity of adolescents (Rice and Gillespie 1992; Bensen and Eklin 1990). Similar to this current study, these studies used the FMS to measure faith maturity as a dependent variable in order to determine the relationship that various aspects of church ministries have with faith maturity. These studies focused primarily on general characteristics of congregations, but did not examine factors emerging from youth ministry theory. This current study thus provides complementary findings by examining youth ministry strategies for facilitating faith maturity in adolescents.

Examination of Youth Ministry Theory

In one additional effort to understand the factors influencing the faith maturity of adolescents, Erickson developed and tested a theoretical model of the religious development and commitment of adolescents. The model included a variety of parental, home, peer, and church factors. The study found that participation in religious education had a strong correlation with faith maturity, but it did not address the nature of religious education (Erickson 1992, 132).

This current study has extended this line of research by further examination of the influence of religious education through the lens of youth ministry theory. Its findings tend to support much of youth ministry theory, which suggests that involvement with three factors will foster spiritual maturity in adolescents – relationships with Christian adults, balanced programming, and encouragement and equipping in the use of the spiritual disciplines.

Relationships

The first youth ministry factor considered in this study was the theory that a strong relationship between an adolescent and a Christian adult will positively impact the faith maturity of that adolescent (Senter 1997a, 123-27; Burns 2001, 23-25; Dean and Foster 1998, 26; DeVries 2001, 148-51). Though, based on this research, one cannot determine cause and effect, the strong correlation between faith maturity and involvement in such a relationship certainly supports this theory. In fact, this relationship factor demonstrated the strongest correlation of all the factors and subfactors considered in the study. There is also support within this study for the equipping of laypersons to engage in relational ministry with adolescents. Contrary to what one would expect, having a strong relationship with the youth pastor/director has a lower level of correlation with faith maturity than does having a strong relationship with another Christian adult involved in the ministry, though both are statistically significant.

Balanced Programming

The second youth ministry factor considered in this study was the theory that involvement in programming among five areas – worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service – will facilitate the faith maturity of adolescents (Fields 1998, 47-51; Dettoni 1993, 29-30, 73-74, 95-103, 105-11; Black 1991, 42-44; Livermore 2001, 59-68; Martinson 1988, 20-27). The findings of this study support this theory with one caveat. There is a statistically significant correlation between faith maturity and the balanced programming factor and four of the five subfactors, the exception being worship.

The finding that worship within the context of the youth ministry does not correlate with faith maturity presents a problem for contemporary youth ministry and should move youth ministry theorists to examine both the theory and practice of worship in a youth ministry setting. In fact, some have already begun this exploration. Noting the increased emphasis on worship in contemporary youth ministry, Senter questions whether the understanding of worship as synonymous with corporate singing and prayer is what God intended (Senter 2001, xi). Similarly, Hart suggests that the current understanding of worship is limited and that an effort should be made to broaden the conception of worship to include living all of life as an act of service to God (Hart 1997, 472). Leafblad, writing about worship from a broader perspective, points out that changing the externals of how we worship does not lead to renewal in worship. Thus, in a youth ministry, the worship may be more teen friendly, but this does not necessarily lead to a change in the hearts of the students who participate (Leafblad 2003, www.ccli.com). Finally, Mueller points to the influence of culture on worship by suggesting that the way adolescents experience popular music concerts has an influence on the way they experience worship. In an analysis of the appeal of one band popular among today's adolescents, the Dave Matthews Band, he states,

DMB reflects the emerging postmodern worldview, including an emphasis on feeling as a means to discovering truth, and positive emotional experience as an aspiration and end. When fans assemble for the concerts, the dancing, singing, and smiling reflect that participants are having an uplifting experience. Reaching those emotional heights become the end of the experience. As this phenomenon becomes more and more ingrained in our culture, we need to be aware that those who hold it will carry it into every nook and cranny of their lives. We should be concerned that the same attitude might be creeping into the church, specifically at the level of corporate worship. It's a question that must be asked: Is emotionally charged worship that emphasizes the experiences of the worshiper as the end, any different from what happens at a DMB concert? If our worship has gone from worshipping God to worshipping worship, then it's no different. If our answer to the question

“What made that a great worship service?” is nothing more than “It made *me* feel good!” then we’ve got to re-examine our focus. (Mueller 2002, www.cypu.org)

Regardless of problems that may exist in our understanding and practice of worship, it is clear that worship must not be abandoned within the context of the youth ministry. That is because the practice of corporate worship is depicted throughout Scripture (Ps 100:1-5; Acts 2:42-47; Col 1:28-29) and parallels the activity of God’s people throughout all of eternity (Rev 4:6-11; 5:9-14). Instead, worship in the youth ministry must be examined and revitalized in accordance with biblical foundations.

