

**UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF NOVICE
YOUTH MINISTERS IN THE EVANGELICAL
PROTESTANT TRADITION**

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ABSTRACT

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Ronald G. Marrs

The experiences of novice youth ministers are varied. One important problem concerning novice youth ministers is the lack of research about the impact of the novice youth minister's experience on longevity and attrition in youth ministry. The goal of this exploratory study was to examine the lived experience of novice youth ministers in the evangelical Protestant tradition. This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological research method to discover the perspectives of people during their novice youth minister experience as well as the perspectives of the ministers who supervised them during that experience.

One primary data source was used for the study: a .75- to 1.00-hour interview with former novice youth ministers and their supervising ministers (separate interviews). Following the collection and analysis of the data, a focus group was conducted to review the research findings in order to contribute to the determination of the validity and reliability of the findings.

The findings of this study were presented using 8 categorical themes. The 8 categorical themes explored were (a) calling; (b) difficulties adjusting to church politics,

conflicts, and other relational struggles; (c) relationship of the youth ministers with their supervisors; (d) mentoring; (e) spouse's experience; (f) selection process; (g) preparation; and (h) differences in perspective between the youth minister and the supervising minister.

The stories of novice youth ministers told in this study reveal the need for great care and consideration to be given by the church to this group of people who seek to live out the gospel in the context of youth ministry. The hope is that these findings will help novice youth ministers thrive and remain in youth ministry and that supervising ministers and youth ministry educators will contribute to this endeavor.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The experiences of novice youth ministers are varied. Some enter the profession with a great deal of formal education and others with none. Some believe they have been called by God to youth ministry while others are seeking a sense of confirmation that this is the vocation to which they have been called. The local church environment is healthy for some and toxic for others. Some seem to thrive and others survive for a time and then move on to some other vocation. Supervision of novice youth ministers is conducted by church leadership using a variety of supervisory styles.

While Grenz (2001) writes that youth ministry has come of age and that youth ministers are more likely to consider being a youth minister as a legitimate vocation, the landscape of youth ministry today reveals that people are still moving in and out of youth ministry at a rate which warrants further research. The few studies on the longevity and attrition of youth ministers done to date were based on the self-reporting of youth ministers (Atkinson & Wilson, 1991; McKenzie, 1997; Grenz, 2001). This study was done to include others in the context of youth ministry who influence the success or failure of a youth minister (parents, volunteer youth leaders, youth, senior pastors, supervising pastors and ministerial colleagues) to discover the factors which lead to people choosing whether or not to make a career of youth ministry.

Description of the Problem

The rise of local church youth ministry over the past 60 years has led to numerous people working in youth ministry in part-time and full-time positions. Being a youth minister in a church has become a more highly regarded vocational option. The National Network of Youth Ministries (NNYM) has nurtured a movement of youth ministers willing to minister to youth for a lifetime, should God so direct, since 1981. Programs with majors in youth ministry have been established at the college and graduate school level. The Association of Youth Ministry Educators (AYME) was established for the professional development of professors in higher education who prepare people for the vocation of youth ministry. In spite of the growth of youth ministry over the past 60 years there still seems to be limited research on the experience of novice youth ministers and how the experiences of these youth ministers in their early days of youth ministry impact their vocational trajectory.

Limited research has been conducted in the areas of the attrition and longevity of youth ministers. The assertion made by many that youth ministers average 18 months in a church has circulated for many years and continues to this day, but only a handful of studies have occurred to shed light on the situation. Atkinson and Wilson (1991) found in their sample of Christian and Missionary Alliance youth pastors that few stayed in a church position more than 2 years, but there were mitigating factors in their denomination that impacted that attrition rate. In an attempt to study career longevity McKenzie (1997) discovered that youth ministers who left within the first 10 years of their youth ministry averaged 4.5 years in youth ministry. In Keehn's (1997) study of youth ministers the

mean length of total paid ministry experience was 13.26 years and the mean stay in their current position was 4.5 years. Kjesbo (1998) found it difficult even to locate people who had been in vocational youth ministry longer than 10 years.

Grenz (2001) found that the average age of entry-level youth ministers is almost 25. The majority of youth ministers in his study left the vocation in their 30s with the mean age of those leaving being nearly 35. Makin (2005), studying the turnover intentions of youth ministers, found that generally youth ministers were not choosing to be youth pastors as a stepping-stone to becoming a senior pastor.

What remained to be studied is the critical stage of youth ministry called the novice stage. This study sought to discover the critical factors in the novice experience of youth ministers that contribute to staying in youth ministry, making moves within the ministry, or leaving vocational youth ministry altogether.

Background and Importance of the Study

Historians of youth ministry like Cannister (2001) and Senter (1997) trace the modern youth ministry movement to the founding of the Sunday school movement by Robert Raikes in 1780 in Gloucester, England. The original purpose of Raikes' Sunday school was literacy training for children but included elements of Christian education as well. The formation of Sunday schools in the United States was carried on by the American Sunday School Union which formed in 1824.

The history of youth work in America includes organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association (1844), Christian Endeavor (1881), The Miracle Book Club

(1933), Young Life (1941), and Youth for Christ (1950). These organizations mobilized many volunteers and the number of people being paid to do youth ministry increased.

Senter (2010) denotes the period 1933–1989 as the period of relational outreach in youth ministry. Protestant denominations such as the Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists propagated youth fellowships from 1936–1965. Southern Baptists began to hire youth ministers in the 1970s. These youth ministers “were for the most part trained as Christian educators tied to church educational structures far more than they were as evangelists or spiritual directors” (p. 208).

What had previously been known as youth fellowships in local churches changed to youth ministries in the 1960s and 1970s as local churches grappled with retaining their youth and as they watched parachurch organizations successfully reach out to non-churched teenagers. Although adults had been involved with youth and some had even earned a living ministering to youth prior to the 1960s, the professionalization of youth ministry became an important focus in the 1960s and beyond. Senter (2010) notes the 1960s churches began to drop the nomenclature of youth director in favor of youth minister or youth pastor.

Youth Specialties began in 1968 to provide ideas for youth ministers and eventually they established a convention in 1970 to equip youth ministers who were pursuing youth ministry as a vocation. The National Network of Youth Ministries began in 1982 with a core value to encourage adults to minister to youth for a lifetime if God so led them. Group Publishing was begun in 1974 to provide resources and curriculum for youth ministers. The Son Life organization propagated a philosophy of youth ministry

which influenced numerous youth ministers to organize their youth ministries on the principles taught.

In the 1970s the early group of church-based paid youth workers began to age and had to face a challenge to their identity. Senter (2010) frames the issue well when he says:

Churches tended to treat even the most successful youth ministers as novice adults and expected them to soon grow out of this fun-and-games period of their lives and move on to their life's work. Youth ministers reacted against this criticism, though, because many of them saw their ministry as a lifelong calling and not just a first stage of ministry. (p. 292)

Youth ministers viewed youth ministry like any profession where professional standards should control the practice. Those who were opposing this view suggested that youth ministry was like professional athletics where people should move on after performance waned because of age.

Into this milieu came programs in Bible colleges, Christian liberal arts colleges, and seminaries in the late 1970s to provide academic preparation for youth ministry. Veteran youth ministers were hired to teach and coordinate these youth ministry majors which grew out of Christian education programs. The formation of the Association of Youth Ministry Educators in 1994 helped solidify the professional role of the youth minister in local churches. Youth ministry would become a theological and an academic discipline. Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) reported on a study of youth ministers conducted at a gathering of youth ministers in 1996 that 52.6% had received seminary training of some kind.

A “perfect storm” has formed in the world of local church youth ministry making it a challenging time for local church youth ministers. Critical forces have converged to call into question the role of a youth minister and contribute to questions about attrition and longevity.

One of these forces is the confusion that still exists over the role of youth ministers in local churches. Churches continue to hire youth ministers on the basis of criteria that are not based on a clearly articulated philosophy of youth ministry accepted by parents, adolescents, and church leadership alike. There are no universally accepted standards for youth ministers. The search for youth ministers is usually based on a haphazard approach of networking or the use of internet placement sites such as churchstaffing.com and ys.com. Educational institutions provide opportunities for matching prospective youth ministers with churches but with very limited communication about the quality of the match. Some denominations provide placement help but generally a church is on its own to find a youth minister that will match its context.

Another force that has helped create the “perfect storm” is the criticism that youth ministry is one of many “silo” ministries in the church. Each staff member of the church, so the argument goes, runs their “silo” and thus, ministers in isolation. When youth are involved in the youth ministry “silo,” they are seldom connected to the rest of the church with the outcome being that when they graduate from the youth ministry at the end of high school, they leave the church, never to return.

A force related to the “silo” issue is the pressure for youth ministers to become family ministers. In 2004, Richard Ross and other youth ministry leaders challenged

youth ministers by issuing a call which stated, “We call for youth ministers to take on their rightful role as pastoral ministers to parents, acknowledging parents as the primary spiritual leaders of their children and serving parents in that role” (p. 1). The role of a youth minister was to be broader than the youth and the adult volunteers in the youth ministry. The youth minister was to be more actively engaged in ministering to parents than previously. These youth leaders did not recommend that the youth pastor change his title, but the job description was to expand to parents.

In his book *Family-Based Youth Ministry: Revised and Expanded* DeVries (2004) makes a distinction between family pastors and youth pastors. He says of his own identity struggle, “Over the past decade I have often straddled the fence of my ministerial identity, not quite sure whether I was a youth pastor or a family pastor” (p. 175). His conclusion was that he was a youth pastor by calling and by passion. Here was a veteran youth pastor seeking to influence others involved with youth to expand their ministry to parents while concluding that he, as a youth pastor and not a family pastor, was driven by a focus to see young people grow to maturity in Christ. Part of the “perfect storm” has been the identity challenge for youth ministers.

Another contribution to the “perfect storm” has been the rise of the home schooling movement. This has provided an added dimension to youth ministers who previously ministered to students being educated in public schools, private Christian schools, and private secular schools. Out of this home schooling movement has grown the family integrated church movement which has a constituency who believe that the responsibility for discipleship of children belongs to the parents. They have gone “so far

as to advocate the elimination of church youth ministries because of the deeply held conviction that fathers should provide Christian training for their children” (Senter, 2010, p. 76).

Another wind blowing has been the perspective of emerging churches on youth ministry in contrast to the perspective of established churches. Youth ministry has existed in established churches because people in those churches believed youth ministry to be critical. They chose to operate a youth ministry with a paid youth minister. Parents have attended these churches for the very purpose of having their children involved in a healthy youth ministry. However, as churches started to reach out to other demographics such as 20- and 30-somethings, traditional youth ministry was not part of the scene. Senior leadership of these emerging churches was targeting a different group of people and these people did not have teenagers. Many emerging churches have been committed to doing ministry differently than traditional churches and part of this difference is the approach to youth ministry. Prospective youth ministers have to face the challenge of finding their fit in such contexts. Sadly, the traditional churches that could afford a youth minister in the past are often declining and losing church members to the emerging churches. This leaves youth ministers in a difficult situation.

Dean (2010) summarizes the criticisms that youth ministers face by those who blame the superficial Christianity of youth on ineffective youth ministries:

Critiques of youth ministry in postmodern American churches abound. Most forms of youth ministry were conceived more than a century ago (e.g., Sunday school and youth groups); surely it is unrealistic to expect them to adequately support today’s teenagers, who must withstand the pressures of globalized, postmodern culture. This is the position of much published literature on youth ministry and Christian formation. Youth ministry could combat mutant Christianity, so the reasoning goes, by updating, streamlining, or shoring up our

methodologies, and by beefing up our educational efforts so they legitimately compete with lifestyles and activities that discourage postmodern young people from prioritizing faith. (p. 35)

Although Dean does not agree with placing the blame on youth ministers, she shines a light on another force creating a “perfect storm” for youth ministers.

Therefore, novice youth ministers in the United States begin their tenure in the midst of a “perfect storm.” After decades of youth ministry in the United States, they have to contend with a plethora of youth ministry philosophies and perspectives on the role of the youth minister. Understanding the factors that determine whether or not novice youth ministers stay in youth ministry, move to other ministries, or leave youth ministry is critical.

There have been a small number of studies on the factors that impact the tenures and longevity of youth ministers. Keehn (1997) concluded that the primary factors for staying in youth ministry for this sample were a calling to youth ministry, support of the youth minister for the ministry and validation of the youth minister’s call to ministry, social support and accountability partners (primarily youth minister colleagues from other churches), the presence of mentors, Sabbath rests (along with spiritual vitality), balancing the time between work and family, and adequate financial compensation.

Atkinson and Wilson (1991) determined that the most significant items of satisfaction with youth ministers who had longer tenure were achievement (results from ministry, personal goal attainments, success in ministry) and recognition, and to a lesser degree, supervision. Kageler (1992) studied youth pastors who had been fired and found that the top three reasons given for firing were related to conflict: (1) conflict with the senior minister (41.9%), (2) conflict with church leadership (27.4%), and (3) conflict with

parents (17.9%). McKenzie (1997), in studying people who left youth ministry, found that “positive experiences with regards to the work itself” was the most powerful motivator. The most frequently mentioned hygiene factor was “negative experiences with senior pastor.” Overall references to the senior pastor were negative by a margin of about three to one. Fairly typical negative factors were a lack of appropriate communication and lack of agreed upon expectations in the supervisory relationship.

Lawson (2000a) discovered nine themes that were factors in thriving associate ministers (sample included youth ministers): finding satisfaction in God’s direction, working well with one’s supervisor and fellow associates, foundational attitudes and commitments for thriving, church environments that enable thriving, sustaining personal vitality, building supportive relationships, the importance of family health, confirmation and perseverance in ministry, and patterns of behavior by the supervising minister. His findings provide a strong basis for further research on why some novice youth ministers thrive and why some do not thrive.

Grenz (2001) found the top four most influential factors identified by former youth ministers for why they left youth ministry as a career were “change in my calling to youth ministry,” “changing vocational interests,” “greater opportunity for successful work in my new position,” and “salary/benefits inadequate.” Makin (2005) studied the intentions of youth ministers with regards to leaving and staying in youth ministry. He concludes that it does not appear, in general, that youth ministers’ intentions to leave are impacted by an ambition to become senior pastors nor are they using the youth minister position as a means to the senior pastorate. Makin also determined that no relationship

was found between family structure and intentions to leave the organization or the career. Research by Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) provided some perspective on the turnover rate among youth pastors. They conclude that the turnover rate among youth ministers is not really known, but that the tenure for the average youth minister is longer than had been assumed previously.

Some information can be gathered from the experience of novice ministers in general, which contributes to an understanding of novice youth ministers. Roy Oswald (1980) conducted research for the Alban Institute on the transition from seminary to parish. Oswald gained valuable insights from the study of 102 seminary graduates. One key problem faced by novices was role confusion. Role confusion occurred when novice ministers struggled with the tension created when dealing with the expectations of parishioners and the expectations the novice carried into the ministry that had emerged from seminary training. Emotional and spiritual highs and lows contributed to this struggle. Ministerial competency was challenged when critical incidents occurred. Cultural differences between the seminary and the parish created stress. Four ministerial competency issues created problems: (1) handling conflicts constructively, (2) setting appropriate limits, (3) encouraging participation, and (4) expressing one's self orally. The experiences of assistant pastors were reported to be somewhat different than senior pastors in the novice experience; the study did not differentiate between youth ministers and other roles taken on by assistant pastors.

Nearly 20 years after this report the Lilly Endowment organization engaged the Alban Institute to be part of the Transition in Ministry initiative to again study seminarians transitioning into parish ministry. In a report published in 2008 (Wind &

Wood, 2008) findings are presented from what would best be described as qualitative research. The researchers cite the importance of certain practices for the success of novice youth ministers moving from the seminary to the parish. Of significance are congregation-based residency programs, peer-based programs for interaction, practice-based pastoral formation through reflective immersion, and mentoring provided by veteran ministers.

The studies by the Alban Institute are limited to seminarians moving into ministry. The reality in youth ministry is only a limited number of novice youth ministers enter roles as seminary graduates. One of the critical factors to be examined in the study of novices is the domain of education. What kind of preparation for ministry is critical for successful youth ministry?

The present study is important due to our limited understanding of novice youth ministers in particular and novice ministers in general. Understanding the issues of longevity in youth ministry as well as local church tenures will be enhanced by this study. Research needs to be conducted which will help us understand what factors in the novice youth minister's experience lead them to stay, move, or leave. If novice youth ministers are to survive the "perfect storm" presently occurring in church youth ministry, we need to understand what will help them thrive and become youth ministers who last.

Statement of the Research Question

The purpose of this present study is to understand the lived experience of youth ministers in the novice stage of their youth ministry service. The present study addresses two major questions. First, what are specific internal motivating factors in the lives of novice youth ministers that impact whether they thrive or not? In view here are issues

such as calling to ministry, identity, and self-efficacy. Second, what are the critical factors in the novice youth minister's context which contribute to him thriving in ministry and thus impact his potential longevity in church youth ministry? Of interest here are the strategies of the supervising minister, difficulties faced by novice youth ministers, the experiences of the youth minister's spouse, and other matters that provide the context of the youth minister's life in church youth ministry.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used.

Attrition

Attrition refers to the situation in which people who start in paid youth ministry leave youth ministry. The literature on youth minister attrition does not provide a concise definition but the literature on teacher attrition is helpful here. Boe, Cook and Sutherland (2008) refer to attrition as leaving teacher employment. Although the argument could be made that a person who leaves youth ministry employment for another area of vocational ministry is still in the ministry, for the purposes of this study attrition refers to leaving youth ministry.

Evangelical Protestant

An evangelical Protestant is a person who believes that faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is essential and following Christ as an obedient disciple is an indicator of that faith commitment. An evangelical also makes it a priority to tell others about this need for faith in Christ. This is the kind of person Wells (2008) refers to as a "Reformational"

Evangelical Christian, a person who believes that only in the Bible is God's authoritative truth to be found, only in Christ is salvation found, only by grace is one saved, and only through faith is salvation received.

Longevity vs. Tenure

In the youth ministry literature there is often a tendency to use these terms synonymously, but it is important to make a distinction. Tenure refers to the time spent in one ministry position (Atkinson & Wilson, 1991, p. 47). Longevity is defined as the length of time a person was in youth ministry as a paid vocational youth minister (Grenz, 2001, p. 9).

Mentoring

Although a variety of definitions exist, the following definition seems to have reasonable consensus, at least in the educational and business world. "Mentoring is a relationship between two people in which the person with greater rank, experience and/or expertise teaches, counsels, guides, and helps the other to develop both professionally and personally" (Bustrum, 1997, p. 111). The professional aspect involves career help and the personal aspect involves psychosocial development. Role modeling is a key component of mentoring.

Novice Youth Ministers

They have responsibility to share the gospel with youth and disciple them in the faith. Some youth ministers are ordained, some are licensed and some are neither. People in this role are given a variety of titles such as youth pastor, youth director, student

pastor, pastor to students, and associate pastor of youth. For this study, people with these titles are all referred to as youth ministers (Lamport, 1992; Grenz, 2001)

The label “novice” is derived from the field of education. Beginning teachers in their first full-time contracted teaching position are considered novice teachers (Cherubini, 2009). Although the length of time one is considered a novice teacher is arbitrary, typical research focuses on the first 3 years of a teacher’s experience (Keigher, 2010). Therefore, the term novice youth ministers refers to youth ministers who are in the first 3 years of their first paid youth ministry in a local church. For this study a novice youth minister works in the church at least 30 hours per week and at least half of his responsibilities include youth ministry.

Vocational Ministry

The term vocational ministry is used to describe roles in local church ministry where a person is paid for the role and has a sense that this is a vocation to which he has been led by God. The term implies a church staff position that is viewed as a legitimate place of long-term employment (Grenz, 2001, p. 9).

Youth

Often used interchangeably are the terms youth, adolescents, students, and teenagers (Clark, 2001, p. 42). For the purposes of this study, youth are defined as students in middle school and high school so as to distinguish them from college-age students or young adults. They are typically 12–18 years of age (Grenz, 2001, p. 9).

Youth Ministry

Youth ministry is defined as the intentional strategy by a local church to provide paid adult leadership to provide opportunities for students in middle school and high school to place their faith in Christ, grow in Christ, and serve Christ. This intentional ministry is to be located in the study of practical theology and assumes that youth “are called to take part in every practice of Christian ministry, to participate in the total mission of the church, for God calls all of us into the divine plan of salvation” (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001, p. 19).

Population and Sample

The population in view for this study is current and former youth ministers in evangelical Protestant churches in the United States who experienced their first 3 years of youth ministry within the last 10 years. The sample was selected from youth ministers in the Pacific Northwest. The sample used was developed through a “snowball” methodology where novice youth ministers were selected through a process of broadcasting the need for participants through the existing relational network of this researcher. Participants were selected based on whether they considered themselves as having thrived or not thrived in their novice experience. They also had to agree to allow their ministerial supervisor, who supervised them during those novice years, to be interviewed. The supervisor also had to agree to be interviewed.

Assumptions of the Study

There were several assumptions that were not investigated in this research study. The first assumption was that youth need adults in their lives other than their parents to

help them develop into Christ followers. The present reality in United States culture is that adults influence youth in a variety of endeavors: athletics, music, drama, business and much more. Many adults spend their entire lifetimes in vocations that seek to influence youth such as teaching, coaching, and counseling. Local churches need to provide adults outside of the youth's family who influence them in matters of faith.

The second assumption was that there is a benefit to long tenures for youth ministers in a church. Time is needed to build trust among youth, parents, ministerial staff, and in the community. It takes time for a novice youth minister to develop ministry competencies. Although no studies were found that support the benefits of long tenures over short tenures, the assumption is that there is an optimum amount of time that a youth minister spends at a church which leads to effective ministry.

The third assumption was that the ministerial supervisor of the novice youth minister provided the most important perspective on the situation besides the youth minister. Other key figures in the situation such as students, parents, and youth ministry volunteers might be valuable but would be difficult to involve in the study.

Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this study was delimited by several factors. First, the sample was selected from youth ministers in the Pacific Northwest because of the challenge of finding people who had been novice youth is within the last 10 years. This researcher's network of relationships is strongest in the Pacific Northwest and obtaining the sample was expedited by limiting the sample to that network.

Second, one of the criteria for the sample was that a youth minister agreed to permit the interviewing of his ministerial supervisor during that novice experience and the supervisor had to agree to be interviewed. Certainly this eliminated novice youth ministers who might have been valuable for the study.

Third, the sample was selected from the evangelical Protestant stream of Christianity. Factors which impact novice youth ministers in other streams of Christianity may not surface in the study of evangelical Protestants.

Summary of the Introduction to the Problem

A vast number of youth ministers are serving in evangelical Protestant churches throughout the country and every year many novice youth ministers enter vocational ministry. There is limited research on the experience of novice youth ministers and how the experiences of these youth ministers in their early days of youth ministry impact their vocational trajectory. Limited research has been done in the areas of the attrition and longevity of youth ministers and the literature does not reveal the impact of the novice experience on attrition and longevity. This study sought to discover the critical factors in the novice experience of youth ministers that contribute to staying in youth ministry, making moves within the ministry, or leaving vocational youth ministry altogether.

Chapter 2, the review of the literature, summarizes the areas of youth minister attrition and longevity, career development theories, calling, and teacher socialization. This literature review provided the background for this study. Chapter 3 provides a theological framework by examining the subjects of calling, ministry leadership roles, and mentoring. In chapter 4 the research design is presented along with the procedures

for data gathering. Chapter 5 presents the results of the study and chapter 6 presents the conclusions reached by the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Of importance to the study of novice youth ministers is the locating of their present experience within the historical context of youth ministry in the United States. Coinciding with the rise of youth culture in the United States after World War II was the rise of youth ministry and the development of the role of youth minister. The idea of making a career as a youth minister became a reality for many young adults exploring ways to minister to youth in the church. Over the past 60 or more years many young adults have tried their hand at youth ministry. The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that lead some novice youth ministers to careers in youth ministry while others move on to other careers—some in vocational ministry and some not. The present study sought to locate the experience of novice youth ministers in the field of career development theory, studies of ministerial attrition and longevity, the notions of vocation and calling, and finally, the findings from the experiences of novice teachers in Kindergarten–Grade 12 education.

The review of literature begins with a brief overview of career development theories. There are a number of credible theories, some of which began in the early 20th century. This review of literature brings to light the factors that influence the selection of careers in an overall sense. The next section focuses on two critical domains from the

study of career development theory that are especially relevant to the experience of novice youth ministers: vocation/call and occupational socialization. The next section is a review of the relevant studies with regards to youth ministry attrition and longevity. Over the last several decades much has been made about the short tenure of youth ministers and thus, the establishment of the truth about youth minister longevity is critical. The final section provides a brief look at the transition of novice teachers into the field of education. Insights gained from research on the retention of novice teachers can contribute to the study of novice youth minister retention. The review begins with an examination of career development theories.

Career Development Theories

Psychodynamic Theory: Bordin

Bordin's psychodynamic theory attempts to relate self-concept to career development as well as the series of choices that comprise the relationship. The theory is grounded on propositions that hinge on the idea that there is a spirit of play in each person which includes self-expression and self-realization. Bordin (1990) suggests that a sense of wholeness which involves an "experience of joy is sought by all persons, preferably in all aspects of life, including work" (p. 105). People seek for personal meaning and some form of creative expression.

According to Bordin people spend their lives seeking to find an ideal fit between themselves and work. Examining a person's motives is a key to understanding their decision-making process. Bordin theorized sources of satisfaction that are used to frame

decision-making (e.g., manipulation, sensual, exploration, movement). All work activities can be divided into three classes: dealing with people, with data, and with things.

Bordin believed that the personal career development aspects can begin in the earliest years of an individual's thoughts about themselves. These thoughts develop in the process of distinguishing between play and work as the child experiences spontaneity and effort. Subsequent career decision-making points can produce perplexity and paralysis when a person experiences doubts and dissatisfactions with current resolutions of themselves.

Trait-Factor Theories

Brown. Duane Brown (1996) was prompted to develop his theory by the question, "What are the factors that lead to satisfying career choices?" (p. 337). Cognizant of theories that propose self-efficacy as the primary source of motivation for decision-making, Brown was more convinced that expected outcomes were the most important source. He believed this because he thought people tend to cope with the complex demands of their work environment by taking advantage of potential sources of satisfaction in that environment. The subsequent question was "How do people decide which outcomes are more important than others?" Where some would answer, "interests," Brown would answer, "values."

According to Brown (1996), values are beliefs that have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. "The cognitive aspect of values contains information about desired end states and the preferred means of achieving them" (p. 339). Both the destination of life's journey and the means of reaching the destination are involved in the

cognitive component. The affective aspect of values includes positive or negative emotions. The affective component is activated automatically when people interact with their environment and when they do introspective thinking. Values, then, are

cognitive structures that allow individuals to meet their needs in socially acceptable ways. . . Values transcend situations, are influenced by socialization processes, and are more or less stable. Goal-directed action, the behavioral component of values, results when values are activated, either by needs or by perceived opportunities to satisfy values. (p. 340)

Values are crystallized when a person can personally place a relevant label as an explanation for her behavior. These values are prioritized when individuals can communicate the order of importance that values assume as they serve as guides for behavior.

Brown (1996) theorizes that values are critical in the life role choices made by individuals and of utmost importance under certain conditions. Life satisfaction depends upon the fulfilling of life roles (including work roles) that satisfy a person's essential values. Success in a life role is dependent on the related skills taken into the role and the aptitudes (cognitive, affective, and physical) possessed by the individual when entering that role. These skills and aptitudes will determine a person's ability to adapt to role changes that happen in particular situations.

Dawis and Lofquist. The work of Lloyd H. Lofquist in the area of vocational psychology and student personnel services began in 1956 at the University of Minnesota. A group of people formed the Work Adjustment Project team of which Rene Dawis was a member. Together, Dawis and Lofquist proposed a psychological theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). What began as a theory of career development

became a more general theory with application to different environments. The new term for this general theory is person-environment correspondence (PEC).

A critical concept in this theory is “person-in-an-environment.” A person has requirements for survival and well-being in an environment. The requirements are referred to as “needs.” Biological needs are required for survival and psychological needs for well-being. “Reinforcers” refer to whatever satisfies needs because they increase or maintain the rate of behavior. People behave in ways that help satisfy their needs. When a person and environment interact to extract reinforcers from each other in a mutually satisfying way, they are in correspondence. Satisfaction is the result of correspondence. “Satisfactoriness” characterizes “the worker with whom the work environment is satisfied” (Dawis, 1996, p. 82).

Tenure is the length of time a worker remains on the job or is retained. Tenure depends in large part on the levels of satisfaction and satisfactoriness. People have a limited set of work skills. Work behavior in this theory is described in four terms: (1) celerity which denotes “the quickness with which the worker initiates the interaction with the work environment” (Dawis, 1996, p. 85), (2) pace, (3) rhythm, and (4) endurance.

Seventeen propositions comprise the framework of the theory. Among these are the following four propositions:

1. Work adjustment at any time is indicated by the worker’s concurrent levels of satisfactoriness and satisfaction (Dawis, 1996, p. 89).
2. Satisfactoriness is predicted from the correspondence of the worker’s abilities to the work environment’s ability requirements.

3. Satisfaction is predicted from the correspondence of the work environment's reinforcers to the worker's values.
4. Tenure is positively related to satisfactoriness and satisfaction (Dawis, 1996, p. 90).

Other critical concepts in this theory are perception (self-image, self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, self-identity) and development (unfolding of capabilities, opportunity).

Holland. John Holland's theory is based on the relationship between vocational personality types and work environments. Four working assumptions provide the foundation for the theory. The first assumption is that in American culture most persons can be categorized by one of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional. Each type, Holland (1997) asserts is "the product of a characteristic interaction among a variety of cultural forces including peers, biological heredity, parents, social class, culture and the physical environment" (p. 2). Based on all these factors, a person learns to prefer some activities over others. These preferences lead to strong interests and subsequently to a group of competencies. A particular disposition grows out of this sequence of preferences, interests and competencies that lead a person's thinking, perceiving, and acting.

The second assumption is that six model environments exist: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional. Each of these environments is dominated by a certain type of vocational personality. Each of these types of work environments is created as people of similar types "surround themselves with special

people and materials to seek out problems that are congruent with their interest, competencies, and outlook on the world” (p. 3).

Holland’s third assumption is that people will seek to work in environments that will let them use “their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles” (p. 4). The fourth assumption is that a person’s vocational behavior will grow out of the interaction between personality and environment.

These four assumptions are supported by five secondary assumptions:

1. Consistency: “Within a person or an environment, some pairs of types are more closely related than others” (p. 4).
2. Differentiation: “Some persons or environments are more clearly defined than others” (p. 4).
3. Identity: Personal identity involves the possession of a clear and stable picture of one’s goals, interests, and talents. “Environmental identity is present when an environment or an organization has clear and integrated goals, tasks, and rewards that are stable over long time intervals” (p. 5).
4. Congruence: Different vocational types require different environments (p. 5).
5. Calculus: “The relationships within and between personality types or environments can be ordered according to a hexagonal model in which the distances among the types or environments are inversely proportional to the theoretical relationships among them” (p. 5).

Career Development Theories Anchored in Learning Theory

Lent, Brown and Hackett. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) approach their social cognitive career theory on the basis of Bandura's social cognitive personality theory. Their approach recognizes the mutual and interacting influences among persons and their environments. Following Bandura, they posit a fully bidirectional, model of causality, where the following operate as interlocking mechanisms: (1) personal attributes such as internal cognitive and affective states as well as physical characteristics, (2) external environmental factors, and (3) overt behavior which is distinct from the internal and physical qualities of a person (p. 261). Three critical variables are used to understand these interlocking mechanisms.

The three primary variables in this theory are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals. First, self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capabilities in organizing and executing courses of action that are required of them to attain designated types of performances. According to Lent, Brown and Hackett (2002), "self-efficacy beliefs are acquired and modified through four primary sources of information (or types of learning experiences): (1) personal performance accomplishments, (2) vicarious learning, (3) social persuasion, and (4) physiological and affective states" (p. 262).

The second primary variable is "outcome expectations." "Outcome expectations are personal beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors" (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002, p. 262). Outcome expectations are developed as one imagines the consequences for performing certain behaviors. They are learned by the appraisal and reaction of others (e.g., rewards given).

The third primary variable is “goals.” According to Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) “goals may be defined as the determination to engage in a particular activity or to effect [*sic*] a particular future outcome” (p. 263). An individual’s personal goals provide the mechanism for people to organize, guide and sustain their behavior even when they receive no external reinforcement. The subsequent interplay between self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals is complex. For example, the goals selected by an individual and the effort expended to reach those goals are affected by the confidence one has in reaching the goals (self-efficacy) and the expectation of a positive outcome.

Another key component of this theory is the development of vocational interests. Social cognitive career theory “asserts that people form enduring interest in an activity when they view themselves as competent at it and when they anticipate that performing it will produce valued outcomes” (p. 265). Vocational interests, then, are formed when an individual feels they are efficacious at an activity and meet the expected outcomes.

Krumboltz. Krumboltz’s social learning theory of career decision-making “recognizes that people are intelligent, problem-solving beings who try to understand the environmental contingencies that surround them and who in turn control their environments to suit their own purposes and needs” (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 234). This theory is grounded in the idea that what people believe about their skills and the likely outcomes of those skills are better predictors of their behavior than their actual skills or presently existing outcomes.

Krumboltz (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996) proposes four factors that influence career path:

1. Genetic endowment and special abilities
2. Environmental conditions and events
3. Learning experiences that are instrumental (a person acts on the environment to produce positive consequences) or associative (people perceive a connection between stimuli and the environment)
4. Task approach skills: performance standards, work habits, perceptual and cognitive processes (for example, attention and retention), mental sets, and emotional responses (for example, hopes and fears).

Developmental Theories

Ginzberg. Ginzberg (1951) was one of the original career developmental theorists. He argued for three distinct periods for occupational decision-making. The first stage is described as a fantasy choice. A tentative choice is the second stage and a realistic choice is the third stage. The realistic stage can be divided further into three periods:

1. Exploration is the period where a person seeks to acquire experience to help resolve occupational choices.
2. Crystallization follows exploration and “is the process whereby the individual is finally able to synthesize the many forces, internal and external, that have relevance for his decision” (p. 107).
3. Specification is the final period where an individual chooses a specialization.

These three distinct periods for occupational decision-making are founded on three conclusions Ginzberg reached.

Three conclusions are considered the basic elements of his theory. They are as follows:

1. "Occupational choice is a developmental process: it is not a single decision, but a series of decisions made over a period of years" (p. 185).
2. "The process is irreversible . . . later decisions are limited to previous decisions" (p. 185).
3. "The process ends in compromise. Throughout the years of his development the individual has been trying to learn enough about his interests, capacities, and values and about opportunities and limitations in the real world, to make an occupational choice that will yield him satisfaction" (p. 184).

Gottfredson. Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) theory of circumscription, compromise and self-creation is concerned with "the process by which people unnecessarily circumscribe and compromise their career options, often sacrificing fulfillment of their 'internal unique selves' in order to meet expectations for job prestige and sextype" (2002, p. 86).

Whereas circumscription is the process by which individuals reject alternatives they deem unacceptable, compromise is the process by which they abandon their most-preferred alternatives. Compromise is adjusting aspirations to accommodate an external reality. Anticipatory compromise takes place when people begin to moderate their hopes (assessments of compatibility) with their perspectives of reality (assessments of accessibility). As they do, the aspirations they voice will shift away from their ideal and toward the expected. Experiential compromise takes place when individuals meet a barrier in implementing their most-preferred choices. (2002, pp. 100–101)

Vocational aspirations directly relate to how one perceives an occupation is accessible to them. Factors impacting accessibility include gender and socio-economic status.

Gottfredson suggests that compromises can range from minor to wrenching, but the higher the compromise, the higher level of concern there is over it. Satisfaction with one's occupation is related to the degree of compromise required. A minor compromise occurs when a choice involves acceptable alternatives and is less painful (and ultimately more satisfying) than a major compromise where the individual has to choose between alternatives that are unacceptable but accessible. Gottfredson (2002) says, "Overall satisfaction with one's occupation will depend on the degree to which the compromise allows one to implement a desired social self, either through work itself or the lifestyle it allows self and family" (pp. 106–107).

Gottfredson considers as fact the following:

1. Practically speaking, it is not possible to change individual traits such as intelligence and personality. Therefore, she advises, good vocational counselors work with, not against, core traits.
2. End-specific traits such as interests seem to be more dependent on context and are thus somewhat more amenable to intervention. Therefore, young people should sample a broad menu of occupational experiences so they can better develop and discover their interests and values.
3. People are able to shape their inhabited environments and shape their lives in those environments to a greater degree than they imagine, thereby helping people to understand what settings, activities and people bring out the worst and best in them.

Super. Super's career construction theory of vocational development (1957) is established on life stage theory. Vocational stages throughout the life span are as follows:

1. Growth stage (birth–age 14)

In this stage self-concept develops as individuals identify with key figures in their family and at school. Needs and fantasy are dominant in the early parts of this stage. Included in this stage are fantasy (ages 4–10), interest (ages 11–12), and capacity (ages 13–14).

2. Exploration stage (ages 15–24)

Role tryouts, occupational exploration and self-examination occur in school, leisure activities, and part-time work. Stages in this category are tentative (ages 15–17), transition (ages 18–21), and trial (ages 22–24).

3. Establishment stage (ages 25–44)

An individual finds an appropriate field and puts forth effort to make a permanent place in that field. This includes two stages: trial (ages 25–30) and stabilization (ages 31–44).

4. Maintenance stage (ages 45–64)

In this stage the individual has made a place in the world of work and is now concerned with holding on to it. There is continuation along established lines and little ground is broken.

5. Decline stage (age 65 and up)

Work activities change and eventually cease as physical and mental capacities decline. Two stages in this area are deceleration (65–70) and retirement (71 on).

Super (1957, pp. 54–55) distinguishes between behavior and development. He defines behavior as the responses made to stimuli at any given point in time, and development as the process throughout time that provides the individual with a behavioral repertoire.

There are three categories of factors that are influential for individual vocational behavior according to Super: role factors, personal factors, and situational factors. First, role factors are factors that relate to self-concept. According to Super, one's self-concept is a determinant of the occupational roles selected by individuals. Second, personal factors include intelligence, special aptitudes, interests, values, attitudes, and personality. Third, situational factors are external factors which include religious background, home atmosphere, parental attitudes toward the individual, and parental attitudes towards school (p. 52).

Savickas. Savickas (2002) further developed Super's theory and labels the theory "career construction." He distinguishes between differential and developmental perspective in vocational psychology. The differential perspective takes a cross-sectional view of personality types while the developmental perspective takes a longitudinal view of a person's adaptation patterns. His career perspective uses the idea of vocational adaptation as the "responses an individual makes in choosing and adapting to an occupation. . . . Career is the development of vocational behavior over time" (pp. 150–151).

At the heart of career construction theory is the proposition that an individual's career pattern (occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of jobs) "is determined by the parents' socioeconomic level and the person's education, abilities, personality traits, self-concepts, and career adaptability in transaction with the

opportunities presented by society” (p. 155). Work satisfaction is proportional to the degree to which the individual is able to implement her vocational self-concept.

“Vocational self-concepts develop through the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of peers and supervisors” (pp. 155–156). There is a maxi-cycle of career stages: growth (ages 4–13), exploration (ages 14–24), establishment (ages 25–44), management (ages 45–64), and disengagement (age 65 on) as well as a mini-cycle with the same stages during transitions from one career stage to the next (p. 156). The ABCs of career construction are attitudes, beliefs, and competencies. These areas increase along the lines of concern, control, conception, and confidence.

Systems Theory: Patton and McMahon

Patton and McMahon (2006) argue for the need of an overarching framework to unite the career development theories which they label as a systems theory framework (STF) for career development. The theory of these researchers is “a reaction to the traditional classical, analytic, or positivist worldview” (p. 171) on which much of the thinking about career development has been based. According to Patton and McMahon, the “traditional view assumes that the world operates in much the same way as a machine” (p. 171). All action involves a model of cause and effect that is linear. Valid knowledge is gained through observation gained through sense perceptions. Unhindered development will yield progress and such progress is incremental and linear according to the traditional view.

In light of the criticisms of the traditional worldview, Patton and McMahon value the whole, “a system which is more than the sum of the individual parts” (p. 171). Patterns of interrelationship are more important than cause and effect between parts. Progression is not always linear, and “the complexity of a system is far too great” (p. 172). Patton and McMahon argue that change is not always incremental, and enduring change may be sudden. According to Patton and McMahon, “the human system is viewed as purposive, ever-changing and evolving toward equilibrium” (p. 172). The systems theory framework is

not designed to be a theory of career development; rather systems theory is being introduced as the basis for an overarching, or metatheoretical, framework within which all concepts of career development described in the plethora of career theories can be usefully positioned and utilised [*sic.*] in theory and practice. (p. 196)

The individual is the central focus and each individual constructs his own meaning of career. The constructs of existing career development theories are relevant in their application to each individual.

The systems theory framework contains both content and process influences. The first content influence is the individual system (a person). Career development theories explore a number of critical intrapersonal factors which influence career development and are different for each individual: gender, values, sexual orientation, ability, interests, skills, age, world-of-work knowledge, physical attributes, aptitudes, ethnicity, self-concept, personality, beliefs, disability, and health. The second content influence is the contextual system of the individual which includes the social system and the environmental-societal system.

First, the social system of an individual refers to the other people systems with which an individual interacts. These people systems are family, media, community groups, workplace, education institutions, and peers. Within each of these systems are values, beliefs, and attitudes which are sources of input for individuals with regards to career choices. Second, the individual lives within a larger society and environment (environmental-societal systems). In view here are political decisions, historical trends, globalization, socioeconomic status, the employment market, and an individual's geographical location.

Process influences are the second major category for the STF. Three primary influences are in view: "the recursive nature of the interaction between the individual and their contextual system, change over time, and chance" (Patton and McMahon, 2006, p. 197). First, recursiveness describes the kind of interaction between the individual and his context as non-linear. This interaction is not necessarily reciprocal, although mutuality exists. This viewpoint rejects simplistic cause and effect relationships. Understanding the past, present, and future aspects of an individual is important, but the emphasis is on the present. As the nature of the content influences changes, so does the degree of the influence. According to Patton and McMahon, "changes in one part of the system, or in one system, produces change in another part of the system, and individuals and their systems will experience their own recursiveness" (p. 207).

Second, "change over time" refers to the on-going process of decision-making and transitions that are part of the life-span phenomena of an individual. The career development process is a non-linear evolution involving forward and backward

movements. Included in this process are the issues of family life cycle and the changing demands of life roles. In the present historical context, an individual's career is less predictable and demands greater adaptability, flexibility and mobility. Individuals will need to be more concerned about employability than job security.

The third dimension of process influences is that of chance. Referred to as fortune, luck, accident, or happenstance, chance involves unplanned events that alter an individual's behavior. According to Patton and McMahon (2006), "Chance can impact any part or combination of parts of a system" (p. 210). Patton and McMahon suggest that their metatheoretical framework allows for all career theories to have their contributions recognized. The interconnections between the theories can be demonstrated, and congruence between theory and practice in career development can be attained.

Summary: Career Development Theories

The study of career development theories suggests that the study of novice youth ministers must take into consideration the same factors that impact the development of any career. The potential exists for novice youth ministers to be paralyzed when they face doubt and dissatisfaction. The values of the youth minister will be lived out in the context of a church where the values of the senior minister, parents, students, and adult volunteers may differ. The fit between the person (novice youth minister) and the environment (the church and ministry position) must be considered. The nature of the fit is impacted by the issues of satisfaction, survival, perception (self-image, self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, self-identity), and development (unfolding of capabilities, opportunity). The discussion of personality types and work environments will aid in the

understanding of the novice youth minister's experience. Does the match between a certain personality type and church working environment impact the tenure of a novice youth minister?