In addition, the findings of this research also suggest that corporate worship, even with its current problems, serves a purpose in youth ministry. Though there is no correlation between worship and faith maturity, the use of a band, contemporary music, and student leadership in worship correlates with the frequency of involvement with worship. This suggests that if worship is appealing to adolescents, it may attract them to the youth ministry where they can encounter the other aspects of youth ministry that do correlate with faith maturity. In other words, adolescents may attend a youth ministry because of the worship, but they benefit more from the relationships, programming, and training in the practice of the spiritual disciplines.

Spiritual Disciplines

The third and final youth ministry factor considered in this study was the theory that encouraging and equipping adolescents to practice the spiritual disciplines would positively impact their faith maturity (Fields 156-64; Marcum 2001, 7-17). The findings of this research support this theory to some extent. While the factor score demonstrates a strong correlation with faith maturity, encouraging students to pray and

read the Bible daily had a lower correlation with faith maturity (.193, .042 significance). The items within this factor that demonstrated the strongest correlation with faith maturity were the frequency of prayer, whether silent or aloud within the ministry. Thus, practicing the spiritual disciplines in a corporate context had a stronger relationship with faith maturity than did verbal encouragement to practice the disciplines.

Other Aspects of Youth Ministry Theory

Though much of contemporary youth ministry theory is supported by this research, three additional insights emerge that address other aspects of contemporary youth ministry theory.

Gender Differences

The gender differences that emerged in this study present a challenge to contemporary youth ministry theory. Though most of the youth ministry factors and subfactors demonstrated a positive correlation for females in the study, there were few factors or subfactors which demonstrated a positive correlation for males. Even those that do correlate, the correlations are generally weaker, at the 0.05 level instead of the 0.01 level. This is in spite of the finding that there are few gender-based differences related to the involvement of subjects with the factors and that there is no statistical difference in the mean FMS scores of the two genders. These differences suggest that there is a greater fit between contemporary youth ministry theory and the needs of adolescent females than there is for males.

Gender differences in religious participation are no surprise in the field of youth ministry. Empirical research and informal observation of church youth groups

suggests that females are more religiously involved than males. In a review of national statistics regarding the religious participation of adolescents, Smith et al. report that females are more likely to consider themselves religious, attend church services, and participate in youth group (Smith et al. 2002, 605). Forliti and Bensen found that females scored higher on every religious measurement in their study except one (Forliti and Bensen 1986, 221). Consistent with this present study, Erikson's effort to model the factors influencing adolescent faith found distinct differences between males and females. This included the finding that involvement in religious education was a positive factor related to faith maturity for females but not for males (Erickson 1992, 144-45).

It is possible that the findings of this present study offer an explanation for the gender-based differences in participation of adolescents in churches and youth groups. If there is a poor fit between a contemporary approach to youth ministry and the needs of males, it is no wonder that they participate in lower numbers and experience fewer benefits than do females. Perhaps it is time to reconsider today's "one-size-fits-all" approach to youth ministry. Though empirical research has revealed these gender-based differences, little has been done at the theoretical or practical level to address those differences. Additional research is needed to provide a greater understanding of the spiritual needs of adolescent males, an understanding that will lead to a more effective youth ministry practice.

Varied Needs

As with the gender differences, the results of this study suggests that youth ministry theory should begin to consider the varied needs of different groups. Though the findings of this research do not provide a complete understanding of the differences

between the various subgroups, they again suggest that youth ministry theory and practice should consider some adjustment to its current “one-sized-fits-all” approach to the spiritual formation of adolescents.

For instance, in examining the school-type subgroup analysis of the youth ministry factors, there are differences in the correlations with faith maturity of the fellowship related items of “attending fun/recreational activities” and “talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics” between those who attended a non-Christian school and those who attended a Christian school. For those attending a Christian school, these items demonstrate statistically significant relationships at the 0.01 level. In contrast, for those who attended a non-Christian school, only “attending fun/recreational activities” demonstrates a statistically significant relationship, and this at the lesser 0.05 level. This difference is also reflected in the correlation between faith maturity and the fellowship subfactor, with those in the Christian school subgroup demonstrating a correlation at the 0.01 level in comparison to the non-Christian school subgroup at the 0.05 level. This suggests that the peer relationships and social activities provided by the youth group play a stronger role in faith maturity for those attending a Christian school than for those attending a non-Christian school.