There are other insights from career development theory that will aid in the understanding of novice youth ministers. The interplay between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals is significant. Career decision-making involves exploration which is likely the most common stage in which novice youth ministers find themselves. The accessibility of an occupation will impact a person's vocational aspiration for that occupation. The responses of people in the environment will impact these perceptions of accessibility. The construction of a career is based on factors such as attitudes, beliefs, and competencies, therefore it is vital to know how these factors impact the success of novice youth ministers.

Limited research exists where career development theory was applied to youth ministers. Atkinson and Wilson (1991) used Herzberg's (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) Motivation-Hygiene theory in their research with youth ministers. One of the foundational factors in Herzberg's theory is job satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Atkinson and Wilson (1991) concluded that factors other than job dissatisfaction should be studied to explain why the large majority of Christian and Missionary Alliance youth pastors leave youth ministry by the end of the second year. One of the factors they thought should be considered was the Christian and Missionary Alliance policy of allowing missionary candidates to function as youth pastors for their two-year home service required prior to missionary placement. They noted two other factors to be

considered were the use of youth ministry as a stepping stone to other ministry positions and the youth pastor's return to school.

McKenzie (1997) used Herzberg's (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) Motivation-Hygiene theory to study youth ministers in the Church of God (Anderson, IN) who stayed in youth ministry and left youth ministry. McKenzie (1997) found that the highest satisfier or motivator among these youth ministers was the work itself. The primary factors which brought dissatisfaction were senior pastor relationships, interpersonal relationships, and the youth ministry lifestyle; however, the majority reported that these factors did not affect their career decisions or ministry performance.

Grenz (2001) studied both current and former youth pastors. He did an extensive literature review on career development theory, but only measured a very limited number of factors in the area of career development that related to job or career change. Three factors were found to be most influential for influencing job or career change: inadequate salary/benefits, greater opportunity for successful work in a new position, and conflict with the senior pastor. Current youth ministers cited two influential factors related to their job or career change: unhealthy spiritual environment within the church staff and unhealthy spiritual environment within the whole church. Former youth ministers cited four factors that influenced their job or career change: (1) changing vocational interests, (2) lack of challenge, (3) desire to make better use of skills, and (4) changing family obligations.

The work of Patton and McMahon (2006) brings to light the critical nature of the systems in which a novice youth minister finds herself. The systems impacting novice

youth ministers have not been examined in previous youth minister research. Data gathered by previous researchers have come from the self-reporting of youth ministers. This researcher's proposal will be to obtain data from the ministers (senior ministers and senior associate ministers) who supervise novice youth ministers in order to increase the understanding of the systems impacting these novices in the local church setting.

Further use of career development theories need to be explored in the study of novice youth ministers in light of their limited use to date. The following section is a literature review of the research on two specific areas of career development theory that are especially salient for the study of novice youth ministers: calling and teacher socialization.

Critical Domains from the Study of Career Development Theory

Arising from the study of career development are specific domains which are of critical importance for the study of the experience of novice youth ministers. The first domain, calling, surfaced out of the need in vocational psychology to understand the spiritual and religious dimensions of career development. Recent forays into this area have investigated the roles of purpose and meaningfulness in work roles. One of the key factors for the study of novice youth ministers is his/her sense of calling to the ministry.

The second critical domain is teacher socialization, a specific domain in the study of occupational socialization. Occupational socialization is the process of role development as it relates to one's occupation. This field of study is concerned with the process whereby a novice learns the skills, behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, values and

symbols of the profession. The study of novice youth ministers will involve an investigation into the ways they are socialized into the field of youth ministry.

Calling

The notion of calling has become an area of academic interest as the domain of meaningful work has been explored. Present day literature reviews commonly reference the works of Reformation leaders Martin Luther and John Calvin. Prior to the Reformation, the term calling was generally used to describe a specific call to priestly ministry or the general call of the gospel to salvation. Luther broadened the definition to include any station of life that a person might occupy in the world of productive work. He suggested that the faithful execution of duties in those stations pleased God and contributed to the general welfare of humankind (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

Calvin's refinement of Luther's ideas on the importance of having a calling led to an exaltation of work as uniquely personal. One's calling, according to Calvin, also came from a person's particular, God-given gifts and talents. Bunderson and Thompson (2009) summarize the classic formulations of men like Calvin and Luther in this way: "calling is that place in the world of productive work that one was created, designed or destined to fill by virtue of God-given gifts and talents and the opportunities presented by one's station in life" (p. 33). These formulations have provided the foundation for more recent research.

Bellah et al. (1985) launched recent scholarship surrounding work as a calling when they suggested a difference in perspective of one's work as a job, a career or a calling. Bellah et al. (1985) suggested that a sense of calling might offer the strongest

route to truly meaningful work. At this point, however, the literature on calling is characterized by a lack of consensus. The primary theorists, according to Dobrow (2010), differ in their views of what a calling is and where it exists:

Calling can be an *orientation* toward work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), the *work* itself (Hall and Chandler, 2005), a *place* in the occupational division of labor (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009), or an *external pull* to pursue a particular career path (Dik and Duffy, 2009; Duffy and Sedlacek, 2007). (p. 6)

Although consensus does not exist with regards to the construct of calling there is much to be gained from an investigation of the idea. Scales are being developed which may be valuable for research with novice youth ministers. The following theorists are the most prominent in the present day discussion of calling and vocation.

Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz. Inspiration for the work of Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1997) came from Bellah et al. (1985) who argued for three distinct relations that people might have for their work: jobs, careers, and callings. These researchers hypothesized that people who view their work as a job are only interested in the material benefits acquired from work and do not seek or receive any other types of benefits. The work is only a means to acquire the resources needed to enjoy time away from the job. The major interests and ambitions of people who view work only as a job are not expressed through the work.

The hypothesis also proposed that people who view their work as a career have a deeper investment in their work and mark their success with advancement through the structure of their occupation. Advancement will often bring higher social standing, increased power, and higher self-esteem.

Also included in the hypothesis was the idea that a person with a calling views their work as inseparable from their life. Doing the work brings a sense of fulfillment in contrast to acquiring career advancement or financial gain. These people consider the work as valuable as an end to itself, socially valuable and not necessarily pleasurable.

Participants in Wrzesniewski, McCauley et al. (1997) were employees of a major state university student health service ($N = 76$) and non-faculty employees of a small liberal arts college ($N = 162$). Of the 196 respondents, 79% were female. The mean age was 42 years (range 21–69). Respondents included “physicians, nurses, administrators, pharmacists, health educators, librarians, supervisors, computer programmers and analysts, medical technicians, administrative assistants, and clerical employees. A sample of 135 of the 196 respondents was placed into three categories in light of their responses to the questionnaire developed by the researchers with the following results: A total of 44 viewed their work as a job. Those who viewed their work as a career numbered 43, and 48 viewed their work as a calling.

Wrzesniewski, McCauley et al. (1997) built their study on two primary factors: work satisfaction and motivation for work. While they did not hypothesize that work satisfaction would entirely explain distinctions between job, career and calling orientations, they found it to be an important factor. An individual’s motivation for work can be intrinsic, extrinsic, or both. Using the Work Preference Inventory developed by Amabile, Hill, Hennessey and Tighe (1994) extrinsic motivation was divided into two subfactors: compensation and outward orientation. Intrinsic motivation is divided into challenge and enjoyment.

Wrzesniewski, McCauley et al. (1997) found that “Calling” respondents, compared with both “Job” and “Career” respondents, were significantly better paid, better educated, and had occupations higher in both self-perceived status and objective prestige level. The study supported their hypothesis that “Callings” people “would generally be associated with greater life, health, and job satisfaction and with better health” (p. 29). Respondents in the “Calling” category “did work of significantly higher occupational status than respondents in the other two groups” (p. 29) leading to “the fairly obvious point that people in relatively high-status occupations think more positively about their work and have more interesting and challenging work than people in relatively low-status occupations” (p. 29).

Wrzesniewski, McCauley et al. (1997) note three surprising results of the study. First, all three perspectives of work can be well represented in at least some occupations. Second, the concern for advancement that seems to mark a “Career” “did not confer much advantage over a Job in the various well-being variables” (p. 31) that were assessed. Third, “satisfaction with life and with work may be more dependent on how an employee sees his or her work than on income or occupational prestige” (p. 31).

Bunderson and Thompson. One of the possible downsides to a strong sense of calling which is relevant for the study of novice youth ministers was discovered by Bunderson and Thompson (2009). They discovered that zookeepers with a strong sense of calling are more willing to sacrifice time, money, and physical comfort or well-being for their work. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation by management. The study described in chapter 4 sought to discover if novice youth ministers (who are in very low

“power” positions in a church) are vulnerable to similar exploitation if they have a strong sense of calling.

Bunderson and Thompson (2009) studied zookeepers in the United States in light of scholarly interest in deeply meaningful work and the significance of the concept of *calling* in the field of career development. Zookeepers were hypothesized to frame the work they do in the language of *calling*. This hypothesis holds true for youth ministers as well. Bunderson and Thompson, as other researchers studying *calling*, include Luther and Calvin in their review of the literature and thus, build on the classical theological framing of the concept of calling. At the time of their research there were 4,680 zookeepers working at over 210 zoos and aquariums in the United States. The first stage of the research was to conduct interviews with 23 of these zookeepers and analyze the data using a grounded theory approach.

Bunderson and Thompson followed the qualitative interview research with a quantitative study in a second stage of research. Surveys were completed by 982 zookeepers from 157 zoos in the United States using a random sampling technique. These zookeepers included people who were members, as well as non-members, of the American Association of Zookeepers.

Bunderson and Thompson concluded from the interviews in the first stage that the heart of the notion of calling for zookeepers “is a sense that they were born with gifts and talents that predisposed them to work in an animal-related occupation” (p. 37). Zookeepers described events that transpired in a remarkable way as if they were being “led” or “pushed” into the “right places.” Their descriptions were very similar to the classical conceptualization championed by Luther and Calvin. In light of their research a

“neoclassical” definition of calling was constructed by Bunderson and Thompson: “one’s calling is that place in the occupational division of labor in society that one feels destined to fill by virtue of particular gifts, talents, and/or idiosyncratic life opportunities” (p. 38).

One of the findings of importance to the discussion of calling for novice youth ministers is the articulation by zookeepers that the benefits of calling do not come without cost. “A sense of calling complicates the relationship between zookeepers and their work, fostering a sense of occupational identification, transcendent meaning, and occupational importance on the one hand, and unbending duty, personal sacrifice, and heightened vigilance, on the other” (pp. 38–39). One of the negative implications is that “those with a sense of calling will be vulnerable to exploitation by management because unfavorable pay, benefits, or working conditions are likely to be construed as simply another sacrifice one must make to pursue a calling” (p. 43). Of significance for the study of novice youth ministers will be to examine the personal costs required to do the ministry and the potential for exploitation of the novices by churches.

Two important conclusions were drawn from the second stage of the study. First, zookeepers conceptualize their calling similarly to the classical conceptualization of Protestant reformers and the neoclassical conceptualizations rather than modern conceptualizations. Classical and neoclassical articulations of work as calling involve a moral duty to society which includes a willingness to sacrifice and a perceived duty to the organization. Modern conceptualizations, in contrast, tend to be more self-focused and emphasize the importance of identity, self-fulfillment, self-knowledge and the pursuit of personal happiness. Zookeepers pursue their calling, not because they enjoy cleaning cages but, rather, “because cleaning cages is part of their offering to society, an offering

they feel obligated to make because of their particular gifts and society's needs" (p. 51). Being a zookeeper was predetermined by their "wiring" and/or the apparent unfolding of circumstances.

In both neoclassical and classical views, the source of the calling lies outside the self and the responsibility of the individual is to discover and dutifully embrace rather than decide. Thus, the neoclassical view retains an external caller but the caller is not necessarily divine. There is a general confidence, then, in the order of the universe, "a belief that events happen as they are supposed to happen" (p. 51). According to Bunderson and Thompson, "modern conceptualizations generally assume that a calling is simply a personal life choice, something one chooses out of passion or commitment, not because it was meant to be" (p. 51). Neoclassical and classical views of calling, by contrast, emphasize destiny and duty. The bond formed between a person and his work is forged by duty and destiny, and thus, becomes truly binding. If the response of the individual is diligence and sacrifice, then this is truly a noble endeavor (p. 51).

The second conclusion from the quantitative portion of this study supported the conclusions of the qualitative study: neoclassical conceptualization of calling is a double-edged sword. Zookeepers with a greater sense of calling were more likely to view their work as meaningful and important, but the positive outcomes come at a price. Zookeepers with a strong sense of calling are more willing to sacrifice time, money and physical comfort or well-being for their work. They are more vulnerable to exploitation by management. They contend with heightened expectations about management's moral duty which can lead to relationships characterized by vigilance and suspicion.

Bunderson and Thompson conclude that an inherent tension exists in deeply meaningful work because deep meaning comes with real responsibility. Any conceptualization of work meaning, or work as a calling, “that promises meaning without responsibility or significance without sacrifice is underspecified” (p. 52).

Dik and Duffy. Dik and Duffy (2009) sought to establish the constructs of calling and vocation within counseling psychology. They sought to locate these constructs within the discussion of purpose (“a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self”) and meaningfulness (“the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one’s being and essence”) (p. 425). Dik and Duffy clearly base their constructs on classical notions of calling.

Dik and Duffy (2009) propose the following construct for the term *calling*:

A calling is a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. (p. 427)

This construct has three components. The first component of this construct focuses on the extent to which a person perceives that his motivation comes from an external source. For some this will be expressed by pointing to God and others will consider it fate. Some people may point to God and the needs of people in society. The second component incorporates the sense of purposefulness and meaningfulness that a person may attach to a particular life role and efforts made to fit into a framework of purpose and meaning in life. The third component echoes the classical notions of calling where a particular life role was thought to be of value if it contributed to “the common good” or the well-being

of society. They suggest that this construct for calling allows for a calling to be pursued potentially within any life role, not solely the role of an employee or worker.

The proposal for a working definition of *vocation* is very similar to the definition of *calling*. Dik and Duffy define *vocation* as “an approach to a particular life role that is oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p. 428). The dimension of an external source is eliminated from the definition of *vocation* while retaining the other dimensions.

In proposing these constructs Dik and Duffy (2009) argue that “these constructs do not reflect something a person discovers once and for all but rather involves an ongoing process of evaluating the purpose and meaningfulness of activities within a job and their contribution to the common good or welfare of others” (p. 429). Secondly, the definitions allow for the possibility that every person has a vocation. Thirdly, it is possible that a calling or vocation can occur in legitimate areas of work other than (for example) religious, teaching, or social science careers. Fourthly, individuals may describe themselves as currently having a sense of calling or vocation whereas others might say they are searching. The distinctions between the “presence of” a calling and the “search for” a calling are critical for further study.

Steger, Pickering, and Dik. Steger, Pickering, and Dik (2010) tested the ideas of Dik and Duffy in a quantitative study of 242 highly religious and less religious college students at a large public university. Using an Internet survey strategy, students were asked to complete the Brief Calling Scale and the Religious Commitment Inventory.

They also completed the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity Scale, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Expressions of Spirituality Scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, the Work Preference Inventory, and the Career Decision Profile.

The researchers sought to provide the first indications of whether or not calling should be considered only sacred and not secular. They conclude that calling can be conceptualized broadly for both religious and non-religious individuals. The researchers found support for the idea that “people who approach their work as a calling have a career that engages them at a deep level and provides them with a highly valued sense of contribution and worth in their work lives” (p. 91).

In seeking to discover links between “calling orientations” and better psychological and positive work attitudes, Steger et al. (2010) conclude, “Meaning in life appeared to be a significant mediator of the relation between calling and psychological adjustment and appeared to serve as a supplemental link from great calling to greater meaning to greater positive work attitudes” (p. 91). This supports the central pillar of their modern calling theory which suggests that work can provide people with meaningful work experiences and provide a route to discovering and experiencing greater purpose and meaning in their lives as a whole.

The final conclusion of Steger et al. is that both religious and non-religious people find the ideas of meaning and purpose in life and work as accessible and applicable. They also conclude that more empirical inquiry is needed to examine how work is connected to the creation of meaning in the life of an individual.

Hall and Chandler. In their study, Hall and Chandler (2005) purposed to distinguish between “subjective career” and “objective career.” “Subjective career” measures factors which stem from the individual: (1) job satisfaction, (2) self-awareness, (3) adaptability, and (d) learning. “Objective career” measures the factors from the vantage point of those outside the individual: (1) income, (2) promotions, (3) hierarchical job level and (4) job mobility. According to Hall and Chandler, previous researchers have acknowledged an interdependence of the two. For example, one group of researchers concluded “that there is a need for people to be assisted in doing critical self-appraisal that does not demotivate, but helps to guard against the perceptual biases that may lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointing outcomes” (p. 156). Distinguishing between objective career measures and subjective career measures is important because what might appear to be success from an objective viewpoint does not always lead to an individual’s subjective experience of success.

Hall and Chandler argue that “even when an individual’s career is a calling, there are periods of time—particularly during career transitions—when the person’s subjective assessments of his or her career deviate from perceptions of personal ‘success’” (p. 157). They “propose that under certain conditions, *task success can lead to psychological failure*” (p. 159). Here are some of the scenarios where task success may lead to psychological failure:

- When behaviors associated with career success lead to personal failure
- When assignment success does not result in identity change
- When a changed identity is not seen by significant others

- When objective success in one phase of the career propels the person into a new career learning cycle.

In these situations, a person may experience psychological failure in the midst of what others view as objective success.

Hall and Chandler argue that the deepest forms of psychological success or satisfaction occur when work is experienced as a calling rather than a job or career. Calling is defined as “work that a person perceives as his purpose in life” (p. 160). Hall and Chandler argue that previous notions of calling had a divine element, but a secular view developed where a person does work “out of a strong sense of inner direction—work that would contribute to a better world” (p. 160).

Hall and Chandler define a protean career as one “in which an individual is (a) self-directed, and (b) driven internally by one’s own values. She is motivated to “follow her own distinctive ‘path with a heart’” (p. 162). This kind of career is not a calling, however. “Pursuing a calling entails both having a protean career orientation *and* being conscious of having a strong sense of purpose” (p. 162).

This model suggests that a sense of purpose and calling along with a sense of self-confidence (Bandura’s self-efficacy) leads to goal-setting and efforts to meet the goal. The results of goal-setting and effort (objective success) lead to a sense of psychological success which is subjective. When the person experiences the inner experience of success, she sees herself in a new and more competent way (identity change). Objective success leads to external recognition, for instance, the resultant feedback from others which may also lead to identity change. The results of identity development and a higher level of self-confidence lead to further goals and efforts to meet those goals.

Dobrow. Dobrow (2006, 2010) conducted a four-wave longitudinal survey study of 576 talented young musicians over a span of 7 years, 2001-2008, for the purpose of studying the idea of calling among a group of people who tend to use the language of calling as do youth ministers. The researcher gathered data by conducting 82 interviews with participants ($n = 46$). Dobrow's research addressed four broad questions: (1) What is having a calling? (2) Can having a calling be measured? (3) What are the antecedents of having a calling? (4) What are the consequences of having a calling?

In her original research Dobrow (2006) formulated a construct for "having a calling" with the elements shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Dobrow's Construct for "Having a Calling" (2006)

Element	Definition
Passion	Deep enjoyment and satisfaction from engaging in one's work
Identity	Personal and work identities are tightly intertwined
Urgency	Feel a sense of destiny about engaging in a particular type of work
Engulfs consciousness	One's work domain is continuously present in one's consciousness
Longevity	Have always known that one would engage in a particular type of work
Sense of meaning	Perceive one's work activities to be meaningful or gratifying
Domain-specific self-esteem	Feeling about one's abilities in and association with the work domain

Dobrow (2010) created a calling scale using these seven elements of the "having a calling" construct. In her recent research she reduced her "having a calling" construct to

the following: “an all-consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain—that permits an examination of calling over time” (p. 8). She argued the idea that calling is a stable construct that does not change over time in contrast to others (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). She argues against calling as something to be searched for and found, a “cause” rather than a “consequence” of various positive outcomes. Dobrow’s concern is for the origins and evolution of callings. She argues for a “dynamic model” of calling. Calling can change over time and can be shaped by antecedent factors through the experiences of people. “Rather than ‘having’ a calling”, according to Dobrow, “people ‘experience’ a calling that may or may not be sustainable” (p. 4).

Dobrow concludes from her study that people who are more involved in the domain to which they feel called (such as the domain of music in this study) have experienced higher levels of initial calling. These same people experience a decrease in calling over time. Further, Dobrow concluded that certain antecedents such as behavioral experiences, social experiences, and musical background shape one’s calling. This research supported the proposition of Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) “that a dynamic process involving behavioral cues and social processes determines work meaning” (p. 31).

The results of Dobrow’s (2010) study suggest a possible downside to the idea of calling. She reported in her study that individuals who are found to be more involved in the calling domain early in the experience of their careers indicate a decrease in calling over time. She concludes, “This decline challenges the notion that people ‘find’ a calling and suggests instead that people first develop a calling through involvement and then

'lose' it through this same involvement. A calling is thus difficult to "sustain" (p. 31). According to Dobrow, individuals should stop trying to "find" a calling since it is a process filled with indecisiveness, discomfort, and lack of clarity. "Instead they can actively engage in influencing or developing the degree of calling they feel toward a domain [such as music] by immersing themselves in work-related activities and closely monitoring the degree to which they enjoy being around their peers" (p. 35). In other words, an individual should not look for a "calling," but rather should get involved in a domain such as art or writing and monitor the satisfaction they have while involved in that domain.

Summary: Calling. The subject of calling is critical to the study of novice youth ministers in light of the common usage of the term *calling* to define one's motivation for ministry. The study of the biblical and theological perspectives presented in chapter 3 of this research study reveal that the constructs for calling and vocation offered by Dik and Duffy (2009) are advantageous for the present study of novice youth ministers. Their constructs have three critical dimensions, the first being the perceived motivation by the individual as being external (*calling*) or internal (*vocation*). The perceived motivation for a person in the calling construct is external. A person with a calling will report an external, transcendent summons. He will report a sense of hearing God's voice in an exceptional manner. A person who fits the vocation construct will report more internal motivations than an external summons. The second aspect of both constructs includes the ideas of purposefulness and meaningfulness. The third dimension is the "other-centered"

dimension of motivation. As is shown in chapter 3, these three aspects reflect a theological perspective on calling and vocation.

Also helpful in the work of Dik and Duffy (2009) is the distinction between the “presence of” a calling and the “search for” a calling. The presence or absence of a sense of calling in a novice youth minister is important for the present study of this researcher. The novice youth minister’s sense of calling might sustain him through difficult times, but a misguided sense of calling may keep him in a career ministry role for which he is otherwise unsuited.

Although Dobrow’s (2006, 2010) calling construct does not include an perceived external motivation, her construct includes critical components that can be used in examining motivation for work and other dimensions of the human experience of work. These critical components are passion, identity, urgency, engulfing of consciousness, longevity, sense of meaning, and domain-specific self-esteem.

The finding of Wrzesniewski et al. (1997), that the three perspectives of work—job, career, and calling—can be well represented in at least some occupations, suggests that youth ministry might be one of those occupations. The longevity of youth ministers may hinge on their perspective of job, career, or calling. Is their work in youth ministry a job they are doing, a career they are pursuing, or a calling they are obeying?

Bunderson and Thompson’s (2009) study on zookeepers provides a valuable cultural backdrop for the study of calling for novice youth pastors in the United States. Their work reveals that vocabulary of U.S. culture includes the word *calling* which has its source in Christian use of the term. Interestingly, people who do not necessarily believe

that God is the one who does the calling do believe that they were destined to fill a role in society because of their particular gifts, talents, and/or idiosyncratic life opportunities. According to Bunderson and Thompson the language of calling is used widely in Christian circles without precision. In the midst of this broader cultural context, novice youth ministers often enter ministry with a fuzzy view of “calling.” This researcher’s study examines how critical the sense of calling is in the experience of a novice youth minister.

What Bunderson and Thompson (2009) consider the possible dark side of their findings is the potential vulnerability to exploitation that occurs with a sense of calling. Zookeepers with a strong sense of calling were more willing to sacrifice time, money, and physical comfort or well-being for their work. Could it be that the same is possible for novice youth workers? Could a strong sense of calling lead to feelings of exploitation or interfere with a healthy marriage and healthy family relationships? The increase of interest in the area of calling and subsequent findings provide a valuable framework for studying the role of calling in the life of novice youth ministers. The biblical and theological underpinnings are explored in chapter 3 of this study.

Teacher Socialization

The study of novice youth ministers will involve an investigation into the ways they are socialized into the field of youth ministry. This process is referred to as “occupational socialization.” Occupational socialization is the study of the process of role development as it relates to one’s occupation whereby a neophyte learns the skills, behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, values and symbols of the profession. Much research has

been done in this field but little can be found in the literature with regards to youth minister occupational socialization. The socialization of novice youth ministers into an occupation is an important concept in understanding their lived experience.

Widstrom (1998) was the first (and apparently only person to date) to conduct research in the area of occupational socialization with reference to youth ministers. His study helps support the value of studying teacher socialization to understand youth minister occupational socialization. He concludes that socialization of youth ministers mirrors the multi-faceted nature of other professions. Professional training prior to entering the profession is not enough. Experiential learning is not enough. Mentors, exemplars, and colleagues are not enough. “Every event and influence encountered by youth ministers played a specific role in their socialization” (p. 14). Widstrom emphasizes the importance of a “call” to ministry in the experience of many youth ministers as a sustaining factor in their profession (p. 95). He found that the process of “reflective adaptation” was practiced by youth ministers.

In light of the dearth of research on youth minister occupational socialization, the search for an equivalent occupation leads to the field of teacher socialization (also referred to as teacher learning or teacher enculturation), a subset of occupational socialization. Teacher socialization refers to the process of a novice teacher acquiring the necessary skills, behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, values and symbols of the teaching profession. A novice teacher is one who is in the first year of teaching with her first teaching contract, usually fresh out of a formal teacher education program and with limited or no substitute teaching experience. The occupations of youth ministry and

teaching have enough in common to make the study of teacher socialization valuable for the study of youth minister socialization, but it is important to note both the similarities and differences between the two occupations. In both ministry and teaching, the novices are usually in their 20s during their first experience and the long-term commitments to consider the field as a vocation are still under scrutiny. Both teachers and youth ministers practice their role in isolation from other professionals in their field. Teachers, however, have other professionals in close proximity. While youth ministers often have other youth ministers in the community, they do not have other youth ministers in close proximity of their workplace.

Both teachers and youth ministers have students as their primary focus of concern. Volunteers and parents are more evident in the primary place of work for the youth minister, although teachers often have parents and aides in their classrooms. Nevertheless, the expectations of other adults are operative in both environments. Both occupations must concern themselves with the expectations of parents and superiors (senior ministers and elders for ministers; administrators and school board members for teachers). Both occupations have superiors whose supervision can be limited or non-existent. The reality for the teaching profession is that the vast majority of teachers have been students in a classroom sometime prior to their novice teaching experience. The same is not true for all youth ministers. Although some youth ministers will have experienced youth ministry as a teenager, not all will have that lived experience. Both professions are involved with discussion about pre-service training, induction as a novice,

and the role of mentoring. There are enough similarities between the two professions to warrant the use of teacher socialization research to inform youth minister socialization.

The question posed by Feiman-Nemser (2008) for teacher learning frames the issues in teacher socialization and by extension, frames the issues in youth minister socialization: “What do teachers need to know, care about, and be able to do?” (p. 697). She suggests four themes for the conceptualization of learning to teach. The first theme—learning to think like a teacher—encompasses the intellectual work of teaching and how the cognitive sciences influence this work. “Learning to think like a teacher requires a critical examination of one’s existing beliefs, a transition to pedagogical thinking, and the development of meta-cognitive awareness (p. 698).” This learning occurs in the teaching context as well as pre-service education.

Novice youth ministers must also learn to think like a youth minister. The subsequent questions for this research on novice youth ministers are these: “How does a novice youth minister learn to think like a youth minister? Does the novice youth minister come to the ministry having examined his beliefs about appropriate youth ministry? How much critical examination of the theological and philosophical underpinnings of youth ministry must the novice youth minister have done?”

Second, learning to know like a teacher (as distinguished from learning to think like a teacher) focuses on the different kind of knowledge on which good teaching depends, including the knowledge generated in practice. Teachers need to know the subject matter and how to teach to a diverse group of learners. “They need to understand how children grow and learn and how culture and language influence learning. They need

to know about curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and classroom organization. Their knowledge needs to be broad and deep. “Besides knowledge *for* teaching which can be learned outside practice, teachers need knowledge *of* teaching which can only be gained in the context of the work” (p. 699). A key component to this acquisition of knowledge is taking a reflective stance. Merely having an experience does not guarantee learning from an experience. Reflection is required.

Thus, the study of novice youth ministers requires an understanding of what they need to know about theology, the Bible, spiritual formation, culture, and so on. How do they gain this knowledge (formally, informally, non-formally)? What do they need to know before they start working as a youth minister? What can they learn from working with a mentor in a mentored field experience? How might mentors help in the first years of ministry? Who guides them in reflecting on their experience? What does an induction program look like to help them with critical knowledge?

The third theme, learning to feel like a teacher, “signals the fact that teaching and learning to teach are deeply personal work, engaging teachers’ emotions and identity as well as their intellect” (p. 699). The forming of one’s identity, Feiman-Nemser says, “is a complex process that fuses past, present, and future ideals and realities” (p. 699).

Without a doubt, learning to feel like a youth minister is personal work as well. The range of emotions is experienced by novice youth ministers as they negotiate relationships with parents, students, volunteers, senior ministers, colleagues on the church staff, and others. This is a critical time for identity development as the typically young adult asks herself if she was made for this. Issues of self-efficacy and self-concept are

operative when novice youth ministers question their ability to do the job when difficulties arise.

The fourth theme, according to Feiman-Nemser (2008) is that of action, the development of dispositions that unite ability with desire, where teachers are oriented to act in particular ways. The development of these dispositions result in teachers who hold high standards, who seek out students' strengths and interests as a foundation for learning, and who persist in helping students succeed. This process of development may require collaboration with colleagues and not personal heroic efforts on the part of the individual teacher. "Two decades of research on teacher community and teacher collaboration have produced compelling evidence that improvements in teaching are most likely to occur in schools where teachers work together" (p. 701).

Youth ministers have many professional skills which must be exercised and these skills are readily tested in their novice experiences. These include delivering messages, organizing events, communicating to a varied constituency, managing finances, training adult volunteers, relating to the senior minister and many more. How these skills are obtained and assessed is the focus of this researcher.

These four themes of thinking, knowing, feeling, and acting like a teacher, form the framework for important domains which are studied in the field of teacher socialization or teacher learning. Understanding some of what impacts teacher retention may be helpful for understanding youth minister retention given the lack of research on youth ministers. Given some similarities of experience between teachers and youth ministers, what seem to be the most salient domains from the study of teacher

socialization to help with the study of novice youth ministers are pre-service education, teacher identity, and workplace culture.

Pre-service education. Pre-service teacher education is one of the important domains in the study of teacher socialization. Pre-service teacher education includes the following: “(a) general education and academic specialization courses completed outside schools, departments, and colleges of education; (b) methods and foundation courses usually completed within education units; and (c) field-based experiences usually carried out in elementary and secondary classrooms” (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, pp. 335–336).

Lampert’s (2010) discussion of practice and pre-service education highlights the challenge of separating the domains of thinking, knowing, feeling, and acting outlined above by Feiman-Nemser (2008). Her concern is with the common dichotomy made between theory as thinking and practice as action. Prospective teachers are taught “theory, skills and knowledge about teaching through coursework” (p. 24) and then they do their fieldwork in a school where this knowledge is applied and practiced. Lampert argues for the development of “situated knowledge” through “pedagogies of enactment” where the teacher is viewed as an artisan who must create her own techniques. Since teaching is enacted in relationships between teachers and students in the context of a subject matter, teacher educators should act as masters working with apprentices as experienced physicians work with medical interns during “rounds.” This pedagogy of engagement should be added to the pedagogies of investigation and reflection. Included in the pedagogy of engagement is the practice of rehearsal, which involves performance and feedback.

The study of novice youth ministers must address the question of what kind of pre-service education is needed for them to succeed. The following questions will help in the discovery process: How and with who does this happen or should it happen? What are the results of inadequate pre-service training for youth ministers? Can any deficiencies in pre-service education be addressed during the novice experience?

Teacher identity. Teacher identity is another domain which is critical to the understanding of teacher socialization. According to Lampert (2010), learning to teach “involves adopting the identity of a teacher, being accepted as a teacher, and taking on the common values, language and tools of teaching” (p. 29). Learning the practice of teaching is like a doctor learning the practice of medicine or a lawyer learning the practice of law. “Learning the practice of teaching is not only about learning to do what teachers do but learning to call oneself a teacher and to believe in what teachers believe in” (p. 29). Thus, practice refers “to the profession with its shared identity, culture, values, language, tools, and knowledge into which teachers are fully acculturated” (Wang, et. al., 2010, p. 4).

Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue for the importance of understanding one’s self as one develops her professional identity. This self-awareness is an ethical necessity because a teacher’s perceptions and preconceptions play a role in how the teacher sees children and the children’s learning. Teachers need to know themselves—frames of reference, values and biases. They need to look critically at the privileges and inequities of their own lives and the lives of their students. Teachers need to explore their own social perspectives. They need to reflect on their own educational experiences and how these

experiences impact their own teaching. Proper identity development involves the examination of perspectives different from one's own.

Without question, novice youth ministers are also involved in the critical task of their identity development. In some cases novice youth ministers are convinced of a calling to be a youth minister; others are not sure of their long-range vocational goals and thus are impacted by both their positive and negative experiences as a novice. What part does the novice's supervisor play in this? How might mentors help with this?

Workplace culture. Another domain for teacher socialization is the workplace culture. Workplace culture includes the following domains. First is the domain which discusses the role of students in the life of the novice teacher. The novice teacher learns a range of personal behaviors in adjusting to the behaviors of the students in the classroom environment. A second domain in the discussion of the workplace culture is the school as an organizational structure which includes two important aspects: the influence of evaluators and the influence of teaching colleagues. Third, included in the workplace culture is the role of parents as well as the socioeconomic status of the families in the school community.

A fourth domain of workplace culture is the place of the novice teachers' colleagues in their experience and the growth of teacher professional communities in specific schools. Westheimer (2008) discusses the area of "teacher professional communities" which involves a specific focus on teachers who are committed to learning with and from their colleagues, usually within a school site. These professional communities are designed to improve teacher practice so students will learn. These communities create a culture of intellectual inquiry where ideas matter. Teachers learn to

be leaders and novice teachers are helped. Alienation is reduced so teachers can learn from each other.

The collaboration practiced in these teacher professional communities is essential because teachers often face isolation in their classrooms. The values of privacy and independence have been widely held by teachers. Professional learning communities are designed to focus on “student learning, reflective practice, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared values” (p. 760). “Accordingly, the structural conditions necessary for teacher learning to occur include time to meet and talk, physical proximity to one another, interdependent teaching roles, structures for communication, and sufficient teacher autonomy” (p. 760). Preventing the sense of isolation is especially important for novice teachers.

Rather than “sink-or-swim” or “trial-by-fire” propositions, teacher professional learning communities provide new teachers with support by connecting them with veteran teachers. A sense of connection and community, it is suggested, will help novices “achieve the kind of personal and professional satisfaction that will keep them in the profession” (p. 765).

According to Westheimer (2008) one of the primary means of accomplishing professional collaboration and exchange is mentoring. “Mentoring, in particular—when practiced within a strong professional community—strengthens teacher retention, teacher learning, and pedagogical innovation. . . . It also helps novice teachers form and enact their own visions of good teaching and identify themselves with the teaching profession” (p. 765).

As with novice teachers the workplace culture of the novice youth minister is also of critical importance in understanding his experience. To what degree do youth ministers practice their craft in isolation? The youth minister is a colleague with the senior minister; however, he has more in common with youth ministers at other churches. The other youth ministers are not in the same building, however. Is the youth minister expected to work without supervision? Is she ever evaluated? What kind of induction programs (strategies for helping adjust to new occupation) exist for novice youth ministers? Do they have mentors and what is the role of the mentors? Would they be aided by mentors in their church or outside? The workplace culture includes students, parents, adult volunteers and sometimes other ministers and ministry directors. How is the novice youth minister impacted by all of these people?

Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) describe the attitude shifts of novice teachers whose idealistic images of teaching were shattered when they were confronted with the realities of teaching. New teachers “struggle for control and experience feelings of frustration, anger, and bewilderment. The experience process they go through is more one of survival than of learning from experiences” (p. 155). They report that novice teachers “do not feel sufficiently prepared by their teacher educators and come to view colleagues in their schools as ‘realistic’ role models, as the people who ‘do know’ how one should go about teaching” (p. 155). They conclude that studies on teacher socialization suggest that it is quite difficult for individual teachers to really influence established practice in schools. Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) state the following about teacher education: “teacher education provides a stressful, ineffective interlude in the shift from being a

moderately successful and generally conformist student to being a pedagogically conservative teacher” (p. 156).

In a similar fashion as novice teachers in their first teaching experience, novice youth ministers experience a range of emotions when confronted with the realities of pastoral ministry. Differences in goals, values, beliefs, philosophies, and viewpoints produce confrontations and conflicts. These conflicts can engender negative emotions which can lead to the questioning of one’s rightful place in the ministry. Burnout is the outcome for some novice youth ministers with the end result being their departure from youth ministry. Learning to feel like a youth minister is a serious undertaking.

Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) argue that the ecology of learning to teach is a critical concept: “we believe that only when all players and landscapes that comprise the learning-to-teach environment are considered in concert will we gain a full appreciation of the inseparable web of relationships that constitutes the learning-to-teach ecosystem” (p. 170). The ecosystem of the church must be studied to understand the lived-experience of novice youth ministers. The socialization of youth ministers into the youth ministry profession includes the prior beliefs, values, and identity of the youth minister along with the expectations, values, beliefs, practices of students, parents, senior ministers, and volunteer staff in a church setting.

Historical review of teacher socialization research. The work of Cherubini (2009) provides a historical review of the research on teacher socialization from 1969-2005 and thus, provides a summary of teacher socialization. The historical review provides more understanding of the three constructs previously discussed (pre-service

education, teacher identity, and workplace culture) as well as additional constructs helpful for the study of the occupational socialization of youth ministers.

Cherubini (2009) discovered a “consistency in the complex descriptions of new teacher’s experiences during their socialization into the professional culture of teaching” (p. 83). School culture consists of norms, values, and the accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevail among colleagues. The emerging themes and their implications, discussed under three headings and related time periods, are presented in the following sections. Cherubini’s argument is that novice teachers experience these same concerns/issues today that have been part of the literature for over 35 years.

1969–1980: Research on perception of self. The overarching theme from 1969 to the mid-1980s was the new teachers’ perception of self. New teachers were described as being enculturated into the teaching culture through a progression of identifiable stages during their professional socialization “from those of ‘self’ (professional competence), ‘task’ (actual teaching practice) and ‘impact’ (increasing professional capacity)” (p. 85). The role of culture in the novice’s first teaching experience is vital in validating the teacher’s career path and has a foundational impact “on his or her professional and formative identity development” (p. 85). School culture plays a big part in the novice’s feeling of self-efficacy since one’s feelings of adequacy in doing the job are impacted by the actions and reactions of others. The critical domain of identity development is once again brought into focus for the novice teacher. The related topics of self-efficacy and the impact of the school culture are reinforced as critical areas in the study of teacher

socialization. Similarly, novice youth ministers are also engaged in identity development, grapple with issues of self-efficacy and have to adjust to a church culture.

Research from mid-1980s to late 1990s: Professional stability. During the mid-1980s through the late 1990s, the main themes related to education focused on professional stability, including concerns of new teachers combined with stage of development, teacher attrition, and leadership. In Cherubini's (2009) review of the literature, he suggests that the concerns of novice teachers eventually move them from initial positive attitudes to disenchantment within 4–5 months. Stress and fear can further lead to debilitating apprehension and tension. Part of the strenuous nature of the early days of teaching is the challenge the novice has to successfully carve a niche in the school culture, seeking security and respect while contending with frustration and self-doubt. These concerns can be placed in an overall framework of development that involves three stages as proposed by Cherubini (2009): survival, mastery, and impact. The duration of these stages are dependent on the knowledge of teaching practice by the novice and the environment and culture of the school.

Critical questions for youth minister socialization arise out of these issues in teacher socialization that contribute to the understanding of the novice youth minister experience. Do novice youth ministers go through the same developmental stages as novice teachers? How are they helped to reflect on their experience during this process? Are the issues of stress, fear, apprehension, and tension part of the novice youth minister experience?

Secondly, this time period from the mid-1980s to late '90s, according to Cherubini (2009), was characterized by the study of teacher attrition. Critical factors in

the life of the novice teacher were studied for their contribution to teacher attrition: isolation, loneliness, time demands, class and behavior management, and teacher burnout. One of the critical factors which surfaced was the “sink or swim” mentality of some school cultures. The language of this factor is that of isolation and suffocation. A person either survives or dies.

Of interest for the study of novice youth ministers is to determine if the “sink or swim” mentality is a motif of local churches’ approach to novice youth ministers. If so, does this lead to youth minister attrition? Are these young ministry leaders in the Body of Christ lost because no one helps them negotiate the experience of being a rookie?

The third theme in this time period from mid-1980s to late ’90s, according to Cherubini (2009), was the critical nature of the leadership of the school. The principal was suggested as the key to ensuring the beginning teacher made a successful integration into the school. Leaders need to attend to the way in which new members are brought into school faculties.

This theme of leadership in teacher socialization is also important to the understanding of the novice youth minister’s experience. Important questions should be raised. What supervisory styles are used by the novice’s supervisor? Is mentoring operative in the situation? Does healthy assessment exist?

Research from 2000 to 2005: Identity development and school culture. Much of the research between the years 2000 and 2005 focused on the identity development of new teachers and school culture. The language of survival occurred here as well. Survival involves functioning on the edge of physical and emotional exhaustion in the attempt to adjust to the demands of the campus and classroom. The novice teacher must deal with a

discord between two distinct realities: an individual's professional proficiencies and incongruent expectations from the field. The illusion of being fully prepared by pre-service experience can lead to overwhelming feelings of frustration, anxiety, and self-doubt. These feelings impact the establishment of the novice teacher's identity as she grapples with whether or not she should consider herself a teacher.

Included in the challenge of identity establishment is establishing membership in the professional community in which the novice teacher finds himself. A "pecking order" is apparent in schools where the newest members must "pay their dues." Acceptance is not automatic. Novices inherit a position of disadvantage. The conclusion is that novice teachers have their idealism and self-image challenged as they face their initial experiences and school culture. New teachers need to be equipped "with the tools, strategies, and techniques to be responsive to the varying levels of complexity and tension as they negotiate professional roles" (p. 94). To assist new teachers in adjusting to the school community, school leadership can recognize the skills and diversity of experiences as well as each novice teacher's unique needs and interests. This will facilitate socialization into the school culture.

Again, critical questions for the study of novice youth ministers arise out of the research on identity and school culture. What are the role expectations for novice youth ministers? How do these expectations mesh with the unique gifting and personality of the youth minister? Who is helping the youth minister deal with both realistic and unrealistic expectations?

One of the key aspects of teacher socialization is the part the schools, school districts, and state governments play in the life of the novice teacher. Teacher induction policies are the approaches these entities take in helping novice teachers. According to Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) the focus is on teacher recruitment, preparation, licensure, and retention. Policies typically center on formal induction programs, mentoring programs and credentialing systems leading to professional licensure. Carver and Feiman-Nemser's (2009) analysis of three induction programs led to important insights. The induction phase of a novice teacher provided by these formal programs is an extended time of learning often into the second year of teaching and even into the third. Induction programs differ in their approaches to support and evaluation. Carefully crafted tools and resources are important to the process and include both teaching standards and student content standards. These provide the basis for assessing progress and identifying critical areas for professional growth. Mentors (individuals and teams) are at the front lines of teacher induction programs. Although their responsibilities vary from site to site, mentors are essential to provide support and assistance for the novice. The involvement of mentors in assessment varies from site to site.