Though further research will be needed to clarify this and other differences between subgroups, it is possible that youth ministry programming can be tailored to fit the needs of particular groups of students in at least some cases. This does not necessarily mean that the current ministry efforts would need to be dismantled in favor of several more specialized groups. Perhaps those adults who are in shepherding relationships with adolescents could be trained to assess the needs of the student that they are mentoring and

then could encourage them to get involved in specific aspects of the program. Another way of tailoring the youth ministry to the needs of a particular subgroup would be to provide an activity or program to fit their specific needs. For instance, if further research discovered a unique need for instruction in adolescents schooled at home, a special class could be offered during normal school hours for these students. Regardless of the specific adjustments that need to be made, a more varied approach to the needs of adolescents should be considered.

Family-based Youth Ministry

Third, the results of this study speak to the current interest in family-based youth ministry. Recognizing the influence that families and parents have on the faith of adolescents, DeVries argues for the inclusion of parents in the ministry to their adolescents. He identifies two approaches to a family-based youth ministry. The family ministry model is “driven by a desire to empower families” for ministry to their adolescents and seeks to empower and equip families for this task. This approach often includes “ambulance programs,” which assist families in crisis, and “guardrail programs,” which seek to foster healthy families. The youth ministry model of family-based youth ministry is “driven primarily by a desire to see young people grow to maturity in Christ” and seeks to develop a “faith-nurturing community” that includes parents and other Christian adults (DeVries 2001, 150-51). In many ways, this effort to build a network of adult relationships for adolescents is similar to the relational emphasis in traditional youth ministry theory, with an added emphasis on partnering with parents in mutual ministry to their adolescents. DeVries and Burns suggest that this partnership include communicating with the parents about the direction of the ministry and events

being planned, encouraging and equipping parents for ministry to their children, involving parents in the ministry at a variety of levels, and reaching out to non-Christian parents (Burns and DeVries 2003, 19-30).

The findings of this current study support the youth ministry model of family-based youth ministry and do not support the family ministry model. This study found a statistically significant relationship between faith maturity and the presence of strong relationships with the youth pastor/director, other adults involved in the youth ministry, and Christian adults outside the youth ministry. It also found a strong relationship between faith maturity and the frequency of “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics” within the context of the youth group. Thus, as DeVries suggests, the presence of strong relationships with Christian adults may influence the faith maturity of adolescents. It also appears that involvement within a youth ministry increases the strength of relationships that adolescents have with Christian adults since subjects report having somewhat stronger relationships with Christian adults within the youth ministry than with non-parental Christian adults outside the youth ministry. These relationships in the youth ministry also have a stronger correlation with youth ministry than do the relationships with Christian adults outside the youth ministry, though both types of relationships are statistically significant. Thus, one of the functions of youth ministry is to provide the opportunity to develop these relationships and an environment that increases their effectiveness.

In contrast, this study found no relationship between faith maturity and the perceived level of Christian influence in the home. Though this may not support the influence of parents and family on the faith maturity of adolescent, it does not mean that

such influence does not exist. Erickson found that his “Parents’ Religious Influence” variable demonstrated no correlation with faith maturity for males and a small but negative correlation for females. This variable is similar to the home influence variable used in the present study in that it included two questions that asked respondents to rate the level of religious influence of each parent. It also included the parents in a ranking of twenty eight items that might be influential in their religious development. So it is not surprising that the present study found no relationship between faith maturity and the perceived level of Christian influence in the home. However, Erickson’s “Adolescent’s Home Religious Behavior” did demonstrate a strong influence on faith maturity for both males and females. This variable included an “index of public and private religious behaviors in the home” such as “frequency of prayer, Bible reading, other religious reading and family devotions” (Erickson 1992, 137-39, 143-46).

Research Applications

In addition to the implications for the precedent literature, this study also provides empirically-based insights for youth ministry practitioners and others seeking to facilitate the spiritual maturation of adolescents.

First, youth ministry practitioners should make it a primary goal to foster relationships between adolescents and mature Christian adults. Too often, youth ministry practitioners view the youth ministry as a set of programs or activities instead of as a network of relationships including both adolescents and Christian adults. Of the youth ministry factors and subfactors, the relationship factor demonstrated the highest level of correlation with faith maturity. The same is true when considering the frequency items, where “talking with an adult 1-on-1 about life issues and spiritual topics” achieves the

highest level of correlation with faith maturity. These relationships may be encouraged through a variety of means. Some ministries may seek to stimulate discussion between adolescents and Christian adults by incorporating discussion groups within their regular youth ministry activities. Others may establish adult-led small groups where adults seek to mentor, disciple, or pastor the adolescents in their group. This type of small group structure also has the benefit of providing a strategy that gives every willing adolescent the opportunity to establish a relationship with a Christian adult.

This study also found that having a strong relationship with the youth pastor/director had a lower, though still significant, correlation with faith maturity than did having a strong relationship with another adult involved with the ministry or with another Christian adult outside the youth ministry or the family. These findings should spur youth ministry leaders to recruit and train laypersons for relational ministry with adolescents and seek to facilitate adolescents' relationship within the broader congregation. This equipping role for the youth ministry leader is consistent with the biblical perspective on leadership which envisions leaders equipping the members of the church for mutual ministry (Eph 4:11-13).

Second, the results of this study provide a framework for the planning of programs and activities. It found a strong correlation between the balanced programming factor, which incorporates questions related to each of the five aspects of a balanced youth ministry program, and faith maturity. This suggests that by intentionally incorporating each of the five aspects of a balanced program, youth ministry leaders may be able to facilitate faith maturity among adolescents. Though these aspects may be

incorporated in a multitude of ways, it is important to make sure that each aspect is present.

Third, teaching, one of the most common aspects of youth ministry programming, should place a greater emphasis on helping students understand the Bible. Of the teaching related items in the study, this aspect demonstrated the strongest correlation with faith maturity, much stronger than do relevance and opportunities for discussion. In an effort to engage students, there is often a temptation to emphasize these other aspects of teaching. Though they are important, the central focus should be placed on helping students understand the Bible. Unfortunately, this study found that this aspect is the lowest rated of the teaching related items.

Fourth, the findings of this study highlight the importance of fun/recreational activities in youth ministry. Though the literature does not provide any significant exploration of the role that fun and recreational activities plays in youth ministry, this aspect deserves more attention. This study found that the frequency of involvement in “fun/recreational activities” interacted with faith maturity in two ways. First, participation in “fun/recreational activities” had a surprisingly strong direct correlation with faith maturity. This may suggest that having fun is essential to the success of youth ministry. This study also found a very strong correlation between “attending fun/recreational activities” and “inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them” which itself had a strong correlation to faith maturity. Thus, if youth ministry practitioners desire to reach non-Christian adolescents and stimulate the faith maturity of Christian adolescents, they should include “fun/recreational activities” into their youth ministry programming.

Fifth, for those whose goal is to encourage their students to share Christ with their non-Christian friends, verbal encouragement to do so seems largely ineffective. This item demonstrated no correlation with inviting their friends to outreach oriented activities. Instead, teaching students how to share their faith and creating an atmosphere that was comfortable for non-Christians both have a greater influence on inviting non-Christian friends, as does participation in recreational activities. Also, a variety of seemingly unrelated items in the study also related strongly to inviting friends. This includes serving in the ministry and praying aloud with other. So, youth ministry practitioners may be able to increase their effectiveness in evangelism by training youth to share their faith, cultivating a positive environment, and developing a strong ministry in the other areas.

Sixth, it is important that youth ministries help adolescents identify their spiritual gifts and provide opportunities for service within the youth ministry. Of all the items related to service in this study, these two demonstrated the strongest correlation with faith maturity, even stronger than the frequency of serving within the ministry. Though the ability to accurately determine an adolescent's spiritual gifts is questionable due to their lack of experience in ministry and their limited self-awareness, there is something that happens in this process that seems to contribute to faith maturity. It may be that the process itself facilitates self-reflection; especially reflection that focuses on how God has equipped the adolescent for a life of service to Himself and others. This process in and of itself may stimulate the faith of adolescents.

Seventh, the findings of this study suggest that giving students the opportunity to participate in prayer, whether silent or aloud, contributes significantly to faith maturity.

Here again, verbal encouragement to practice the disciplines had limited impact on faith maturity, though it did demonstrate a weaker though statistically significant correlation with faith maturity. Teaching students how to pray and providing them with resources also contribute to faith maturity. But it is the practice of the disciplines within the context of the youth group that seems to have the strongest effect. Thus, youth ministry practitioners would do well to incorporate these activities into the appropriate programs.

Finally, the findings of this study provide a framework for the training of youth ministry leaders. Those designing curriculum for youth ministry training would do well to focus on the foundational knowledge and skills associated with the aspects of youth ministry that were found to relate to faith maturity in adolescents. Youth ministry leaders should receive training in the following areas:

1. Mentoring adolescents.
2. Recruiting, training, and motivating laypersons for relational ministry with adolescents.
3. The leadership and administrative abilities required for planning and implementing a balanced youth ministry program.
4. Teaching and public speaking with an emphasis on helping adolescents understand the Bible.
5. Facilitating healthy, biblical community within the youth ministry.
6. Communicating the Gospel to an adolescent.
7. Helping adolescents understand the nature, purpose, and process for identifying one's spiritual gifts.
8. Helping adolescents understand and practice the classical spiritual disciplines, based on a theological foundation.