Based on the work of Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) important questions should be asked in studying novice ministers. What is the impact on novice youth ministers when no induction strategies exist and no standards for induction into the role of a professional youth minister exist? What impact might veteran youth ministers have in the mentoring of novices?

Summary: Teacher Socialization. Findings in teacher socialization literature are helpful for the research of novice youth ministers. Novice youth ministers need to think like youth ministers. That is, they need to examine their beliefs as well as their philosophical and theological presuppositions about youth ministry and being a youth minister. Research is needed to determine the critical knowledge necessary for quality youth ministry. The emotions experienced by novices should be examined. Research should be conducted to determine in what ways and with whom these emotions should be processed. Anger and frustration, for example, are experienced when criticisms are leveled against a novice youth minister. Professional competencies (e.g., speaking, counseling) need to be addressed along with the means of learning these competencies. Are mentors critical to this process? Of what importance is the input of professional colleagues in developing the proper behaviors of a youth minister? What difference does the supervising minister make in the life of the novice?

The issue of pre-service education is important for the study of novice youth ministers. What kind of training and/or experience is essential before a person becomes a youth minister? What part does formal training play in youth minister socialization? What can only be learned “on-the-job”? Does field education need to be a mentored experience?

The domain of identity formation studied in teacher socialization includes the area of self-efficacy, how effectively one feels he is accomplishing the tasks assigned to him. Thus, youth ministers are impacted by successful or unsuccessful negotiation of the expectations of others in the church setting. Who needs to be available when the novice

youth minister is doing reflective thinking about his competency and future in youth ministry? Should it be a supervising minister, a colleague inside the church, a mentor from inside church, or maybe a professional colleague from another church? Where does the concept of calling fit in the experience of a novice youth minister? Is a sense of isolation operative in the life of a novice youth minister?

Another key component of teacher socialization is the workplace culture. The workplace culture of the novice youth minister includes the senior minister, parents, students, and adult volunteers. Expectations, supervision, isolation, and evaluation are components of the youth minister's experience that impact the adjustment to the new situation. Differences in goals, values, beliefs, philosophies, and viewpoints produce confrontations and conflicts. Negative emotions in the midst of conflict can lead to disillusionment, burnout, and departure.

The findings of teacher socialization have not been applied to the experiences of novice youth ministers, however future research should take into account what has been learned about novice teachers as they are inducted into the field of education.

The following section reviews the research on youth minister attrition and longevity.

Youth Minister Attrition and Longevity

This part of the literature review reports what is known about youth minister attrition and longevity. Although research is limited, a small number of studies have examined these subjects. This section is a review of these studies.

Atkinson and Wilson

The tenure of youth ministers was the concern of Atkinson and Wilson (1991) in their study of youth ministers in the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) denomination in Canada and the United States. The researchers sought to address the issue by determining the relationship between job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, and three perspectives on career development. The study was conducted through convenience sampling by sending a questionnaire to every C&MA youth minister in Canada and the United States during the fall of 1984. They received 80 responses for a return rate of 57%. There was only one female in the resultant sample. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: demographic information, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors defined by Herzberg (1959); and a modified version of the Brayfield-Rothe Index, a measure of overall job satisfaction.

Atkinson and Wilson first compared the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction scores between participants in three life cycle stages to test their first hypothesis: a significant difference in levels of job satisfaction will be found between the life cycle stages of Entering the Adult World (ages 22–28), Age Thirty Transition (ages 29–33), and Settling Down (ages 34–40). This hypothesis was rejected. At the $p < .10$ alpha level, none of the satisfaction factors (achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility, and work itself) or dissatisfaction factors (policy, salary, interpersonal relationships, supervision, and work itself) were significantly different between people in any of the stages. This was also true for the total job satisfaction factor (JSF), the total job dissatisfaction factor (JDF), and the overall job satisfaction factor (OJS).

The researchers partially rejected the second null hypothesis, which predicted no significant difference in satisfaction levels in career development stages as defined by job tenure (the number of years in one's present position). The achievement and recognition mean scores were significantly higher at the fourth stage (6–10 years) than at the first (first year), and the working conditions means score was significantly higher at the third stage (3–5 years) than in the first stage (first year) (alpha level at .10). The third null hypothesis, which predicted no significant difference in satisfaction levels at three career stages as determined by the length of time in the ministry, was partially rejected. Youth ministers in the maintenance stage (over 10 years) were significantly more satisfied with the recognition they receive than youth ministers in the establishment stage (1–2 years).

Atkinson and Wilson conclude that their sample provided little evidence of support for Levinson's (1978) theory suggesting that the Age Thirty Transition Stage is a time of mild crisis and upheaval. Instead, they conclude that tenure or years in one's present position are better indicators of variances in job satisfaction. The more time a youth minister spent in a specific position, the more satisfied with his ministry he was likely to be. The most significant items of satisfaction are achievement (results from ministry, personal goal attainments, success in ministry) and recognition, and to a lesser degree, supervision. The two researchers also assert that some answers are provided relating to job satisfaction and short tenure of youth ministers in light of the fact that only 30% (24 of 80 people) of their sample had tenure of more than 2 years. Their data showed no significant differences concerning dissatisfaction factors related to tenure and conclude that those concerned with the turnover of youth ministers should look for other possible contributing factors.

The research by Atkinson and Wilson is tainted by the assumption that the average tenure of a youth minister in one church was 18 months. Nowhere do they cite empirical research to make this assertion. When the youth ministers in their sample did not show a significant difference in levels of dissatisfaction they could have suggested the tenure statistics need to be examined. The purpose and design of the study was not sufficient to draw conclusions about longevity or attrition of youth ministers; therefore, the conclusion reached that a large majority of Alliance youth ministers leave by the second year is not justified. Since this was a descriptive study and not correlational, conclusions reached about the reasons for long tenures must be considered with much caution.

Kageler

One of the first studies related to youth minister attrition was done by Kageler (1992) who surveyed people who knew youth pastors who had been fired or forced to resign. He used a snowball sampling strategy and over a 3-month period gathered information on 175 youth ministers. The research design was descriptive in nature. Kageler does not elaborate on the people who completed the surveys or how long it took to gather the sample. There is no way to know how they got their information about this “fired” youth pastor.

Ninety-three percent of the participants in this study were male and 7% were female. The majority of the individuals were fired while in the 26–30 years old range (41.2%). Most were married (79%) and a high percentage (93%) were college graduates. Only 34% were seminary graduates. The highest percentage of people (31.3%) was fired after 2 years at the church. The highest percentage of total ministry years was 1–5 years

(42.4%). Of all the participants 48% found another youth ministry position. Of those who didn't find another youth ministry position, 65% did not want one. The top three reasons given for firing were related to conflict: conflict with the senior pastor (41.9%), conflict with church leadership (27.4%), and conflict with parents (17.9%).

Kageler concludes from the findings that there were four causes of conflict between the youth minister and the senior minister: differing philosophies of ministry, pastoral insecurity, "scapegoating," and the arrival of a new senior pastor. As a result of the findings Kageler recommended that youth ministers seek to understand the pastor, submit to the senior pastor, communicate negative feelings in an appropriate way, and always speak well of the senior pastor in public. Youth ministers need to recognize that conflict with parents involves different perspectives on rules, standards, and conduct, as well as the teaching and advice of the youth minister. He recommends that youth ministers try to understand the changing nature of parenting in our culture, work on understanding the parents' point of view, and work hard to build bridges through good communication.

Kageler's findings were a helpful start in the early research on youth minister longevity. The nature of the research design, however, made generalizability difficult to the broad experience of novice youth ministers. The value of this research is that it began to inform the research that followed on longevity of youth ministers. Certainly the area of conflict appeared in later research with the relationship with the senior pastor being a critical factor.

McKenzie

McKenzie (1997) chose to interview 27 youth ministers and former youth ministers in the Church of God denomination in order to study longevity issues among youth ministers. The sample was obtained from a list of people who were employed full time in youth ministry in 1986. The sample was drawn from among those who best represented the population based on criteria established by the researcher. In 1986 there were 2,345 congregations in the United States, and 87 persons were listed as youth ministers. An interview protocol was field tested with four current youth ministers and four former youth ministers outside the sample. Four of the 27 interviews were conducted face-to-face and the rest were completed by phone. Interviews averaged 60–75 minutes in length. There were questions in four areas: demographic information, entry into youth ministry, youth ministry experiences, and how the subject's life had changed since entering youth ministry. McKenzie also collected data from the annually published *Yearbook of the Church of God*.

McKenzie (1997) used a constant comparative method of analysis. This requires data to be coded from a variety of perspectives. A computer program, "The Ethnograph" was employed for the analysis. McKenzie coined the term "novice leavers" which was used to describe those who served up to nine years in youth ministry and then left youth ministry. "Veteran leavers", according to McKenzie's definition, served 10 or more years before leaving youth ministry. In this sample, six people were still in youth ministry at the time of the interviews. Of the 21 who left youth ministry, eight were senior ministers, five were ministers of music, two were ministers of Christian education, two had left

ministry for secular positions, one was an evangelist and motivational speaker, one was a Youth for Christ area director, one was a student, and one was unemployed. Participants expressed three motives for entering youth ministry: (1) a response to the call of God, (2) youth ministry provided an opportunity to respond to a more general call to ministry, and (3) youth ministry provided a needed entry level into ministry. In this sample, youth ministry was not widely pursued as a stepping stone to other types of ministry.

McKenzie concluded that youth ministry did appear to be, in fact, a novice adult activity as he had anticipated (Levinson, 1978). He had also anticipated that the age thirty transition (Levinson, 1978) would be a time when many would leave youth ministry, but only about a third of the sample did so. This time period was, however, a critical time of assessment for those who moved from one youth ministry to another. Using Herzberg's (1966) categories of motivators and hygiene factors, McKenzie found that "positive experiences with regards to the work itself" was the most powerful motivator. The most frequently mentioned hygiene factor was "negative experiences with senior pastor" by a 3 (negative) to 1 (positive) margin. Fairly typical negative factors were a lack of appropriate communication and lack of agreed upon expectations in the supervisory relationship. In spite of this, however, McKenzie found that there did not seem to be a correlation between longevity and these negative relationships.

Of great significance is McKenzie's conclusion, "Nearly all youth ministers leave youth ministry" (1997, p. 153). Tenure lengths were long in McKenzie's sample and whatever negative experiences occurred did not deter most of his sampled youth ministers from further ministry. Unfortunately his sample was very small, but

McKenzie's implications are worthy of consideration. He concluded that youth ministers (and those who hire them) should consider the issue of what an appropriate tenure in youth ministry might be. At what age or stage might a youth minister lose effectiveness and need to move into other areas of ministry? Colleges and seminaries need to prepare prospective youth ministers in such a way that they can do youth ministry for a season and then grow into other ministry careers.

Keehn

Keehn (1997) developed his research on the assumption that longevity in youth ministry is positive. The purpose of his research was to discover the factors that promote longevity in youth ministry and which prevent longevity. His definition of longevity was the length of one church staff location or ministry. Keehn's research design was the organization of three focus groups. The first group was selected from a National Institute of Youth Ministry database of youth ministers known to have been in youth ministry 7 years or more and who reported that they were thriving. The other two groups were recruited at a National Youth Workers Convention who came from all over the United States. These youth ministers had also been in youth ministry for 7 years or more. The total sample was 20 people, 18 men and 2 women. The 12 questions for the focus groups were based on Lawson's work (1995) studying associate staff. They included questions about longevity factors, relationship with the senior pastor, personal maintenance and development, managing negative situations, and family relationships.

Demographic analysis of the sample indicated that the mean length of total paid ministry experience was 13.26 years and the mean stay in their current position was 4.5

years. For this sample the primary factor for staying in youth ministry was a calling to youth ministry. The second most important factor was support of the youth minister for the ministry and validation of the youth minister's call to ministry, including support during conflict and availability to discuss issues. The third factor was social support and accountability partners primarily made up of youth minister colleagues from other churches. The fourth factor was mentors and the fifth factor was Sabbath rests and spiritual vitality. The final major factor was the ability to balance time between work and family.

Keehn concludes from his literature review that the factors that prevent longevity seem to be excessive time demands which lead to the intrusion on family times, the lack of social supports, and inadequate financial compensation and training. The primary factors for promoting longevity, he concludes, are validating the call of the youth minister through recognized authority and a clear job description, protected time for renewal and family through extended periods of rest, and adequate financial compensation.

Care should be taken in generalizing Keehn's findings. His sample was purposely drawn from people with longevity and who were thriving, and in the case of the sample from the National Youthworkers Convention were self-selected. His work does provide a basis for further research to determine if the factors he found to contribute to longevity can be corroborated in future studies. Keehn did state clearly whether the people in his sample were referring to mentors from within their church or outside the church. This is a critical issue for the purposes of this literature review. One of the important questions is

whether or not the supervising minister (usually the senior pastor) should be involved in mentoring the youth minister he is supervising.

Lawson

Lawson (2000a) conducted research among associate ministers to understand what factors contributed to thriving in ministry. In his research report he was able to tease out the data which applied to associates who were involved in youth ministry. Over a period of 1 year he involved 120 veteran associate staff members (7 or more years in ministry) in 21 focus groups. Three of these focus groups were with youth ministry staff. Phase 2 was survey research that involved fourteen denominations in the United States and Canada. A total of 800 surveys were sent out. In all, 415 usable surveys were returned (response rate of 59%). Of the respondents, 112 (27%) were responsible for ministry with youth in their churches. Lawson found that 82% of associate pastors were supervised by senior ministers.

Lawson (2000a) discovered nine themes that were factors in the lives of thriving associate ministers: (1) finding satisfaction in God's direction, (2) working well with one's supervisor and fellow associates, (3) foundational attitudes and commitments for thriving, (4) church environments that enable thriving, (5) sustaining personal vitality, (6) building supportive relationships, (7) the importance of family health, (8) confirmation and perseverance in ministry, and (9) patterns of behavior by the supervising minister. These themes were used to build the survey completed by the 415 associate staff members. There were 73 items listed as possible contributors to one's ability to thrive in ministry. Of those items, 26 items were identified by 90% or more of the survey

participants. Lawson compared the responses of the 112 survey respondents with major responsibility for youth ministry with those who did not have such responsibilities. *T*-test comparison of mean scores ($p < .05$) revealed that there were statistically significant differences for only 9 of the 73 factors and in all cases the factors that were identified were less influential for the youth ministry personnel than the non-youth ministry personnel. The three factors not selected by 80% or more of the youth ministry workers were “Hold regular (weekly or so) staff meetings” (75% for youth ministry workers, 91% for non-youth ministry workers), “I delegate a lot of ministry responsibilities to others, focusing my efforts in a few areas” (50% for youth ministry workers, 63% for non-youth ministry workers), and “Our church staff have regular retreats together” (35% for youth ministry workers, 51% for non-youth ministry workers).

Lawson reaches five conclusions regarding thriving factors in associate ministers. First, most thriving factors are common to all associate staff, regardless of position. Second, God’s guidance and strength are critical for thriving in ministry. Third, healthy relationships are important for thriving in ministry. Fourth, both internal and external factors encourage thriving. Last, thriving includes other life factors as well as a number of job factors. His recommendations include preparing the whole person for ministry, creating opportunities to clarify calling, developing interpersonal skills and strong supportive relationships, nurturing spiritual vitality, and educating and equipping supervising ministers and church boards.

Lawson’s research is foundational for future research in the area of youth ministry longevity because of the many factors articulated by associate pastors who were thriving.

A starting point is provided for thinking about job satisfaction and how to help youth ministers thrive in ministry. Those who train and supervisor youth ministers can work to be sure that these factors are being addressed. However, since job dissatisfaction is not necessarily tied to job satisfaction factors, youth minister attrition studies need to be sure to include factors that lead to unhealthy situations that contribute to youth minister departure. One of the limitations of Lawson's study is that he only studied youth ministers who were thriving in ministry and who had been in ministry 7 or more years. The study of attrition and longevity would require the study of youth ministers who are not thriving to determine what factors cause people to leave youth ministry. It would also require that youth ministers be studied who have worked less than 7 years and those who left youth ministry prior to reaching the 7-year mark. In light of a somewhat low survey response rate, Lawson's study should be replicated before his findings are broadly generalized.

Strommen, Jones, and Rahn

Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) surveyed 2,416 people of the approximately 7,500 youth ministers who attended the Atlanta 1996 Youth Leaders Conference sponsored by the National Network of Youth Ministry (NNYM). The purpose of the research was to gather a variety of information about youth leaders in areas such as concerns, personal inner strength, priorities, outcomes, goals, and organizational support. The conference itself was a concerted effort by the NNYM to get the key national parachurch organizations involved along with the youth ministry leaders from large denominations. The outcome was one of the largest gatherings of youth leaders to date.

Respondents were classified into nine denominational/organizational groups and yielded the following percentages of respondents: Southern Baptist (22%), Youth for Christ/Young Life (18%), United Methodist (14%), Assembly of God (10%), Evangelical Lutheran (10%), Presbyterian (U.S.A.) (9%), Miscellaneous (9%), Evangelical Covenant/Evangelical Free (5%), and Episcopal (3%).

Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) used a 20-question, open-ended questionnaire to obtain their data. They expressed disappointment at the return rate of 51.5% as a limiting factor in the results.

Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) concluded that there is a much longer tenure for the average youth minister than had been previously assumed. They define tenure as the number of years in youth ministry, whereas others would use the word *longevity* and reserve the word *tenure* for the amount of time in one ministry location. Although they did not report an average tenure, they did report the responses shown in Table 2.2 for the number of years the respondent had been in youth ministry. They conclude that the turnover rate among youth ministers is not really known, but that tenure for the average youth minister is longer than had been previously assumed. Since no data were gathered with regards to the number of churches/ministries in which each person served or the number of years at each ministry, the turnover rate cannot be determined if turnover rate is an indication of how long a person stays in one location. It is difficult to determine the generalizability of their findings about tenure (total amount of time in youth ministry by their definition) since data were not available with regard to all attendees. The researchers do note that the number of non-respondents is a limiting factor since “it is reasonable to

suppose that a disproportionate number of these also would be disconcerted and discouraged” (Strommen, Jones, & Rahn, 2001, p. 36).

Table 2.2

Number of Years in Youth Ministry for Sample of Youth Pastors (Strommen, Jones, & Rahn, 2001)

Number of years in youth ministry	Percentage of youth ministers
Less than 1 year	2%
1–3 years	12%
4–6 years	20%
7–9 years	18%
10–15 years	26%
16 or more years	22%

It should also be noted that the study sample may not be representative of all youth ministers since the data reveal many veteran youth ministers attended the conference. Veterans typically have the resources to attend such conferences whereas many novices likely are part of small churches/ministries with limited resources and thus cannot afford to attend. Also, since a sustained effort was made to involve parachurch organizations, the sample includes both local church youth ministers and parachurch youth workers. No data were provided to help distinguish between church and parachurch staff. This is important because differences exist between the cultures of churches and

parachurch organizations. This provides a limiting factor to the generalizability of the findings.

Grenz

Identifying the factors that influence youth ministers to leave vocational youth ministry was the purpose of the research by Grenz (2001). The population of this study was current and former youth ministers (YMs) who were members of the National Network of Youth Ministries (NNYM) during their vocational youth ministry experience. Surveys were sent to 175 YMs who were thought to be currently in the NNYM. Seventy-two surveys were sent to YMs thought to have left youth ministry. The method used was stratified random selection. Of the 247 surveys sent out, 154 were usable (return of 62%). The sample contained 89 current YMs and 65 former YMs. Thirty of the people in the total sample were females (19.5%). Grenz designed a descriptive, causal-comparative study using a questionnaire survey instrument. The survey instrument used was a modified form of Lawson's (1995) "A survey of current and former church educational ministry staff in North America."

Grenz reported that less than half of all participants (48.1%) had a mentor or an internship during their ministry preparation. The mean age at which current YMs began work as a YM was 24.87 years of age and the mean age at which former YMs began work was 24.92, which was not significantly different. The mean age that former YMs left the vocation was 34.54 years, with the range being 22–58 years. The majority of former YMs left the vocation in their 30s with the second largest group (21.5%) leaving in their 20s. Of all YMs, 4.65 years was the mean tenure in their first position. YMs

average tenure in subsequent positions were as follows: 3.27 years for second, 4.28 years for third, 2.98 years for fourth, and 4.60 years for fifth. Forty-five (69.2%) of the former YMs were still employed in some type of vocational ministry. Sixteen of those were in a youth-related parachurch or denominational ministry position. The top four most influential factors identified by former YMs for why they left youth ministry as a career were “change in my calling to youth ministry,” “changing vocational interests,” “greater opportunity for successful work in my new position,” and “salary/benefits inadequate.”

In the discussion of his findings, Grenz compares his results to other research in the area of YM tenure. One difference he notes is in the area of the highest degree earned. Kjesbo (1998) and Jones (1999) reported that 40% of their participants received a graduate degree, whereas Grenz reported 57%. Jones (1999) reported that 68.3% of her participants received college or graduate youth ministry training, whereas Grenz reported only 32.5%. Grenz notes that tenure patterns of current and former YMs were not impacted by a person having gone through a youth ministry major, and further states that he and McKenzie (1997) may have failed to locate former YMs who left the vocation after a short time. Certainly this would impact the tenure rates. Although most of the 64 factors in the survey showed only weak influences on the job and career changes of YMs, conflict with the senior pastor was noted as an influential factor. Grenz asserts that a positive relationship with the senior pastor can lead to longer tenures, while a negative relationship leads to shorter tenures. He recommends that senior pastors be mentors to their YMs.

Grenz teased out the relevant demographic data in this research, which was an especially valuable aspect of this research. He looked at the overall career of the youth minister as well as tenure in each position. As Grenz drew his sample from members of the National Network of Youth Ministry, there exists the likelihood that people who join this organization are more serious about youth ministry as a long-term vocation. They are also likely to be serious about making a career of ministry in general, so the reason they leave youth ministry is to pursue a different kind of ministry. Care should be taken when generalizing to the larger population of youth ministers whose reasons for not joining the NNYM might be significant for the analysis.

Still the tenure rates reported here are very significant in light of the persistent use of the mythical statistic that YM tenure is 18 months. Grenz provided a comparison of the YM tenure studies done to date which should supply a good foundation for further research. Of interest is Grenz's finding that YM tenure patterns were not impacted by a person participating in a youth ministry major, however an explanation of that would be helpful. Grenz supports the idea that senior pastors become mentors for YMs.

Makin

Makin (2005) explored the turnover intentions of youth ministers due to the limited empirical literature on the attrition rate of youth ministers. He sought to understand and clarify the antecedents of behavioral intentions related to youth minister turnover. His desire was to assess the influence of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, expected utility of present job, career commitment, senior pastor ambition, and family structure as potential predictors of turnover intentions.

Makin surveyed a sample of youth ministers made up of participants gathered from a database provided by the National Network of Youth Ministries (NNYM). NNYM provided 3,001 randomly selected email addresses from their membership list and the process began in December 2004. Makin received 571 responses (19% overall response rate). The respondents were screened so that the sample included only full-time youth ministers with the resultant sample containing 393 respondents. The survey included the following scales: a 9-item version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, the Job Satisfaction Survey, the Family Structure Index, the Intention to Turnover scale, the Expected Utility of Present Job scale, and the Career Commitment Measure.

Makin tested 10 hypotheses, and regression analyses of the data led to the following conclusions. A youth minister who is satisfied with his supervisor, with non-monetary rewards, with communication at the church, and with the nature of the work is less likely to consider exiting his church. The more the youth minister is psychologically unattached to the church, the more likely he is to think about leaving the church.

Makin comes to two conclusions from his findings after doing a regression analysis, even though earlier correlational evidence pointed in a different direction. First, the expected utility of the present job does not bear on youth ministers' intentions to turnover (leave present ministry). It does not appear, in general, that youth ministers' intentions to leave are impacted by an ambition to become senior pastors nor are they using the youth minister position as a means to the senior pastorate. Second, no relationship was found between the youth minister's family structure and his intentions to leave the organization or the career.

Makin's discovery related to ministry supervision was significant for the purposes of the research questions being explored in this literature review. He concluded that satisfaction with one's supervisor was the strongest of all facets related to organizational turnover. He reports that other studies have indicated that a youth ministers' relationship with the senior pastor was a significant source of job satisfaction. In discussing the limitations of his study, Makin states that youth ministers who are members of the National Network of Youth Ministry and choose to do the survey may not represent those who are discontent with their job or youth ministry as a profession. As Makin notes, intention to turnover (leave one's present ministry) does not equate to actual quitting. Further research needs to include input from youth ministers who leave their churches and leave youth ministry.

Summary: Youth Minister Attrition and Longevity

The attrition rate of youth ministers is difficult to pinpoint, therefore it is hard to compare with other occupations. The assertion that the average stay at a church by a youth minister is 1.5 years has received no substantiation. Eighty-six percent of the respondents in the Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) study reported being in youth ministry for 4 or more years; however, they were attendees at a national youth ministry conference and may not be typical. The data revealed a high percentage of those attending the conference were ministry veterans. Grenz (2001) reported average tenure rates (time in each ministry position) between 2.98 years and 4.65 years, but they may not be typical because they belong to a professional youth ministry association (NNYM). The reality is that most youth ministers eventually leave youth ministry (McKenzie, 1997).

However, knowledge about the timing of departure, factors contributing to departure, and subsequent vocations requires more research.

Factors that contribute to youth ministers thriving have more research supporting these factors than those factors related to attrition. Lawson (2000a) provides nine themes that are factors in thriving associate ministers (sample includes youth ministers): finding satisfaction in God's direction, working well with one's supervisor and fellow associates, foundational attitudes and commitments for thriving, church environments that enable thriving, sustaining personal vitality, building supportive relationships, the importance of family health, confirmation and perseverance in ministry, and patterns of behavior by the supervising minister. These themes and the specific factors contained in each theme provide a basis for future research on the subject of youth minister attrition and retention.

According to Lawson (2000b), youth ministers are typically supervised by senior ministers. He reported that 82% of associate pastors were supervised by senior ministers. The relationship with the supervising pastor and the youth minister is clearly an important factor related to attrition and longevity. Kageler (1992), however, reported that conflict with the senior minister was the most common reason for a youth minister being fired. Lawson (2000a) reported that one of the key factors of importance for an associate pastor thriving in ministry was the ability to work well with one's supervisor.

It is difficult to find youth ministers for research purposes who have left youth ministry after their first experience. McKenzie (1997) found that many youth ministers who leave youth ministry simply move on to different aspects of vocational ministry,

including church and parachurch ministries. More research should focus on those who have left youth ministry for vocations outside the church or parachurch ministry context.

Of concern for the study of novice youth pastors is the area of transition into the field of youth ministry. A parallel vocation is that of education where the issues of attrition have been studied related to induction of novice teachers into the field. The following section reports the findings on the issues facing the transition of novice teachers into the field of education.

The Transition of Novice Teachers into the Field of Education

Because of the paucity of literature in the areas of youth minister attrition and longevity, the search for an equivalent career area leads to the field of education. Many youth ministers begin their careers in their 20s as do many teachers in the field of education. Much research has been conducted with regards to teacher recruitment and retention which can provide insights for the study of novice youth ministers. There is much in the literature about teacher induction into the profession and factors which help in the retention of teachers. The factors leading to teacher attrition may be similar to youth minister attrition.

One limitation of the comparison between teachers and youth ministers is the gender issue. Women are more likely to enter teaching than men, whereas men are more likely to be youth ministers than women. According to Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006), women are more likely than men to enter the teaching profession. Glazerman et al. (2008) had 88.5% females and 11.5% males in their study of teachers from a number of school districts. Grenz (2001) found only 19.5% of his sample of current and former

youth ministers to be female. Keehn's (1997) small sample had 18 men and 2 women. Makin's (2005) study had 91.9% males and 7.9% females. In spite of these limitations, there is still value in understanding the issues of induction and retention in the field of education to discover factors that determine teacher attrition and retention and consider if these might also be relevant for people in youth ministry.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Review of the Recent Empirical Literature

Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) provide an updated review of the literature with regard to teacher recruitment and retention. What follows are the findings that are most relevant to the study of youth minister recruitment and retention.

The highest turnover (moving from one school to another) and attrition (leaving the occupation of teaching) rates occur in the first years of teaching and after many years of teaching (nearing retirement) (p. 200). Guarino et al. (2006) cite a study in Texas which reported that "approximately 16% of those who entered teaching in Texas between 1987 and 1996 left the public school system within their first year and 26% left within 2 years. Second-year attrition rates were found to be lower for slightly older students (pp. 186–187). For this reason, leaders in public school education have asked the question if the retention rates in education are higher or lower than other occupations. The studies reported in this literature review suggest that "the teaching profession may have somewhat lower retention rates than other occupations that employ college graduates, but they disagreed on results comparing specific occupations" (p. 185). The data did not allow for a definitive answer, however. The comparison with retention rates of youth ministers with other occupations would also be valuable. It may be that the attrition of

youth ministers who leave after 1 or 2 years is not significantly different from that of other occupations.

A crucial factor in the study of attrition in education is financial compensation.

Consistent findings regarding compensation were as follows:

- Higher salaries were associated with lower teacher attrition
- Teachers were responsive to salaries outside their districts and their profession
- In surveys of teachers, self-reported dissatisfaction with salary was associated with higher attrition and decreased commitment to teaching (p. 200)

Certainly a critical factor in examining the reasons for youth minister attrition is the compensation packages provided by churches.

Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) found that a number of working conditions were related to recruitment and retention of teachers. Critical to the study of youth ministers is this finding: “Schools that provide mentoring and induction programs, particularly those related to collegial support, had lower rates of turnover among beginning teachers” (p. 201). According to these researchers, teachers who experience an induction strategy and mentoring support in their first year of teaching are less likely to leave teaching or change schools. The relevance for youth ministry is clear. Would a strategy for induction and the provision of mentors contribute to the success of youth ministers as well? Who should provide such a strategy since churches are not linked together like the public school system?

Guarino et al. (2006) also found that “schools that provided teachers with more autonomy and administrative support had lower levels of teacher attrition and migration”

(p. 201). This finding is also important to the study of novice youth ministers. Finding a balance between autonomy and appropriate support is tricky, but this suggests that the supervisory strategies of senior pastors (the most common supervisors of youth ministers) may be critical for the retention of youth ministers.

Impacts of Comprehensive Teacher Induction

In a study commissioned by the Department of Education, Glazerman, Doflin, Bleeker, Johnson, Isenberg, Lugo-Gil, Grider, and Britton (2008) conducted a controlled experiment to study the effects of a comprehensive teacher induction plan. Their approach to the study of novice teachers may aid in the study of novice youth ministers.

The concern of the study is the often quoted statistic in education that 46% of beginning teachers leave the classroom within 5 years (p. 1). High turnover rates can expose students to inexperienced teachers and thus impact learning outcomes. The price of recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers can be costly and disruptive to the school. One of the typical responses to the turnover of teachers has been the implementation of induction strategies for new teachers, which includes mentoring. Could it be that induction programs for novice youth ministers with a mentoring component will help with the retention of novice youth ministers?

The importance of this study for the study of youth ministers has less to do with the results of the report as the framework for the research. One of the key perspectives on novice teachers and their mobility, by destination, is found in the three possible outcomes: (1) stayers (stayed at original school), (2) movers (within same district, to

different district, to a private, parochial or other school), or (3) leavers (left to stay at home, left for school/new job, or something other).

This framework of mobility for teachers provides a basis for the creation of a framework for studying the mobility of youth ministers. This proposed framework is seen in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

Outcome Framework for Studying Youth Minister Mobility, by Destination

General outcome	Specific destination
Stayers	Stayed at the original church where a novice
Movers (moved but remained in paid youth ministry role)	Moved, minister in same denomination
Movers (moved but remained in paid youth ministry role)	Moved, youth minister in different denomination
Movers (moved but remained in paid youth ministry role)	Moved, youth ministry in a parachurch organization
Movers (moved, remained in paid vocational ministry but different role than youth ministry)	Moved, different ministry role in the same church
Movers (moved, remained in paid vocational ministry but different role than youth ministry)	Moved, different ministry role in a different church in the same denomination
Movers (moved, remained in paid vocational ministry but different role than youth ministry)	Moved, different ministry role in a different church in a different denomination

(table continues)

Table 2.3 *Outcome Framework for Studying Youth Minister Mobility, by Destination*
(continued)

General outcome	Specific destination
Movers (moved, remained in paid vocational ministry but different role than youth ministry)	Moved, different ministry role in a parachurch organization
Leavers (left paid vocational ministry)	Left, to stay home
Leavers (left paid vocational ministry)	Left, to education
Leavers (left paid vocational ministry)	Left, job entirely different from vocational ministry
Leavers (left paid vocational ministry)	Left, other

One of the factors examined was the reason teachers give for moving out of a school. Table 2.4 lists the reasons teachers gave and how these reasons might be used to inquire about youth ministers' reasons for moving out of a church situation.

Table 2.4

Mapping the Reasons for Leaving a Church with Reasons Teachers Give for Moving

Reasons teachers gave for moving out of a school	Reasons novice youth ministers might give for leaving a church
Moved, spouse/partner's job	Moved, spouse's job
Salary or benefits	Salary or benefits
Job security	Job security
Workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom resources, school safety, parent and community support)	Workplace conditions (facilities, parent support, budget)
Opportunities for desirable teaching assignment	Offer from another church/parachurch organization
Dissatisfied with administrative support	Dissatisfied with senior minister's support
Principal's leadership	Senior minister's leadership
Changes in responsibilities	Changes in responsibilities
Challenge of implementing new reform measures	Challenge of implementing senior minister's/elders' philosophy of ministry
Difficulty with colleagues	Difficulty with other church staff

(table continues)

Table 2.4 *Mapping the Reasons for Leaving a Church with Reasons Teachers Give for Moving* (continued)

Reasons teachers gave for moving out of a school	Reasons novice youth ministers might give for leaving a church
Autonomy over the classroom	Restrictive, micro-managing style of supervisor
Autonomy over the classroom	Parental interference
Lesson planning time	Message preparation time
Professional development opportunities	Professional development opportunities
Involuntary transfer	Requested to change ministry positions with no interest in doing so
Not asked to return	Let go (fired or asked to resign)

Note. The data in the left column are adapted from “Impacts of comprehensive teacher induction: Results from the first year of a randomized controlled study” by S. Glazerman, S. Doflin, M. Bleeker, A. Johnson, E. Isenberg, J. Lugo-Gil, M. Grider, and E. Britton, 2008, (NCEE 2009-4034). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

In order to study the attrition rate of youth ministers, the frameworks provided by this study on teacher induction and mentoring provide helpful categories for framing the research.

Summary: The Transition of Novice Teachers in the Field of Education

The search for a similar career that can provide a framework for the study of novice youth ministers leads to the field of education. The factors that influence the attrition of teachers can contribute to an understanding of the attrition of novice youth ministers. The factors which are relevant to the study of novice youth ministers that influence the attrition rate of teachers seem to be financial compensation, induction strategies (including mentoring), and supervision (balance of autonomy and support). Future research might examine the impact of compensation for novice youth ministers on their longevity. Strategies for “inducting” a novice youth minister could be studied.

Supervision strategies for novice youth ministers need to be explored to determine if attrition can be attributed to an inadequacy in this area. What kind of supervision is needed for novice youth ministers to thrive in ministry?

One important question which grows out of this research is whether or not the rate of retention in education is different from other occupations. The same question could be asked of the youth ministry field. Perhaps the rate of retention is not significantly different and a certain amount of attrition should be expected of those in their early- and mid-20s who are discerning their place in the world. On the other hand, churches may be losing key ministry leaders for the future because of the inappropriate treatment of young leaders and a failure to retain them because of mishandling or mistreatment.

The research on teacher attrition is framed by categories of “stayers,” “movers,” and “leavers.” Research has been extensive to discover why teachers move away from schools and why they leave the profession of teaching. More research is needed to explain why novice youth ministers stay in their first assignment, move to another ministry assignment, or leave the paid vocational ministry altogether.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

A review of the literature reveals a paucity of empirical research related to the lived experience of novice youth ministers. Little is known about the attrition and longevity rates of youth ministers in general. The widely spread myth that the average stay of a youth minister at a church is 1.5 years is not substantiated in the literature. Only limited evidence exists to establish the average stay of a youth minister at a church (Grenz, 2001). Little is known about the reasons why novice youth ministers stay at their

first church, move to another church or ministry, or leave the paid vocational ministry altogether. It could be that youth ministers stay, move, or leave at the same rate as people in other occupations. The present research attempts to understand some of the reasons why some novice youth ministers stay, others move, and some leave.

Lawson (2000a) provides insight into the reasons why some youth ministers thrive in ministry. These factors need to be examined in the lives of novice youth ministers to help understand if they are thriving, surviving, or dying. One of the key areas for youth ministers who thrive, according to Lawson, is the sense of calling that some possess. More research needs to be done on this factor to understand how a sense of calling impacts the novice youth minister's ability to deal with the challenges of the first youth ministry assignment in a church.

The study of career development theories provides a number of factors which can be applied to the study of novice youth ministers; however, limited research has been done to apply the understanding of career development to the lives of novice youth ministers (Atkinson & Wilson, 1991; McKenzie, 1997; Grenz, 2001). Factors articulated in career development theories, such as person-environment fit, self-efficacy, and calling, are worthy of exploration in the life experience of novice youth ministers.

The findings from studies in the field of education on teacher socialization have not been applied to the experience of novice youth ministers, but are used in the present research. Research needs to be done to determine what socialization strategies contribute to the healthy development of a youth ministry career during the novice's first ministry. What does a novice need to know to be successfully inducted into the youth ministry

profession? What emotions are experienced and how can they be processed in a healthy manner? What are important pre-service experiences that need to occur to properly prepare the novice? What are critical issues in supervision and mentoring of a novice? What are critical professional competencies that must be developed in the first ministry experience?

The purpose of this review of the literature was to provide a framework for research on the experience of novice youth ministers. The research study described in chapter 4 helps with an understanding of why youth ministers stay, move, or leave the profession. It contributes to knowledge about the vocational trajectories of novice youth ministers who thrive and those who do not thrive. Insights were gained with regard to calling and socialization. The following chapter provides a theological foundation for this research.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW INTEGRATION

Novice youth ministers engage in local church ministry with motivations that vary greatly. Some are convinced that they have been called to youth ministry for a lifetime. They use the language of calling to describe why they are youth ministers. Others have found in themselves a longing to see youth come to Christ and grow as followers of Christ, but they do not have a strong commitment to youth ministry as a vocation. Others simply had a positive youth group experience which led them to try being a youth minister. The average youth minister begins youth ministry at the age of 25 (Grenz, 2001). At that stage of life there is still a sense of vocational exploration and often a lack of commitment to a lifetime vocation.

Because the language of calling is a critical component of a novice youth minister's experience, this chapter examines first the theology of calling. It reaches the conclusion that two constructs should be used to discuss the motivations for youth ministers: calling and vocation. Second, it argues that a person drawn to vocational ministry should engage in an assessment process to determine if he is one of God's gifts to the church as noted in Ephesians 4:11: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. A youth minister may conclude that she is not one of these people, but her identity and subsequent motivation to stay in youth ministry may be dependent upon that conclusion.

Third, the claim is made that an important part of the exploration process is the mentoring of novice youth ministers.

A Theology of Calling

A person's longevity in any occupational role is dependent on the person's motivation for that role. This is true for novice youth ministers as they seek to discern their place in the kingdom and identify their kingdom responsibility. Therefore, one of the critical issues facing novice youth ministers is the notion of "calling." This chapter will argue that the term "calling" in the evangelical Protestant tradition is imprecisely used and must be clarified in order to help novice youth ministers determine their place in the kingdom and identify their kingdom responsibility.

The argument is typically made that persons in vocational ministry will only persevere through hardship and remain in their roles if they have a "call from God" to be in ministry. The concern is driven by both motivation and identity concerns. One will be motivated to continue in ministry if he is able to recall the fact that God has called him to ministry and this awareness will sustain him through the difficult times. If one's identity is established as a person called to vocational ministry, then she will be unable to do anything other than be in vocational ministry. Lawson (2000b) quotes a children's pastor and reveals the typical evangelical Protestant language of call when he writes, "I would say number one [for thriving in ministry] is a strong sense of call. I don't think I can—in fact, I know I can't—do anything else, because I've tried" (p. 14). So the question is raised, "What is a biblical perspective on the idea of 'calling'?"

Unfortunately, much of the language of calling is used for calls to the pastorate and missions. It is important to examine the biblical constructs for “call” in order to determine if it is a helpful notion for novice youth ministers in their search for meaning and purpose in their work, and for determining whether they should pursue a vocation in youth ministry. The search for a helpful construct for “call” starts in the Old Testament (OT).

Calling in the Old Testament

The two predominant ideas of calling in the OT are that of Israel’s call as a people and the idea of people being called to specific tasks to accomplish God’s purposes. J. I. Packer (2001) summarizes the central thought of OT theology with regard to Israel and call this way:

Throughout the OT, Israel regards itself as a family called first by God out of heathendom, in the person of its ancestor (Isa. 51:2), and then from Egyptian bondage (Hos. 11:1), to be his own people (Isa. 43:1), serving him and enjoying his free favor forever. This conviction is most fully stated in Isaiah 40–55. Here the central thought (developed in reference to the coming return from captivity) is that God’s gracious once-for-all act of calling sinful Israel into an unbreakable covenant relation with himself guarantees to the nation the eventual everlasting enjoyment of all the kindnesses that omnipotent love can bestow (Isa. 48:12–49:26; 54:6–17). (p. 199)

God’s call to Israel was based on His sovereign will to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

The other idea of calling in the OT is that people were “called” to carry out specific tasks and missions. Bezalel was called to use his skills to help in the construction of the tabernacle. In Exodus 31:1–5 (ESV) his call is stated:

The LORD said to Moses, “See, I have called [בְּרָאֵלִי] by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God,

with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

Moses was called by God to lead the people of Israel out of bondage (Exod 3:1–10).

Isaiah and Jeremiah were called to be prophets when God summoned them by speaking directly to them (Isa 6; Jere 1:1–10). Although the word *call* is not used in the stories of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the reality of the call is apparent and these two cases are typically used by people making the argument that God still “calls” people to ministry today.

These arguments will be discussed in more detail later.

Calling in the New Testament

The Greek verb καλέω is translated “to call” in the New Testament (NT) and is the word used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word קָרָא, “to call,” the primary word used in the OT for this notion. Derivatives of καλέω in the NT are used to describe the ideas of “called,” “calling,” and “call.”

The most predominant use of the word *call* in the New Testament refers to the call of God to salvation. Lewis and Demarest (1994, p. 38) refer to this call as part of “the golden chain of salvation found in Romans 8:28–30”:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called [κλητοῖ] according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called [ἐκάλεσεν], and those whom he called [ἐκάλει] he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The use of καλέω to refer to the call of salvation occurs in many other passages (e.g., 1 Cor 1:9; Gal 1:15–16; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 Thess 2:11–12).

With regard to this call to salvation, scholars have created a distinction between the external call to salvation and the internal call. The external call refers to God's choice to use human ambassadors to proclaim the message of the gospel. Lewis and Demarest (1994) articulate it this way:

The omnipotent Spirit has freely chosen to invite the world to Christ through human ambassadors. "How can they hear [about the Cross] without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:14). Today Christians are emissaries of reconciliation to God through the historically incarnate, crucified and risen Christ. Under orders from the Lord of all, they take the Good News to everyone everywhere. By the external or *verbal call* we mean the believers' activity through audible or visual signs imploring sinners to acknowledge their moral guilt before a holy God, to repent, believe the Gospel, and so trust Jesus Christ for salvation. (p. 48)

Every Christian, then, has received this call to salvation and is obligated to call others to this salvation by proclaiming the gospel.