Further Research

The results of the current investigation provide direction and insight for further research into the relationship between youth ministry involvement and faith maturity. First, a replication of the current study may confirm or disconfirm these findings. In addition, it would also be helpful to use the current methodology with populations other than first-year students at a Christian college. Such alternative populations might include those who have advanced past the first year at a CCCU-affiliated school, who attend CCCU-affiliated schools in other regions of the country, who attend a secular university, or those who did not continue their education beyond the secondary level. Research among these other groups would provide a broader insight into youth ministry since these other choices of post-secondary activity may reflect different characteristics of the subjects. Similarly, the current methodology could be adapted for use with current secondary students. This approach would provide the opportunity for cross-sectional analysis according to age of the subjects.

Second, because the current study was broad in nature, it would be helpful to use a similar design to more thoroughly examine one of the aspects of youth ministry considered. For instance, the nature of the relationships between adults and the students involved in youth ministry could be examined. This might reveal insights into the way that the characteristics and practices of mentors interact with the faith maturity of adolescents. The one exception to this approach is in the area of worship, which, in the current study, did not demonstrate a significant relationship with faith maturity. Thus, it may be necessary to conduct more foundational research into the way that adolescents experience worship within the church and/or youth ministry. This type of study would be

more qualitative in nature, seeking to develop theory based on interviews with adolescents.

A third direction for further research would be to develop a longitudinal study to examine the relationship between youth ministry involvement and faith maturity over time. The study could begin with a cohort of early adolescents who would be surveyed every two years through the end of their secondary education. They could again be surveyed four and eight years after the completion of secondary education. This type of study might clarify the findings of the current study by revealing the direction of the relationships as well as their magnitudes.

Finally, since the current study found fewer and weaker correlations between involvement with the youth ministry factors and faith maturity among males, it will be important to examine the factors related to the faith maturity of adolescent males as well as the way that adolescent males experience youth ministry. This again could begin with a qualitative approach using interviews to develop a theory, followed by the use of surveys to broaden the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population.

APPENDIX 1

THE FAITH MATURITY SCALE

This section contains information related to the Faith Maturity Scale, the measurement instrument used to assess the faith maturity of participants. Included are the 38 items included in the scale, the items included in the two subscales, and a letter from the Search Institute describing the process for obtaining permission to utilize the instrument in the current study.

The Faith Maturity Scale

Instructions: How true is each of these statements for you? Mark one answer for each. Be as honest as possible, describing how true it really is and not how true you would like it to be. Choose from these responses: 1 = never true; 2 = rarely true; 3 = true once in a while; 4 = sometimes true; 5 = often true; 6 = almost always true; 7 = always true.

1. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.
2. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross and rose again.
3. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.
4. I help others with their religious questions and struggles.
5. I tend to be critical of other people. (R)
6. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.
7. My faith helps me know right from wrong.
8. I do things to help protect the environment.
9. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.
10. I have a hard time accepting myself. (R)
11. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world.
12. I take care of my physical health.
13. I am active in efforts to promote social justice.
14. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
15. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation.
16. I am active in efforts to promote world peace.
17. I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine.
18. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.
19. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes.
20. I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have.
21. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.
22. I speak out for equality for women and minorities.
23. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.
24. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.
25. I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world. (R)
26. I believe I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved. (R)
27. I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious.
28. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world.
29. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
30. My life is committed to Jesus Christ.
31. I talk with other people about my faith.
32. My life is filled with stress and anxiety.
33. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
34. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
35. I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues. (R)
36. I like to worship and pray with others.

37. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.
38. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of creation.

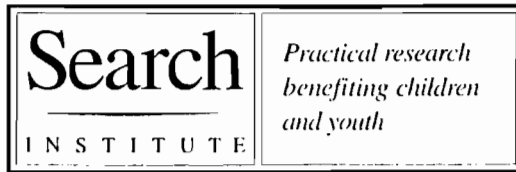
Note: (R) indicates item is reverse scored.

Vertical Subscale

3. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.
7. My faith helps me know right from wrong.
9. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.
11. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world.
14. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
15. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation.
19. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes.
24. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.
31. I talk with other people about my faith.
34. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
36. I like to worship and pray with others.
38. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation.

Horizontal Subscale

1. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.
6. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.
8. I do things to help protect the environment.
13. I am active in efforts to promote social justice.
16. I am active in efforts to promote world peace.
18. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.
21. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.
22. I speak out for equality of women and minorities.
28. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world.
29. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
33. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
37. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.



July 31, 2003

Keith Krispin, Jr.
Judson College
Department of Youth Ministries
1151 North State Street
Elgin IL 60123

Dear Mr. Krispin:

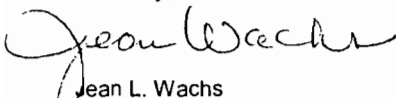
Thank you for your interest in using the 38 items comprising the Faith Maturity Scale. Permission to use this scale is granted with the following understandings:

- Permission is granted for one-time use only as part of your dissertation research analyzing the relationship between youth ministry involvement and faith maturity in first-year Christian college students. Any additional use of the items or the newly created survey requires additional written approval from Search Institute.
- Permission to use the items is restricted to the organization/individual requesting the permission. Permission cannot be transferred to another organization/individual, nor may your survey be made available for use by another organization/individual.
- Search Institute is to be cited on all printed materials (survey, reports, etc.) as follows:

[List survey item numbers] taken from *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. Copyright © 1988 Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN. Used by permission.
- We request that a copy of your survey instrument be forwarded to my attention at Search Institute.

Thank you for your interest in our work. I wish you well in completing your dissertation.

Sincerely,



Jean L. Wachs
Administrative Manager of Applied Research

APPENDIX 2

YOUTH MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

This section contains the Youth Ministry Involvement Survey, the 77-item instrument designed to gather data for the present study. Following the cover page, which includes instructions and the appropriate protocols regarding informed consent, the survey is divided into four sections – General Information, Frequency of Youth Ministry Involvement, Perception of Youth Ministry Involvement, and Your Values and Experience (Faith Maturity Scale). Also included are the written instructions for administering the survey that were included with each packet of surveys.

Youth Ministry Involvement Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to explore the involvement that first-year Christian college students have had with Christian youth ministry during their senior high years, as well as how that involvement is related to their own experience with the Christian faith. This research is being conducted by Keith R. Krispin for the purposes of completing a doctoral dissertation as well as to advance understanding of the role that youth ministry plays in the lives of young people. In this research, you will complete the following survey regarding your involvement with youth ministry and your experience with the Christian faith. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, and by checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by clearly marking the squares or circling the numbers as appropriate. It is important to answer all questions unless otherwise instructed in the survey itself. Please do not answer any question more than once. When you have completed the entire survey, please place the survey in to the envelope held by your instructor. Thank you for your participation.

General Information:

1. Indicate your current age:
 - 17 & under (*If you checked this box, do not complete the rest of this survey. Simply return it to the envelope held by your instructor.*)
 - 18
 - 19
 - 20 & older

2. Gender: Male Female

3. During your high school years, what type of influence did your home environment provide?
 - Strong Christian influence
 - Medium Christian influence
 - Little Christian influence
 - No Christian influence

4. During your high school years, what type of influence did your closest friends provide?
 - Strong Christian influence
 - Medium Christian influence
 - Little Christian influence
 - No Christian influence

5. What type of high school did you attend during the majority of your high school years?
 - Public or Private Non-Christian
 - Private Christian
 - Home school

6. If you consider yourself to be a Christian, how long have you been a Christian?
 - I do not consider myself to be a Christian
 - 0-3 years 4-7 years 8 or more years

7. *To what extent do you agree with the following statement:* During my senior high years, I developed a strong relationship with a Christian adult, not including my parents or those involved with a youth ministry.
 - Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. In an average month during your high school years, how many youth ministry activities would you have attended? (Examples may include youth Sunday school, midweek youth group, Christian youth club, special events, or any other ministry-based activity designed for teenagers.)
 - 0 1-2 3-4 5-6 7 or more

(Please turn page to continue survey.)

9. During your high school years, what type of Christian youth ministry were you most involved with?
- Youth ministry as part of a local church
 - Youth ministry that is not part of a local church (such as Young Life, Campus Life/Youth for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes...)
 - I was equally involved with both a church-based youth ministry and non-church-based youth ministry.
 - I had no involvement in a Christian youth ministry during my high school years. *(If you had no involvement with a youth ministry during your high school years, turn to page 5 and complete the survey starting with question number 41.)*

Frequency of Youth Ministry Involvement					
Instructions: How often did you participate in each of the following within your Christian youth ministry?					
Choose from these responses: 1 = Never, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Monthly, 4 = Weekly, 5 = More than once a week					
1	2	3	4	5	10. Talking with an adult about life issues and spiritual things
1	2	3	4	5	11. Worshiping God through singing
1	2	3	4	5	12. Teaching/Learning activities
1	2	3	4	5	13. Attending fun/recreational activities (Playing games, going bowling...)
1	2	3	4	5	14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics
1	2	3	4	5	15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them
1	2	3	4	5	16. Serving within the ministry (Examples: performing a drama, setting-up for youth group, running the soundboard, or leading a small group discussion)
1	2	3	4	5	17. Serving others outside the youth group (Examples: painting the home of an elderly person and/or helping at a soup kitchen for the homeless)
1	2	3	4	5	18. Praying aloud with others in the group
1	2	3	4	5	19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer

(Please turn page to continue survey.)