The idea of internal call has produced much debate between different theological schools but the definition of Lewis and Demarest provides one perspective to help focus on the difference between the external and internal call of God to salvation:

It is *necessary* for the Spirit internally to renew lost capacities for knowing, loving, and serving God because depraved sinners are both persistently unwilling and unable to respond to spiritual things. By the internal calling we mean that effectual ministry of the Holy Spirit that persuades chosen sinners of the truth of the claims made in the verbal or external call. (p. 54).

Although this definition is more aligned with the Reformed position on internal calling, it does draw attention to the fact that the call of God to salvation requires an inner working of God in conjunction with the external call of the gospel. Of critical importance is that the primary use of the concept of call in the New Testament refers to salvation.

The terminology of calling, according to Packer (2001) has two other subordinate applications in the NT. The first is "God's summons and designation of individuals to

particular functions and offices in his redemptive plan” (p. 200). He cites Paul’s call to apostleship (Rom 1:1), the call to missionary preaching of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2; 16:10), and the call to the high priesthood (Heb 5:4). What is critical for this study is that very limited data were used, along with the OT calling of people like Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, to argue for the necessity of a people needing a “call” to ministry. This is an unwarranted leap. The fact that some received a call to particular roles does not lead to the conclusion that a novice youth minister (or anyone else) should be looking for a “call to ministry.” A call by its very nature is from a Sovereign God who does what He wills. A person cannot seek after a “call.”

The second NT use of the word *call*, according to Packer (2001), refers “to the external circumstances and state of life in which a person’s effectual calling took place” (p. 200). This is argued from 1 Corinthians 7:10–40, where Paul speaks to the issues of circumcision, slavery, and marital status. Packer makes a statement, however, which helps trace the use of the term *call* back to the Reformation when he says,

This is not quite the sense of “occupation” or “trade” which the Reformers supposed that it bore in the latter verse [1 Cor 7:20]; but their revaluation of secular employment as a true “vocation” to God’s service has too broad a biblical foundation to be invalidated by the detection of this slight inaccuracy. (p. 200)

Unfortunately, this “slight inaccuracy” has led to an imprecise use of the word *call* and needs to be clarified.

To whom was Packer referring when he harkens back to the Reformation? One person in view is Martin Luther. Hardy (1990) suggests that Luther’s concept of vocation was “formulated largely in reaction to the medieval monastic ideal and its religious devaluation of all earthly occupations” (p. 45). In contrast, Luther taught that “a vocation

is the specific call to love one's neighbor which comes to us through the duties which attach to our social place or 'station' within the earthly kingdom" (p. 46). One's station in life is not necessarily a matter of paid employment, although it might be. As Luther taught, a station is a way people relate to other people. Stations included being a parent or a child, a husband or a wife, a master or a servant. It could be a baker, a cobbler, or a farmer. So within one's station a person should heed the call to love one's neighbor. One need not abandon one's station to become a monk. Work was done in the context of one's station and work was considered a divine vocation, a calling as important as a call to religious service as a monk.

What is evident from the discussion of Luther is the constant intermingling of terms: vocation, call, station, and work. The slight inaccuracy to which Packer refers (with regard to the Reformers' use of 1 Cor 7:20) involves a co-mingling of the terms *call*, *vocation*, and *station*. Lenski (1963) makes it clear that the call referred to in 1 Corinthians 7:20 is not related to one's work situation when he says, "We should not regard κλησις in the sense of a man's profession, position, or life work, for this is the standard apostolic term for the effective gospel call which makes a man a true Christian" (p. 302). For this reason, extending the idea of calling to describe someone's profession or work role seems misplaced. However, the language of calling is a predominant aspect of evangelical Protestant discussion of jobs, careers, and vocations.

One example from a book on the subject of "call" is provided by Guinness (2003) who suggests a distinction be made between primary and secondary calling. He says this:

Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as

motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia). (p. 31)

Our primary “calling,” according to Guinness is our call to be in relationship with God.

“*Our secondary calling*”, according to Guinness, “*considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him*” (p. 31). In this he is echoing the Puritans who he believes were “magnificent champions of calling” (p. 39). He suggests that as a matter of secondary calling “we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history” (p. 31). “They are ‘callings’ rather than the ‘calling’” (p. 31). But here, again, the use of the word *callings* leaves us with ambiguity. Why choose this term? Why not use the language of our purpose in life or our mission from God? The biblical notion is that all who are called of God to salvation are to live their lives for the glory of God and for the accomplishment of God’s purposes. The daily task for every Christian is to love God and love people (Matt 22:36–40). Nowhere in Scripture can be found instructions for searching for or determining one’s “calling.” In fact, a “call” from God is based on His sovereign will and should not be sought after.

Schuurman (2004) articulates the implications of God’s “call” for every believer when he says,

The ones God chooses, God calls or summons or invites for a particular purpose. God calls people to celebration, hope, repentance, feasting, performing a task, undertaking a laborer, fellowship, and more. God calls first of all a people, Israel and the church; individuals have their callings within the corporate calling. Put in general terms, the purpose of God’s call is for the people of God to worship God, and to participate in God’s creative and redemptive purposes for the world, to enjoy, hope for, pray for, and work towards God’s shalom. This is what it means for Christians to be in Christ and follow Christ. (p. 18)

God's call to salvation, His general call, is the call to be a member of the people of God and this membership has duties that are common to all, according to Schuurman. Out of these common duties will flow specific places of responsibility for each individual.

So what should be the outcome of the use of the word *call*? Biblical precision would suggest that the word calling be reserved for individuals who believe that God has summoned them by some supernatural means to a specific place and/or role. The means may be external or internal, but it is a summons like that made to Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1; 16:10). A call in this sense is initiated by God and not sought by humans. But what language should be used for those who are convinced that God has directed them to a particular life role or responsibility?

It would seem valuable to form constructs that differentiate between that of "calling" and "vocation" to help inform the discussion of one's occupational choices. Dik and Duffy (2009) provide the basis for such constructs. They define calling as

a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. (p. 427)

Vocation is defined as

an approach to a particular life role that is oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. (p. 428)

These two definitions can be used to form a basis for constructs which communicate theological perspectives and will be adapted for the purposes of this research.

Adapting the constructs of Dik and Duffy (2009) leads to the following definitions proposed by this researcher:

A *calling* is a summons by God, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness in the pursuit of the glory of God and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation in obedience to God's command to love others.

A *vocation* is an approach to a particular life role discovered through the examination of one's passions, spiritual gifts, natural talents, and personality through personal reflection and input from the Christian community that is oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness in the pursuit of the glory of God and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation in obedience to God's command to love others.

Why is it necessary to have two constructs that seem essentially the same?

The idea of calling should not be abandoned because our sovereign God may very well use such means that cause a person to conclude that God has spoken to her in such a way that it can only be described as a transcendent summons. God may use a speaker, an experience, a dream, a vision, or some other means that causes a person to conclude that God has called them to a role or region of the world. This has happened in the past and can happen now.

On the other hand, there is still a need for people to understand what role God has designed them to do in carrying out the mission of God in the world of work. This research will argue that every Christian should be able to discover his or her vocation. That is, every Christian should be able to discover (through the means described in the

construct of vocation articulated above) the role or roles that God has for him or her in the building up of His church and working in the world.

Of value to note here is the etymology of the word *vocation*. The word is derived from the Latin word “vocare,” a verb meaning “to call.” Consequently, common definitions of the word *vocation* include the word *call*. For example, *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines *vocation* as “the action on the part of God of calling a person to exercise some special function, especially of a spiritual nature, or to fill a certain position” (Simpson, 1989, p. 723). Although the two words *calling* and *vocation* are connected etymologically, it seems important to encourage every Christian to seek for his or her personal vocational design and to acknowledge that God will call individuals as He chooses.

So a youth minister may be convinced that she is called to youth ministry. God’s transcendent summons is responsible for her pursuit of a career in youth ministry. Since God’s call is sovereign, a novice youth minister cannot seek after such a call. But a novice youth minister can determine if he will consider youth ministry a vocation to which he has been guided by God.

One of the first steps in the determination of youth ministry as a vocation is to determine if one is a leader in the church as defined by New Testament passages. This determination is not solely the responsibility of an individual. It is the responsibility of leaders in Christ’s church to identify and develop future leaders for the church. The discussion of leadership roles of youth ministers must find its context in the ministry leadership roles found in the NT.

New Testament Survey of Ministry Leadership Roles

The history of Christ's church is filled with different terms for ministry leadership within the Body of Christ. These terms imply different roles within a local church and in denominations. These terms and subsequent leadership roles have been informed by two major overlapping groupings of leaders found in the NT. One group is found primarily in the Pastoral Epistles (along with Acts, 1 Corinthians, and Romans) and the other group is found in Ephesians 4:11–12. The first group to be discussed is that of “bishops, elders, and deacons.”

Church Leadership: Bishop, Elder, Deacon

The terms *bishop*, *elder*, and *deacon* are the primary terms found in the New Testament to describe church leaders. A bishop (ἐπίσκοπος, overseer) is one who pastors or shepherds the flock of God. The term *elder* (πρεσβύτερος, presbyter) is used synonymously with *bishop* in Pauline literature and appears to refer to the same person (1 Tim 3:1, 4:14, 5:17, 5:19; Titus 1:5–7). Subsequently, these two offices were separated into different positions for church leadership. Deacons were appointed to serve in the church (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–13).

The function of the bishop/elder is to oversee (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:2) and care for the flock of God (Acts 20:28). This means bishops/elders are to be concerned about the stability and purity of the flock. They are in a position of power that can be abused (1 Pet 5:1–4). Bishops/elders are to be people of impeccable character (“above reproach,” 1 Tim 3:2, NIV) and able to teach (1 Tim 3:2). They are to direct the affairs of the church (1 Tim 5:17).

Elders appear early in the life of the church. Elders gathered with James in Jerusalem to greet Paul. They gathered with the apostles to discuss important issues facing the church (Acts 15:2–45). Paul and Barnabas appointed elders when they began a church in a city (Acts 14:23).

There is no NT evidence for the concept of formal ordination of elders/bishops that followed in later years. They were appointed by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:23 and Titus was instructed to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). The process of selecting bishops/elders is not laid out, although the qualifications are clear (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–7).

The word *deacon* comes from the word group based on the verb διακονέω meaning “to serve.” The related nouns are διακονία, “service,” and διάκονος, “server.” In John 2:5, 9 διάκονος is used for the waiters at the meal. All Christians are to be servants (διάκονος) of Christ (John 12:26). Christ was a διάκονος (Rom 15:8) and He instructed all Christians to serve others as He came to serve (Mark 9:35).

The formal office of deacons (the diaconate) may be traced to the situation in Acts 6:1–6 where seven men were appointed to serve (διακονεῖν) tables (Burge, 2001, p. 320). The process used to choose these men is not articulated in the passage, but the group somehow chose these men and then presented them to the apostles for confirmation. Although these seven men are not called “deacons” in the passage, they did the work of service later noted by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:8–13.

The evidence that deacons became an office in the church begins with Paul’s greeting in Philippians 1:1. There he addresses the “overseers and deacons.” In 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Paul lists the qualifications of a deacon following the qualifications of a

bishop/elder. Deacons are to be men of strong spiritual character who are respected by other Christians. They are to prove themselves as men of worthy character prior to being appointed as a deacon. Although some take the women referred to in 1 Timothy 3:11 as the wives of deacons, there is strong evidence that what is being referenced is deaconesses, an order of women in the church who are acknowledged as special servants. Support for this comes from Romans 16:1 where Phoebe is referred to as a “deacon” or “deaconess.”

In spite of the NT perspective which made the terms *bishop* and *elder* refer to the same church office and the early church perspective which did likewise, the terms gradually became descriptive of two different offices in a hierarchical form of church government. The testimony of early church leaders reveals the “elders” and “bishops” as referring to the same office. John Chrysostom states clearly, “presbyters of old were called bishops . . . and the bishops presbyters” (Dosker, 1979, p. 516). However, Ignatius, the sole bishop in Antioch, writes in about 117 AD of churches having one bishop and that bishop was assisted by several presbyters and deacons (Dosker, 1979, p. 516). The bishop began to be seen as the primary celebrant in worship, the head pastor, and the lead administrator of the church. Along with this came a theology of apostolic succession for the office of bishop. Thus, circa 150, many held the position that bishops were direct successors of the apostles and guardians of the Church’s teaching.

The reasons for splitting the two lead positions (bishop and elder) into two offices are possibly both sociological and theological. It is possible the pressures from the inside and the outside caused people to turn to a form of church government that looked to one person as the leader rather than a group of elders. Also possible is that the separation was

part of God's sovereign will and initiated by the apostles as they came to an end of their leadership (Toon, 2001, p 171).

Three views have dominated church history regarding church government: episcopalian, Presbyterian, and congregational. The church landscape in the 21st century is dotted with churches holding variations of these three views. This leads to differences in leadership titles and roles. There are churches that consider themselves as having a congregational form of government and have a board of elders who lead the church. The board may or may not include pastors. The pastors may or may not be viewed as elders. Other congregations consider themselves as elder-ruled, not ruled by the congregation. Some have one person who is looked to for leadership while others reject any hierarchical form of government that puts one person in authority over another. In many traditions, the leader of the church is called a pastor and the congregation may be elder-led or congregational-ruled.

Thus, the interface between bishops, elders, and deacons in governing the church has taken on many forms since the inception of the church. The NT data require that churches be cautious in declaring their perspective on church government as the only biblical pattern. What is clear is that there are to be leaders in the church who exhibit the qualities stated in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–7. They are referred to in these passages as bishops/overseers, or presbyters/elders. They are to provide oversight of the affairs of the church, to teach and be concerned about the welfare of those in the church. The criteria listed in these passages include psychosocial dimensions (matters of character and matters of interpersonal relationships). Ministry skills are also in view (“able to teach,” NIV). These dimensions are also found in the criteria for deacons.

The identification and selection of these leaders is not an easy subject. The seven men chosen in Acts 6:1–7 were proposed by the church at the behest of the apostles and were approved by the apostles with the laying on of their hands and prayer. The first elders were appointed by Paul and Barnabas. Delegations were selected for particular ministry tasks (Acts 15:22 and 1 Cor 16:3). Titus was to appoint elders in every city. No consistent pattern can be found, whether hierarchical or democratic in nature. There is evidence in the NT and early church history of oversight provided by the apostles and then by existing elders or bishops. The qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–7 provide the template for any selection process established for leaders in the church.

There is a need for godly leaders who are variously called elders, bishops, overseers, or presbyters. These leaders along with deacons who serve the Body of Christ are as needed today as in every time period since the beginning of the church. Although there may be disagreements as to the details of title and function of these leaders, churches must be careful to use biblical templates for the selection of their leaders. The elders are not the only ministry personnel who have special roles in the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4:7–16 provides another group to examine. Within this grouping of ministry personnel is listed the role of pastor. Is this word synonymous with elder?

Ministry Roles in Ephesians 4:7–16

Another grouping of ministry roles in the Body of Christ is found in Ephesians 4:7–16: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The responsibility of these people, often called leaders, is to equip the saints (believers in Christ) for ministry. The outcome of equipping and subsequent serving of all the members of the Body is unity and

growth. An overview of the passage follows and then special attention is given to verses 11 and 12.

Ephesians 4:7–16 follows Paul’s exhortation for believers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling with an emphasis on preserving unity (4:1–6). In Ephesians 4:7–16 Paul makes it clear that maintaining unity will be accomplished by acknowledging diversity. Diversity is created because Christ gives different gifts to people in the body (4:7). Christ has the right to give gifts in this way because of his ascension and exalted status (4:8–10). Contributing to this diversity is the fact that Christ has given five types of people to the body: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (4:11). These people are to equip all the saints to do the work of ministry (4:12). The goal is for the body to attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to become mature and like Christ (4:13). In so doing, believers will not be like children who are easily swayed by false teachers who are cunning, crafty and deceiving (4:14). This growth or maturity in Christ will come from speaking the truth in love (4:15), from the body looking to Christ as the source of growth (4:16) and from the whole body working properly in love (4:16).

In verse 11 the use of the word “he” refers back to Christ. The verb “gave” refers to the giving in verses 7 and 8. The one who has given a spiritual gift to every believer is now said to give people to the Body of Christ. What follows is a list of four or five types of people (leaders in the Body of Christ) depending on how the Greek construction is to be taken. The Greek article appears before the words *apostles*, *prophets*, *evangelists*, and *pastors* but not before the word *teachers*. The construction has led to different translations as well as interpretations. After discussing the grammatical issues involved in

this issue, Wallace (1996) concludes, “The uniting of these two groups by one article [pastors and teachers] sets them apart from the other gifted leaders. Absolute distinction, then, is probably not in view” (p. 284). He goes on to say, “Thus, Ephesians 4:11 seems to affirm that all pastors were to be teachers, though not all teachers were to be pastors” (p. 284). Wallace’s position is reasonable and will be used as a basis for the remainder of this discussion. Pastors should be teachers, but teachers are not necessarily pastors.

How are these ministry roles to be defined? Hoehner (2002) states, “It seems that the main function of an apostle is to establish churches in areas that have not been reached by others” and “prophets communicate divine revelation” (p. 542). Some have concluded that apostles and prophets were gifts to the church for the foundation of the church and are no longer present today. This is based on Ephesians 2:19–21 where Paul tells the Ephesians, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (ESV). Although this is a possibility, it is difficult to take a dogmatic stand. However, for the purpose of this research it will be assumed that local churches will be unlikely to look for apostles and prophets to fulfill youth ministry roles. It is more likely that youth ministers will take on roles that reflect the gifting of evangelists, pastors, or teachers.

Evangelists win converts to the faith (p. 543), and teachers teach the revelation of God authoritatively (p. 545). What about pastors? Hoehner suggests that pastors minister to troubled saints, exhort and comfort all believers, and administer the activities in the local assembly (p. 544). Unfortunately Hoehner reads more into the term *pastor* than is

warranted. The role of pastor (with teaching as an aspect of the role) is found only in this passage. The noun *pastor* is used nowhere else in the NT. The word itself gives the clue that this person is a shepherd of the flock as are the elders (1 Pet 5:1–4). The pastor is to teach. This teaching and shepherding should lead to the saints being equipped to do the work of ministry. Hoehner does not provide evidence that pastors are to “administer the activities in the local assembly.” He does reflect the common perspective among churches today that pastors are among the primary leaders of a church. This is unfortunate because the leaders of the church are to be the elders. The five groups of people referred to in Ephesians 4:11 are instructed to equip the saints. The passage says nothing about leading the saints.

In verse 12, some take all three prepositional phrases to refer to the people listed in verse 11. Thus, these leaders were given to equip the saints, do the work of the ministry, and build up the Body of Christ. But this interpretation goes against the thrust of the passage since it promotes a huge distinction between clergy and laity. The better understanding is that these leaders are to view their task as equipping the saints for the work of service. The noun *equipping* is used only here in the NT. The verb form can mean “restore, mend, prepare, put into order, complete, furnish, to perfect, instruct” (Hoehner, pp. 549–550). The best way to take the noun in this verse is *instructing* and *equipping*. The purpose of this equipping is that every believer would be prepared to do the work of ministry (διακονία, *service*). When the leaders equip and believers serve, the Body of Christ is built up. The Body of Christ refers to the church (in its universal aspect) as described earlier in Ephesians (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4).

Throughout this research the term leader has been used to refer to the people mentioned in Ephesians 4. It is not uncommon for these leaders to be referred to as those who fulfill a certain office in the church. But that is not what should be gained from this text. This text, in fact, refers to them only as a group of people who have been given as gifts by Christ to the church. The context would suggest that these people have been given to function in the Body of Christ as a whole, commonly referred to as the universal expression of the church. The leaders of local churches are the elders (overseers).

There exists one more critical interpretive decision. Are the pastors referred to in Ephesians 4 the same as the elders/overseers referred to in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5? This is not easy to answer. In Acts 20:26 and 1 Peter 5:1–4 it is clear that the responsibility of elders is to shepherd the flock. The Greek word translated “shepherd,” ποιμαίνω, is the basis for the noun used in Ephesians 4:11, ποιμένας, which is usually translated “pastor.” The noun is used only here in the New Testament. A possible conclusion is that the pastor (shepherd) listed in Ephesians 4:11 is the same as the elder found in the passages discussed previously. Certainly elders are to shepherd the flock and teach (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17–18) but for some reason Paul did not use either *elder* or *overseer* in Ephesians 4:11. This is curious since he addresses local church leaders specifically elsewhere as elders (1 Tim 4:15; Titus 1:5) or overseers (Phil 1:10). For some reason, Paul wanted to distinguish a specific role in the Church by using the terms *pastor* and *teacher* in Ephesians 4:11. This researcher concludes that the role of pastor is not synonymous with the role of elder.

What does this have to do with novice youth ministers? The purpose of this research is to help novice youth ministers discover their place as leaders in the Body of

Christ. This discovery process is made difficult by the present reality that the role of youth minister is not usually connected with one of these five groups of people who are gifts to the church mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 or with the office of elder. The title of pastor has been used by some churches to indicate the role of the minister to youth, but certainly not by all. Men and women are hired for a ministry role and carry a variety of titles. Youth minister, youth director, and youth pastor are the most common titles. There is no wonder that novice youth ministers often have identity problems. Most evangelical Protestant traditions are not looking for an apostle or a prophet to lead their youth ministry even if they do believe these roles are for the church today. Few are looking for an evangelist. Most would hope that the youth minister is some combination of a pastor and a teacher. But often, it is not clear to the congregation or the novice youth minister what ministry leadership role he should play.

A novice youth minister should determine if God has given him to the Body of Christ as one of these ministry leaders found in Ephesians 4:11 who are to equip the saints for the work of service. The title a church gives the novice youth minister does not need to be a hindrance in this discovery process. But how does a novice youth pastor make this determination? The criteria for identifying the ministry personnel listed in Ephesians 4:11 and the leaders designated as elders would appear to be important in this determination.

According to Best (1998), what is important is that Paul gives no guidelines as to how to identify the leaders listed in the passage. He argues that criteria are given for elders, bishops, and deacons in the Pastoral Epistles, but none are found in the Ephesians 4 passage. What is important, says Best, is that the evangelists, shepherds, and teachers

knew “they had been selected and given to the church by Christ” (p. 394). Somehow, he speculates, the people knew they had been given this role in the church and this would help them be steady during difficult times and would eliminate any cause for boasting. This begs the question, however, “How did these people know they were gifts to the church for these roles?” Is this something that was accomplished internally with no external input from other people? The answer lies in the overall teaching in Scripture regarding determining the will of God with respect to vocation. A vocation is discovered through the examination of one’s passions, spiritual gifts, natural talents, and personality through personal reflection and input from the Christian community. The avenues of prayer, reading of the Word, the internal working of the Spirit of God, and the seeking of wisdom from wise Christian counselors are means to the discovery of one’s giftedness and vocation. God uses people to help people find direction. A close personal mentor and other wise advisors in the Body of Christ should help in this decision-making process. Novice youth ministers should spend some of their reflecting time during their first years of ministry to determine if they are one of these people given to the church. If so, they will find a critical component of their identity wrapped up in this identification. And with this identity there will be motivation and a sense of mission. They are to equip Christians for ministry.

What should a novice youth minister do if he concludes that he is not one of the equipping leaders discussed in Ephesians 4? According to the passage he still is one who is being equipped to minister and for a short time or a long time that ministry may be to youth. A church can choose to hire people for any number of roles in the church which it deems important to meet the needs of people and help in the advancement of the gospel.

Every ministry role is to contribute to the growth of the Body. The leaders can equip people for a variety of roles and the elders of a church can choose to pay any number of people. People are paid to be custodians and sound techs as well as ministry directors and administrative assistants. Certainly there is value in paying someone to minister to the youth of the church.

The concern of this researcher is that youth ministers be sustained through the ups and downs of ministry and that they have a clear sense of identity that is rooted in Scripture. If one's identity is that of evangelist, pastor, or teacher, the motivation for ministry takes on a different complexion. These tend to lead a person to think of ministry in the church as a long-term vocation—a work role where one could spend her whole lifetime. Therefore, novice youth ministers should receive special attention while they are in that role. Often, however, novice youth ministers are loosely supervised and sent off to accomplish ministry on their own. They lack the kind of mentoring that is needed in the life of young leaders, especially novice youth ministers. One way to accomplish the identification and equipping of vocational ministry leaders is to provide mentoring for novice youth ministers. One example of ministry mentoring is found in the relationship between Paul and Timothy.

Paul and Timothy: A Case Study in Mentoring

Mentor relationships between established ministry leaders and emerging ministry leaders are essential. These relationships provide the spiritual companionship necessary to help emerging leaders determine their vocational place in the Body of Christ as well as provide expertise which leads to healthy psychosocial development and growth in pastoral ministry competencies. The established leaders in view for this study are senior

pastors of local churches. The present reality is that most Protestant evangelical churches designate their primary leaders as pastors and the pastor with more authority is designated the senior pastor or lead pastor. The focus here is on the responsibility of local church senior/lead ministers to identify and equip ministry leaders of all types using a mentoring strategy. Such a mentoring strategy should focus on the psychosocial development and ministry skills of the emerging leaders as well as helping them determine their role in the Body of Christ. A mentoring relationship can be helpful for an emerging leader to analyze his gifting, temperament, and passions in the presence of an experienced leader. Once the emerging leader has determined that God is leading her to vocational ministry leadership, a mentoring strategy can help her prepare for the ministry. The study of the relational dynamics between Paul and Timothy provides a model of a mentoring relationship that can inform the nurturing of novice youth ministers.

Johnson and Ridley (2008) provide a definition for mentoring which encapsulates the literature on mentoring. They define mentoring in the following manner:

Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé). Mentors provide protégés with knowledge, advice, counsel, support, and opportunity in the protégés pursuit of full membership in a particular profession. Outstanding mentors are intentional about the mentor role. They select protégés carefully, invest significant time and energy in getting to know their protégés, and deliberately offer the career and support functions most useful for their protégés. Mentoring is an act of generativity—a process of bringing into existence and passing on a professional legacy. (p. xv)

Of importance to supplement their definition is the idea that Christian mentoring is characterized by dependency on the Holy Spirit by both the mentor and the protégé in the process of ministry skill development, character development, interpersonal relationships

development and the discovery of vocation/calling. This perspective on mentoring is illustrated by the relationship between Paul and Timothy.

The relationship between Paul and Timothy began soon after Paul's sharp dispute and separation from Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Timothy was commended to Paul by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium who spoke well of him. Timothy had apparently exhibited the spiritual character and ministry competencies to a sufficient degree within the context of his Christian community that Paul desired to make Timothy his ministry companion. The rise of Timothy in the context is unknown but the fact that others identified him as a potential ministry partner of Paul is significant. Timothy watched Paul's ministry first hand. The leading of the Holy Spirit was evident. Significant ministry was occurring which Timothy, the protégé, was able to observe as a member of the team, experiencing both adversity and success in ministry. It is reasonable to assume that the protégé had many conversations with the mentor while traveling, doing life and ministry together. When Paul determined to go to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21), he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, presumably to provide ministry leadership in that region. Paul joined Timothy again in Macedonia and eventually headed to Jerusalem.

Timothy became a beloved fellow-worker with Paul (Rom 16:11; 1 Cor 4:17). Paul entrusted him with messages and ministry (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:19; 1 Thess 3:2, 6). Eventually Timothy appears to have settled down in Ephesus to be a lead elder/overseer in a local church (1 Tim 1:3; 3:1). Paul and the council of elders were involved in the bestowing of a gift on Timothy (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6) which appears to be directly

related to his leadership in the church. With the involvement of the community and the specific mentoring of Paul, Timothy discovered his vocational role in the Body of Christ.

The protégé had been identified as a leader, equipped for ministry in a local church, and subsequently released and launched into such a ministry. But Paul did not leave his protégé to fend for himself after Timothy was established in a local church ministry in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:30). The books of 1 and 2 Timothy are instructions for ministry leadership provided by the mentor to help the protégé continue to do godly ministry. Paul counseled Timothy to teach sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:3; 4:1-6), remember the prophetic words about himself in order to fight the good fight (1:18), pray (2:1), identify elders and deacons for the church (3:1–13), and be godly (4:7–8). Timothy was to be an example to others even though he was young (4:12) and he was to devote himself to public reading of Scripture as well as to preaching and teaching (4:13). In all of this, Timothy was to pay close attention to his life and his doctrine. Timothy was to remember the significant role of ministry that had been entrusted to him by the laying on of hands by other church leaders (2 Tim 1:6).

Paul's mentoring example provides a template for those who supervise novice youth ministers. Novice youth ministers are generally young men and women who need thoughtful and intentional guidance by ministry mentors. Their socialization into ministry requires intentional induction methodology that includes a mentoring strategy.

A critical part of the mentoring process should be to help the protégé discover his vocational place in the Body of Christ. Is he one of the people God has given as gifts to the church? Is she ministering to youth for a season of time but really designed for other

ministry roles? Mentors should focus on ministry competencies, godly character, and interpersonal skills. Ministry protégés must learn God’s Word and be able to rightly interpret and apply it. Mentors need to observe protégés in their ministry tasks and allow protégés to observe them. Healthy assessment processes involving personal need assessment and goal-setting will facilitate growth and development. The mentoring of novice youth ministers by more experienced ministers is essential.

Summary of the Christian Worldview Integration

Novice youth ministers confronted with issues of motivation and identity clarification will almost invariably be encouraged by popular evangelical culture to examine their “call” to ministry. As we have seen, this common usage of the term *call* has generated unnecessary confusion among young ministers. A novice youth minister may be convinced that he has received a transcendent summons from God, a “call” to function in that role. Such a person will find great resources in this divine calling for longevity in pastoral ministry. Most, however, will not have such an experience. For the great majority of youth ministers, the concept of vocation will prove useful. By means of a personal discovery process and the confirmation of others, a novice minister discovers that youth ministry is her vocation, the place for which God has designed her to serve and to which He has guided her. Still another novice youth minister may believe that youth ministry is not his calling or vocation, but the place where God has placed him for a season with no long-term commitment to such a ministry role. These are matters of identity which will impact the motivation of a novice youth minister and subsequently determine whether or not he will remain in youth ministry for any length of time. Novice

youth ministers need to be aided in this discovery process by the personal attention of mentors.

One important area of exploration for novice youth ministers is to examine if they are among the people God has given to the church for the equipping of the saints for service. They need to determine if God has given them as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher. This determination will impact their sense of calling or vocation. They may report a “transcendent summons” from God which they would refer to as a *call*. Or they may conclude they are one of these five people but use the language of vocation because they are convinced that God has made them to equip the saints for the work of service. Conclusions reached by a novice youth minister in this exploration process will impact his sense of identity. If, in fact, he is one of the people who has been given as a gift to the church, he should be helped to find a place to carry out this responsibility and determine if youth ministry is that place.

Mentoring is one means of helping novice youth ministers in this discovery process. Senior pastors and other veteran ministers should come alongside novices to help them grapple with the issues of calling and vocation, and thus find their place of ministry responsibility in the Body of Christ. This will happen best in a mentoring context that provides observation, healthy assessment, feedback, and reflection.

Future studies of novice youth ministers need to uncover the identity issues that motivate their work in youth ministry. Do they consider themselves to be among the people given by God to the church (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher)? Do they view their position in youth ministry as a calling or a vocation? Or do they use

language other than calling or vocation to describe their role in youth ministry? Future studies should include questions about the people, training, and experiences which have shaped the person's identity as a youth minister. Specifically, the issue of mentoring should be explored. Questions need to be asked to understand the role of mentoring prior to the novice's first ministry and during the first 3 years of ministry. Does the novice youth minister's supervisor use a mentoring strategy in his supervisory role?

Future studies will be aided by gathering information from both the novice youth minister and the supervising minister regarding the issues of identity, motivation, calling, vocation, and mentoring. Research to date has solely sought the report of youth ministers. Hopefully, such research will bring benefit to youth ministers, students, and churches in accomplishing biblical purposes for the glory of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Of importance to the study of novice youth ministers is the locating of their present experience within the historical context of youth ministry in the United States. Coinciding with the rise of youth culture in the United States after World War II was the rise of youth ministry and the development of the role of the youth minister. The idea of making a career as a youth minister became a reality for many young adults exploring ways to minister to youth in the church. Over the past 60 or more years many young adults have tried their hand at youth ministry. The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that lead some novice youth ministers to continue in careers in youth ministry while others move on to other careers—some in vocational ministry and some not. This chapter will explain the research design and procedures used to discover these factors.

Statement of the Research Question

The purpose of this present study was to understand the lived experience of youth ministers in the novice stage of their youth ministry service. The present study addressed two major questions. First, what are specific internal motivating factors in the lives of novice youth ministers that impact whether they thrive or not? In view here are issues such as calling to ministry, identity, and self-efficacy. Second, what are the critical factors in the novice youth minister's context which contribute to his thriving in ministry

and thus impact his potential longevity in church youth ministry? Of interest here are the strategies of the supervising minister, difficulties faced by novice youth ministers, the experiences of the youth minister's spouse, and other matters that provide the context of the youth minister's life in church youth ministry.

The focus of this research was on the collective experiences of youth ministers in the novice youth minister stage. A valuable research design for answering these questions is the process of phenomenographic research, which is described in the next section.

Research Design

The phenomenographic research method was used to design this research. This research method is often used in educational research when a researcher is interested in how reality appears to the individual. It is a specialized method used to describe the "different ways in which people conceptualize the world around them" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 497). In this research study individuals were the novice youth minister and his supervising minister. Of interest were the conceptualizations of both groups regarding the novice youth minister's experience. The object of study in phenomenographic research is the "variation in human meaning, understanding, or conceptions" or "awareness or ways of experiencing particular phenomenon" (Akerlind, 2005, p. 322). The object of this study was the lived experience of novice youth ministers. Variations and similarities of meaning were obtained by interviewing two sets of people involved in the experience—the youth minister and his supervising minister. Interviewing these two sets of people provided a means of triangulation, critical in the field of qualitative research.

Outcomes for phenomenographic research are represented analytically “as a number of qualitatively different meanings or ways of expressing the phenomenon” (Akerlind, 2005, p. 322) and are called “categories of description.” The structural relationships linking these “categories of description” (different ways of experiencing) are called the “outcome space.” The articulation of an “outcome space” is to provide an elucidation of the relations “between different ways of experiencing the phenomenon” (Akerlind, 2005, p. 322). The focus in this research is on the collective experience more than the individual experience. Therefore, the search for similarities and differences is a key component of the research. Previous research on youth ministers has focused solely on the perspective of the youth minister. Hopefully, the inclusion of supervising ministers provides increased clarity on the categories of description and the outcome space of the novice youth minister’s experience in a church. In this research categories of description are referred to as “organizing themes” and outcome space is labeled “theoretical constructs.”

The phenomenographic method of research involves interviews that “are typically audio taped and transcribed verbatim, making the transcripts the focus of analysis” (Akerlind, 2005, p. 322). The examination of these transcripts leads to a set of categories or meanings which are not predetermined but which emerge from the data. This process is explained in the section below on data analysis.

The suspension of theoretical knowledge is a characteristic of phenomenographic research and is accomplished by the researcher’s attempt to keep an open mind. Careful listening is required and bracketing must be practiced. Bracketing involves the researcher’s conscious effort to set aside his personal beliefs, views, and hypotheses in

order to be open to the experience of the interviewee. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) suggest that the researcher needs to achieve empathy. Empathy requires that the researcher detach from her own lifeworld and be open to the lifeworld of the interviewee (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 299).

The issue of bracketing impacts the decision about questions to be selected for the interview process. Ashworth and Lucas (2000, p. 302) argue for the use of open-ended questions and minimal use of questions prepared in advance. However, they also acknowledge that there is a range of approaches to phenomenographic research which includes the approach of searching for predetermined categories rather than simply discovery. This researcher attempted to be open to discovery while using some predetermined categories discovered in the review of the literature. Therefore, using a semi-structured interview design, the questions used were open-ended and theory-driven. These questions and ways this researcher handled bracketing are discussed in the section below on data collection.

A researcher's interviewing skills should be subjected to ongoing review and improvements should be made if necessary. According to Ashworth and Lucas (2000), "the transcription of the interview should be aimed at accurately reflecting the emotions and emphases of the participant" (p. 300). How these two aspects of interviewing and transcription were handled is discussed in the section below on data collection.

During the analysis of the data, the researcher should continually be aware of the possible importation of his own presuppositions, hypotheses, and theories. Premature closure must be avoided in order to produce logical and hierarchically-related categories. This is accomplished by constantly looking for divergence and emphasizing differences

and nuances. The idea of cause and effect must be avoided. The process of analysis should be clear to the reader when reporting the findings and presenting the conclusions. The reader should be allowed to evaluate the attempt at bracketing and be able to trace the process by which the researcher's findings emerged (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, pp. 305–306). How these recommendations were followed is discussed in the section below on data analysis.

Although this researcher has a great deal of experience with novice youth ministers and with youth ministry that could bias the research, the use of phenomenographic research design provided a valuable structure for careful listening, systematic bracketing, scholarly analysis, and accurate reporting. Details of the design are discussed in the following sections.

Operational Definitions

What follows are the operational definitions used in this research. Definitions are provided for *attrition*, *evangelical Protestant*, *longevity*, *tenure*, *novice youth ministers*, *vocational ministry*, *youth*, and *youth ministry*.

Attrition

Attrition refers to the situation in which people who start in paid ministry with predominantly youth ministry responsibilities leave such a ministry to youth. The literature on youth minister attrition does not provide a concise definition, but the literature on teacher attrition is helpful here. Boe, Cook, and Sutherland (2008, p. 8) refer to attrition as leaving teacher employment. Although the argument could be made that a person who leaves youth ministry employment for another area of vocational ministry is

still in the ministry, for the purposes of this study attrition refers to a person who leaves ministry where the predominant responsibilities were for youth.

Evangelical Protestant

An evangelical Protestant is a person who believes that faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is essential and following Christ as an obedient disciple is an indicator of that faith commitment. An evangelical also makes it a priority to tell others about this need for faith in Christ. This is the kind of person Wells (2008, p. 21) refers to as a “Reformational” evangelical Christian, a person who believes that only in the Bible is God’s authoritative truth to be found, only in Christ is salvation found, only by grace is one saved, and only through faith is salvation received.

Longevity vs. Tenure

In the youth ministry literature there is often a tendency to use these terms synonymously, but it is important to make a distinction. *Tenure* refers to the time spent in one ministry position (Atkinson & Wilson, 1991, p. 47). *Longevity* is defined as the length of time a person was in youth ministry as a paid vocational youth minister (Grenz, 2001, p. 9).

Novice Youth Ministers

Youth ministers exist in local churches to share the gospel with youth and disciple them in the faith. Some youth ministers are ordained, some are licensed, and some are neither. People in this role are given a variety of titles: youth pastor, youth director,

student pastor, pastor to students, and associate pastor of youth. In this study, people with these titles are all referred to as “youth ministers” (Lamport, 1992; Grenz, 2001).

The label “novice” is derived from the field of education. Novice teachers are in their first paid teaching role and are also referred to as new teachers or beginning teachers (Cherubini, 2009). Although the length of time one is considered a novice teacher is arbitrary, typical research focuses on the first 3 years of a teacher’s experience (Keigher, 2010). Therefore, *novice youth ministers* refers to youth ministers who are in the first 3 years of their first paid youth ministry in a local church. For this study a novice youth minister worked at least 30 hours per week for the church and at least half of those 30 hours was spent in ministry to youth.

Vocational Ministry

The term *vocational ministry* is used to describe roles in local church ministry where a person is being paid for the role and has a sense that this is a vocation to which he has been led by God. The term implies a position on a church staff that is viewed as a legitimate place of long-term employment (Grenz, 2001, p. 9).

Youth

Often used interchangeably are the terms *youth*, *adolescents*, *students* and *teenagers* (Clark, 2001, p. 42). For the purposes of this study, *youth* is defined as students in middle school and high school so as to distinguish them from college-age students or young adults. They are typically 12–18 years of age (Grenz, 2001, p. 9).

Youth Ministry

Youth ministry is defined as the intentional strategy by a local church to provide paid adult leadership to provide opportunities for students in middle school and high school to place their faith in Christ, grow in Christ, and serve Christ. This intentional ministry is to be located in the study of practical theology and assumes that youth “are called to take part in very practice of Christian ministry, to participate in the total mission of the church, for God calls all of us into the divine plan of salvation” (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001, p. 19). For the purposes of this research, a church with a youth ministry has provided for a paid youth minister to work at least 30 hours per week in a ministry role and at least half of the ministry portfolio includes responsibilities aimed directly at youth.

Sample Selection Procedures

The procedure selected for this study was a stratified purposeful sampling for a multiple-case study design (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 178). A stratified purposeful sample is used when the study examines multiple cases that exhibit characteristics at predefined points of variation (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 181). The sample was gathered in a snowball sampling fashion where over time cases were “recommended by individuals who know other individuals likely to yield relevant, information-rich data” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 181). The goal was to gather a total of 12 youth ministers who thrived in their novice experience and 12 youth ministers who did not thrive in order to learn from both types of individuals. In addition, the sample would include the minister who supervised the novice youth minister. The total number of participants in the sample

was designed to be 48. The target population for this research study was novice youth ministers who served in evangelical Protestant congregations in the Pacific Northwest.

The sample selection started with a pool of youth ministers already known to the researcher after 37 years of youth ministry in the Pacific Northwest. This pool of youth ministers includes present and former youth ministers in two denominational groups—Converge Northwest (formerly the Columbia Baptist Conference district of the Baptist General Conference) and CBNW (Conservative Baptists of the Northwest). Also included in the pool were youth ministers from a number of other evangelical denominations. Graduates in the youth ministry programs of Corban College and Multnomah University were also accessible to this researcher.

This pool was represented by a number of people this researcher had gathered over the last 8 years and who were part of an email distribution list of over 200 people who are youth ministers or are interested in youth ministry. People on this list were asked if they fit the following criteria for being involved in the study or if they knew someone who would fit the criteria.

The email sent to prospective participants on this researcher's email distribution list (see Appendix A) asked the recipient to consider if she met the following criteria:

1. He started his first youth ministry position in an evangelical Protestant church in the Pacific Northwest between the years 2000 and 2007 and spent at least 1.5 years in a novice youth minister experience. The reason for this criterion is that the study is limited to novice you ministers in evangelical Protestant churches in the Pacific Northwest. A person is likely to remember much of the circumstances if the ministry started within the last 10 years. The individual should have started the youth ministry

before June 2007 so that 3 years have passed since the beginning of the novice experience. A required tenure of at least 1.5 years in the novice experience is likely to exclude those who had no intention of staying in youth ministry when they began the ministry. The foundational idea was that 3 years had passed since the beginning of a novice youth minister experience which lasted at least 1.5 years.

2. The position required at least 30 hours of work per week, with youth ministry responsibilities as at least half of the ministry portfolio. Selecting this characteristic increased the likelihood that the youth ministry position was intended to be a long-range situation by both the youth minister and the church. If the youth ministry responsibilities were not at least half of the portfolio, it was less likely that the position was intended to be a long-range youth ministry role.
3. The individual was willing to participate in a 60- to 75-minute interview.
4. The individual was willing to allow his supervising minister during his novice experience to be interviewed. (Participants were told that the reporting of results would disguise the participants so they were not recognized and that information obtained would not be shared with any other participants.)
5. His supervising minister was willing to participate in a 60- to 75-minute semi-structured interview. (Participants were told that the reporting of results would disguise the participants so they were not recognized and that information obtained would not be shared with any other participants.)

Youth ministers and their supervising minister during their novice experience were told the purpose and benefits of the study in order to encourage them to be involved. They were told that the purpose of the study was to understand the lived experience of

youth ministers in the novice stage of their youth ministry service and that the study was trying to address two major questions. First, what are specific internal motivating factors in the lives of novice youth ministers that impact whether they thrive or not? In view here were issues such as calling to ministry, identity, and self-efficacy. Second, what are the critical factors in the novice youth minister's context which contribute to him thriving in ministry and thus impact his potential longevity in church youth ministry? Of interest here were the strategies of the supervising minister, difficulties faced by novice youth ministers, the experiences of the youth minister's spouse, and other matters that provide the context of the youth minister's life in church youth ministry.