Perception of Youth Ministry Involvement	
<p>Instructions: On the scale below, indicate your response to the following statements as they apply to the Christian youth ministry that you were most involved with in your high school years.</p> <p>Choose from these responses: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.</p>	
SD D N A SA	20. I developed a strong relationship with my youth pastor/director.
SD D N A SA	21. I developed a strong relationship with an adult involved with the youth ministry, other than the youth pastor/director.
SD D N A SA	22. If I had a personal problem, there was an adult involved with the youth ministry that I would have felt comfortable talking with about it.
SD D N A SA	23. The worship time in my youth ministry was teen friendly, using a band and up-to-date musical styles.
SD D N A SA	24. Students were involved in leading worship within my youth ministry.
SD D N A SA	25. The teaching in my youth ministry helped me understand the Bible.
SD D N A SA	26. The teaching in my youth ministry dealt with real life issues.
SD D N A SA	27. The teaching in my youth ministry included opportunities for discussion.
SD D N A SA	28. The students in my youth ministry were welcoming to new people.
SD D N A SA	29. I felt close to the other students in my youth ministry.
SD D N A SA	30. The students in my youth ministry were supportive of group members who were experiencing problems.
SD D N A SA	31. My youth ministry taught me how to explain the Christian faith to a non-Christian.
SD D N A SA	32. My youth ministry encouraged me to share my faith with my non-Christian friends.
SD D N A SA	33. My youth ministry was a comfortable place to bring my non-Christian friends.
SD D N A SA	34. My youth ministry helped me identify my spiritual gifts.
SD D N A SA	35. My youth ministry provided opportunities to serve within the group.
SD D N A SA	36. My youth ministry provided opportunities to serve others outside the group.
SD D N A SA	37. My youth ministry taught students how to pray on their own.
SD D N A SA	38. My youth ministry taught students how to study the Bible on their own.
SD D N A SA	39. My youth ministry encouraged students to set aside time daily to pray and read the Bible on their own.
SD D N A SA	40. My youth ministry provided resources, such as journals and Bible study guides that students could use for individual prayer and Bible study.

(Please turn page to continue survey.)

Your Values and Experience

Instructions: How true is each of these statements for you? Circle one answer for each. Be as honest as possible, describing how true it really is and not how true you would like it to be.

Choose from these responses: 1 = never true; 2 = rarely true; 3 = true once in a while; 4 = sometimes true; 5 = often true; 6 = almost always true; 7 = always true.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	41. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	42. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross and rose again.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	43. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	44. I help others with their religious questions and struggles.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	45. I tend to be critical of other people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	46. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	47. My faith helps me know right from wrong.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	48. I do things to help protect the environment.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	49. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	50. I have a hard time accepting myself.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	51. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	52. I take care of my physical health.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	53. I am active in efforts to promote social justice.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	54. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	55. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	56. I am active in efforts to promote world peace.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	57. I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	58. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	59. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	60. I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	61. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	62. I speak out for equality for women and minorities.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	63. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	64. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	65. I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	66. I believe I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	67. I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	68. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	69. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	70. My life is committed to Jesus Christ. (Please turn page to continue survey.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	71. I talk with other people about my faith.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	72. My life is filled with stress and anxiety.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	73. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	74. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	75. I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	76. I like to worship and pray with others.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	77. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	78. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of creation.

Questions 41-78 are taken from *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. Copyright © 1988 Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN. Used by permission.

For office use only:

FMSS: _____

Instructions for Administering the *Youth Ministry Involvement Survey*

To the GEN101 faculty:

Thank you so much for your assistance with this research. I hope that it will shed some light on the involvement of youth in Christian youth ministries, as well as how that relates to faith maturity. I also hope that it might provide insight into the students taught at _____.

Instructions:

Distribute one survey to each student and read the instructions below. When the students have completed the survey, have them return the surveys to you to be placed in the envelope. Also return any unused surveys to the envelope. In the field test, it took most students 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. One student took approximately 20 minutes.

When all the students have completed the survey, please seal the envelope and place it in the campus mail so that it will be returned to me. If convenient, you may also drop it by my office in the fitness center. The envelope has been preaddressed with my name and location.

Thank you again for your assistance! If you have any questions, please call me at _____.

In administering the survey please read the following instructions to your students:

- Before starting the survey, read the “Agreement to Participate” section on the front page and check your response in the appropriate box. This section describes the purpose of the survey and asks for your participation. Your participation is totally voluntary. If you choose not to participate, please check the appropriate box and return it to the instructor.
- The survey is designed to explore your experience with Christian youth ministry during your senior high years. Don’t worry if you have no experience with Christian youth ministry or even if you don’t consider yourself to be a Christian. The survey takes those factors into consideration. In fact, it is helpful to gather information about a wide variety of experiences.
- Please clearly mark one and only one response for each and every question. It is very important that each question be answered and that no question receives more than one response.
- As you mark your responses, read the instructions for each section carefully as the rating scale may differ depending on the questions being asked in that section. Also remember that the only right answer is the one that accurately reflects your experience and perceptions.

- You may use either a pen or pencil to complete the survey.
- When you have completed the survey, please return it to your instructor who will place it in the return envelope. Know that your instructor will not review the surveys and will not know who filled out any given survey.
- Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 3

YOUTH MINISTRY FACTORS AND QUESTIONS

This section presents the questions incorporated into the YMIS as they relate to the three youth ministry factors – relationships, balanced programming, and encouragement and equipping in the use of the spiritual disciples. Each factor is addressed in the study using one or two items related to frequency of involvement and two to four Likert-response items related to the participants perceptions of their youth ministry. The balanced programming factor is further categorized according to the five components of a balanced youth ministry program – worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and service.

Youth Ministry Factors & Questions

Factor: Relationships

Frequency:

10. Talking with an adult about life issues and spiritual topics

Perceptions:

20. I developed a strong relationship with my youth pastor/director.
 21. I developed a strong relationship with an adult involved with the youth ministry, other than the youth pastor/administrator.
 22. If I had a personal problem, there was an adult involved with the youth ministry that I would have felt comfortable talking with about it.

General Information: (Though this question relates to the relationship factor, because it does not pertain specifically to youth ministry involvement, as do the other questions, it will be included in the General Information section of the survey.)

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: During my senior high years, I developed a strong relationship with a Christian adult, not including my parents or those involved with a youth ministry.

Factor: Balanced Programming

Worship

Frequency:

11. Worshiping God through singing

Perceptions:

23. The worship time in my youth ministry was teen friendly, using a band and up-to-date musical styles.
 24. Students were involved in leading worship within my youth ministry.

Instruction

Frequency:

12. Teaching/Learning activities

Perceptions:

25. The teaching in my youth ministry helped me understand the Bible.
 26. The teaching in my youth ministry dealt with real life issues.
 27. The teaching in my youth ministry included opportunities for discussion.

Fellowship

Frequency:

13. Attending fun/recreational activities (Playing games, going bowling...)

14. Talking with my peers about life issues and spiritual topics

Perceptions:

- 28. The students in my youth ministry were welcoming to new people.
- 29. I felt close to the other students in my youth ministry.
- 30. The students in my youth ministry were supportive of group members who were experiencing problems.

Evangelism

Frequency:

- 15. Inviting my non-Christian friends to activities designed for them

Perceptions:

- 31. My youth group taught me how to explain the Christian faith to a non-Christian.
- 32. My youth group encouraged me to share my faith with my non-Christian friends.
- 33. My youth group was a comfortable place to bring my non-Christian friends.

Service

Frequency:

- 16. Serving within the youth ministry (Examples: performing a drama, setting-up for youth group, running the soundboard, or leading a small group discussion)
- 17. Serving others outside the youth group (Examples: painting the home of an elderly person and/or helping at a soup kitchen for the homeless)

Perceptions:

- 34. My youth group helped me identify my spiritual gifts.
- 35. My youth group provided opportunities to serve within the group.
- 36. My youth group provided opportunities to serve others outside the group.

Factor: Encouragement and Equipping in the Use of the Spiritual Disciplines

Frequency:

- 18. Praying aloud with others in the group
- 19. Spending time in silent meditation/prayer

Perceptions:

- 37. My youth group taught students how to pray on their own.
- 38. My youth group taught students how to study the Bible on their own.
- 39. My youth group encouraged students to set aside time daily to pray and read the Bible on their own.
- 40. My youth group provided resources, such as journals and Bible study guides that students could use for individual prayer and Bible study.

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