The potential benefits of the study were explained in the email, including finding ways to help youth ministers thrive and the acquisition of knowledge which would help in the promotion of better relationships between youth ministers and their supervising ministers. Findings, they were told, would provide strategies for the encouragement of novices to consider long-term youth ministry service. Insights would be gained to help Christian universities and seminaries train youth ministers for service in local churches.

Prospective participants were told that participation was entirely voluntary and the information would be held in absolute confidentiality. Pseudonyms were to be used and every effort was to be made to prevent readers from identifying them or their church. Information that was not disguised would not be shared with other participants.

Recipients who fit the criteria and who were interested in being interviewed were then asked to complete an online survey using the [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) platform (see Appendix B for the survey). The survey responses were used to determine whether the respondent fit the criteria listed above. They were asked a question to determine whether

they had thrived or not thrived in their novice youth ministry experience. A youth minister was considered to have been thriving if the following were true (Lawson, 2000):

- Enjoyed their ministry and found it satisfying
- Feel their responsibilities were a good fit for their gifting and personality
- Found ways to sustain their personal well-being in the midst of ministry demands
- Were not eager to consider other work or ministry

For youth ministers who did not thrive in their novice experience the following would have been true:

- Did not enjoy the ministry and did not find it satisfying
- Felt their responsibilities were not a good fit for their gifting and personality
- Did not find ways to sustain their personal well-being in the midst of ministry demands
- Were eager to consider other work or ministry

The goal was to find within each of these two categories (thriving and not thriving) up to three youth ministers who filled the following categories:

- Stayed: At the end of 3 years from the beginning of their youth ministry, they were at the same church in a youth ministry role.
- Moved and still in youth ministry: At the end of 3 years they had moved to a different church but were still in a youth ministry role.
- Moved and were in paid ministerial positions but not in youth ministry: At the end of 3 years they had moved to a position that involved vocational ministry which was not youth ministry in a local church.

- Left vocational ministry: At the end of 3 years they had left paid vocational ministry.

The original email was forwarded by two denominational leaders to their network of youth ministers. Another veteran youth worker working in a parachurch ministry covering the Northwest region of the United States forwarded the original email to his list of 2,000 people. As the online survey was being monitored, colleagues of this researcher were also contacted when it did not appear that all of the desired categories were being represented in the survey responses.

Eventually 143 people completed the online survey. This researcher contacted some individuals by email or phone to understand better whether they did or did not thrive in their novice youth minister experience. The criterion of having worked at least 30 hours per week in youth ministry was lowered to 20 hours in some cases because certain candidates fit the other criteria and it was clear that they were in a youth ministry role that allowed them to be considered a novice youth minister.

The original intent of this research was to interview 20–24 dyads (novice youth minister and supervising minister) for a total of 40–48 interviews. It was thought that sufficient data would be gathered to provide valid and reliable data if 10–12 dyads were examined where the novice youth minister thrived and 10–12 dyads were examined where the novice youth minister did not thrive.

The final sample included 26 youth ministers and 24 of their supervisors. Ten of the youth ministers thrived in their novice youth ministry experience and 16 did not thrive. Table 4.1 indicates the breakdown of the categories that the participants represented.

Table 4.1

Number of Participants Thriving and Not Thriving in Four Vocational Outcome Categories

	Stayed at church where novice youth ministry occurred	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	Left vocational ministry
Thrived	3	1	3	3
Did not thrive	3	5	3	5

Out of the 26 people interviewed regarding their novice youth minister experience, 6 stayed, 6 moved to work with youth in another church, 6 moved to a different vocational ministry in a different church, and 8 left vocational ministry. Because of research limitations it was determined that it was more crucial to examine YMs who did not thrive than those who did.

Because some novice YMs had more than one supervisor during their tenure, a total of 30 supervising ministers were considered for interviews and subsequently 24 supervising ministers were interviewed. Each youth minister was asked if she would be comfortable with this researcher interviewing the person who supervised her during her novice youth minister experience. Four of the participants did not want their supervising minister to be interviewed. In two of the situations, both the supervising minister and

another person were interviewed. In one case, the second interview was with a church board member who had acted as a mentor to the youth minister. In the other case, the second interview was with the supervising minister of the youth minister's second church. In both cases, the second interview was conducted in order to gain a better perspective of the youth minister's situation.

Data Collection Procedures

Each YM participated in a 60- to 75-minute interview either in person, on the phone, or via voice/video-over-internet-protocol (Skype). Supervising ministers (SMs) spent 30–45 minutes in an interview. Prior to the interview each person read and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C). The interview was conducted using a semi-structured interview methodology. Flick (2006, pp. 156–157) suggests three types of questions in a semi-standardized (semi-structured) interview. First, open questions start the interview. These may be answered on the basis of the knowledge that the interviewee has immediately at hand. Second, theory-driven, hypotheses-directed questions are asked which are oriented to the scientific literature or based on the researcher's theoretical positions. Third, confrontation questions are used, which are a response to the theories and relations the interviewee has presented up to that point. These are asked in order to critically re-examine the ideas presented by the interviewee in the view of competing alternatives.

Interviews in phenomenographic research should be concerned about the total experience of the participant, not just conceptualizations. Therefore, these interviews were conducted in such a way as to uncover the feelings, reflections, and meaning

making of the participant along with conceptualizations. Also of interest were the associations the participants made with the novice experience and subsequent vocational choices.

The following questions were used in the interviews of the novice youth ministers (see Appendix D). Questions 1–11 are considered open questions and questions 12–20 are theory-driven questions. A pilot study was used to determine which of these questions were the most beneficial.

1. Could you give a little background of how you got started in youth ministry?
2. What was your ministry title in your first youth ministry?
3. What were your primary responsibilities?
4. How would you describe your novice experience in general? Please explain your answer.
5. What were the major aspects of youth ministry that brought you joy?
6. What were some of the major challenges?
7. Were your salary and benefit package satisfactory?
8. How did your novice experience lead you to where you are today?
9. If you moved out of church youth ministry into another area of ministry, what impact did your novice experience have on that decision?
10. If you left vocational ministerial ministry, what impact did your novice experience have on that decision?
11. In general, what connections do you make between your novice youth ministry experience and your subsequent vocational trajectory?

12. Was it your thought during this time that you had the skills and abilities to be a youth minister?
13. How did your thoughts about vocation/call impact your entry into youth ministry?
14. How did your novice experience impact your perspective on a call to ministry?
15. What factors caused you to think you were a fit or not a fit for youth ministry in that church? Church youth ministry, in general?
16. Who were your mentors prior to and while you were in your novice experience?
How did they contribute to your ministry development?
17. What aspects of your personality did you consider valuable for youth ministry?
18. What aspects of your personality did you consider detrimental to youth ministry?
19. Please describe the areas of youth ministry where you felt effective. Please describe the areas of youth ministry where you struggled to be effective.
20. In what areas do you think your supervising minister may have felt you were effective as a youth minister? In what areas do you think your supervising minister may have felt you were not effective as a youth minister?

The following questions were used in the interview of the supervising minister (see Appendix E). Questions 1–7 are considered open questions and questions 8–14 are theory-driven questions. (The number in parentheses indicates the question's connection to the youth minister questions.)

1. Why did you choose _____ to be a youth minister at your church? (#s 1–3)
2. Was it your perception that _____ was thriving or not thriving while at your church? (#4)
3. What did you perceive were _____'s joys in youth ministry? (#5)

4. What did you perceive were _____'s challenges in youth ministry? (#6)
5. Did you think _____'s salary and benefit package was satisfactory? (#7)
6. What factors do you believe caused _____ to stay with your church or leave? (#s 9–10)
7. In general, how do you think _____'s novice youth ministry experience influenced his vocational trajectory? (#11)
8. Was it your thought during this time that _____ had the skills and abilities to be a youth minister? (#12)
9. By the end of the 3 years, did you think _____ was called by God to be in church youth ministry? (#13)
10. What factors caused you to think _____ was a fit or not a fit for youth ministry in that church? Church youth ministry, in general? (#15)
11. In what ways did you intentionally attempt to mentor _____? (#16)
12. What aspects of _____'s personality did you consider valuable for youth ministry? (#17)
13. What aspects of _____'s personality did you consider detrimental to youth ministry? (#18)
14. In what areas did you feel _____ was effective as a youth minister? In what areas did you feel _____ struggled to be effective as a youth minister? (#19)

Table 4.2 shows the connection between a construct discovered in the literature review and a specific theory-driven question.

Table 4.2

Connection of Interview Questions with Constructs from the Literature Review

Construct from theories	Question for novice youth minister	Question for supervising minister
Abilities	12. Was it your thought during this time that you had the skills and abilities to be a youth minister?	8. Was it your thought during this time that _____ had the skills and abilities to be a youth minister?
Calling	13. How did your thoughts about vocation/call impact your entry into youth ministry? 14. How did your novice experience impact your perspective on a call to ministry?	9. By the end of the three years, did you think _____ was called by God to be in church youth ministry?
Compatibility	15. What factors caused you to think you were a fit or not a fit for youth ministry in that church? Church youth ministry, in general?	10. What factors caused you to think _____ was a fit or not a fit for youth ministry in that church? Church youth ministry, in general?
Mentoring	16. Who were your mentors prior to and while you were in your novice experience?	11. In what ways did you intentionally attempt to mentor _____?
Personality	17. What aspects of your personality did you consider valuable for youth ministry? 18. What aspects of your personality did you consider detrimental to youth ministry?	12. What aspects of _____'s personality did you consider valuable for youth ministry? 13. What aspects of _____'s personality did you consider detrimental to youth ministry?

(table continues)

Table 4.2 *Connection of Interview Questions with Constructs from the Literature Review*
(continued)

Construct from theories	Question for novice youth minister	Question for supervising minister
Self-efficacy	19. Do you believe you were effective as a youth minister? 20. In what areas do you think your supervising minister may have felt you were effective as a youth minister? In what areas do you think your supervising minister may have felt you were not effective as a youth minister?	14. Do you believe _____ was effective as a youth minister?

The interviews were conducted by this researcher only. Care was taken by the researcher to avoid deep discussions of negative experiences so as not to cause the interview to be distressful. The participant was invited to stop the interview at anytime. Guidelines suggested by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) were followed, including the assurance of confidentiality, the building of rapport, and the explanation of the benefits of the study. The interviewer talked less than the participant. Questions asked contained a single idea. Simple probes were used, such as “Can you tell me more about that?” Contradicting the participant was avoided, as well as any appearance of cross-examination (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 254).

Two digital recorders were used at each interview in case a problem occurred with one of the recorders. The digital recordings were transferred to the researcher’s computer, which is password protected. The recordings on the digital recorder were kept

on the recorder until they were deemed unnecessary. The digital recorders were kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Digital recordings were transcribed by the researcher/interviewer and by transcribers acquired for that purpose. These transcriptions were saved and reviewed by the researcher/interviewer and by the assessors who evaluated a small number of transcripts to help with the bracketing process. These transcripts were kept on a password-protected computer.

The researcher knew the identity of the participants during the data collection and analysis process through appropriate coding, but in order to protect anonymity, reporting of the findings was done anonymously using pseudonyms. Caution was taken to prevent the identification of specific participants and/or churches.

Researcher Reflection Procedures

This researcher's reflection strategy included bracketing procedures which were put into place in order to avoid researcher bias. This researcher has been working in and around youth ministry for 43 years. This researcher began as a volunteer while in college and subsequently became the part-time high school minister at his home church while in seminary. This researcher served 21 years as a youth minister in one church. During that time this researcher led denominational youth activities and a youth ministers' network in the community. During this researcher's career he has been to numerous conferences and gatherings of youth workers, having many conversations with veterans and novices and those in between. This researcher has taught workshops on youth ministry and read extensively in the field. This researcher began teaching youth ministry at the seminary

level in 2003. The obvious conclusion is that this researcher had to work hard at avoiding researcher bias. This researcher's goal was to be a disciplined researcher in order to hear what youth ministers had to say about their novice experiences and what supervising ministers had to say about the youth minister. This required that critical procedures be put into place.

The first procedure was to keep a journal during both the data collection and data analysis. The proposed plan was to write a journal entry each time an interview took place. These questions were to be answered: "Did any of my previous knowledge, theories, or hypotheses impact negatively the questions asked or the way they were asked? In other words, did any of my presuppositions bias the interview? Did I engage in empathetic listening? Were there any signs that my personal beliefs and knowledge intruded on the interview?" Although the entries did not happen after every interview, they were conducted sufficiently to provide a sense of bracketing and a consciousness of avoiding researcher bias. Journal entries by this researcher reveal a strong attempt to not let bias impact the interviews. The data analysis process included entries at regular intervals which were also designed to reflect in such a way as to avoid bias.

During the data collection process and the data analysis process this researcher noted emerging organizing themes and looked for data which would imply the opposite to be true, looking for ideas which challenged an emerging organizing theme. The goal was to look for information that "disconfirmed" what seemed to be an emerging organizing theme.

In order to improve the researcher's interview skills and promote necessary bracketing, two seminary colleagues were asked to read interview transcripts and provide

an assessment. The transcript used pseudonyms in order to protect confidentiality.

Although there would have been value in having the assessor listen to the digital recording, this would have constituted a violation of the promise made to the participants that only the researcher would listen to the tapes and be aware of the identity of individuals. (Transcribers were the exception to this.) The chance existed that the assessor would have recognized the voice or the situation of the interviewee. This assessment was conducted approximately every eight interviews until it was determined that this researcher was conducting the interviews in a satisfactory manner.

The assessor was asked the following questions: Did the interviewer appear to be open to hear whatever the participant said? Did the interviewer guide the interview in such a way that his presuppositions intruded on the interview? Did the interviewer appear at any time to silence any concerns, preoccupations, or judgments of the participant (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300)? Did the interviewer “use prompts to pursue/clarify the participant’s own line of reflection and allow the participant to elaborate, provide incidents, clarifications, and maybe, to discuss events at length” (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300)? Did the transcription accurately reflect the emotions and emphases of the participant (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300)?

This researcher had intended to meet with the assessors to discuss the conclusions reached but this was not necessary. The conclusion after each of the three assessments (received in writing) was that this researcher had conducted himself in such a way that there were no concerns or needs for improvement. Because of this, the assessments were halted after three had been conducted.

After the data were collected and analyzed, one focus group (90 minutes in duration) was conducted after the data had been analyzed in order to provide feedback on the findings. The focus group consisted of two novice youth ministers, two veteran youth ministers, and two ministers who supervise youth ministers. The organizing categories and theoretical constructs (outcome space) found in chapter 5 were sent to the participants and they were asked to be prepared to answer the following questions when the focus group was conducted (see Appendix F):

- What are your general reflections as you read the result of these interviews?
- Do the interview citations used to illustrate the theoretical constructs actually support what I am maintaining?
- Does anything surprise you with the findings?
- Do you think there are any alternate explanations for the data that I have presented?
- What questions arise for you out of what you read?

During the focus group this researcher explained the findings and how he bracketed the research. Participants in the focus group were asked to judge the reliability and the validity of the findings by answering the above questions sent to them in advance. The focus group was conducted in such a way as to provide a permissive and nonthreatening environment so that the participants could speak in a relaxed and comfortable environment. The purpose of the focus group was to provide a forum for the participants to share their ideas and perceptions as they responded to this researcher's findings and conclusions in order to help prevent this researcher's biases from distorting the analysis and conclusions. The results of the focus group supported the validity of the

findings. There were no concerns that the interview citations were not supportive of the theoretical construct they were purported to support. There were no alternative explanations provided for the data. The only surprise was the data regarding the average length of time for a novice youth minister's stay at the church. The perception of the majority of the focus group was that the average length of stay for a novice youth minister is 1.5 years. The findings in this study did not support that assertion.

One of the people who had previously assessed the transcripts to look for interviewer bias was asked to observe the focus group. He was asked to consider the following questions during the focus group:

- Does the focus group leader appear to be open to hear whatever the participants said?
- Did the focus group leader guide the interview in such a way that his presuppositions intruded on the focus group?
- Did the focus group leader at any time appear at any time to silence any concerns, preoccupations, or judgments of the participants?
- Did the focus group leader "use prompts to pursue/clarify the participant's own line of reflection and allow the participant to elaborate, provide incidents, clarifications, and maybe, to discuss events at length" (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300)?

Following the focus group, the observer reported that that this researcher was open to hear what the group had to say about the research and used prompts and reflective comments to encourage participants to express and clarify their opinions and experiences.

The observer saw no attempts to silence any concerns or judgments of the participants or to guide the group in such a way that his presuppositions intruded on the discussion.

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to field test the interview questions as well as to improve the interviewing skills of the researcher. Special attention was paid to bracketing skills and the avoidance of leading questions.

The pilot study involved two novice youth ministers and the supervising minister from their novice experience. One youth minister described his novice experience as one where he thrived and one described his novice experience as one where he did not thrive. Each participant completed an informed consent form (see Appendix C). The interviewing procedures and questions were as described above. The data were collected and analyzed as described in this chapter. The pilot study was used to determine if the interviews with the youth ministers should be longer, if the interview with the supervising minister should be shortened, and what questions should be eliminated, added, or revised.

It was concluded after the pilot study that the interview questions were satisfactory and that the length of the interview would be 60–75 minutes for the YM and 30–45 minutes for the SM. The data collection procedures were satisfactory and the transcription process adequate.

Informed Consent

An informed consent form was sent to each participant prior to her interview (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to bring the signed informed consent form to the

interview and the form was collected prior to the interview. When the interview was conducted via phone or Skype, the signed informed consent form had been sent prior to the interview or the interviewer solicited approval as the interview started. The informed consent form explained the general purposes of the research and the potential benefits. Participants were informed that they could choose not to answer questions and could withdraw from the study at any time. The data gathered from the interview, they were told, would be kept confidential and anonymity would be guarded by the use of pseudonyms. The same informed consent form was used for participants in the focus group following the data analysis process. They were asked to bring the signed informed consent form to the focus group and it was collected prior to the group discussion.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using the theoretical coding data analysis procedure (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 7) used generally for qualitative research and phenomenographic research data analysis procedures. Each interview was transcribed and the entire text was entered into the computer software, NVivo9. Included in the transcription process were the reflections and emotions of the participants (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300).

The transcripts were read and NVivo9 was used to isolate relevant texts. Special attention was made to conduct an iterative process of reading and examination of the transcripts so the data would be looked at from different perspectives (Akerlind, 2005, p. 328). Repeating ideas were discovered and from those ideas, organizing themes were noted. Using these organizing themes, theoretical constructs were proposed if they were

discovered within the organizing theme. Subsequently, theoretical narratives were developed, as described in chapter 5, as conclusions were reached. These conclusions provide different ways of understanding the lived experience of the novice youth minister.

One of the critical components of phenomenographic research is the examination of the qualitatively different ways in which people understand a particular phenomenon (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 335). These ways of understanding or conceptions are represented in the form of categories of description (organizing themes). Unique to this research were comparisons made between what the novice youth minister perceived about his novice youth ministry experience and what his supervising minister perceived about it. Research to date has focused only on the categories of description provided by the youth minister. This research was done with the hope that the categories of description (organizing themes) discovered would contribute to the success of youth ministers and the promotion of quality youth ministries in local churches.

For this reason, the data analysis process was patterned after the following recommended procedures (Akerlind, 2005, pp. 328–329):

- Focus on the “how” or “what” of the phenomenon.
- Focus on similarities and differences within and between categories and transcripts associated with the particular categories. The goal is to discover divergence and nuances of differences.
- Pay attention to transcripts that do not fit the proposed categories of description.
- Look for the logical structure of the outcome space to explain the structural relationships of the categories of description.

- Avoid any notions of cause and effect (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 305).

Following these procedures contributed to reliable findings.

The use of journaling for bracketing was continued during the data analysis process using the questions mentioned above. This was done whenever the researcher sensed the need.

Akerlind (2005, p. 330) suggests that two types of checks contribute to the validity of the data analysis and subsequent reporting of findings. These two checks contribute to the extent to which the study is seen as validly investigating what it was designed to investigate or “the degree to which the research findings actually reflect the phenomenon being studied” (Akerlind, 2005, p. 330). These two checks are referred to as communicative validity checks and pragmatic validity checks. Communicative validity checks are used to determine if the interpretation of the data is defensible. This is accomplished by soliciting feedback from the research community or other communities that are logically able to contribute to the establishment of validity. Akerlind suggests that phenomenographic researchers commonly do not seek feedback from the interviewees themselves, so this research will not include typical “member checking” of the participants. What is recommended is obtaining the feedback of other members of the population and the intended audience for the findings. For this reason, a focus group (90 minutes in duration) was conducted after the data had been analyzed in order to provide feedback on the findings. The focus group consisted of two novice youth ministers, two veteran youth ministers, and two ministers who supervise youth ministers. The organizing themes and theoretical outcomes were presented to the participants and feedback was solicited. The researcher explained the findings and how he bracketed the

research. In this way, the focus group was asked to judge the validity of the findings. As described above, the validity of the findings was supported by the members of the focus group and by the person who observed the group to watch for bias.

The other check is referred to as a pragmatic validity check. This check is used to determine the usefulness of the research. The focus group described above was asked to help with this determination as well.

Reliability determination in qualitative research is commonly done through coder reliability checks and dialogic reliability checks. In the case of this research, these two checks were not possible because they both assume that more than one researcher is involved in the project. The alternative Akerlind (2005, p. 332) suggests is that the researcher makes the interpretive steps clear to the readers by fully detailing the steps and by presenting examples to illustrate them. This was accomplished by the use of data from the journal and interview assessors in the reporting of the findings and conclusions.

Summary of the Research and Design Procedures

This chapter has described the research questions and research design of this study. The phenomenographic research method was used. Outcomes of this research are “organizing themes” and “theoretical constructs.” Semi-structured interviews were the source of data and involved 26 novice youth ministers and 24 supervising ministers. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews, along with some theory-driven questions. The suspension of theoretical knowledge was accomplished by careful listening and intentional bracketing. Operational definitions were provided for *attrition*,

evangelical Protestant, longevity/tenure, novice youth ministers, vocational ministry, youth, and youth ministry.

The process of sample selection was explained as a stratified purposeful sampling in a snowball fashion based on this researcher's existing network of relationships among youth ministers in the Pacific Northwest. Specific criteria for participants in the sample were articulated, including the definitions of *thriving* and *not thriving*.

The data collection plan was presented, including details of the 60- to 75-minute semi-structured interview for the YMs and 45- to 60-minute interviews with the SMs. The questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were presented. Procedures for the recording and transcribing of the interview were explained. The procedures for researcher reflection were discussed with journaling being one of the important components. A process for this researcher's improvement of interviewing skills was explained. The procedure for the conducting of a focus group was described. A focus group was conducted following data collection and data analysis to help judge the validity of the findings.

The pilot study was described, which involved interviews with two novice youth ministers and their supervising ministers. The plan for informed consent was described.

Finally, the theoretical coding data analysis procedures which are used for qualitative research in general and phenomenographic research in particular were presented. Digital recordings were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo9 software. Repeating ideas, organizing themes, and theoretical constructs were proposed. A focus group was used to help determine the validity and reliability of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

This phenomenological study investigated the experience of current and former youth ministers as novices in evangelical Protestant churches in the Northwestern region of the United States by interviewing both them and the minister who supervised them. The examination of existing material prior to this investigation included career development theories, youth minister attrition and longevity studies, and the transition of novice teachers into the field of education. Biblical and theological organizing themes explored prior to the investigation were a theology of calling, a NT survey of ministry leadership roles, and the mentoring case study of Paul and Timothy. These prior investigations helped form the interview questions for the novice youth ministers and their supervisors.

Chapter 4 described the methodology of the study, how the sample was collected, and how the data were analyzed. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a picture of how the data were analyzed and the subsequent organizing themes and theoretical constructs which were discovered in the process. The next section presents the data describing the participants.

Study Participants

The participants in this study were 26 men and women who had served as novice youth ministers in churches in the Northwestern region of the United States (with one exception) between 2000 and 2008, and 24 of their supervising ministers. A person was considered a novice youth minister if he served for the first time in a church youth ministry as a paid staff member for at least 20 hours per week. (The initial criterion was 30 hours per week and in most situations this was the case. In a few cases the weekly expectation was 20 hours but it was clear that the position was considered a youth ministry position with a clear path to increasing the hours and that it was a permanent position). These 26 youth ministers were selected through a snowball sampling method. Having been involved with youth ministers in the Northwest since 1973, this researcher sent an email to about 250 youth workers in the Northwest from his personal database of youth workers. They were asked to complete a survey and pass the email along to people they knew who were presently or formerly youth ministers, inviting others to take the survey. One of those receiving the email was a Christian university youth ministry professor who posted the survey link on his Facebook page.

The survey asked when the person began his novice youth ministry experience and whether she thrived or did not thrive as a novice youth minister. No definitions were given in the survey for thriving and not thriving. Subsequently 143 persons completed the survey.

Using this survey data and, in some cases, after contacting a potential prospect, participants who fit the following definition of *thriving* (Lawson, 2000) were selected and asked to participate in an interview:

- Enjoyed their ministry and found it satisfying
- Felt their responsibilities were a good fit for their gifting and personality
- Found ways to sustain their personal well-being in the midst of ministry demands
- Were not eager to consider other work or ministry.

Ten people who said that they thrived as novice youth ministers were asked to participate in interviews.

Sixteen people who fit the following definition for youth ministers who *did not thrive* in their novice experience (Lawson, 2000) were selected for interviews:

- Did not enjoy the ministry and did not find it satisfying
- Felt their responsibilities were not a good fit for their gifting and personality
- Did not find ways to sustain their personal well-being in the midst of ministry demands
- Were eager to consider other work or ministry.

Although the original intent was to interview 12 people who had thrived and 12 who had not thrived, the determination was made that there was more value in examining more YMs who did not thrive than YMs who thrived.

For each of these two categories (thrive, not thrive) the goal was to find three people for each of the following vocational outcomes:

- Stayed at the church of novice youth ministry experience
- Moved to youth ministry at another church after their novice experience
- Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church after their novice experience
- Left vocational ministry

Table 5.1 shows the actual number of participants in each vocational outcome category.

Table 5.1

Number of Participants Thriving and Not Thriving in Four Vocational Outcome Categories

	Stayed at church where novice youth ministry occurred	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	Left vocational ministry
Thrived	3	1	3	3
Did not thrive	3	5	3	5

This researcher determined that if a limited number of interviews were going to be conducted, it was better to have more participants who did not thrive. Therefore only one person was selected who had thrived and moved to youth ministry in another church.

Table 5.2 provides the specific characteristics of each participant and a means of identifying each one while examining the specific findings of the research.

Table 5.2

Participant Characteristics: Age when Novice Youth Ministry Began, Duration of Novice Youth Ministry, Thriving State, Vocational Outcome

Youth Minister identification #	Age when novice youth ministry began (in years)	Duration of novice youth ministry position (in years)	Thriving state	Vocational outcome	Location of church
YM#1	23	5	Thrive	Stayed	Small town
YM#2	24	3	Not thrive	Left vocational ministry	Suburb
YM#3	19	6	Thrive	Stayed	City
YM#4	28	2	Not thrive	Left vocational ministry	City
YM#5	22	2.5	Not thrive	Left vocational ministry	Suburb
YM#6	21	5	Not thrive	Stayed	City
YM#7	22	4	Not thrive	Stayed	City
YM#8	21	7	Not thrive	Moved to youth ministry in another church	City
YM#9	27	3	Not thrive	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	Small town
YM#10	23	6	Thrive	Left vocational ministry	Suburb
YM#11	24	3.5	Not thrive	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	Small town

(table continues)

Table 5.2 *Participant Characteristics: Age when Novice Youth Ministry Began, Duration of Novice Youth Ministry, Thriving State, Vocational Outcome* (continued)

Youth Minister identification #	Age when novice youth ministry began (in years)	Duration of novice youth ministry position (in years)	Thriving state	Vocational outcome	Location of church
YM#12	26	1	Not thrive	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Small town
YM#13	27	5	Not thrive	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Small town
YM#14	25	4	Not thrive	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Small town
YM#15	24	1	Not thrive	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Small town
YM#16	24	7	Thrive	Stayed	Suburb
YM#17	25	2	Not thrive	Left vocational ministry	Small town
YM#18	45	6	Not thrive	Stayed	Suburb
YM#19	30	.75	Not thrive	Left vocational ministry	Suburb
YM#20	21	5	Thrive	Moved to a different vocational ministry (parachurch)	Small town

(table continues)

Table 5.2 *Participant Characteristics: Age when Novice Youth Ministry Began, Duration of Novice Youth Ministry, Thriving State, Vocational Outcome* (continued)

Youth Minister identification #	Age when novice youth ministry began (in years)	Duration of novice youth ministry position (in years)	Thriving state	Vocational outcome	Location of church
YM#21	24	3	Thrive	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	Small town
YM#22	22	2	Thrive	Left vocational ministry	Suburb
YM#23	22	5	Thrive	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	City
YM#24	24	5	Thrive	Moved to youth ministry in another church	Small town
YM#25	30	2	Not thrive	Moved to a different vocational ministry in another church	City
YM#26	18	4.5	Thrive	Left vocational ministry	City

Out of the 26 people interviewed regarding their novice youth minister experience, six stayed, six moved to work with youth in another church, six moved to a different vocational ministry in a different church, and eight left vocational ministry. The average age for the beginning of the novice youth ministry experience was 25.65 years.

The average length of stay in the novice youth ministry experience in this sample was 3.86 years. Table 5.3 displays the comparisons of average length of stay in a youth ministry position from research cited earlier in this study, along with the results of the survey done in this research to gather the sample.

Table 5.3

A Comparison of Tenure Rates in Youth Minister Attrition and Longevity Studies

Study	Mean years in youth ministry position	Sample size
Novice youth ministry experience, interviews conducted by Marrs in 2012	3.86	26
Novice youth ministry experience, survey by Marrs, 2012	5.19	143
Novice youth minister experience, still at same church, survey by Marrs, 2012	5.82	58 (of 143 respondents)
Novice youth minister experience, left first church position, survey by Marrs, 2012	4.70	85 (of 143 respondents)
Keehn (1997)	4.5	20
Grenz (2001): First youth ministry position	4.65	154
Grenz (2001): Second youth ministry position	3.27	154

(table continues)

Table 5.3 *A Comparison of Tenure Rates in Youth Minister Attrition and Longevity Studies* (continued)

Study	Mean years in youth ministry position	Sample size
Grenz (2001): Third youth ministry position	4.28	154
Grenz (2001): Fourth youth ministry position	2.98	154
Grenz (2001): Fifth youth ministry position	4.60	154

What is evident from this table is that the often-asserted claim that the average stay of a youth minister in a church is 1.5 years appears to be inaccurate. No reliable statistical data have been gathered because to date no one has conducted a definitive quantitative study which included people no longer involved in youth ministry in the sample. Whether or not it would be significant to determine this number (average stay at a church) is questionable anyway. What is more important is the determination of why youth ministers stay in youth ministry and why they leave.

An interview lasting 45–75 minutes was conducted with each of the novice youth ministers. The questions asked in the interview can be found in Appendix D. These interviews were conducted in person, by phone, and via Skype. During the interviewing process this researcher had a conversation with a friend who is a documentary filmmaker to gain knowledge about how to do interviews. This friend's film work has consistently revealed a respect for his subjects. His advice was very helpful:

- Be a good listener. An empathetic listener.
- Build rapport.

- Build trust. Practice the Prior Question of Trust: “Is what I am doing, saying, or thinking building trust or undermining trust?”
- It is not possible to be completely objective so build a bond. Don’t fear building a bond. People will say things because of the bond that they won’t say otherwise. Don’t break the bond. The bond actually helps keep you honest by respecting them and not painting them in a bad light in reporting. Don’t be afraid to build the bond. (J. Paget, personal communication, May 27, 2011)

This researcher heeded this advice in order to contribute to the reliability and validity of the data.

Each youth minister was asked if he would be comfortable with this researcher interviewing the person who supervised her during her novice youth minister experience. Four of the participants did not want their supervising minister to be interviewed. In two of the situations, both the supervising minister and another person were interviewed. In one case, the second interview was with a church board member who had acted as a mentor to the youth minister. In the other case, the second interview was with the supervising minister of the youth minister’s second church. In both cases, the second interview was conducted in order to gain a better perspective of the youth minister’s situation. Table 5.4 displays the role and relationship the supervising minister had with the novice youth minister.

Table 5.4

Supervising Minister’s Role and Relationship to the Novice Youth Minister

Youth Minister	Supervising Minister	Interviewed Supervising Minister’s role ^a
YM#1		No interview
YM#2		No interview
YM#3	SM#3	Senior minister

(table continues)

Table 5.4 *Supervising Minister's Role and Relationship to the Novice Youth Minister*
(continued)

Youth Minister	Supervising Minister	Interviewed Supervising Minister's role ^a
YM#4	SM#4	Senior minister ^b
YM#5	SM#5	Associate minister who supervised YM#5 when he began ^c
YM#6	SM#6	Associate minister who supervised YM#6 when he began ^d
YM#7	SM#7	Associate minister ^e
YM#8	SM#8	Associate minister
YM#9	SM#9	Senior minister
YM#10	SM#10	Associate minister
YM#11	SM#11	Senior minister
YM#12	SM#12	Associate minister
YM#13	SM#13	Senior minister ^f
YM#14	SM#14	Associate minister
YM#15		No interview
YM#16		No interview
YM#17	SM#17	Senior minister
YM#18	SM#18	Senior minister
YM#19	SM#19	Senior minister
YM#20	SM#20a	Senior minister at YM#20's first church
YM#20	SM#20b	Senior minister at YM#20's second church
YM#21	SM#21	Senior minister
YM#22	SM#22	Senior minister
YM#23	SM#23	Associate minister ^g
YM#24	SM#24	Senior minister
YM#25	SM#25a	Senior minister
YM#25	SM#25b	Church board member who had served as a mentor
YM#26	SM#26	Associate minister

Note. ^aUnless otherwise noted, the supervising minister directly supervised the youth minister during all or a portion of his novice experience. ^bYM#4 was directly supervised by an associate minister. ^cAt the time of YM#5's departure from the church he was supervised by the senior minister. ^dAt the time of YM#6's departure from the church he was supervised by the senior minister. ^eYM#7 had been supervised by others when she began. ^fYM#13 had previous supervising ministers prior to SM#13, the supervisor at the time of his departure from the church. ^gYM#23 had previous supervising ministers prior to SM#23, the supervisor at the time of his departure from the church.

An interview lasting 45–60 minutes was conducted with each of the supervising ministers. The questions asked in the interview can be found in Appendix E. These interviews were conducted in person, by phone, and via Skype. The interviews were recorded on two digital recorders.

This researcher transcribed the four interviews conducted for the pilot study and the first few of the primary research. Four people were then enlisted to transcribe the remaining recordings. The first transcription of each person was proofed by this researcher while listening to the recording to determine the reliability of her transcription skills. All four were very accurate and thus reliable.

In order to provide an opportunity for this researcher to improve his interviewing skills and in order to provide bracketing, two assessors were enlisted for the pilot study and the primary research. These assessors were asked to read the transcripts and answer the following questions (also found in Appendix F) at periodic intervals in the interviewing process:

- Did the interviewer appear to be open to hear whatever the participant said?
Did the interviewer guide the interview in such a way that his presuppositions intruded on the interview?
- Did the interviewer appear at any time to silence any concerns, preoccupations, or judgments of the participant?
- Did the interviewer use prompts to pursue/clarify the participant's own line of reflection and allow the participant to elaborate, provide incidents, clarifications, and maybe, to discuss events at length?

- Did the transcription accurately reflect the emotions and emphases of the participant?

In no case did the assessors have any concerns about the researcher's interviewing process.

The overall experience of interviewing was positive. The only awkward moments occurred when this researcher was in the second interview of a youth minister/supervising minister dyad. On a few occasions this researcher heard statements from the second person of the dyad that revealed information this researcher knew the first person in the dyad did not have. For example, one youth pastor was frustrated that this researcher did not really know why he was asked to leave and the supervising minister was telling me his reasons for asking the youth minister to leave. Never did this researcher reveal information to one person in the dyad about what the other had said, but it was somewhat ominous to be hearing information that the other person had never received. In most cases, the two members of the dyad had the same information and subsequent similar perspectives on the lived experience of the youth minister.

After all 50 interviews were transcribed, each transcription was entered into the computer software program NVivo9, which was designed for data analysis in qualitative research. The interviews were searched first for relevant data and repeating ideas. NVivo9 allows the researcher to isolate the repeating ideas with the relevant data and place them into nodes which can then be labeled as organizing themes emerging out of the data. From these organizing themes can be developed theoretical constructs which emerge out of the themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Table 5.5 lists the organizing

themes and theoretical constructs which emerged from the data analysis. The theoretical constructs are labeled in such a way as to be easily connected to their organizing theme.

Table 5.5

Organizing Themes and Theoretical Constructs which Emerged from Data Analysis

Organizing theme	Theoretical constructs
1. Calling	<p>Calling 1.1. Some novice youth ministers used the language of a transcendent summons (an external call of God) to vocational ministry.</p> <p>Calling 1.2. Some novice youth ministers described their call more in terms of process than an external summons.</p> <p>Calling 1.3. Some novice youth ministers viewed their novice experience as a call to a particular position or place.</p>
2. Difficulties adjusting to church politics, conflicts, and other relational struggles	<p>Difficulties 2.1. Some novice youth ministers experienced difficulties with their supervising minister.</p> <p>Difficulties 2.2. Some novice youth ministers experienced difficulties because of problems in the church not directly related to them.</p> <p>Difficulties 2.3. Some novice youth ministers struggled with leadership other than their supervisor (senior ministers, church board members, influential leaders).</p> <p>Difficulties 2.4. Some novice youth ministers experienced difficulties with parents and adult volunteers.</p> <p>Difficulties 2.5. A small number of novice youth ministers had difficulties with students.</p>
3. Relationship of the youth ministers with their supervisors	<p>Supervising 3.1. A nurturing supervising relationship was beneficial to the novice youth minister but did not guarantee a thriving situation.</p> <p>Supervising 3.2. Tolerable supervisor relationships were found in both thriving and non-thriving situations but were more common in non-thriving situations.</p> <p>Supervising 3.3. Unhealthy supervisory relationships were major contributors to “not thriving” situations.</p>

(table continues)

Table 5.5 *Organizing Themes and Theoretical Constructs which Emerged from Data Analysis* (continued)

Organizing theme	Theoretical constructs
4. Mentoring	<p>Mentoring 4.1. Approaches to mentoring by supervising ministers fell into three categories.</p> <p>Mentoring 4.2. In non-thriving situations the absence of a mentoring strategy by the SM was detrimental to the situation.</p> <p>Mentoring 4.3. Mentoring prior to the novice youth ministry experience was not a significant factor for thriving.</p>
5. Spouse's experience	<p>Spouse 5.1. Wives of YMs who did not thrive faced struggles that ranged from being irritated to sadness and loneliness.</p> <p>Spouse 5.2. Wives of YMs who thrived also had struggles.</p>
6. Selection process	<p>Selection 6.1. Major differences between the youth minister candidate and the church were overlooked or misunderstood.</p> <p>Selection 6.2. Wrong assumptions were made about youth minister's fitness for ministry.</p> <p>Selection 6.3. Mistakes were made when a youth minister was selected very quickly without church leadership being integrally involved.</p>
7. Preparation	
8. Differences in perspective between YM and SM	

Each of these eight organizing themes, with their accompanying theoretical constructs, are discussed in the sections that follow. The actual words of the participants are presented as these constructs are developed. The first organizing theme to be presented is calling.

Organizing Theme 1: Calling

Youth ministers were asked if they believed they were called to youth ministry. No definition was provided by the researcher for the idea of calling. This was purposeful in order to draw out their personal experiences rather than have them respond to the researcher's constructs. Six of the 26 youth ministers reported that they were specifically called to youth ministry. Sixteen of the 26 youth ministers said they were called to vocational ministry. Four were personally uncertain about their calling or it was difficult to assess their thinking from their responses. Since the interviewer did not ask the youth ministers to provide a lengthy explanation of their view of calling, the interviewer had to infer from the comments how they would define calling. Three viewpoints emerged in the analysis which led to the following three theoretical constructs.

Calling 1.1: Some Novice Youth Ministers Use the Language of a Transcendent Summons (an External Call of God) to Vocational Ministry

Sixteen of the 26 youth ministers described their entrance into youth ministry as a result of a transcendent summons or external call of God. Here are four exemplary responses:

YM#2: Oh, I was excited about it, ministry. I felt called to ministry. [This YM did not thrive and left vocational ministry.]

Interviewer with YM#4: Would you have said that you were called to youth ministry? If I would have talked to you right before taking the job?

YM#4: Absolutely, I would have said called. Of course, that's the term that everybody says! [This YM had an emotional breakdown and is no longer in vocational ministry.]

YM#6: I thought God was calling me to be a youth pastor. I thought, you know, like I looked at my life, and I said the youth group made the impact. I was a current youth leader. R., the youth pastor, had been the inspiration. So God had called me to, you know, youth ministry, and when I went through all of my college classes, and interviews with my professors—they do this thing called a sophomore interview. And they said, “So what’s your call to ministry?” And I said, with all enthusiasm, “I’m called to be a youth pastor. I’m called to be a youth”—you know, I’m not—because the idea was... and probably still is, but at least back in that day, it was, “Oh, so you don’t want to be a senior pastor?” I was like, “No, I just want to be a youth pastor.” [This YM did not thrive as a novice but stayed at same church and is thriving now.]

YM#21: When I was 13 I felt called to ministry, I just felt the Lord speaking to me, I didn’t know what it would look like if it was missionary, or worship type of stuff, or senior, or Christian education or anything... I had no clue, but I knew it was something. [This YM is in vocational ministry but not in youth ministry.]

In these cases, the participants used the construct of calling which reflects an understanding of calling as an external summons by God. This calling, however, did not always lead to a vocational ministry outcome. The second theoretical construct reveals more of a process idea than an external call.

Calling 1.2: Some Novice Youth Ministers Described their Call more in Terms of Process than an External Summons

Four youth ministers used the language of process to describe their call to their novice experience. This construct is more closely aligned to the idea of vocation described earlier in this study. Here are two examples of these responses:

YM#7: Yeah, yeah... And like I said, I kind of just, I was discovering it along the way, but once I got into it I was like, “Ooo, this is good, it fits me, I feel comfortable in this. [This YM did not thrive in the first years of his novice experience but is now thriving in youth ministry in the same church.]

YM#8: Yeah, that was always really difficult for me. And I didn't lie, when that would come up in interviews, but I'm sure I skirted my way around it. Because I never felt a sense, I never felt a clear calling to be a youth pastor... I felt gifted, I had a heart, definitely, but I did not ever feel a calling per se. I felt more of a calling to be a counselor than I ever did a youth pastor. Let's see, I was...gosh, what was that...it was some leadership group that we were...going through the same leadership process, and I was at probably the worst seminar I've ever been at in my life, but the guy gave us an hour to be by ourselves, and I just...had a really intimate moment with God where I, for the first time, felt like I had a mission, mission statement even. Which was to reach out to kids that know they are hurting and lost, and meet them with the love of Christ. [This YM did not thrive as a novice but is thriving in his second youth ministry experience.]

Although there was only a small number who used the language of process when asked about calling, this construct is important to note because they did not use the language of external summons by God to a particular ministry role. The last theoretical construct for this organizing theme is important to note because the people represented here do not use the language of either of the first two.

Calling 1.3: Some Novice Youth Ministers Viewed their Novice Experience as a Call to a Particular Position or Place

When asked about their call, three participants expressed God's leading them to a particular position or place rather than to a ministry role. Here is how they expressed themselves:

YM#12: On the underlying philosophy I believe that God leads where we need to go, but we don't necessarily know where. So for me it was, has God given me the natural skills and abilities for this, also is heart in right place for this? Do I care about students? Have heart for God? Have something to offer students as a role model? And do I have skills? Do I have the ability to teach, run program? I felt those were all affirmative. But even going into youth ministry I don't know myself very well, so can't say it was black and white, and it was never black and white for me, still isn't black and white, but I'm still doing it. Learning who I am is major process for me, and going to school now, don't know what will do, full time role youth or work in school with students? But I want to work with

students. So have a narrowed focus of where I want to spend my time working in school with kids or in ministry with kids.

YM#17: You know, that was...it was funny because even when we went to [state], I told the senior pastor, he said, "Well, how long, what kind of commitment can you make?" I said, "I have no idea," I said, "I would love to be here at least five years, but I'm going to go when and where God calls me to." [This YM did not thrive and is no longer in vocational ministry.]

In view of these three theoretical constructs and the data they represent, two assertions can be supported by the data from this research.

First, the presence of a calling to youth ministry or vocational ministry is not necessarily a predictor of people continuing in youth ministry or vocational ministry after their novice youth ministry experience. Four of the six who said they were specifically called to youth ministry were still in youth ministry and the other two left vocational ministry. Of the two who left vocational ministry, one reported thriving as a novice and the other reported not thriving. Of the 16 who said they were called to vocational ministry, nine were still in youth ministry, five were in vocational ministry other than youth ministry, and two had left vocational ministry. Both of the two who left vocational ministry reported not thriving in their novice experience. Of the four whose sense of call was vague or difficult to discern, one remained in youth ministry and three left vocational ministry. Although it might be argued that a significant percentage of youth ministers reported a sense of call and remained in vocational ministry of some kind (82%), there are people who enter their novice experience with a sense of calling to vocational ministry but who end up in a different vocation altogether.

Second, the presence of a sense of calling (in the sense of transcendent summons) is not a predictor of whether or not a person will thrive as a novice youth minister. The description of “not thriving” came from both those who said they were called specifically to youth ministry and those who said they were called generally to vocational ministry. First, four of the six YMs who reported that they had been specifically called to youth ministry did not thrive. (Three of those stayed in youth ministry.) Here are some of their descriptions of “not thriving”:

YM#4: First a surface description, I mean, there’s a lot of layers, but I would say it was pretty disappointing and pretty discouraging. I ended, I essentially had a nervous breakdown at the end of it. [He left youth ministry.]

YM#6: Uh, I said it was every single human emotion wrapped up into one, and slapped in your face, basically. For that first year, I loved it, and it was the greatest. It was the defining moment when it came to what ministry is, and I understood all those things I was being taught, and those experiences, and those great moments with those students, and so I loved, loved, loved so much of it. And yet it was aggravating, and draining, and destroying of what I thought church was, and what I had thought I had signed up for. [He stayed at his first church with youth, however.]

Nine of the 16 who reported a calling to vocational ministry in general did not thrive. Of those nine, five stayed in youth ministry. Here are three examples of these people who did not thrive even though they had a sense of calling to vocational ministry:

YM#2: In general? The 3-year experience was very enjoyable for a lot of times and very painful and at others. I would say that the most painful part of it was the head of the board seemingly—there was nothing I could do to be right—so that was the hard part—and in the end the main reason why I left for another job was because of him. And he—he never made things up—but he interpreted things and expected things that were just not realistic, not possible. I didn’t treat his daughter fairly. I didn’t provide a ministry that would meet her needs. But yet the way I ran the ministry, I was told by him to do it, which was a confusing thing

for me. The head pastor's daughter was in a similar situation. Seemingly nothing I did ever made a difference. [Left vocational ministry.]

YM#9: It was a phenomenal experience. I am so grateful for it. I think—and I really am grateful to be in a denomination that I wasn't familiar with and a style of worship and praise that was definitely different to me. Uh, I definitely—it's given me the passion and zeal, I think, the thick skin to really pursue ministry now, but it was awful hard... I felt like from the day one that I started I was being compared to the previous youth director. [Still in vocational ministry but not youth ministry.]

YM#25: Yeah, that's a good question. You know, I mean, I never, like, I knew that going into this job, that I was not going to be a youth pastor forever. I wasn't ever going to be a 60-year-old youth pastor, not that there's anything wrong with that, I just knew that I wasn't going to be that. And...so I knew that this would be temporary, and so did, when I got hired it was just clearly stated, and yet my heart was never to be like, "Oh, well, this is just a stepping stone to something else." No, I mean, youth ministry is pastoral ministry, period. [In this case the calling was clearly to vocational ministry in general.]

As with the participants who felt called to youth ministry, those who felt called to vocational ministry were not exempt from challenging situations which led them to a "not thriving" condition.

The data in this survey did not support the common notion among evangelical Christians that having a call to ministry is essential for sustaining a person through difficult times. The three perspectives discovered in this research cut across the categorical lines of thriving and not thriving as well as the vocational outcomes. The next organizing theme to be discussed focuses on the difficulties novice youth ministers faced because of church politics, church conflicts, and other relational struggles.

Organizing Theme 2: Difficulties Adjusting to Church Politics, Conflicts, and Other Relational Struggles

One of the dominant organizing themes in this study was the difficulty novice youth ministers had in adjusting to church politics, conflicts, and other relational struggles. In some situations the youth minister was at the center of the conflict or struggle. In others, they were part of the ministerial leadership team contending with difficulties that were not centered on the novice YM personally. Twenty-one out of the 26 YMs reported difficulties adjusting to church politics, conflicts, and other relational struggles. Twelve of those YMs described a very serious conflict. The first theoretical construct describes the difficulties experiences by novice YMs with their supervising minister.

Difficulties 2.1: Some Novice Youth Ministers Experienced Difficulties with their Supervising Minister

Ten of the YMs described serious relational difficulties with their supervising minister or difficulties they experienced, in general, because of perceived deficiencies in the SM's supervising strategy. The SM was often, but not always, the senior minister. In each of these 10 situations the YM described himself or herself as not thriving in the situation. The descriptions of five participants reveal five different variations of these difficulties:

1. The YM and the SM were at odds from the beginning of their relationship.
2. The YM had an agenda related to the SM.
3. The YM had a conflict with a church leader and was disappointed at the response of the SM.

4. The YM was struggling and his supervisors did not realize it.
5. The YM did not really understand why the SM was displeased with him.

These five cases are now illustrated.

First, in the case of YM#4, he and his supervisor (not the senior pastor) were at odds from the beginning of their relationship. Of his director supervisor, YM#4 said this:

YM#4: [My supervisor] was a little more, kind of nuts and bolts; I would say probably the person I butted heads most with would be [my supervisor].

The senior minister (SM#4) was interviewed for this research because of his indirect supervision of the YM and confirmed the difficulties between YM#4 and his supervisor:

SM#4 (the senior minister, indirect supervisor): From the very beginning they [YM#4 and his supervisor] conflicted.

The conflicts between the YM and SM were consistent as the YM faced decisions regarding the youth ministry. As is described below, YM#4 was in conflict with the students, parents, and volunteer leaders. YM#4's perspective of his SM was this:

YM#4: The feeling that I got from [my supervisor] was that there was, tradition seemed more important, relationships seemed more important, godliness didn't seem as important.

These conflicts caused the YM to describe himself as not thriving in this situation and he subsequently left vocational ministry altogether.

Second, in the case of one YM (not identified to protect anonymity) the struggle centered on the leadership power dynamics. The YM had been a volunteer in the youth ministry as well as a leader in the church. As a volunteer he knew the circumstances

surrounding the departure of a previous youth minister and attributed some of the reason for the departure as a power struggle between the previous youth minister and the senior minister.

YM: So I knew why [the previous youth minister] had left. [The previous youth minister] didn't leave because he was happy to go somewhere else. He left because he couldn't take dealing with the SM [senior minister] at that point. And, so with that, I already knew that coming into this, that there were issues.

So when the YM took the job he was determined to challenge the leadership style of the SM. Here is his perspective:

YM: ...so, I came in looking to be a team member, not being a servant. Not that I don't serve, 'cause I believe that's the truest form of leadership is when you serve your people and you help them to survive so that they can help the next people along the line. But it was just, it was truly a hierarchy in the office with [my SM#18] being at the top.

The YM clearly had an agenda to deal with what he perceived as a faulty leadership model on the part of the SM. Subsequently there was a considerable struggle and the YM reported that he did not thrive in this situation. But both the YM and the SM agreed that the situation had been worked out and they continue to work together.

Third, YM#2 found himself at odds with the chairman of the board of the church (this situation is described more fully later) but was disappointed with the response of his supervisor, who was the lead minister:

YM#2: With the lead pastor...I would say, part of the most frustrating and painful thing with him was that he never talked to me about it, and he never seemed to support me through the ridiculousness of the head of the board. And—even down to being—having the head of the board come in and say he wanted me fired, but

never defending me, just calling me in later and telling me that happened. And so, that was frustrating.

This situation ended with the resignation of YM#2 and his departure from vocational ministry. He did not want the SM (lead minister) to be interviewed because they were just now repairing their relationship after his departure 7 years prior.

Fourth, YM#7 found herself in a situation where she lacked the experience and training needed to cope with the issues she was facing. (Other details of her struggle are discussed later.) YM#7 had two supervisors when she began and the situation was confusing. In this case, the situation would not be described as a conflict, but as a deficiency in the supervision strategy. YM#7 described it this way:

YM#7: When I first started I met weekly with our children's pastor and then I also met monthly with our senior pastor. So, I met with our children's pastor once a week and she was supposed to help me, mentor me, my senior pastor said she was my supervisor, she said that my mentor, and those are two different, those are two different words to me and two different roles. So there was no job description of what our relationship looked like, she was just...it was kind of all on her. So she was my main supervisor. She helped me in lots of ways with figuring out program, but I would come to her with questions and she would give her feedback, but I felt like it was still mostly me figuring it out and her, you know, she helped me to kind of understand what was going on, but she was basically my main go-to person, which I think was a little unfair to her.

The associate minister who eventually became her SM described the situation this way:

SM#7: ...the pastor [senior pastor, one of the supervising minister at the beginning of YM#7's tenure] was just totally programmatic and, you know, "Tell me what you're doing...it all looks fine...any questions...how can I help..." He was very kind and gracious, but I don't think he had any discernment when it came to the role... Well, I think the only thing I've ever heard is just, she feels like she's drowning... And I think no one knew that she was feeling like she was drowning. And we didn't have a boss who would pick that up. And I think he thought giving

her to the C.E. Director would take care of all the rough edges, but I think together they were anxious.

The deficiency in this supervising strategy created a difficult situation for YM#7.

Fifth, YM#12 was at cross purposes with his SM from the outset. Here's how he described the situation:

YM#12: From a ministry side, my supervisor was a difficult guy to work with, not overbearing but distant and really disconnected; he assumed I should know what to do. The guy before me had a well-oiled machine. They were actually looking for someone with more experience, but they liked me so much and we both knew when I walked in the door that I wasn't like the previous guy, but they liked me.

YM#12 thought that the SM and others would patiently help him adjust to the situation but the SM believed that the YM was not doing the right things even though he tried to help him. The YM did not understand the SM and did not believe he was receiving the help and counsel he needed to deal with the conflicts.

YM#12: For example, if someone had conflict with me I'd ask for help but it wouldn't be helpful. What I didn't know till later, a lot of people were complaining about specific things and rather than come to me, my supervisor would come back to me and say "you're rocking boat and you need to get by it..." But I never knew who wanted what—he told me to call a parent meeting, and I'd ask who was mad at me. And I would ask for specifics and he would say—he'd say, "I'm not going there." "Well, if they are mad at me, you should have them let me know so we can talk through it. I want to sit down and walk through it and not just have a conflict." That was a big thing that led to my leaving, just too many conflicts not resolved, too much water under the bridge...so me being novice with the situations I knew I was doing the best I could, but I needed more help from him in terms of so and so is not about this...let's sit down with him... "Why don't I mediate with you? And mediating. Not once mediated. And that was huge, ultimately the deal breaker. Maybe we would have found out it wouldn't work, but at least we needed to give that an opportunity.

The impression of this researcher was that the SM decided fairly early that YM#12 was not a fit for the situation and with other issues taking precedence in the church chose not to take the time to help him learn from and navigate the situation. To this day, YM#12 does not really understand all that went on in the situation.

Difficulties 2.2: Some Novice Youth Ministers Experienced Difficulties because of Problems in the Church Not Directly Related to them

Ten YMs found themselves in church situations with significant problems occurring in the church that were not directly related to them but which led to struggles for the YM. Seven of the 10 were in the “not thriving” category. The three that described themselves as thriving overall actually left because of these struggles. Here are the stories of YMs who found themselves in troubling situations because of church conflicts.

YM#10 thrived throughout most of his tenure until the situation turned ugly in the church. Here is how his SM described the situation:

SM#10: Well, I would say the biggest challenge to him at the time was what we were going through as a church. I mean, you know, I think when he saw we were going through one of the most difficult times in [the church's] history, that became real tough on him. You know, I mean, he just didn't know what to do with it. It ended up shaking him. His two pastors, both myself and [the senior minister], two of his mentors, I think that was tough to watch people undermine us. I think it was hard for him to see guys my age acting the way they were acting. When you grow up in a church and you see individuals a certain way and you're thinking to yourself, man, these guys from a distance are strong pillars of the faith, and then you get up and close and personal to them and it becomes disheartening when you see, oh my gosh, these guys have been walking with the Lord for 30, 40 years. That's the fruit of what God has done in their lives? That's tough for a 20-year-old to now have the maturity to see the results of some person's years of walking with Christ. And that was tough on him.

In the midst of this church conflict, YM#10 resigned amidst what he called “a perfect storm.” He said, “honestly it was the perfect storm. It was a church melt down. My staff underneath me...some were paid and some were volunteers...had a staff underneath me melt down.” He left the church and vocational ministry, too.

YM#6 (in a “not thrive” situation) grew up in the church and was mentored by the youth minister whom he followed. He was excited to be in the role but the church began to unravel. At his first staff meeting, the senior minister resigned! Here’s how YM#6 described the situation he faced:

YM#6: The church has gone through all—this church specifically has gone through all kinds of splits, and all kinds of divisions, and kinds of chunks of people leaving, so it wasn’t like this was—we had never experienced any kind of frustration, but a lot of people left because [the senior minister] left. And so when that happened, the board decided to make some changes, because we have always been staff heavy. Just had been notorious for this church to be staff heavy... Our senior pastor, L., had never really dealt with it. We had kept saying, “We need to change, we need to change...we’re not as big of a church as we used to be.” But that never changed. So, the board made a decision as people began to leave, numbers went down, giving went down, we were at this really scary stage, we had to fire our missions pastor. And that was probably one of the most frustrating experiences with church, because we did a phone call, you know, and we had a staff meeting that next day, with the whole staff, and basically they say, “We had to let go of [name of associate minister].” And we all felt like we had just gotten a leg chopped out from under us with L. leaving, and then another strong male presence pastor was now taken away. And again, I was just kind of like, “I don’t know what to think. I’m new here.” You know, I’ve known these people for so long. I went to—I was in youth group with most of the board’s children. You know, these staff members knew me as the kid that did VBS skits to the kid who had—you know, with playing with their junior highers. So I was just still just a kid in their eyes, and I acted like a kid for a long time. And I was just like, “You’ve got to be kidding me, this is happening?” So when that happened, the church got really, really angry. A lot of people left because of that. There were meetings that they had where they were yelling at board members for the decision, and the board members were not apologizing.

YM#6’s supervisor reiterated the difficulties he faced and commended him for staying

with the church (where he is still working):

SM#6: All I would say, and I mean, I've already said it though, just that his first three years here, especially the first two, were chaotic. And I have a lot of admiration and appreciation for him sticking it out with us, and even being open to me, as a supervisor in that time and then back as a colleague, which he still often treats me as a supervisor, you know, if he's got questions, whatever, he's in my office. So, just, ya...just his stick-tuitiveness [*sic.*] during that time and his loyalty here. I am still astounded by—honestly, a lot of people would have said, “Forget this, this is not what I signed up for, I'm out of here.”

YM#11 (in a “not thrive” situation) began his novice experience as the church began to go through difficult circumstances. His supervisor described it this way:

SM#11: Uh, I think there were some very positive things [about] going to seminary. Uh, but the ministry side was not the greatest. And uh, things were not good at the church when he came. It was one of the worst situations I've even seen. And he stepped in just as it began... And, um, it was very tough on him and me! But probably tougher on him, I think. It was his first full-time ministry... The turmoil, and the chaos, and the anger, and all this stuff...that just arose that was not related to him, or his ministry at all. But he felt it.

This church situation led to him describing his “non-thriving” experience this way:

YM#11: Nothing really met any of my expectations...and not that my expectations were right...but my experiences in youth ministry...volunteering and training before I took that position were much different than in the church that I had began that position in...so there was a lot...a lot of the way things happened that were different ways of doing things. Um...also newly married in a new city...adjusting to a new life...in a lot of different ways...I'm sure...the context of the overall mission and vision and health of the church at large was different also...and as I have had more time to reflect... I think that's one of the reasons we eventually left...was, uh...just the inability to lead a youth ministry the way I envisioned it...in the context of a church with a mission and a vision...and help the way I like with a greater connection of the youth ministry to the overall church.

This was certainly a difficult context in which to begin. By the time of his departure, the SM felt that some people were leaving the church because of the YM and the SM ultimately questioned the YM's fit for youth ministry. This researcher was uncertain whether or not the SM had actually communicated this to the YM. The presenting reason for having the YM leave was lack of funding for his position because of declining church attendance.

YM#21 (in a "thrive" situation) took the youth minister position when the previous youth minister became the senior minister of the church. The previous senior minister was YM#21's father. The new senior minister, SM#21, felt that YM#21's father had been mistreated. The youth group had been impacted because one of the key leaders in the youth ministry had been part of a group that split from the church in the midst of the commotion about YM#21's father. Although YM#21 was positive about the time at the church, SM#21 felt that in different circumstances YM#21 might have stayed with him:

SM#21: Had it—had we been—me and him working together at a different church, it probably would've—we probably might've still been working together, really. But there were some external factors—you know, I don't know if you know the whole story, (RM: Yeah.) his dad was pastor and left under some unpleasant situation, not from myself, I think there was some residual resentment, from [the release of his dad]. And so, I think he left here sooner, not because he didn't like me, or the position, but maybe, just needed to move on. I don't know if he'd say that.

Other factors contributed to the departure of YM#21, but the church political situation made it a challenge.

Difficulties 2.3: Some Novice Youth Ministers Struggled with Leadership Other than their Supervisor (Senior Ministers, Church Board Members, Influential Leaders)

Facing conflict with the senior minister or another influential leader in the church other than her supervisor can be very disconcerting for a novice YM. Two YMs reported serious struggles with the senior pastor who did not act as their immediate supervisor. Five YMs had difficulties with a member of the church board or some other influential leader.

One of the two YMs who struggled with the senior pastor who was not his immediate supervisor, YM#5, became a novice youth minister in a church with a long history of conflicts. Here is how his first SM described his own experience when he started at the church:

SM#5: Some of it's just the makeup of [name of the church]. I came in '99, my first staff meeting, and I came from, probably the healthiest church I've ever been a part of. I mean, it was very fast-growing church, a lot of things going on, just was a very good situation. So I came and, first staff meeting I think was Tuesday, and the first word, now granted I had met with the senior pastor several times during the time of interviews, including the call committee, so we had spent quite a bit of time together, and then I hear out of his mouth, "well, there are a number of people who want me to go." Well, that's not exactly news that you're looking forward to. But it has a long, long, long, long history of conflict between staff members and congregational members.

This minister referred to by SM#5 eventually left and YM#5 was supervised by SM#5, who was the acting senior minister until a new minister came. YM#5 described the situation this way:

YM#5: And a year into it, they called a senior pastor who was from [name of state] in a very traditional [denomination], ...so his, from my perspective, his role was to come in and bring this [church] back in line with the denomination.

Because what was going on in the church is they had a, kind of a, two sections of the church body. One that was much more of a, a type of a community church, a blend of denominations because there was such a strong youth group history that people would come to this church. And then there was the other group that was very much [this denomination]. And so the senior pastor came in as a strong [denominationalist] and I'm not a [this denomination] in a lot of theological ways. So up until that point, it worked for me to be, my theology and everything, and then it ultimately came down to that being one of the issues.

Ultimately, the tension created by theological differences between the senior minister and the youth minister contributed to the departure of the YM.

YM#2 was one of the five YMs who faced serious difficulties with a church board member or other influential leader in the church. Here is YM#2's description of the situation:

YM#2: At the end what contributed to . . . was just a renegade head of the board who I couldn't please no matter what. . . I don't . . . I want to keep beating this dead horse literally but literally four staff left within a couple years and communicated appropriately and respectfully that he was a big contributor to that fact and I can remember sitting down with the associate pastor, [name of associate pastor], who is a pastor of family counseling and of administrative stuff, too, and he sat me down about 6 months before I left and said, "All right, [name of associate pastor] would like us to meet about some—meet once a week to talk about—what did he say?—Organizational strategies. And this is after it just hit the fan with the head of the board and I go, "Well, why are we doing this?" "Well, [the senior pastor] would like me and you to meet." 'Cause it was obvious that the head of the board—this was a way to kind of pacify—. I go, "Well, no one else's meeting like this. Why is it just me?" And [name of associate pastor] and I had a great relationship, still do. I said, "I don't understand—this wasn't the first conversation we had where I said—"this guy—everything people said—he keeps torpedoing people and being abrasive and mean to people in the church." I go, "Why do we keep writing him a hall pass? Why he's he still the head of our board if he doesn't meet the qualifications. He caused one staff member to leave already and I'm sure I'm not the only one. Why is this?" So when you talk about things that are my downfalls I don't think that contributed at all to me leaving. It literally was just one individual who caused things to stir up, which is sad.

YM#2 felt he got no support from the senior minister in dealing with this major conflict

and ultimately decided the best thing was to resign. His disappointment was heightened by a very inadequate acknowledgement of his departure from the church.

Difficulties 2.4: Some Novice Youth Ministers Experienced Difficulties with Parents and Adult Volunteers

Although the number of novice youth ministers in this study who reported difficulties with parents and adult volunteers was small, their stories provide more background for those youth ministers who did not thrive. Novice YMs must negotiate the expectations of many people in the church. Two key groups of people are parents and adult youth ministry volunteers. Some YMs do not appear to be equipped to manage these expectations.

Two of the YMs had struggles with both parents and adult volunteers. One of them ended up leaving vocational ministry and the other left the church and eventually returned to youth ministry in another church. One of them, YM#4, had such a difficult time that it led to an emotional breakdown. He made changes in the youth ministry the first year that led to much contention:

YM#4: So I didn't want to pursue it for the following year, but that's kind of when all hell broke loose; it was like, "We've always done this!" You know, so, "We should really be doing this, I don't want my kids to miss out on this." That was a big sticking point, that kids wanted to go and they were like, "Why won't you let us do this?" And parents didn't understand it, but not all the parents. I mean, there's parents who were supportive, there's parents who had a tough time with it. There's pastors who were supportive, but there's also pastors who had a tough time with that.

YM#4 found himself struggling against the way things were done in the past. One key issue that brought division was a youth event which YM#2 found unsatisfying. He

attended once and decided not to attend the next year:

YM#4: You're transitioning into a new job, but the church is also transitioning into receiving a new youth pastor. So you're dealing with, on one side of things, there's a certain way I do things, but there's also a certain way the church does things. There's expectations that the volunteers have, you know, "The old youth pastor let us do this," or "We do this," or...and, there was things that I wanted to really push and move forward, you know, maybe programs or philosophies that I thought were important and you kind of deal with, you kind of get a good taste of conflict that may arise within the church, and so I may come in, I may want to do something... I think a great example to me, and I can use this as an example, was just the [name of event] event that goes on every [name of season of the year]. As soon as I got in there, I had heard, "[Name of event] changed my life." And then from other people I heard, "[Name of event] is a reason for kids to make out and have sex with each other...it's a good excuse."

So YM#4 found himself at odds with parents, adult volunteers, and his SM. He admitted his own contribution to the situation:

YM#4: And so, I didn't necessarily come into the job with a sense of compromise or a sense of partnering with other people and pastors, specifically like [his supervisor].

Here was a man who found himself in conflict with key adults in the youth ministry as well as his supervisor. This left him isolated in a very difficult situation. After a serious emotional breakdown, he left vocational ministry.

The other YM (not identified to protect anonymity) who was in conflict with both parents and adult volunteers lasted a very short time in his novice youth minister experience. He was also at odds with his supervising minister. The SM described the situation this way:

SM (not identified to protect anonymity): I had gone through a pretty knockdown, drag-out, um...last probably 6 months, 8 months with the previous youth guy.

And um, and...there was some bruises. And we thought that we were into a new era and things would be rebuilding... And then it all went sideways. And now we had parents more angry than they were before. And we had the potential to lose this really choice parent core, this volunteer core...when it didn't go well, with [the YM] it was not—there just wasn't the room for a lot of grace to happen in there.

Although this YM ended up in youth ministry at another church, his novice experience was extremely difficult and confusing.

YM#15 had what is likely a very unusual experience with a parent. In his case, he was the target of a rumor-mongering parent who happened to be the sister of the senior minister! Here is his description:

YM#15: Yeah...let's see...some of the other challenges...dealing with some of the parents, especially a key problem family that happened to be the lead pastor's sister. That was one of the reasons why we ended up leaving there after a year. She was, just...started spreading kind of rumors about my wife and I around town, and just, really blowing things out of proportion, and was just upset at me for not attending their son's graduation, high school graduation, and having to work instead of that...

In this situation, the YM went through a time of real soul searching before feeling comfortable putting himself forward for vocational ministry. He did end up in another youth ministry after a season of reflection stimulated by this very difficult time with a parent in this novice situation.

YM#5 found that some of the challenges in meeting expectations came from misunderstandings that started in the interview process:

YM#5: There was a, like, a disconnect in expectations, both from myself and my wife and from the volunteers in the church, and there was a lack of definition of terms, because...in terms of vocabulary. So, in the interview process, when I said "Bible study" it meant one thing. When they said "Bible study" it meant another

thing. And so, essentially, I went into the experience with all of my background and worldview and how I interpreted the job would be, and they heard all of my answers and responses in the context of what they interpreted that to be. So we all, I think very well-meaning, started off thinking, “This is a great fit and a wonderful thing,” and it took about two and a half years for it all to realize that it really wasn’t a good fit for me. I think in addition to that, some of my conviction and my own unwillingness to compromise on what I thought was the way it should be done, got in the way of my ability to operate within the context.

Although there were other issues that led this YM to leave the church for another youth ministry position, this challenge with adult volunteers was definitely a major aspect of his not thriving in the situation.

These examples point out the critical need for novice YMs to have wise counsel in negotiating the expectations of parents and adult volunteers. Difficulties experienced in these situations can be very hard to overcome.

Difficulties 2.5: A Small Number of Novice Youth Ministers had Difficulties with Students

One of the noteworthy results of this study was the extremely low number of youth ministers who reported difficulties of any kind with the students. Only one YM reported difficulties with students and that YM had difficulties with parents, adult volunteers, and his supervising minister, also. Most of the others reported that they flourished with the direct ministry to students even if their overall experience was a “not thriving” experience. YM#9, who did not thrive, said this:

YM#9: No. I—from the very first day that I was there, and I think this was quite fortunate for me, the youth group really took off. I started doing a lot of stuff with the neighborhood kids and so we had a youth group of 40 pretty decent regular attenders in no time. And so it was really affirming to me that—that kids were coming to the Lord. It was—I loved youth group.

When asked what brought her joy, YM#7, who did not thrive as a novice, said this:

YM#7: The kids. Being with them, listening to their heart, meeting new kids that come or meeting new friends... I think one of the biggest joys is doing stuff with them. Whether that's going to retreats or doing summer things together, that's probably been the best part of it. Like I said, watching them physically grow, emotionally grow, spiritually grow, the honor of being, of walking alongside of them, is really, really cool.

The SM of YM#25, who did not thrive and moved to a different vocational ministry, spoke of YM#25's joy in ministry this way:

SM#25: Well, definitely his first joy was preaching the Word to youth. I think that more than preaching in the church, which we did allow him to do. He was just in his element. I went over once and just heard him, and you could tell that he had, almost, fun doing what he loved to do. It was his joy to be around young people and to have fun with them. He was a fun guy to be around. The kids would just gather around him. He was just one of them, but not in the sense of one of the kids, but one in spirit with them. He was mature in his age and in his maturity level, so that was a definite distinction between them, but he had a great joy just being around young people.

Again, the bright spot of even "non-thriving" YMs was the direct ministry with students.

As may be expected, thriving YMs made very positive remarks about their direct ministry with students. The surprise in this research was that there were not more struggling youth ministers who reported difficulties with students.

The second organizing theme has focused on the difficulties of the novice YM with a variety of stakeholders in the church. These included supervisors, senior ministers, board members, parents, adult volunteers, and students. Some of the difficulties centered on the novice youth minister herself, while in others the YM was not the focal point. The next theme takes up more specifics of the YM's relationship with her supervisor.

Organizing Theme 3: Relationship of the Youth Ministers with their Supervisors

How critical is the relationship of the novice youth minister to his supervisor? Is it possible to thrive when the relationship with one's supervisor is unhealthy? Is it important for a youth minister to have a healthy relationship with his supervisor in order to thrive? Does it matter whether or not the supervising minister has a mentoring strategy?

A total of 32 supervising relationships were in view for the 26 youth ministers interviewed for this research. Four YMs had two SMs during their novice experience. One YM had 3 supervisors. Three categories were used to group the responses and describe the relationships: nurturing, tolerable, and unhealthy. Three constructs were developed from these categories. The first theoretical construct focuses on a nurturing supervising relationship.

Supervisor 3.1: A Nurturing Supervising Relationship was Beneficial to the Novice Youth Minister but Did Not Guarantee a Thriving Situation

The category of "nurturing" was used to describe relationships of mutual respect, good communication, and a sense of collegiality. In eight of these cases the YM was thriving. In six of the cases the YM was not thriving. In the latter cases, other dynamics were at work to produce a "not thriving" situation, not the relationship with the supervisor.

YM#16 had a supervising minister who was exceptionally nurturing and she thrived in the situation. She described it this way in response to a question about how her supervisor contributed to her thinking and development as a youth minister:

YM#16: I would say, just, probably the full-hearted support...even if I was going to mess up super bad, I knew he was still going to train me, help me through that...support and love me. That was really helpful. I knew a lot of people in college who had, you know, not so supportive, . . . that kind of people working with them. So that was really helpful. And I would say accountability. I was held accountable to make sure that I was, you know, that I was spiritually growing, that I was reading my Bible, praying, you know. Especially when you go to a Bible college. People can just assume you are doing that. So I think that was helpful. He did that and then the women that I mentioned. I think that was the two big things.

SM#16 was a supervisor who provided a nurturing context that was very beneficial to YM#16. He was the one who invited her into youth ministry leadership in the church and maintained a nurturing relationship as her supervisor.

In contrast, YM#5 did not thrive even though he had a very nurturing relationship with his supervisor. Here is his description of the situation in which his supervisor provided hope but other factors led to him not thriving in the situation:

YM#5: Sure, well. Just a brief synopsis? It was really hard for me, and for my wife. I think that, you know, we kind of felt like we were on an island. So that made it very difficult. I had a ton of doubts, and I can get to it later, but within about 6 weeks into the job I had some major, major doubts. Felt completely ill-equipped to do what I was doing. When we merged with the other church a year into it, there was a lot of hope because of [my SM]. [My SM] was a big, big deal for me, really impacted me. But it was still a definite struggle. I went from a very small youth group to a much larger youth group and I hated, hate might be a strong word, but I really disliked that I couldn't know each student personally, or at least something about them personally. I went from a youth group of maybe 15–20 kids to about, our peak maybe we had 70 high schoolers. So that was really difficult for me. And you know, I was young and I was, I didn't have very thick skin, not all that confident even though people thought I really had it together, so, it was tough but really good for me, looking back.

The interview with his supervisor verified the reality of a nurturing relationship that was helpful in the situation even as YM#5 struggled.

The reports of YMs who had nurturing relationships with their supervisors suggest that this relationship is a critical but not sufficient condition for thriving in a novice youth ministry experience.

Supervisor 3.2: Tolerable Supervisor Relationships were Found in Both Thriving and Non-thriving Situations but were More Common in Non-thriving Situations

The “tolerable” category was used to describe a relationship where the dynamics were neither nurturing nor unhealthy. In some cases there were deficits in the relationship, something missing that made for a less than optimum situation. Four people who thrived and eight people who did not thrive described their relationship to their supervisor as tolerable. In these relationships antagonism was not present, but something was missing.

One YM (not identified to protect anonymity) had a mentor outside of the church who he consulted on almost a daily basis. His supervisor, the senior minister, was conscious of this outside mentoring relationship and it impacted their relationship. The SM described it this way:

SM (not identified to protect anonymity): The other thing that came to play with the YM and I that I think was fairly significant was he relied an enormous amount on [name of outside mentor]. He spent time with [this mentor] almost on a daily basis. And so, I felt that he didn’t need me, he didn’t want me, to be involved at that level.

The YM spoke of this outside mentoring relationship but there was no indication that he was aware of the impact on the supervisor. The SM decided that he would not compete with this outside mentor:

SM: It was something I wasn't going to compete with. And so, you know, I never talked to [YM] about that specific dynamic. But [YM] was in a process of finding himself, and he was confused. I really think he was confused. He was discovering the hard work of ministry, the disappointment of ministry, and he had a little bit of a utopian mentality. Which is, to me, not uncommon to somebody coming out of school. You know all the joys but you have not experienced the heartaches, and that's where the call really begins to play in. And, I think in our conversations we did talk about some of those types of things. What little bit of mentoring I may have done was more about the [YM] than it was about ministry.

The SM was not really resentful of the outside mentor, but clearly his relationship with the YM was impacted. This YM did not thrive and eventually moved out of vocational ministry. It is uncertain how much a better relationship would have impacted the situation.

One YM (not identified to protect anonymity) did not describe the relationship with the direct supervisor or the senior minister as bad, but the SM (not identified to protect anonymity) and the eventual supervisor (who was interviewed for this study) felt like both of them missed the YMs struggles.

SM: I think [the YM] thought [YM] had a mentor [the supervisor] but it was not, it was not really prescribed appropriately, so that the gal that was doing it didn't really understand her role and the pastor was just totally programmatic and, you know, "Tell me what you're doing...it all looks fine...any questions...how can I help..." He was very kind and gracious, but I don't think he had any discernment when it came to the role... Well, I think the only thing I've ever heard is just, [the YM] feels like [the YM's] drowning because [the YM] hasn't had...well, what we didn't understand was, [the YM] didn't know what [the YM] was doing, as a freshman, I mean, as a first-year person. I think my boss and the people that worked with [the YM] thought, "You give [the YM] the job description and [the YM] knows what [the YM]'s doing." . . . So, I think, and I've tried to explain to [the YM] that what [the YM]'s asking is pretty significant. Like, [the YM] wanted, a supervisor that [the YM] could just, you know, that was just there for [the YM], and I tried to say, "But we all have jobs." And so, finding that niche and the kind of support...I'd say [the YM], first year, [the YM] was drowning.

Eventually the YM was provided with outside paid consultants to help assess the youth ministry program and the SM interviewed for this research became the YM's supervisor. This led to a much more thriving situation after a very difficult start as a novice. The supervising relationships were essentially tolerable and would not be labeled as extremely unhealthy, but contributed to a situation where the YM was not thriving.

The four YMs who had tolerable relationships with their supervisors and thrived were able to overcome any deficits in the supervisory relationship.

Supervisor 3.3: Unhealthy Supervisory Relationships were Major Contributors to “Not Thriving” Situations

Six YMs had relationships with their supervisors which were unhealthy. Five of them did not thrive and one reported thriving. Most of them have been described under the organizing theme “Difficulties Adjusting to Church Politics, Conflicts, and Other Relational Struggles.” In this section, some YMs and SMs are not identified in order to protect anonymity. YM#2 (who did not thrive) was unhappy about how his supervisor handled the major conflict with the chairman of the board. Since he was just recently taking the steps to reconcile with his SM he asked this researcher not to interview him so as not to dredge up old wounds. One YM (who did not thrive) had extremely poor communication with his supervisor and was released after a very short time in his position.

Another YM (who did not thrive) had a very unhealthy relationship with his first supervisor. Here is his description:

YM: [One of the other youth ministers left] but I had stuck it out; it was some really rough things with the supervisor that we had, and I just, I stuck it out

because I knew that God wanted me to stay and stick it out... So God definitely had blessed me by sticking it out, even though I had wanted to leave, and I had gone on my knees and said, "I want to be out of here, I just can't stand this guy, he's discouraging me, I want to not be in church ever again"... And, so, that was a rough, rough, rough time, and it did affect my ministry a little bit because I don't know, I didn't know how to respond in the right way, I guess, maybe at the time...we had an interim pastor come in, and they actually put this administrative guy more in charge of the church stuff, and then they gave the interim pastor more of the speaking and other things. So he was kind of my supervisor, this guy. And he was more of a rules and...you know, you need to do this, do this, I need to know where you are at all times. It was a really hard, that was probably one of the main reasons that I left the church.

When the SM of one YM arrived to be the senior minister, he took over the supervision of the YM and they had a very healthy relationship. He described the situation this way:

SM: His supervisor. . .was a [long-term civil servant] that was an administrator. And so, very disciplinarian in his approach. I don't think he...he was an administrator, not a pastor. And [YM#13] did not do well under that model. We really failed him in those two years.

According to the SM, by the time he became the senior minister and built a nurturing relationship with the YM it was too late to rescue the situation. It was not possible for the YM to remain at the church and prosper. After moving to a different ministry vocation, the YM has returned to youth ministry at a different church.

Another YM (who did not thrive) was determined to change the leadership style of his SM, which resulted in a rocky relationship. This was eventually worked out and the YM is still at the church.

One YM described his novice experience as a thriving one but the relationship with his SM was not good. His SM described it this way:

SM: So on a one-on-one, I just didn't feel that he respected me enough to listen to me, and therefore, maybe I didn't want to meet with him all that much. They were never fruitful to me.

In this situation, the SM really gave up on his attempt to supervise or mentor the YM.

This rift resulted in the departure of the YM from the church. The YM described it this way:

YM: And so basically he kind of gave me a directive, an ultimatum, and I just took that as my sign that it was time, it was time for me to move on. And that's why I opened up the possibility of exploring another option. And it was a bigger situation in terms of, we just disagreed on direction of things and I felt like this was his church and if I was disagreeing to a point where I felt strongly about it that I was the one that probably should move on. So that's what I chose to do a few months later.

Although the split was reasonably amicable, the unhealthy relationship between the YM and the SM was a major contributing factor in the departure of the youth minister.

In conclusion, it is important to note that 10 of the 16 YMs who did not thrive had either tolerable or unhealthy relationships with at least one of their supervisors. The impact on the experience of the novice youth minister varied in each of these cases, but the data reveal that the relationship with the supervisor was an issue for 10 of the participants who did not thrive. The next section discusses the specific dimension of mentoring as a component of the supervising minister's strategy of oversight in the situation.

Organizing Theme 4: Mentoring

One of the lines of inquiry for this research was the area of mentoring. YMs were asked about the presence of mentors before and during their novice experience. They

were specifically asked if their supervisor had a mentoring relationship with them. The supervisors were asked if they used a mentoring strategy with the YM. What this researcher hoped to understand was the impact of mentoring on the novice youth minister. Of the 26 YMs interviewed, two of them described two different supervisory relationships so that 28 supervisory relationships were addressed with regard to mentoring. This researcher did not attempt to define or describe mentoring when the question was asked. The first two theoretical constructs examine the mentoring strategies of the supervisors. The third construct reveals information about the impact of mentoring prior to the participant's novice youth ministry experience.

Mentor 4.1: Approaches to Mentoring by Supervising Ministers Fell into Three Categories

The subject of mentoring in education was a component of teacher socialization reported in chapter 2. The induction of teachers into the field of education is part of an intentional strategy for novice teachers in a number of school districts around the United States. These strategies often reflect the definition of mentoring suggested by Johnson and Ridley in *The Elements of Mentoring* (2008):

Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé). Mentors provide protégés with knowledge, advice, counsel, support, and opportunity in the protégé's pursuit of full membership in a particular profession. Outstanding mentors are intentional about the mentor role. They select protégés carefully, invest significant time and energy in getting to know their protégés, and deliberately offer the career and support functions most useful for their protégés. Mentoring is an act of generativity—a process of bringing into existence and passing on a professional legacy. (p. xv)

In this research, however, this mentoring construct did not appear to be operative in any of the cases. What did surface were three basic mentoring strategies which are categorized as intentional, informal, and non-existent. These are explained in this section.

First, five supervisors could be described as highly intentional or somewhat intentional mentors of the novice youth minister. *Intentionality* is defined as a thoughtful, consistent approach to the professional development of the novice youth minister. Although they were not fulfilling all the aspects of the construct proposed by Johnson and Ridley (2008), they were accomplishing some of the dimensions of the construct in a more formal manner than those who had an informal mentoring relationship. For example, YM#10 was mentored by a supervisor (SM#10) who was a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor. He watched YM#10 do the ministry and evaluated his work. The goal of SM#10 was to help YM#10 succeed by investing a significant amount of time in him.

YM#14 had a supervisor who saw the need for him to grow in critical areas and set up a goal-setting plan:

SM#14: I found when I came here, there wasn't much evidence that anybody had been evaluated. And so I implemented at first rigid, but empowering evaluation program, and that was probably the hardest thing that I did and I still do is work on those evaluations. Have them set goals, review their goals, and hold them accountable. So, a strong evaluation program I think is really critical. And I used self-evaluations where they evaluate themselves and I evaluate and then we find the gaps. And I begin to work, and I have them write goals around those areas of weakness.

SM#14 met regularly with YM#14 and also had him meet with a layman in the church to work on critical areas of his personal life. He gave much attention, counsel, and advice to help him succeed.

YM#16 had been a student in the ministry when her supervisor was the youth minister. He saw ministry leadership potential in her from an early age and began to invite her to take on ministry responsibilities. When she eventually became the youth minister, he was active in watching her and providing assessment opportunities which were very helpful. She described his strategy this way:

YM#16: He [SM#16] always had my back...always helping me. I talk about having hard times with this gal... He always would support me. Always encourage...even if I was going to mess up super bad, I knew he was still going to train me, help me through that...support and love me. That was really helpful. I knew a lot of people in college who had, you know, not so supportive, . . . that kind of people working with them. So that was really helpful. And I would say accountability. I was held accountable to make sure that I was, you know, that I was spiritually growing, that I was reading my Bible, praying, you know. Especially when you go to a Bible college. People can just assume you are doing that. So I think that was helpful. He did that and then the women that I mentioned. I think that was the two big things.

Here was a YM who had a very intentional mentor as her supervising minister and had been at the same church for 10 years.

In three of the five cases in which the supervisor was a highly or somewhat intentional mentor the youth ministers thrived, and in two they did not thrive. No conclusions could be drawn about the impact of an intentional mentoring strategy on the novice youth minister's experience of thriving or not thriving.

Second, 13 supervisory relationships revealed an informal mentoring strategy. In this strategy the supervisor usually met with the youth minister on a regular basis,

inquired as to how the ministry was going, and was available for problem solving and other interaction over ministry. They generally did not observe the youth minister in direct ministry contexts and were not involved in evaluating their ministry. Here are some of the responses to questions about mentoring strategy that revealed an informal strategy:

SM#21: Well I don't know a if strategy would be the word, I mean, we were in close contact, and so he ran everything by me and I approved some things, not much.

SM#6: Just to stay in touch. I can't say I had a strong strategy, I wasn't expecting or wanting to be his supervisor at that time. Just to, you know, be face-to-face with him. You know, "How are you? What's going on?" and he really didn't have a level of trust with me at that point.

SM#8: I'm pretty informal, so it didn't take on a, you know, "Hey we're going to read this and then we're going to sit down and talk about that..." It was much more like, "Hey, we're in this together, so I just want to be an open book, I want to be with you." So we would pray together and I was purposeful about including that in our relationship. We did have regular meetings where we would sit down and talk through the ministry, what are we doing, what do we need to do, what are you good at that you could contribute to this?

One SM described her informal supervising strategy this way:

SM: I block an hour out of my schedule each week to have a sit down, and check in with him. And find out what—how he was doing. And try to direct and advise. And so forth.

Unfortunately, the YM (who did not thrive) felt like this approach did not help him:

YM: A couple times when I would go to her with issues, she's like, "Well I see us as partners in this and I respect your decisions and what you decide to do." "I don't have any idea what to do?!"

Her informal approach to mentoring provided very little help to him.

Of the YMs who experienced an informal mentoring relationship with their SM, six thrived and seven did not thrive. No conclusions could be drawn about the impact of an informal mentoring strategy on the novice youth minister's experience of thriving or not thriving.

Third, in 10 cases there was no mentoring strategy whatsoever on the part of the supervisor. Reasons for this included the busyness of the supervisor, the lack of interest of the youth minister in such a strategy, and the perceived lack of ability of the supervisor to be a mentor. These examples are given without identification to protect anonymity:

YM (did not thrive and left vocational ministry): And I felt like [my supervisor] didn't really have the ability to mentor, and so that was difficult.

SM: So, I think it came down to the fact, I was very willing to disciple somebody in that role, and [the YM] just wasn't listening. I don't know if he was afraid. . .

YM (supervised by the SM just quoted): [In response to the question, "Is it safe to say your supervisor didn't have a mentoring strategy with you?"] Right. He had a "supervisory" strategy. If there were fires to put out then he would put them out. [This YM was fired after a very short time in the position.]

SM: I think one of the reasons I didn't spend more time with him was maybe because he was pretty pre-established; and I put a lot of faith and trust in what he was doing him because he worked with middle school for a while. That's one of the reasons. But another reason was that I was part time; part-time music, part-time worship, and to be honest with you it was hard for me to spend any more time outside of that. [The YM reported thriving in this situation, however.]

Eight of the 10 novice youth pastors who experienced no mentoring did not thrive and

two did thrive. The outcome of these eight situations is described in the next theoretical construct.

Mentoring 4.2: In Non-thriving Situations the Absence of a Mentoring Strategy by the SM was Detrimental to the Situation

The YMs did not thrive in eight of the 10 situations where there was no mentoring strategy by the supervisor. In these eight situations there were multiple factors which contributed to the “not thriving” situations, but the lack of mentoring by the supervisor revealed the fact that the YM was isolated in a difficult situation without a supervisor who was giving them substantial aid to help them succeed and thrive. It is valuable to note that in five of these cases the YM did not report a mentor inside or outside the church. Although they may have had other people to provide counsel for them in a difficult situation, there is a strong possibility that they were feeling very isolated. In this section some of the participants are not identified to protect anonymity.

One YM did not feel that his supervisor was able to mentor. The difficulty with his supervisor was a major factor in this situation of not thriving.

Another YM reported that his first supervisor provided informal mentoring at the beginning of his tenure, but when the new senior minister came he was given a different person as his supervisor. The new supervisor was not a mentor to him, and as the situation grew more difficult with the senior minister and with other issues, the YM did not have a helpful supervisory relationship.

YM#7 floundered until she was provided with a mentor from an outside consulting agency. This mentor was a youth minister from another state who was able to assess the situation and provide valuable counsel, assessment, and support. Her

supervisor and the senior minister were not providing the attention that YM#7 needed and this outside mentor provided the help that was lacking.

The situation for one YM was difficult in a number of ways. He was fired after a short time following conflicts with parents, students, and volunteer staff. He and his supervisor never connected. The YM would have welcomed a discussion of the conflicts, but the SM decided not to spend time trying to help the YM understand what to do. The YM would have welcomed help, but the SM did not provide it. The SM said he was willing to disciple the YM but did not believe he was listening. He may have been open to mentoring the YM at some point, but when things became more difficult, it appears that he decided the situation was better solved by having the YM leave the church.

Another YM said his novice experience was marked by a very difficult relationship with his supervisor. The senior minister who came in 4 years after the YM began at the church described it this way:

SM: His supervisor following that was a [long-term civil servant] that was an administrator. And so, very disciplinarian in his approach. I don't think he...he was an administrator, not a pastor. And [the YM] did not do well under that model. We really failed him in those 2 years. We didn't bring him in in the best way, but then those 2 years after the pastor died...and I think the pastor that died, had he been healthy, [the YM] would have been great. Because he [the former senior minister] was a strong pastor, great pastor, but his health wasn't good and he passed away shortly after [the YM] got here. Within about 7 months after, the other youth pastor resigned...like I said, [the YM] didn't really have a chance.

According to the SM, by the time he became the senior minister, the difficulties that the YM was experiencing were not going to be resolved easily and so the SM encouraged him to go to seminary in a different state. The YM did so and took another youth ministry position.

Another YM had been a volunteer in youth ministry for many years prior to taking the youth minister position at the church he was attending, but by his report had no mentors prior to his novice experience or during it.

YM: I really don't think I've been mentored in youth ministry. I've just had to figure it out. But I'm unique in that way as I can do that.

His supervising minister was not a mentor to him, in part, because the YM had an agenda coming into the situation. He wanted to encourage the SM to change his leadership style. So they had a difficult time in the early years. Eventually they developed a relationship of mutual respect and the ability to mentor in some ministry areas, but there didn't seem to be mentoring in areas that related directly to youth ministry leadership.

The question which flows out of this data is this: "Would a mentoring strategy by the supervisor have produced a different outcome for these youth ministers who said they did not thrive?" Unfortunately the data gathered do not allow us to say anything conclusively in answer to this question. In each of the eight cases there were multiple factors that made for a "non-thriving" situation. In some cases, a mentoring strategy may have been impossible. In the case of YM#7, she was able to thrive when an outside mentor provided her with the counsel and support she needed. In her case the relationship with her supervisors was tolerable. Further research is needed to determine what impact a mentoring strategy by the supervising minister would have for novice youth ministers. The critical provision to help novice youth ministers thrive may be a mentor either from inside or outside the church to supplement a supervisor who has a nurturing relationship with the novice.

Mentoring 4.3: Mentoring Prior to the Novice Youth Ministry Experience was Not a Significant Factor for Thriving

The presence of a mentor prior to the novice experience was not a significant factor for thriving. Of the 17 YMs who reported mentors prior to their novice experience, nine of those described themselves as not thriving. For example, YM#22 had a mentoring experience that was exceptional in an apprenticeship provided by a veteran youth minister just prior to his novice experience. He did not thrive, however, and eventually left the church after he and SM#22 had philosophical differences.

This assertion from the research does not negate the value of mentoring prior to a youth minister's novice experience. What it suggests is that future researchers should explore the nature and content of that mentoring which often occurs as part of formal youth ministry education. Assuming that mentoring prior to the novice experience precludes the need for mentoring during the novice experience may be misguided as well.

Organizing Theme 5: Spouse's Experience

One of the obviously critical relationships during a novice youth minister's experience is the marriage relationship. Of the 26 youth ministers in this study, five were single (both the women) and 21 were married. Sixteen of the 21 married youth ministers reported that their wives struggled to some degree during their novice experience.

Thirteen of those 16 youth ministers reported not thriving. In two of those cases the struggles of the wife were a critical factor in the departure of the youth minister from the church. One youth minister who did not thrive reported that his wife did not struggle. Three youth ministers who thrived reported that their wives did not struggle. In only one case was the subject of the spouse not discussed in the interview.

Spouses 5.1: Wives of YMs who Did Not Thrive Faced Struggles that Ranged from being Irritated to Sadness and Loneliness

The fact that 13 of 15 wives of youth ministers who did not thrive struggled is not really a surprising outcome. The spouse is impacted when the youth minister is going through difficulties at the church. This research documents the serious nature of the struggles experienced by wives that make the novice youth minister's situation even more difficult. One wife struggled with the hours demanded in youth ministry. In another situation, the YM and his wife were in conflict with each other. Another wife was lonely and isolated. Twelve struggles, including these three, are described in the cases that follow.

Struggle with the hours demanded in youth ministry. The wife of YM#2 struggled with the hours demanded in youth ministry. Her husband described it this way:

YM#2: Another one would be—my wife wasn't fond of the hours. She's a stability, consistency type person and I'll never forget her saying, "We are first—our son"—She said, "I feel like a single mom" 'cause I was usually out. And I was pretty good—if I was out really late doing something—I'd go in the office at noon the next day, but she was not fond of the hours. And that was tough for her. I was not the 100-hour-week guy. I wasn't trying to be Superman, but if it was a long few days in a row, we'd have a conversation about that.

YM#2 left the church for other reasons but his wife's struggle was significant. He recently considered returning youth ministry and this was a subject of discussion between him and his wife.

Conflict with each other. YM#4 had significant personal struggles in his novice experience, including serious conflict with his wife. He described it this way:

YM#4: She was, the 2 years in ministry were, that was a huge conflict for our marriage and probably more so because she was working so intimately with me and I almost have to...you'd have to speak with [my wife] about it, but, it was such a tenuous relationship because I had visions of what I would want to do, but I couldn't communicate them and just the stress of everything made it that much more difficult.

YM#4 left the church and vocational ministry and his marriage survived the major upheaval that occurred for him in this situation.

Lonely and isolated. YM#8 did not discover how lonely and isolated his wife felt until 15 months after he began as a youth minister. Here is how he described the situation:

YM#8: One of the biggest for me was my wife and what it was like to be the wife of a youth pastor. My wife, we've known each other almost our whole lives, I met her in fifth grade at church, so, knew her very, very well. And we got married a month before I actually started my position at [his church]. It was primarily an older church, there were maybe, I'm not even sure if there were three couples within 10 years of our age, maybe there were. Long story short, once we merged, a few months into it, I found out just how lonely she was at the church. I was up front, I'm meeting people all the time, I was paid to go get coffee with people and build these relationships, and she was working full-time, she just didn't have quite the same opportunities. Now, granted, she maybe could have or should have pushed herself harder, but it was hard for her. So, I'd be up front leading worship after Sunday, tons of people want to talk to me, so she's just stuck waiting. I found out she'd go into my office under the premise of checking email, just because she felt miserable by herself. Part of it probably was when we merged, people probably merged we had relationships with people and we just really didn't. We'd only been there a year, but they didn't know that, they probably thought we had been there quite a while, or some people at least. So she was miserable, and I find this out maybe 15 months into being youth pastor, and it just devastated me, it was really, really hard to see my wife struggling like she was.

YM#8 left that church and eventually became a youth minister at another church after not thriving at the first church. The first situation was very difficult for his wife.

Lonely, lacking friendships, criticized. The experience of YM#11's wife was characterized by loneliness and the lack of friendships. The fact that she was criticized by church members made the situation even worse. Her husband described it this way:

YM#11 (did not thrive, now in different vocational ministry): What would my wife say...well, I think it would be fair to say that she did not enjoy it very much. And there's a lot of reasons for that. For her it was that church was hard for her to make new friends at. There weren't people who were her age that were people she'd be friends with. And not having people at church that she was connected with, people she wanted to see at church, she never really developed deep relationships with anyone there. She developed friends outside of the church, other avenues, but she was also more affected by some of the criticisms and conflicts than I was... It was more deep and hurtful for her and she felt it more personally...well, I don't know how to summarize it. One area would be her attempt to develop friendships with the ladies and their pettiness. And basically they were saying they didn't want to be friends with her. Those were some of the parents criticizing her because she was too young to know any better or didn't know anything. She had a desire to invest in some of the girls but they essentially told her that that was my job as a youth pastor to be the one to give the input, not hers.

They were at the church a very short time and went through a serious time of reflection to see if they wanted to continue in church ministry. Eventually YM#11 took a ministry position which was not youth ministry.

Challenge moving from city to small town; overwhelmed, worn out, angry.

YM#12 moved from a city to a small town, which was one of the issues that proved to be difficult for his wife. Here is his description of his wife's struggles:

YM#12 (did not thrive, with youth in a different church): A challenge for her. It was a little bit of adventure for us. Her family is right here in [big city in the Northwest]. Just got married and we moved. We jumped into a town and we didn't know anybody. We might as well have been on a different planet. Little did we know small town life is way different. If you are not from there... And the gossip is kind of like a speedway, you know. For her, relationally she felt

challenged. We didn't know anybody. Our closest friends we like to develop over time... So for her it was overwhelming.

When asked if she questioned whether he should be in ministry after he was fired,

YM#12 said,

YM#12: No. She was more fired up, as much or more about the whole ordeal. By fired up I mean internally, frustrated, she was more on the anger side and I was more [on the] dumfounded side. When we concluded all meetings I asked for a letter - "what will you tell churches?" but he took high road in how he dealt with this and we tried to do all right way and respect, not cause damage to church. We met with youth staff individually but more just to get feedback to say thank you, not to get info about what happened. For her, it impacted her quite a bit. It was a hard year for her.

YM#12 did return to youth ministry in another church.

Anger at husband's mistreatment, wanted to fight for him, wounded. YM#13

(did not thrive, in youth ministry in a different church) had such a difficult situation that it was his wife who began to encourage him to look for a different ministry position:

YM#13: Yeah, it was really hard on her because, you know, she wanted to fight for me and wanted to go tooth and nail with the people, the person that was trying to do this to me, and really, to her it was like, "This is my family that you're trying to..." and she had seen how I felt and the things that were going on, and she had to, you know, she had to deal with those things at home every day pretty much. The difficulty of that season, and so...it was, it was hard, it'd been probably really hard on her even just [me] being full-time youth pastor because there's just a lot with it. So she has a lot of grace and times, too, that...I don't even think just full-time youth pastor or full-time pastors, the things you have to go through. But she definitely wanted to fight and wanted to, just stand up for me, because she knows, she told me one time, "You're one of the most godly men that I know." Actually she said, "You are the godliest man I know" . . . she wanted to be out too. She was like, "We just need to go, let's start looking at other churches or whatever."

YM#13's supervisor spoke of the seriousness of the situation:

SM#13: The main thing, though, was by the time I got here, his wife was so wounded, that she was done. She was so wounded by the church and the way they treated [her husband], and that whole...we couldn't bring her back on board. She just...she was done. And so, you can only go so far if your wife is not on board. There's just...she was done. She had no grace for the church, no patience for the church, barely wanted to even attend church. And she and I had a very different relationship. But...it was just too little, too late at that point. So, I think he could have turned it around, though. It would have taken a little bit of time, build the trust. But he came so far so fast that...but she gave him a year to turn it around and still leave head held high, but she was done. So, I'm still praying for them, that's a big part of seminary for them too, is for her to get a little bit of healing and a better understanding of what life and ministry is. I think she had idealized it, not really knowing what to expect. So...it was a rude awakening.

YM#13 pursued a seminary education with thoughts of other ministry vocations and eventually returned to youth ministry.

Wife was told too much by her spouse and personalized his wounds. YM#14

felt that he told his wife too much and that she took on his wounds. Here is his description:

YM#14 (did not thrive, in youth ministry at a different church): It's interesting, we were just talking about it yesterday, um, often wives take on more of the wounds than the husband does in situations like this. So I—I was in it, it's an opportunity to serve, to grow, to be challenged, uh, to be developed, and so I see all of my opportunities as learning and developing and growing opportunities. My wife saw a lot of wounds and hurts that I took on... I set myself up for failure just because I was bitter and angry, and I would just go to places, um, of critique that would turn into destruction. Uh, and my heart, my wife's heart—I didn't guard my wife, I told my wife too much, uh, she carried everything with me, and there's certain things—and we're such good friends that we just loved to talk... I should've not said everything.

YM#14 concluded that he should have been more careful with what he said to his wife about the matters he was facing.

Wife's lifestyle conflicted with values of the church and led to conflict. In the case of one YM (not identified to protect anonymity), his wife did not really fit into the culture of the church and eventually got into major conflict with people in the church. This added to the difficulties of the youth minister. His supervisor described the situation this way:

SM: The next one [challenge] that was most important was the conflict with his wife. And she was very outspoken and did things that just alienated the ministry.

The SM believed that it was better for the YM to move on because the problems surrounding his wife were not likely to be reversed.

Wife felt personally attacked when husband was attacked, impacting their daughter. YM#15 had a conflict with one of the parents that ended up being the primary reason that they left.

YM#15: ll, when we first got there we were both really excited. And she was pregnant with our first daughter, and when we arrived as well, so she was really involved in the teens and really helped me out. Great...just a great help, really enjoyed it. When we started facing some of these incidents with [conflicting parent] and with a couple other individuals in the church, it really, it hit her a lot harder than it did me. I would get upset, but be able to kind of shrug it off a little bit more. She took it a lot more personally, as attacks on her. And especially came about when, after our daughter was born, it's not just affecting me, it's not just affecting [my wife], but now it's affecting our daughter as well. So she took it a lot more personally...had a lot bigger issue with it than I did.

YM#15 is now working with youth in a different church.

Spouse hurt because students didn't care about them, ready to leave. YM#19

was the other youth minister whose wife pressed for them to leave the church. Here is how he described the situation:

YM#19: The first church, it was pretty clear at the end that especially the kids just really didn't care too much about us, as far as there were kind of, they cared about the ministry and their church and they didn't really give too much of a flip about us, they made that pretty clear. And so, that really hurt her, that was hard for her and so she was quite ready to leave. So, we didn't exactly bail, because we stayed around for a couple more weeks but that was about it. She was done.

YM#19 left the church and vocational ministry.

Wife burned out, struggled with expectations. YM#22 reported that his wife resented being involved herself in youth ministry. Here is how he described his wife's experience:

YM#22: I also think that after the luster wore off, I think at times she didn't want to be [involved herself in youth ministry]. And then, but she never...I don't think she ever felt comfortable voicing that to me. I just assumed that she was fine. She never came to me and said, "Hey, I'm getting burnt out on this, I want to do something different." So I think, looking back on it, I think she kind of resented that she got involved to be supportive of me, and then really wasn't feeling called to do it, and then never knew how to come to me and say she wanted out of it, which I would have been fine with. But no, for me, it was more the women in the church expecting her to be at functions, that kind of stuff. Or, you know, like we had a Christmas party, you know, everybody was encouraged to be there, you know wink, wink, and your spouses...there was times where she didn't want to go and I was like, "That's fine, don't go, that's cool." And I just went by myself, and when I probably should have said something like, "Hey, you know what, I understand you don't to go, but this is something...I don't want you to buy into the...you're doing this because everybody wants you there, let's just do this because it's something for us to do together and it's good for us to be a couple and enjoy it together as opposed to doing something separately." And I didn't do that, I just kind of said, "Yep, you're right, you know, you don't have to go." And then I made excuses for why she wasn't there when I went. And that was, and that got more and more the case later on where she just didn't want to do stuff. And I

didn't know how to handle that, to be really honest. And it kind of burned me out a little bit on stuff, too. Because I think she realized that she wasn't as excited about the professional ministry life as she thought she would have been before we got into it.

YM#22 left vocational youth ministry and, sadly, was divorced from his wife. The reasons were multiple but his perspective was that they got married too young.

Wife felt there was cancer in the church and wanted to leave. YM#25 was in a very difficult church situation. His wife got to the point where she did not want to be at the church. Here is how he described the situation.

YM#25: I mean, we just saw the cancer in the church as a whole and certainly, to be honest, she was like, "I just don't want to be here." And I understood why, and so, and she felt the brunt of, you know, because basically, and again, maybe this is unnecessary, you can edit it out, but basically kind of how things worked was, is that the men were fairly passive so if people had a problem with me, it would never really come to me directly but their wives would all talk and it would kind of get back to [my wife]. Because they wanted to keep us out of the gossip loop. So that was discouraging. So after a while it was like, that she was ready to leave the church.

YM#25 left the church for a different ministry vocation.

The wives of youth ministers who did not thrive were not alone in having struggles. The next theoretical construct articulates the experiences of wives who struggled even though their husbands reported thriving in the situation.

Spouses 5.2: Wives of YMs who Thrived Also had Struggles

Three wives of youth ministers who reported thriving experienced difficulties which were serious enough to have their husbands comment on it. Two of these situations involved YM#1 and YM#24. YM#1 described this wife's situation this way:

YM#1: I think the biggest challenge for, again, I think about my wife and I as doing this together because this job asked so much of me that there's no way that she could—that I could, that she could separate herself from it. And so I think the biggest challenge has been the challenge that's posed to my family. Because I can handle, you know, and we're dealing with this even today, that many years after that first-time experience. But I can handle criticism. I do okay with it. My wife, though, when she's watching me take arrows from congregation members, from other staff members for something she knows I'm putting my whole life into—it hurts her, that hurts her equally if not more because she can't defend me the way that she wants to and I don't think she anticipated that when we talked about being in ministry—before we started. It was kind of like I said this romanticized view of something—and having that perception altering—that perception moved aside. She didn't anticipate the frustration and we're partners in this. And so it was like—when I take those arrows and I take those barbs from people in passing comments—and, you know—she takes them as well. And I'm finding that there is a residual effect on our marriage that has to be addressed. If I don't address it, then it goes unsaid and she shuts down and we lose communication and that hurts me more than anything else.

YM#1 stayed at the church despite these struggles.

The wife of a youth minister who said he thrived had some serious struggles with the church because she thought the church was taking advantage of her husband:

YM#24 (thrived, moved to work with youth in a different church): And at that point she also took a step back, and we had two kids, and so she was watching the kids a lot of times, while I was doing things. And so she wasn't able to be there as hands-on as maybe she might have been. But like I said, that first experience, I think it did—was detrimental to her passion for just jumping out there and helping on a large scale... That being said, she continually followed, and met with on an individual basis several of my—several of the female students... She felt, a lot of the time, I think, that the church was taking advantage of me. And was just taking, all the time. And wasn't really giving back as much as she felt like they should be. And that the church didn't always have my best interests in mind as much as I had the best interests of the church in mind. So that built some resentment. And it built some resentment that—in areas that were outside of my job description. The church had become reliant upon me in being those things because—I mean, I tried to take a step back a lot of times from things that were outside of my um...outside of my job description.

YM#24 chose to move to a different church and continued in youth ministry.

This research uncovered serious struggles in the lives of YMs' spouses. Wives struggled in cases where their husbands were thriving and in cases where they were not thriving. In some cases, these struggles exacerbated the situation and the only resolution was to leave the situation. In other cases, issues were resolved and a more healthy state was reached. This aspect of the lived experience of the novice youth pastor is worthy of further critical examination.

Organizing Theme 6: Selection Process

Churches vary to a great degree in how they go about selecting a youth minister. Some are very thorough and others are not. In eight of the 16 cases where the youth minister did not thrive, a poor selection process contributed greatly to a negative situation. Important items were missed in the process. Matters were overlooked. In two cases the leadership of the church was impressed with the wife as a person who would contribute to the youth ministry. Three theoretical constructs emerged from the data on the selection process. The first theoretical construct describes situations where major differences between the YM and the church were overlooked or misunderstood in the selection process.

Selection 6.1: Major Differences Between the Youth Minister Candidate and the Church were Overlooked or Misunderstood

During the selection process, both the candidate and the church leadership can overlook or misunderstand important differences. These differences eventually prove to be the source of real conflict in the situation. The three cases that follow present the difficulties that ensue when differences are overlooked or misunderstood.

In the case of YM#5 (did not thrive, left vocational ministry), he did not understand the differences between his church background and the hiring church. A difference in the role of the youth minister was also not clearly understood. Here is his description of the situation:

YM#5: And so, had I an understanding that essentially this was a job, where I was a director and I was managing the moving parts, and getting key people in place so that they'd be really the ones doing the impact and seeing it from a management perspective, there might not have been a problem. But because I went in with this sense of calling and ownership and "God's given me this ministry and given me the responsibility of these souls, and essentially, I'm at the helm to meet out this vision," you know, that was the first challenge. And so, what happened is that volunteers, who essentially had been running the ministry for years and years and years, kind of the Queen of England and Parliament, right? So the volunteers really ran the ministry, and the youth guy was the guy that could kind of directed it all, is real charismatic in the personality sense of the word, had a lot of fun with the kids, that sort of thing. So there was a challenge in that I didn't see it that way. And it really, I don't think became clear for me for quite a while. Specifically in the [name of a denomination] you can't just be a pastor, you must go to seminary and then the denomination must ordain you. I came from a [denominational] background where it was, "God ordains you, the elders pray over you, and you're a pastor. So there was challenge there.

There were misunderstandings in the interviewing process:

YM#5: There was a, like a disconnect in expectations, both from myself and my wife and from the volunteers in the church, and there was a lack of definition of terms, because...in terms of vocabulary. So, in the interview process, when I said "Bible study" it meant one thing. When they said "Bible study" it meant another thing. And so, essentially, I went into the experience with all of my background and worldview and how I interpreted the job would be, and they heard all of my answers and responses in the context of what they interpreted that to be. So we all, I think very well-meaning, started off thinking, "This is a great fit and a wonderful thing," and it took about two and a half years for it all to realize that it really wasn't a good fit for me.

YM#5 moved on to another church in youth ministry but eventually moved out of vocational ministry altogether.

This kind of experience begs the question, “Do people really ask the right questions and explore the meanings of the answers sufficiently, or do both the church and the applicant gloss over important matters?” YM#9 admitted to this very thing:

YM#9: I was so excited to have a ministry position that I was not too concerned about the denomination or the church politics or even just the *modus operandus* [*sic.*] of, you know of a given church. I was just stoked to work with kids so I took the job. They asked me if I had questions so I made up some questions to ask because I knew I should have some questions to ask but none of them were why it would be a good fit. It was just because I just wanted to look good in the interview.

It turns out that his previous church experience was radically different than the church that hired him as a novice and the new church’s structure drove him crazy. His supervisor was well aware of this:

SM#9: We are [denominational name]. And so we have committees and people that weigh in on pretty much any decision that’s made. (laughs) And he was not accustomed to having to run things by people as much.

YM#9 was looking for a job while he went to seminary and this seemed like a good option. The church leadership concurred, but he did not thrive in the situation.

Fortunately he learned from the situation and was able to move on to a different area of vocational ministry.

One YM (not identified to protect anonymity) stated specifically that he would not have come if he had known what he came to find out about the church after being there for a time. When asked if he didn’t know the church, he said:

YM: That's a good question. It's funny, my wife and I have talked about that. We said repeatedly, had we known then what we know now, we wouldn't have come, we wouldn't have. But the thing is, we didn't know the questions to ask, I knew some questions, doctrinal questions... So it was just like worlds colliding here and so, so yeah, it was really funny. You asked a question, what was the question again? . . . You know what, my wife and I, we just didn't know the questions to ask. You know, and so, doctrinal questions, those I had down, but, you know, we just didn't know how to ask discerning questions as far as, "What are those deep things beneath the surface that we can ask about that could help us evaluate if this is a healthy church or not?" I think I got an impression, looking back there were things, even in my initial interview with the senior pastor, that were concerning. But I was like, "You know what, let's think the best...oh I know I can be kind of a, maybe too critical at times..." and so knowing that I was just like, "Let's just...have an open mind." But ya, we were pretty blind-sided by some things.

In looking back, the YM realized he didn't ask the right questions, but it was apparent that the leadership of the church had made a decision to overlook a doctrinal issue that turned out to be fatal. The SM who was interviewed was a church leader who was part of the selection process. His description of the process was this:

SM: Well, I'll look at it from two sides. I think one of the biggest challenges that I've heard prior to him coming and then right when he came, was when we interviewed [the YM], there were a couple of things that came up in terms of doctrinal positions that [the YM] I think, some things that were conveyed and some of them not intentionally, but I think later we determined that, ya, there was some things, there were some differences. And so there's a couple people on our leadership team or on our deacon board that had issues with those...[the YM] did not have any issues with that, did not have any disagreements with that, but I think what we learned through the process was that they were a little bit too vague, and that as a leadership team, apparently, we had some, there wasn't unity as far as what everybody...their doctrinal stances were... I was saying that there were a couple doctrinal positions that became evident that [the YM] took a stance on that there were a couple of people on our board had issues with, and you know, we had asked [the YM] a couple times to explain himself and explain, you know, what, why he based, what he based those stances on. And from our senior pastor position, he didn't have an issue with it; for most of the other deacon and elder board, there wasn't an issue with it. But there were a couple people that there still was an issue, and even though there was agreement and there was support, it was always decided, once we made a decision to go forward from the deacon board to make a recommendation to our congregation and the deacon board was

completely behind it. And it wasn't, you know, I think we found out there were some concerns, and so...so I think he came, I think, that happening, not knowing the extent of maybe some of the concerns that there were and us as well, not knowing that there were a couple of individuals that were a little bit stirred up by it. So I think that kind of bred a little bit of questioning and just...kind of...just a little bit of leeriness as far as, "Okay, what is he going to try to bring, what kind of...how will he influence the students?"

The SM believes that the situation with the YM actually revealed major problems with the minister/deacon/elder leadership team of the church. He said,

SM: I think the core problem with all this is there wasn't...I believe, a support, an ultimate support from our leadership, from our senior pastor, and a couple members on our leadership board, that fully got behind [the YM] and supported him. There were the doctrinal issues, we needed to probably come to, we needed to set those out more, I guess. And if we really thought that those were deal-breakers, then we, then we shouldn't have gone forward with [the YM]. But, you know, we were all in concurrence, we all voted, and at that time it should have been expected that everybody step up and get behind [the YM], and there were still a fragment in the church that was listening to some of these leaders and were believing what they were saying and then were kind of, you know, it was building division, and it never got addressed. And so, I think from that perspective, it wouldn't have mattered who it was. Now, if you brought somebody in that aligned with all the...aligned exactly with everybody's doctrinal positions, perhaps there wouldn't have been anything from that angle, but, you know, there certainly could have been other issues... I think, I don't think [the YM] was the issue, I think it was an issue with our leadership and not having unified on where we stood doctrinally. Never been challenged.

So, a perfect storm occurred. The YM would say that he didn't know what questions to ask that would have revealed the true nature of the church and its leadership. The SM was part of the leadership team that selected the YM and it was clear to him that they had failed in the selection process.

Selection 6.2: Wrong Assumptions were Made about the YM's Fitness for Ministry

In certain situations the leadership of the church tasked with making the selection made wrong assumptions about the candidate's fitness for ministry. For example, YM#7 is an example of someone who was in the church as an intern at the time of selection. But wrong assumptions were made about her preparation during the selection process. The supervisor who was interviewed was not part of the selection process but was aware of some of the shortcomings:

SM#7: The background basically is that she was here and she had been an intern and she was aware of our church, the kids liked her, the kids that had been working with her liked her, and we had done more of a broader based search, and did not find anyone to fit what we were looking for. We found one person that we offered the position to that had a lot more background, and had also come from being a part of our church as a student and a young adult, but he couldn't move any further north than [city south of the church] because of his wife's position. And we decided in the end that just was too far away for a youth pastor to live. And so, I think, I think it was unanimous, I wasn't on the search committee, that she would be a good fit with the idea that she had a lot of learning to do. But she was across the street from her mentors and the professors that she had good relationships with so we thought that was also a plus. . . she only really had one youth ministry class at [a Christian university].

What the church discovered was that YM#7 didn't really have a philosophy of ministry nor experience. Until they provided an outside mentor, she struggled a great deal. A more thorough selection process might have uncovered these shortcomings. She did not thrive as a rookie but stayed at the church after she was provided with a mentor from outside the church.

One YM (not identified to protect anonymity) had a good resumé, a very good reference from the youth minister who supervised him as an intern, and a wife whose ministry skills were impressive. The supervisor said this about the process:

SM: Ok, well, we did interview... I'm just trying to think... I think when it came down to a final interview process, we only interviewed about three. We had, um, had a committee working on the process, and I don't know how many resumés we went through, but his resumé was good. He did have good references from [the church where he was an intern] and the person who was the youth pastor there at the time said he had disciplined him. And, uh, gave him a good reference. Um, we, um, let's see... I think myself and two other people—one couple that was currently in youth ministry with [parachurch organization], and one other leader from our church, my wife and I, went and interviewed them as a couple in [another town]. And then brought them down to [our church]. The search committee interviewed them, the elders interviewed them, and a parent group interviewed them. They presented themselves very well. And, you know, she is an amazing asset to him.

Although it is difficult to fault the selection process in this case, the fact that the YM had no experience leading a youth ministry of this size called into question the criteria by which he was selected. Maybe the impressive nature of the wife clouded some of the decision making. Maybe the recommendation of the youth minister who supervised the internship was more glowing than reasonable. This youth minister was let go after a very short time at the church but eventually ended up in youth ministry at another church.

Selection 6.3: Mistakes were Made when a Youth Minister was Selected Very Quickly without Church Leadership being Integrally Involved

This theoretical construct was based on just one case, but it exposes the problems that ensue from a flawed selection process. YM#13 was selected in a somewhat unusual manner. After one visit and apparently very limited involvement of the church leadership, YM#13 was invited by his friend, the youth minister at the church, to take a role in the youth ministry. He did not thrive in this church. Here is his description of the selection process:

YM#13: Ya, one of my friends at Bible college was [name of friend], and he was actually, he left Bible college to come to [the church where YM#13 was a novice] to be a youth pastor, and I didn't know, I hadn't heard from him in a while. And then about a year into his youth ministry, or something like that, he said he was at a conference and he heard God speak saying that I should come to [his church], and I waited, I prayed through that, I waited and I prayed for about 6 months, and talked and prayed, and I wasn't...I didn't know, I just wanted to finish college and so I wasn't sure if I wanted to jump in and then I really felt like God had called me to come to [name of city in which the church was located]. So I jumped on board and the church came out there and I spoke a couple events, or a couple youth groups actually, about 25 students gave their lives to Christ on those nights, and just felt like, I just felt like God was pulling me there and some of the people in the church felt the same way. And so I left there and they gave me a call about a week later and said, "We've got a salary, we've got a moving truck, we've got everything ready for you." And all I had to do was say yes. So really the whole thing was an interview process when I came out, though. I hung out with some of the guys from the church and some of the board members, and it seemed like they all had the same heart that I did I guess, and it all worked together. And we were in [name of state] a week later after that, so.

But this process turned out to be detrimental. SM#13 was not the senior minister at the time YM#13 came to the church, but his knowledge of the situation revealed the negative impact of what turned out to be a flawed selection process:

SM#13: He was...we had, actually, another youth pastor at the time, and that youth pastor wanted to bring on some staff. And so he went ahead and made arrangements to bring [YM#13] on staff, got approval afterwards, that kind of a deal. So there was lots of, lots of confusion as to how [YM#13] was hired. Eventually that other staff person resigned and [YM#13] took his full-time position. . . Yes, yeah, it did hurt him. He never had the full confidence of the board, they didn't participate in the interview process coming in, so he came in under some odd circumstances, I'm not real sure how that all worked out. I don't think anybody is really all sure how that all worked out.

YM#13 left the church to go to seminary after he and SM#13 determined that there were too many negative factors to overcome in that situation. He was moving in another vocational direction but recently returned to youth ministry in a different local church.

These theoretical constructs point to the need for both the church leadership and the youth minister candidate to be sure the selection process brings in view as much information as possible to make sure there is a good match.

Organizing Theme 7: Preparation

An important question for understanding the lived experience of novice youth ministers is, “What impact did the issue of preparation for the position have on the novice’s experience of thriving or not thriving?” The answer from this study is that lack of preparation either formally or informally was not reported as a reason for not thriving. For this reason, no theoretical constructs are being proposed for this organizing theme. The anecdotes described here help point to the need for further research to determine what impact preparation has on the success of youth ministers since there are many institutions of higher education committed to training people for youth ministry.

Twenty participants attended a Christian college or university. Thirteen of those did not thrive. Eight of the 20 Christian college/university attendees were specifically youth ministry majors. Five of those eight did not thrive. Five participants attended a public or private (not Christian) college or university. Two of those five did not thrive. The one participant who did not attend college did not thrive. Three participants graduated from seminary and two of those three did not thrive. Twelve participants had been involved in an internship and six of those did not thrive.

There were several situations where this researcher perceived that better training might have made a difference. There were only four cases where the YM suggested that more and better training would have helped. In one situation a SM noted the lack of

training being a significant aspect of the YM not thriving. When YM#4 (did not thrive, left vocational ministry) was asked if his struggles as a novice were related to his personality or lack of knowledge, he responded:

YM#4: Ya, it's probably a lack of knowledge, it's probably a lack of patience. If I had spent maybe the first couple of years just getting the feelers out, just trying to build relationships and worry less about my ideals, what I wanted to promote in the ministry, what I want to put my hand on. I think that maybe it would have been, maybe I would be there still. I'm not sure, but, I think that it's difficult to—there's a lot of preparation that really, at least for me, needed to take place that didn't take place.

This YM had been a youth ministry major at a Bible college and had other ministry experience prior to starting his novice youth ministry at age 28. All of this did not prepare him for what he faced at the church and he ended up having an emotional breakdown. Whether or not formal training was an issue is questionable considering his supervisor's comments. SM#4 had been the senior minister, but not YM#4's supervisor until he became his mentor after YM#4's emotional breakdown and departure from the staff. Here is SM#4's perspective:

SM#4: I think the big picture was this, [YM#4] told me that even if [his supervisor] would not have been in the situation, he probably still would have had the nervous breakdown because he had such unbelievable expectations of what this knight in shining armor called a youth pastor was going to do and he really had the understanding his job was by pulling up his bootstraps, he could bring all the kids to godliness, and knew little of the power of God, knew little about prayer, it all, it was all up to him.

YM#4's experience with a difficult supervisor surfaced deep-seated spiritual needs which needed to be addressed. Yes, he was unprepared, but God used the experience to help him

grow. It was certainly very painful, but today he acknowledges that he is certainly much better off in his spiritual life.

YM#7 realized that some of struggles were due to lack of preparation. Here is how she described the situation:

YM#7: The challenges were, I guess, my age. Well, I don't want to say my...it's not necessarily my age, but my lack of experience in ministry combined with an expectation that I am going to...that I'm the one that has to move the youth ministry forward and know how to do it all. And I think, coupled with that, my own lack of experience. Like, I didn't really know who to ask for help, and I didn't really know how to ask for help. So that's kind of the challenge, walking in and being handed a program that had its own issues and that was very much separate from the rest of the church, or kind of, was overlooked by, you know, like I said, I think senior pastoral staff. And, you know, the congregation as a whole I guess. That was a big challenge. My own personal challenge was I only had one youth ministry class at [Christian university], even though my major was educational ministry, which is essentially Christian Education, a theology degree. I only had one youth ministry class and so...while that was a challenge, I read books and went to seminars and trainings and things like that.

YM#7's supervisor noted the same thing:

SM#7: So [was] in the middle of honing a career, which I found out later, she only really has one youth ministry class at [Christian university]. An internship that I thought she had, 'cause see, I was second, wasn't in on the recruiting, was with children's ministries at [another church] and so the background I thought she had really wasn't quite as strong as I thought.

In this case, YM#7 did not thrive until she received help from an outside mentor from a youth ministry consultation group.

YM#8 (did not thrive, moved to youth ministry in another church) wished he had taken Bible college more seriously:

YM#8: I wish that I would have taken Bible college so much more seriously than I did. I was 17 when I started, I screwed around so much and missed out on so much, and while I grew a ton, both as a Christian but then also as a youth minister, I really squandered an opportunity there, I think. I didn't realize how amazing it was to sit under these professors every day, and get to go to chapel three times a week, and growing in Christ was not hard because I was immersed in it. And then I got out on my own, as a rookie youth pastor in a tiny church, and I just didn't have people pouring into me like that. So that was, I guess it was two different aspects there, what it was like. I kind of wish that I would have chosen an internship that had a youth pastor with more experience, or maybe even one that I just didn't grow up under... But yeah, I definitely, I wish that I had taken some things, well, I took my internship very seriously actually, but as far as Bible college goes, I wish that I would have gleaned more information, taking advantage of that more. I think that'd be the only thing, really.

YM#8's reasons for not thriving, however, were not significantly connected with the lack of preparation.

YM#13 did not thrive and the supervising minister interviewed believed that his lack of training was definitely connected with his struggles:

SM#13: The only thing I would say is I think sometimes educational institutions don't do a good job equipping people for the local church. He had a lot of theoretical ideas and biblical training. As far as working through his call to ministry, what it means to be a pastor, and how we do that, I don't know that we always are good at that... [The Bible college he attended] is essentially set up for second-career individuals that were already called into ministry. YM#13 was a little bit older than the average youth pastor, so he went through there. They're essentially assuming a rounded individual with lots of leadership skills and background coming out of professional... YM#13 didn't have any of those. They provide a biblical training, so he could preach well, and he could speak well, but he couldn't lead well and didn't know how to develop a ministry.

This lack of preparation and a weak selection process helped produce a very difficult situation in which YM#13 did not thrive.

Unfortunately no theoretical constructs could be mined out of the data gathered in this study. More digging would have been required to make connections between the

experiences of the youth ministers and their preparation prior to the novice position.

Further research in this area would be valuable in view of the numerous formal and informal strategies to equip people for youth ministry in the church. The final organizing theme discusses differences in perspective that were discovered between YMs and SMs.

Organizing Theme 8: Differences in Perspective Between YM and SM

One of the unique aspects of this research was its pursuit of more than one perspective on the novice youth minister's experience. Time constraints required that the design of this research be limited to interviews with the supervising minister and not other people in the ministry context such as parents and adult volunteers. These interviews with SMs contributed to the triangulation which supports the validity of the findings in qualitative research.

Twenty-six people were interviewed who had performed some kind of supervisory role with the YM. In the case of two YMs, two people were interviewed. Two SM interviews were held for YM#20: the senior minister from his novice experience and the senior minister from the church to which he moved after his novice experience. YM#20 had actually thrived in the first church but struggled in the second church. In the case of YM#25, the senior minister who directly supervised him was interviewed, as well as a church board member who had been a mentor and actively involved in the youth ministry. In this situation, there was a very informal sense of supervising which existed between the church board member and the YM.

The conclusion reached after analyzing the data is that in most cases the perspectives of the youth minister and the interviewed supervising minister were not

significantly different. This fact provides evidence of the validity of the conclusions being reached in this research because the gathering of data in this way provided a means of triangulation. In only two cases, for example, did the YM say he thrived and the SM say he did not thrive. No attempt will be made to create a theoretical construct here because of the small number of cases where differences were revealed between the perspective of the YM and the perspective of the SM. However, the anecdotes expose the relationship between the youth minister and the supervisor. Two types of situations are presented here. The first involves three cases where the differences in perspectives revealed an unhealthy relationship between the YM and the SM. The second type of situation involves two cases where the relationship between the YM and SM would not be described as unhealthy but where the differences in perspective complicated the situation.

First, when there was a difference of perspective, the difference sometimes reflected the unhealthy relationship between the YM and the SM during their time together. In only three situations were differences of this nature observed. In these three cases the participants are not identified in order to protect anonymity. The first SM suggested he was open to discipling the YM. He said:

SM: So, I think it came down to the fact, I was very willing to disciple somebody in that role, and he just wasn't listening. I don't know if he was afraid, err... I still have a hard time figuring out what happened there, but uh...

Interviewer: Why—because you were open for a mentor-disciple relationship?

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Discipling.

SM: Yeah. But he wasn't asking.

The SM's perspective was that the YM did not want to learn from him, but the YM's perspective was that when he asked for help to understand what was happening he was rebuffed. He realized that there were problems with parents, adult volunteers, and students, but he wasn't being told what they were. The SM apparently decided that the YM was not going to fit after a period of about 6 months. At that point it seems that the SM did not want to spend time trying to redeem the situation. The YM was gone shortly thereafter.

A second SM thought the YM was arrogant. The YM did not perceive himself that way. The SM said it this way:

SM: Well, he started well. He gathered a pretty good group. He did bring a lot of energy, and he had the kids doing some fun things, things that he had been involved in his former church as intern. And he became part of our staff, and we would have regular staff meetings. I would meet with him also. I always had an open-door policy so he could come in any time with questions, or I could resource him, or whatever. But some personality issues began to crop up. He began to develop—probably already had, but it began to become noticeable—an attitude problem. This is confidential, his attitude presented itself as arrogance, as somebody who was not willing to listen or to take direction. And I thought, pretty much from the beginning, that he doesn't respect me as his boss.

The YM seemed to acknowledge that his strong personality had a down-side, but it is not clear that he understood the intensity of the SM's feelings. The YM chose to leave the church and vocational ministry for a variety of reasons.

In the third situation, the YM's supervisor questioned the YM's suitability for youth ministry, feeling that he did not have a philosophy of ministry:

Interviewer: So did you feel like he had the skills and abilities to be a youth pastor?

SM: I would say he had the commitment, he had short-term skills, I never sensed from [the YM] any long-term planning or programming, that could be a result of his question if this was really a fit for him, I never got to that point with him. But we never talked in a definitive way as to where he was going with youth ministry.

Interviewer: Okay.

SM: And I'm not sure he knew how to do that. I don't know that he had true philosophy of youth ministry.

In contrast, the YM (did not thrive, left vocational ministry) verbalized the struggle this way:

YM: I enjoyed being there and even working there. The...if I had to put it in just a sentence of why I ended up leaving, or stepping down, because we're still attending there, was that I, my philosophy of youth ministry did not fit with the senior pastor's philosophy of youth ministry. . . . If he doesn't let me do this, it's almost an ultimatum to me. I never brought it up that way but that was my thought, because we had, it basically ends up being, it's not my ministry, it's his ministry that I'm running.

There appeared to be a major disconnect between them and this was exacerbated by the fact that the YM consistently consulted a mentor outside the church rather than engaging the SM who knew this outside mentoring was happening. The YM subsequently left vocational ministry after one more stint in youth ministry.

Second, there were two cases where differences between the YM and the SM complicated the situation even if the relationship would not be described as unhealthy. Again, the participants are not identified to protect anonymity. The first YM expressed the wish that the SM would have been have been more direct in the mentoring aspect of his supervision:

YM: So, um, so it was good—but there was no structure to it. There was nothing, we weren't going through anything, uh, at best I would suggest a book here or there, and we'd read through it together. Um, yeah. I'd like—I'd like to think that I was teachable, I wish that we would had—it was very similar, my mentor—my lay mentor in seminary, and the elder board mentor, were very similar. I wish they would've laid into me more—again, that's my personality. I wish they would've told me, “Hey, you're doing it wrong, hey, you're dumb here, you need to step up here, you need to...” And I felt it was somewhat passive, um, it wasn't as strong as it could've been. So. And again, that's personality. So I wish we had a structure there.

But the SM said he was very direct and confronted the YM on all kinds of issues. He said there was structure for the YM:

SM: He just... I've said this before but I'll say it again to re-emphasize, he has trouble working with adults and knowing how to work with them. He...the illustrations he had tremendous problems with a lot, you know that situation. I had him in my house more afternoons than I can imagine, just sitting at the table, strategizing with him how he can overcome this because it got in his way so much, he got angry, and then he alienated people. And again, it almost cost him.

The relationship between the SM and YM would not be characterized as unhealthy, but the disconnect between them was evident in their responses.

There was a second case where differences of perspective complicated the situation. It was not apparent in this case that the YM understood the SM's assessment of his fitness for youth ministry. The YM said this when asked if the SM thought he was effective:

YM: I have no idea of what he thinks of how I did. Um, he never expressed disapproval, um, he...for one thing I remember him saying a number of times...the previous youth pastor...um, had done a few things that aggravated people for various reasons. And he would continually thank me and said, “I'm glad I don't have as many parents coming into my office to complain about them. And so I don't know if that's a compliment on my youth ministry... I mean, he seemed to be happy with the types of programs and the ministry that we had.

But here is what the SM said when asked about the YM's challenges in ministry:

SM: I would attribute it to: (a) The overall difficulties I described earlier. And, (b) I think... I think [the YM's] natural gifts and ability—not his natural gifts—his spiritual gifts, and his natural abilities are...not best brought out in youth ministry.

Interviewer: Umm... So could you unpack that a little more? I mean, this is confidential. Umm... What do you think he was lacking? Or what was he lacking for youth ministry?

SM: He is...uh, he's a very mellow kind of a guy. He doesn't generate a sense of enthusiasm naturally.

Interviewer: Mmm.

SM: Uh...he may be very enthused inside, but it doesn't get communicated.

Interviewer: (laughs) "He may be enthused inside!" (laughs)

SM: It's true, but it doesn't show! And he's, uhh...uh, maybe the main thing.

Interviewer: Did you guys talk about it?

SM#11: You know, I don't think we did. Because I didn't see it for a while. I didn't get it.

In this case the YM and the SM overall had a good relationship, but a more transparent assessment of the YM might have helped the YM understand what was going on in the heart of the SM.

Summary of the Results

This chapter provided the findings discovered in the process of interviewing 26 people about their novice youth ministry experience and 24 of their supervising ministers. Information was provided about sample selection, the interview process, the transcription

process, and the analysis of the data. The data were obtained through a survey and an interview process.

From the interviews eight organizing themes were identified from the responses of the participants. For six of these organizing themes, theoretical constructs were articulated to help better understand the data. The exact words of the participants were used to illustrate the organizing themes and the constructs.

The first organizing theme discussed was that of calling. Three theoretical constructs emerged under this theme. First, some novice youth ministers used the language of a transcendent summons, an external call of God, to vocational ministry. Some of these believed they were personally called to youth ministry. Second, other youth ministers described their call as a process rather than an external summons by God. Third, some youth ministers viewed their call as to a specific position or place. These three views were held by youth ministers who thrived and who did not thrive. No conclusions can be drawn as to how their sense of calling did or did not sustain them in ministry. Neither can conclusions be drawn about how their sense of calling determined their vocational outcomes.

The second organizing theme focused on the difficulties novice youth ministers have in adjusting to church politics and conflicts as well as other relational struggles. Five theoretical constructs emerged under this theme. First, some novice youth ministers experienced difficulties with their supervising minister. One YM and SM were at odds from the beginning of their relationship. Another YM had an agenda that consisted of his desire to change the SM's leadership style. In another case, the YM had a conflict with a church leader and was extremely disappointed at the response of the SM. Another YM

was struggling and her supervisors did not realize it. In the fifth situation, the YM did not really understand why the SM was displeased with him.

The second theoretical construct under difficulties adjusting focused on difficulties which occurred because of problems not directly related to the youth minister. Problems in the churches included major church conflict between leadership and the congregation and difficulties following the death or resignation of the senior minister. The third theoretical construct articulated the struggles some novice youth ministers had with church leadership other than their supervisor. This included lead ministers, church board members, and other influential leaders. Problems included theological differences and lack of support by the senior ministry when conflicts arose with a board member. In the fourth theoretical construct the difficulties were with parents and adult volunteers. When the expectations of the YM and these two groups differed, both major and minor conflicts ensued. Negotiating these expectations could be very stressful for the novice YM. The interesting finding in the fifth theoretical construct was the low incidence of difficulties with students. In both the situations of thriving and not thriving, the youth ministers rarely had any struggles with the students. Positive relationships with the students were consistently reported by novice youth ministers whether they were personally thriving or not.

The relationship of the YM with her SM was the third theme to be discussed. Three theoretical constructs were developed. First, YMs reported that a nurturing relationship with their SM was beneficial but did not guarantee a situation in which the YM would thrive. YMs appreciated a nurturing SM during difficult times, but the presenting problems could be beyond the scope of the SM's aid.

Second, some relationships between YMs and SMs could be described as “tolerable.” The SM was not nurturing, but the situation could not be described as unhealthy or damaging to the YM. There were deficiencies in the situation which at times could be attributed to the SM and other times to the YM.

Unhealthy relationships were experienced by some YMs and SMs, and these relationships were discussed in the third theoretical construct. The nature of these unhealthy relationships varied, but the stories included lack of mutual respect, poor communication, and mishandled conflict.

It was noted in the concluding discussion of this theme that 10 of the 16 YMs who did not thrive had either tolerable or unhealthy relationships with at least one of their supervisors. The impact on the experience of the novice youth minister varies in each of these cases, but the data reveal that the relationship with the supervisor was an issue for 10 of the participants who did not thrive.

The fourth theme noted was that of mentoring. Three theoretical constructs were in view. First, approaches to mentoring by supervising mentors fell into three categories: highly or somewhat intentional, informal, and “no strategy.” Those with an intentional strategy had a thoughtful, consistent approach to the professional development of the novice youth minister. In an informal mentoring strategy the supervisor usually met with the youth minister on a regular basis, inquired as to how the ministry was going, and was available for problem solving and other interaction over ministry. Where there was no strategy the reasons included the busyness of the supervisor, the lack of interest of the youth minister in such a strategy, and the perceived lack of ability of the supervisor to be a mentor.

The second theoretical construct extended the discussion of the first construct by focusing on the absence of a mentoring strategy for YMs who did not thrive. In these situations, there were multiple factors which contributed to the “not thriving” situation, but the lack of mentoring by the supervisor revealed the fact that the YM was isolated in a difficult situation without a supervisor who was giving him or her substantial aid to help him or her succeed and thrive. Although the YM may have had other people to provide counsel for him or her in a difficult situation, there is a strong possibility that he was feeling very isolated. The question arose from this discussion: “Would a mentoring strategy by the supervisor have produced a different outcome for these youth ministers who said they did not thrive?” Unfortunately no definitive answers can be drawn from the findings of this research.

The third construct asserted that the presence of a mentor prior to the novice experience was not a significant factor for thriving. This assertion does not negate the value of mentoring prior to a youth minister’s novice experience, but instead suggests that further research be done to determine how critical mentoring is prior to the novice youth ministry experience.

The fifth theme explored the lived experience of the spouse of a novice YM. In this research the two female participants were both single, so only wives were part of the sample and thus the discussion of spouses. Two theoretical constructs arose from the data. First, wives of YMs who did not thrive faced a number of struggles themselves. These struggles included the hours demanded in youth ministry; conflict between the YM and his wife; loneliness, isolation, lack of friends; criticism; feeling overwhelmed, worn

out, and angry; dealing with mistreatment of her husband; lifestyle differences with the rest of the church; personal attacks; and facing the expectations of people in the church.

The second theoretical construct suggested that wives of YMs who thrived also had struggles. The wife of a youth minister who said he thrived had some serious struggles with the church because she thought the church was taking advantage of her husband. Another wife had a difficult time dealing with her husband being criticized. Even in a thriving situation, the YM had lessons to learn about shepherding his wife through the challenges of youth ministry.

The sixth organizing theme focused on the church's selection process of a youth minister. The discovery was that a poor selection process contributed greatly to a negative situation. Important items were missed in the process. Matters were overlooked. Three theoretical constructs grew out of the data.

The first theoretical construct suggested that major differences between the youth minister candidate and the church could be overlooked or misunderstood. These differences eventually proved to be the source of real conflict in the situation. The doctrinal distinctions between the hiring church and the churches from the YM's experience could be significant. The structure of the hiring church could be an irritation to the novice youth minister. The fact that during the selection process important issues were missed could be due to a failure by one or both parties to ask the right questions. This could occur because of ignorance, lack of experience, or an unwillingness to get very deep in the inquiry process.

Second, a theoretical construct was developed concerning wrong assumptions made by the church about the YM's fitness for ministry. Wrong assumptions could be

made about the formal educational preparation of a YM. The recommendation of a veteran YM who had a novice YM as an intern led one church to believe that the young YM was ready for a bigger situation than the novice YM truly was ready to oversee. Determining a person's fitness for youth ministry in a specific local church is a key component in the selection process which is hampered by inaccurate assumptions.

The third theoretical construct exposed one case in which the YM (who did not thrive) was selected very quickly without church leadership being integrally involved in the process. Although there was only one case, it seems important to note this situation to alert both churches and prospective youth ministers to be careful not to rush the process.

These constructs for the selection process point to the critical need for churches and YM candidates to be thorough as they make this important decision. Everything must be done to help ensure a process that avoids wrong assumptions and misunderstandings.

The seventh organizing theme was the preparation of YMs for youth ministry roles. One of the issues for understanding the YM's experience was understanding the preparation necessary for a YM to thrive in her novice youth ministry experience. The answer from this study is that lack of preparation either formally or informally was not reported as a reason for a YM not to thrive. No constructs were forthcoming from the data. The anecdotes described helped point to the need for further research to determine what impact preparation has on the success of youth ministers, considering the many institutions of higher education which have committed to training people for youth ministry.

The eighth, and final, theme examined the differences in perspectives between YMs and SMs. The conclusion reached was that in most cases the perspectives of the

youth minister and the interviewed supervising minister were not significantly different. This fact provides evidence of the validity of the conclusions being reached in this research. No attempt was made to create a theoretical construct here because of the small number of cases where there were differences. When there was a difference of perspective, the difference reflected the unhealthy relationship between the YM and the SM during their time together, or differences between the YM and the SM complicated the situation even if the relationship would not be described as unhealthy.

In the next chapter, these organizing themes and theoretical constructs are applied in such a way that churches, youth ministers, and youth ministry training institutions can profit from an understanding of the lived experiences of novice youth ministers. This researcher's hope is that this understanding contributes to healthy church youth ministries, thriving youth ministers, and productive youth ministry training programs in Christian higher education.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

This study promotes an understanding of the experiences of novice youth ministers in view of the rise of local church youth ministry in the United States over the past 60 years. A phenomenographic research method was used to explore the lives of men and women who had served as novice youth ministers in churches in the Northwestern region of the United States (with one exception) between 2000 and 2008. In most cases, the novice youth minister's supervising minister was also interviewed.

The literature reviewed explored career development theories. This review exposed the factors that influence the selection of careers in an overall sense: vocation/call and occupational socialization. Studies with regard to youth ministry attrition and longevity were also examined. The third field of review was the transition of novice teachers into the field of education, serving as a comparison group to help in identifying potentially relevant issues.

Because this was an exploration into the lives of Christian ministers, three associated biblical and theological topics were studied. First, a theology of calling was developed with constructs proposed for the terms *calling* and *vocation*. Second, a New Testament survey of ministry leadership roles was conducted. Third, a mentoring case study was presented focusing on the relationship of Paul and Timothy.

This phenomenographic research was conducted because research has been limited as to the experience of associate ministers in general and novice youth ministers specifically (as a subset of associate ministers). Details of the data collection methods were provided in chapter 4 and the approach to data analysis in chapter 5. The data analysis produced eight organizing themes and accompanying theoretical constructs. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings, present the conclusions and implications of the study, and make recommendations for further research.

The first section of this chapter connects the research questions with the organizing themes that arose from the research. Then important implications are presented and recommendations for further research are proposed. The hope is that this study will promote further examination of the relationship between youth ministers and supervising ministers, prompting them to learn ways of working together more effectively, with the result that novice youth ministers remain in youth ministry and youth ministries are healthy. The implications for youth ministry educators in Christian higher education are also addressed to improve the training of prospective youth ministers.

Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

The focus of this particular study was the lived experience of novice youth ministers as perceived by themselves and by their supervising ministers. The research questions sought to better understand this experience by guiding the discovery process. Each of the research questions is examined here to determine what conclusions can be drawn from the data gathered in this research study. The organizing themes and theoretical constructs which grew out of the study are examined and connections made

with the literature review of chapter 2 and the Christian worldview discussion found in chapter 3.

Research Question 1

First, what are specific internal motivating factors in the lives of novice youth ministers that impact whether they thrive or not? In view here are issues such as calling to ministry, identity, and self-efficacy.

Although questions were asked in the interviews about the youth ministers' perception of themselves as youth ministers (identity) and their fitness for youth ministry (self-efficacy), the data gathered led to the identification of only one organizing theme which helped address this research question, the experience of calling (organizing theme 1).

The participants in this study were very familiar with the language of calling, but their experiences of calling varied. Three theoretical constructs were identified under this theme which identified these varied experiences. First, some youth ministers used the language of a transcendent summons (an external call of God) to vocational ministry in general, and sometimes to youth ministry in particular. Second, another group of youth ministers described their experience more in terms of process rather than a transcendent summons. A third group viewed their call as a call to a particular position or place, for example, the particular youth ministry role they were in or that particular church for that season of time.

The first group reflected a perspective of calling which resembles that of the researcher in the present study in the section “Calling in the New Testament”, who based his construct on Dik and Duffy (2009):

A calling is a summons by God, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness in the pursuit of the glory of God and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation in obedience to God’s command to love others. ()

The second group had more of a process orientation in mind and reflects the construct for vocation this researcher proposed in the section “Calling in the New Testament”, which was based on Dik and Duffy (2009):

A vocation is an approach to a particular life role discovered through the examination of one’s passions, spiritual gifts, natural talents, and personality through personal reflection and input from the Christian community that is oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness in the pursuit of the glory of God and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation in obedience to God’s command to love others.

The primary distinction between the two constructs is the means by which the person comes to the conclusion that he should be a youth minister.

The data in this research suggest that some people who at one time believed they were called (using the definition above) to vocational ministry did not end up in vocational ministry, while others did. Some thrived and some did not. (In this research all four participants who used the language of “vocation” were still in youth ministry roles.) This is important to note because the issue of calling can be a critical component of the selection process, but may be ignored once the novice youth minister is hired.

The issue of calling is a common one in the selection process of youth ministers. Church selection committee members often ask candidates about their call to ministry, especially youth ministry. This is not surprising since one of the common notions among vocational ministers is that a sense of calling is necessary to sustain one through the difficult periods of church ministry. (This research neither confirmed nor denied that notion. In only one case did a youth minister assert that her sense of calling kept her going as a youth minister even though she was not thriving.)

A second notion that drives questions about calling in a selection process is the recognition that a youth minister is serving in the role of a paid vocational minister. Certainly, it is assumed, the youth minister needs to be called to ministry. This issue of calling is the legacy of selecting senior ministers for a congregation, so questions about calling seem legitimate for youth ministers. But this can be complicated in view of the different roles and titles churches use for youth ministers. The youth minister may be called a “director” in one church to distinguish her from the pastors. In another church, where the minister is viewed as a pastor, the youth minister is called a “minister” to distinguish him from the pastor. Therefore, youth minister candidates are asked questions about calling that reflect the critical nature of the ministry, but subsequently may struggle with their role in the church. What do novice youth ministers do if they feel that God called them to youth ministry but they are not thriving? Did they misunderstand the call?

Because of confusing differences between candidates for youth ministry positions and church selection committees, the issue of calling needs to be handled with care in the selection process. Once the youth minister is in position, the issue of calling and vocation should be part of the context of supervision. There is another issue that should be part of

conversations between novice youth ministers and those who supervise and mentor them.

That issue is the roles of certain people as equippers in the Body of Christ.

What seems critical is the need for both the novice youth minister and the church to discern if the youth minister is one of the gifts to the church described by Paul in Ephesians 4:11–12. If, in fact, God has given people to the church to equip saints for the work of ministry, then the novice youth minister must decide if he or is one of those people (these gifts to the church were discussed in chapter 3). If the church does not view the youth minister position as being filled by one of these people described in Ephesians 4:11–12, the church needs to make it very clear what the role of the youth minister is to be. If, for example, the youth minister has concluded that she is a pastor/teacher who has been given to the church for the equipping of the ministry, then there will be tension if the church does not frame the position in the same way. A novice youth minister who believes he has been led by God to minister to people and who views himself or herself as an equipper as described in Ephesians 4 may be disheartened by church leaders and members of the church who view his position differently. Supervising ministers should be certain that the titles used in the church do not diminish the important nature of the work.

If, in fact, the average youth minister begins in her mid-20s, the strong possibility exists that the novice youth minister is in the midst of the exploration stage of vocational development (Ginzberg, 1951; Super, 1957). Here is a person who has accepted a paid position in a church because of God's work in his life to that point. It behooves the church to make it a matter of utmost priority to help with the discernment process to help the youth minister determine if God has given him or her to the church as one of those

designed by God to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The data have confirmed that many novice youth ministers are still in the exploration process of their vocational journey. Certainly the issues of call and vocation should be an integral part of the SM's interaction with the novice youth minister. The critical factors in the novice minister's context which contribute to her thriving in ministry are now discussed as the second research question is addressed.

Research Question 2

What are the critical factors in the novice youth minister's context which contribute to his thriving in ministry and thus impact his potential longevity in church youth ministry? Of interest here are the strategies of the supervising minister, difficulties faced by novice youth ministers, the experiences of the youth minister's spouse, and other matters that provide the context of the youth minister's life in church youth ministry.

Five of the eight organizing themes articulated in chapter 5 are relevant for answering this research question. Because of the nature of phenomenographic research, assertions cannot be made which argue for a causal link between a novice youth minister thriving and his longevity in vocational ministry. For this research the assumption is that a novice youth minister who thrives is more likely to continue in youth ministry or some other vocational ministry position. Thus, these conclusions focus on conclusions surrounding the issues which impacted whether a novice youth minister thrived or did not thrive. Organizing Theme 2 focuses on the difficulties that novice youth ministers experienced while adjusting to church politics and conflicts as well as struggles they experienced in relationships.

Organizing Theme 2: Difficulties Adjusting to Church Politics, Conflicts, and Other Relational Struggles

In chapter 2 the discussion of teacher socialization included the domain of novice teachers learning to adjust to their workplace culture. The novice teacher learns a range of personal behaviors in adjusting to the behaviors of the students, the influence of evaluators, the influence of teaching colleagues, and the role of parents in his life.

Brouwer and Korthhagen (2005) describe the attitude shifts of novice teachers whose idealistic images of teaching were shattered when they were confronted with the realities of teaching. They speak of the “struggle for control” and the fact that novice teachers experienced “feelings of frustration, anger, and bewilderment” (p. 155). Needless to say, some of the novice youth ministers in this study dealt with issues of control in the midst of church power struggles.

It was suggested in chapter 2 that the findings obtained in teacher socialization are helpful for understanding the socialization process of novice youth ministers. As with novice teachers (Brouwer & Korthhagen, 2005), novice youth ministers experience frustration, anger, and bewilderment as they adjust to their work situation.

(Unfortunately, the spouses of youth ministers also experience these same things because they are active participants in the social structures in which their spouses are working.

This is discussed below.) The socialization process of novice youth ministers included numerous stories of difficulties in the socialization process. A majority of the youth ministers who did not thrive experienced difficulties with their supervising minister. Some novice youth ministers experienced difficulties because of problems in the church not directly related to them, including 7 of the 16 youth ministers who did not thrive.

Some novice youth ministers struggled with leadership other than their supervisor (senior ministers, church board members, influential leaders). Some novice youth ministers experienced difficulties with parents and adult volunteers. Rare was the youth minister who struggled with students, the primary stakeholders in the youth ministry.

The difficulties experienced by novice youth ministers as described above were clearly contributors to “non-thriving” situations. However, a valuable question to ask is, “Is the experience of a novice youth minister significantly different from the experience of any other minister newly arrived at a church?” Although there are many similarities between youth ministers and other ministers in a church, it could be argued that the number of stakeholders is more numerous for the novice youth pastor than for other ministers newly arrived at a church: students, parents, church board members, the senior minister who may or may not be the supervisor, the supervising minister, and adult volunteers. Along with dealing with a large number of stakeholders, the novice youth minister (usually in her mid-20s) negotiates all these relationships with less life experience and with much less organizational power than other ministers.

The study of teacher socialization (Cherubini, 2009) exposes the process whereby leaders and educators in the field of education have taken seriously the factors which impact a novice teacher and his choice to stay in the vocation or leave. Serious attention has been paid to improving the retention rate of teachers. The same attention needs to be paid to novice youth ministers. The stories of the youth ministers who participated in this research present the expectations the youth minister must negotiate, the different supervisory strategies they experience, the isolation they feel, and the reality of assessments that stakeholders conduct both formally and informally as the youth minister

adjusts to the new situation. Differences in goals, values, beliefs, philosophies, and viewpoints produce confrontations and conflicts. Negative emotions in the midst of conflict can lead to disillusionment, burnout, and departure. Table 6.1 provides a perspective on the strategies being used in the field of education to improve the retention rate of novice teachers and how similar strategies could help in the retention of novice youth ministers.

Table 6.1

The Application of Novice Teacher Retention Knowledge for Novice Youth Ministers

Perspectives and strategies used in education for the retention of novice teachers	Potential applications for the retention of novice youth ministers
Attention is given to the formation of one's identity as a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Lampert, 2010).	Novice youth ministers should be provided with opportunities for reflection and dialogue regarding their identity as a youth minister. This includes reflection on effectiveness, fit, and calling.
Development of dispositions which result in high standards and concern for student success by intentional interaction with teaching colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2008).	1. Novice youth ministers should be part of local and denominational networks of youth ministers which encourage professional attitudes and actions. 2. Novice youth ministers should engage in conversations with their own church ministerial staff on ministerial best practices in the context of their church.
Pre-service teacher education is considered a critical domain for teacher socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1990).	1. Churches should not minimize the essential nature of youth minister. preparation in their hiring practices. 2. Youth ministers should be trained with the same intentionality as teachers.
(table continues)	

Table 6.1 <i>The Application of Novice Teacher Retention Knowledge for Novice Youth Ministers</i> (continued)	
Perspectives and strategies used in education for the retention of novice teachers	Potential applications for the retention of novice youth ministers
<p>The ability to understand and adapt to the workplace culture is critical and is enhanced by teacher professional communities where the novice is aided by veteran teachers (Westheimer, 2008). This strategy rejects the “sink or swim” mentality which leads to the isolation of teachers to figure everything out on their own.</p> <p>Teacher induction practices provide support and evaluation functions which contribute to the growth of teachers through such activities as mentoring and workshops (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009).</p>	<p>Novice youth ministers should place themselves within youth ministry professional communities with others professionals in their community and region. Novice youth ministers need to learn from veterans.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christian colleges and seminaries as well as denominational church leadership should provide formal and non-formal training opportunities specifically designed for novice youth ministers which will support them in the socialization process. 2. Mentoring initiatives should be conducted which connect novice youth ministers with veteran youth ministers.

Novice youth ministers will not be immune to difficulties, but strategic initiatives such as those suggested by novice teacher induction should contribute to the thriving of novice youth ministers and an increase of longevity in the youth ministry field.

Organizing Theme 3: Relationship with Supervisors

Every novice youth minister in this study had a minister on the church staff as her supervisor. Half of them were supervised by the senior minister and the other half by another associate minister on the church staff. Three theoretical constructs were developed from the data. First, a nurturing supervising relationship was beneficial to the

novice youth minister but did not guarantee a thriving situation. Second, tolerable supervisor relationships were found in both thriving and non-thriving situations but were more common in non-thriving situations. Third, unhealthy supervisory relationships were major contributors to “not thriving” situations.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of McKenzie (1997) and Makin (2005). McKenzie discovered that the most frequently mentioned issue regarding the personal experiences of present and former youth ministers in his sample was “negative experiences with senior pastor” by a 3 (negative) to 1 (positive) margin. He found that fairly typical negative factors were a lack of appropriate communication and lack of agreed upon expectations in the supervisory relationship. McKenzie found that there did not seem to be a correlation between longevity and these negative relationships. Makin (2005) discovered that satisfaction with one’s supervisor was the strongest of all facets related to organizational turnover.

The conclusion of this researcher is the same as those of McKenzie (1997) and Makin (2005). Supervisory relationships that are merely tolerable are unlikely to be beneficial to the novice youth minister and supervisory relationships that are unhealthy produce a negative effect in the life of the novice youth minister. These conclusions create a demand for supervisors and novice youth ministers to think clearly about this relationship.

Novice youth ministers need supervisors who are engaged in helping them succeed and who are concerned about their professional and spiritual growth. They need supervisors who will help them negotiate the expectations of a new role. Novice youth ministers need to learn how to communicate with their supervisors in such a way that

they show respect while making their needs, struggles, and expectations clear. Learning how to resolve conflicts in a healthy, biblical manner is essential for both the youth minister and the supervising minister. One strategy supervising ministers need to consider is the possibility of having a mentoring strategy for their supervision, which is the subject of the next section.

Organizing Theme 4: Mentoring

In the literature review of chapter 2 it was very apparent that teachers and leaders in the field of education believe that mentoring is a key component in the induction process for novice teachers. Induction programs involve a variety of strategies designed by school districts to help novice teachers transition into the field of education and thus promote longevity in the teaching vocation. Such induction programs include workshops and mentoring. Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) made this clear when they said, “Schools that provide mentoring and induction programs, particularly those related to collegial support, had lower rates of turnover among beginning teachers” (p. 201). Teachers who experience an induction strategy and mentoring support in their first year of teaching are less likely to leave teaching or change schools. Unfortunately, this research does not allow for the same kind of assertion to be made regarding youth ministers. There was not substantial evidence in the data collected by this researcher to say that the presence of a mentoring relationship in the life of the novice youth minister was a major factor in his thriving or not thriving. Some youth ministers had received significant mentoring prior to their novice experience. Some had mentors inside the church during their novice experience, and some had mentors outside the church. This

was disappointing in some ways, because the evidence is so strong in the field of education that mentors are a critical component to the success of novice teachers because of the help that a mentor provides in adjusting to the culture of teaching and the culture of a specific school. Three theoretical constructs related to mentoring were articulated in chapter 5.

The first construct stated that approaches to mentoring by supervising ministers fall into three categories: somewhat or highly intentional, informal, and non-existent. Some thrived in the first category and some did not thrive. Half of the youth ministers experienced an informal approach to mentoring and there was an even split between those who thrived and those who did not thrive. In 10 of the 26 cases the supervisor used no strategy which resembled mentoring. Eight of those 10 did not thrive, and the second theoretical construct explained their experience.

The second theoretical construct stated that in non-thriving situations the absence of a mentoring strategy (intentional or informal) by the supervising minister was detrimental to the situation. Although the reasons for this absence of mentoring varied from the busyness of the supervising minister to outright conflict between the supervising minister and the youth minister, the outcomes were similar. The youth minister was isolated in a difficult situation without a supervisor who was giving him substantial aid to help him succeed and thrive.

The third theoretical construct focused on the experience of the youth minister prior to the novice experience. The data were not strong enough to determine that mentoring prior to the novice youth ministry experience was a significant factor for thriving. This is not to say that mentoring prior to ministry service may not be significant.

It is only to say that this research was not able to establish a strong link between the two.

This study cannot conclude that novice youth ministers who had mentoring relationships during their novice experience were more likely to thrive than those who did not. There were youth ministers who thrived who had mentors and youth ministers who did not thrive who had mentors. In some cases, youth ministers who did not thrive did not have a mentoring relationship with their supervising ministers and this was detrimental to the youth ministers. Nevertheless, the case cannot be made from this research that a mentoring relationship with some other minister would have alleviated the situation. The biblical example of mentoring discussed in chapter 3 must still be considered, however.

Paul identified Timothy as a future ministry leader and mentored him while they ministered together as well as after Timothy became a leader in an established church ministry. The books of 1 and 2 Timothy attest to Paul's ongoing mentoring relationship with Timothy. In these books, Paul provides encouragement and counsel for Timothy's ongoing growth in ministry competencies and in the development of his character. Supervising ministers do not have to be the mentor of novice youth ministers. In fact, the supervising minister may not be the best person to serve as mentor. But the supervising minister can facilitate the acquisition of a mentor for the youth minister. In one situation in this study, being provided with a mentor from outside the church helped one youth minister turn a "not thriving" situation into a thriving situation.

Organizing Theme 5: Spouse's Experience

In the discussion of Organizing Theme 2 earlier, it was noted that the situation of the novice youth minister is different from the novice school teacher because the spouse of the youth minister is in some ways also part of the workplace culture to which the youth minister is adjusting. Usually the spouse is not part of the day-to-day workplace of the youth minister but is part of the church community in general, and often a participant in the youth ministry specifically. The findings related to the spouse's experience in the life of the novice youth minister are especially critical in light of the extent and the nature of the struggles reported. In this study, the two women who participated were single during their novice experience so the data from this research came only from wives.

The experience of wives whose husbands did not thrive is the subject of Theoretical Construct Spouses 5.1. It is not surprising that the wives of novice youth ministers who were not thriving might not be thriving themselves. What this construct presents is the range of struggles that were experienced. Thirteen of the 16 wives of youth ministers who did not thrive faced struggles that ranged from irritation to sadness and loneliness. One wife struggled with the hours her husband put in for his job. One couple experienced serious conflicts because of his work. One wife was so lonely and isolated that she escaped to her husband's office immediately after the worship service. Another wife experienced the sting of criticism directed at her. The struggle of one wife centered on the move from a large city to a small town. She became overwhelmed, worn out, and angry. The desire of one wife was to fight for her husband as she saw him being attacked. One wife felt personally attacked when her husband was attacked and felt that her daughter was being harmed in the situation. These were the experiences of wives whose

husbands did not thrive. Some of the wives of spouses who reported thriving also had significant struggles.

Theoretical Construct Spouses 5.2 stated that wives of youth ministers who thrived also had struggles. One wife had trouble coping with the criticism of her husband by people in the church even though her husband believed he was processing the conflict well and moving on. In another situation the youth minister's wife thought the church was taking advantage of him.

The conclusion to be reached here is that attention needs to be paid to the spouse of the novice youth minister, especially when it is clear that the youth minister is not thriving. Concern needs to be shown to the spouse to discern how she is adjusting to the new situation. Without question, this is a complex situation. The supervising minister is often responsible to be a minister to the spouse as well as the supervisor to the youth minister. But what if the youth minister is in conflict with the supervising minister? Can the supervising minister care for the spouse while in conflict with the youth minister? The evidence here suggests that the supervising minister and other church leadership would be wise to shepherd the spouse of the novice youth minister with wisdom and compassion, especially when it is apparent that the youth minister is not thriving.

Organizing Theme 6: Selection Process

Problems occurring in the selection process can impact the novice youth minister, the supervising minister, and the church as a whole. Churches' selection of youth ministers takes multiple forms. In some cases, a search team is appointed to find a candidate and present the candidate to the church leadership. In others, the youth minister

is selected by the senior minister. In still others, an associate minister leading the youth ministry is allowed to choose someone who is then presented to the church leadership for approval. The actual process of applications and interviews can also take multiple forms.

In this research, the findings related to the selection process focused on the problems that occur when three things happen. First, problems occurred when the major differences between the candidate and the church were overlooked or misunderstood (Theoretical Construct Selection 6.1). One youth minister did not thrive because the structure of the churches with which he had been associated in the past were vastly different from the church in which he served as a novice youth minister. In another situation, the doctrinal differences were overlooked but eventually became a key part of the conflict the youth minister experienced. In these situations the conclusion is clear that the questions asked and issues raised in the selection process are sometimes insufficient to expose possible differences. These differences turn into areas of tension and create a situation where the youth minister does not thrive.

Another problem ensued when wrong assumptions were made about the youth minister's fitness for ministry (Theoretical Construct Selection 6.2). The third problem occurred when a youth minister was selected very quickly without church leadership being integrally involved (Theoretical Construct Selection 6.3). As with the situation described in Theoretical Construct Selection 6.1, the selection process needs to be more thorough and not rushed. Certainly everyone involved in the selection process is hoping that the youth minister will fit well with the church. Inadequate selection processes are not helpful in determining good fits, contributing to a lack of thriving and short tenures by youth pastors.

The issue of calling addressed in Categorical Theme 1 is pertinent to the selection process. Because of the varied understandings of the term, care should be taken during the selection process to be certain that those asking the questions about calling and the candidate have similar understandings of the terms being used. A selection committee should clearly understand the nature and weight of the criterion if calling is considered an important criterion for the selection of a youth minister. The prospective youth minister will be helped if she understands the nature and weight of this criterion and how to communicate her own sense of God's leading to this ministry role in view of the selection committee's perspective.

Organizing Theme 7: Preparation

Unfortunately, the data obtained in this research did not contribute to answering the question, "What impact did the issue of preparation for the position have on the novice's experience of thriving or not thriving?" In this study lack of preparation, either formally or informally, was not reported as a reason for a youth minister not thriving. The anecdotes described above merely help point to the need for further research to determine what impact preparation has on the success of youth ministers, in view of the many institutions of higher education committed to training people for youth ministry.

No theoretical constructs were developed for the final organizing theme, discussed in the next section, but the conclusions presented contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the youth minister and the supervising minister.

Findings in Relation to the Differences in Perspective Between Youth Minister and Supervising Ministers (Organizing Theme 8)

Interviewing both youth ministers and supervising ministers was an important contribution for the triangulation necessary to produce reliable and valid data in this study. In the early stages of this research study proposal, the idea of interviewing youth, parents, and adult volunteers was proposed as a valuable method of triangulation, but because of time and resource limitations this was not done. Therefore, it was encouraging, when the data were analyzed, to find that in the large majority of cases, the youth minister and the supervising minister had very similar perceptions with regard to the questions that were asked.

Although the analysis of Organizing Theme 8 did not yield any theoretical constructs, there was value in determining what was going on when there were differences in perspective between the youth minister and the supervising minister. In three situations, the differences in perspective revealed an unhealthy relationship between the youth minister and the supervising minister. Unhealthy relationships were evidenced by lack of communication, unresolved conflicts, disrespect, and, at times, animosity. In two other situations, the relationship between the youth minister and supervising minister would not be described as unhealthy, but the differences in perspective complicated the situation. Had only the youth minister been interviewed, it is less likely that these differences would have been discovered.

These differences in perspective between the youth minister and supervising minister revealed the kinds of relational difficulties that can make working together in a church very difficult. When the youth minister is under attack from youth, parents, and

adult volunteers, and the supervising minister does not really want to engage in a discussion with the youth minister, reconciliation and resolution are unattainable. When the youth minister has an agenda to change the leadership style of the supervising minister, conflict is guaranteed. If the youth minister is not aware that the supervising minister does not think he is really a fit for youth ministry, the youth minister does not have all the data needed to analyze and appropriately respond to the situation; more information would have contributed to a better response by the youth minister.

That youth ministers and their supervising ministers will have differences in perspective as they work together in the church is to be assumed. Some of these differences will be major and some will be minor. A difference in philosophy of youth ministry is major. A difference in how many days to run a camp is minor. The pathway for resolution of these differences can be unclear to the supervising minister and the youth minister alike. Unfortunately, when a supervising minister and a youth minister consistently disagree, the youth minister often has nowhere to turn for resolution. What if the supervising minister is the senior minister? Is it acceptable for the youth minister to go to the chairperson of the church board? If the supervising minister is not the senior minister, is it appropriate for the youth minister to talk to the senior minister, or will the youth minister be perceived as “going over the head” of the supervising minister when he talks to the senior minister? The process of navigating the differences should be part of a serious conversation between the supervising minister and youth minister.

Implications

The findings and conclusions of this study have implications for three groups of people who have a stake in seeing youth ministers thrive and continue in vocational youth ministry. These are supervising ministers, youth ministry educators in Christian higher education, and the youth ministers themselves.

Implications for Youth Ministers

Prospective youth ministers need to be prepared to articulate their biblical understanding of calling in a church selection process and explain how God has led them to seek the youth ministry position in view. They need to listen carefully to the Spirit of God as they discern their fitness for vocational ministry, specifically youth ministry. This needs to happen prior to the novice youth ministry experience as well as during the novice experience. This research clearly showed that struggles occur for novices even when they enter the youth ministry with a strong sense of God's leading in their lives, a sense of calling as described by some. During the novice youth ministry experience the youth minister should also take time to dialogue with supervisors, mentors, and colleagues to help him gauge whether or not he one of those indicated in Ephesians 4:11–12 who have been given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

The novice youth minister needs to be cognizant of all the matters of socialization in her novice experience. The youth minister will be negotiating the expectations of a number of stakeholders. There will be issues of power and differing styles of conflict resolution. Some of the struggles will be with the minister who supervises the novice youth minister. Patterns of communication will differ. Some difficulties he faces may

require outside consultation and advice. A key person impacted in the socialization process is the youth minister's spouse.

Youth ministers need to be certain that they do not neglect their spouses, especially if they themselves are not thriving in the ministry. They need to be alert to the spiritual and emotional condition of their spouses in order to detect loneliness, frustration, anger, and other signs that would signal that the spouse is struggling. Care must be taken as to the extent of the information communicated to the spouse about problems the youth minister is having at church. Discernment must be exercised, especially if the heart of the spouse is becoming bitter and angry toward the church.

Implications for Supervising Ministers

The supervising ministers of novice youth ministers are important to their success and thriving. Supervising ministers need to be more diligent, thoughtful, and intentional in their supervision. Novice youth ministers are highly dependent on supervising ministers for encouragement and support. Supervising ministers should consider a mentoring approach for a person who is often still in the exploratory stage of vocation. Youth ministers enter the field with many hopes and dreams. Some do not plan on being in youth ministry for very long, while others hope to make it a career. Some youth ministers want to be in vocational ministry but are not really sure what that looks like. Discussions of vocation and call should be part of this mentoring process. A study of Ephesians 4:11–12 would be helpful, and subsequent engagement with the youth minister about how she fits into this framework of equipping is critical. If the supervising minister

does not have the time or capacity to be a mentor to the youth minister, he should help the youth minister find a mentor within the church or outside the church.

Supervising ministers must be aware of the difficulties the youth ministers are facing. They need to help them deal with the expectations of others. They should establish a culture of healthy assessment in which the youth minister feels safe to talk about areas of struggle and improvement. Lines of communication need to be clear. The issues of power and conflict resolution must be discussed. The supervising minister needs to be conscious of whether the youth minister is thriving or not. The supervising minister should seek the counsel of other leadership in the church to help mediate in the relationship if there is a serious problem between himself and the youth minister. A nurturing relationship should be pursued. This means that the supervising minister should ask the youth minister how he is doing spiritually and emotionally and not just be concerned about ministry competencies or evaluation of performance. The supervising minister should view the novice youth minister as a vocational ministry leader in the church who must be disciplined and encouraged through difficult times in order to do everything humanly possible to set him on a trajectory of a lifetime of fruitful vocational ministry.

Supervising ministers and the leadership of the church need to be especially vigilant in shepherding the spouses of novice youth ministers, especially if it appears that the youth minister is not thriving. Supervising ministers should ask the youth minister how his spouse is doing spiritually and emotionally in the midst of them both adjusting to a new situation. They can ask how the spouse is doing in developing friendships in the church and in the community. The supervising minister can monitor the time demands on

the YM to be certain he is giving enough attention to his spouse. The supervising minister would be wise to encourage the church to provide the finances for both the youth minister and spouse to attend spiritual enrichment opportunities such as conferences and retreats.

Implications for Youth Ministry Educators

It is important for youth ministry educators to assist prospective youth ministers in their understanding of call and vocation. Prospective youth ministers need to have a biblical understanding of call and vocation. Discussion of their place in God's kingdom work as they participate in fieldwork needs to be a central part of the curriculum. Field mentors and faculty mentors should make the subject part of their ongoing interactions.

Youth ministers need to be taught how to adapt to the culture of a church in order to optimize the socialization process. They need to be taught how to analyze the critical issues in a church culture: power, decision making, conflict resolution styles, doctrine, philosophy of ministry, and communication styles, for example. Prospective youth ministers need to learn how to work well with their supervisors. They should be encouraged to find ministry mentors who will guide and encourage them during their novice experience just as novice teachers benefit from mentors (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). They should be encouraged to network with other youth ministers in the community for prayer, encouragement, and counsel. Although networking with youth ministry colleagues is not the same as mentoring, such a network can provide a safe place for interaction about conflicts and difficulties being experienced in the church.

The issues surrounding the adjustment of spouses to the church setting must be addressed by youth ministry educators no matter how difficult it might be to handle in an

educational setting. Youth ministers in training must be prepared to help their spouses face the difficulties that often arise in churches. Spouses could be invited to specific class sessions where this is discussed. Course assignments could require the prospective youth minister to interact with his spouse regarding the spouse's readiness for church ministry. The health of the student's marriage should be addressed while he in this formal education process. The findings of this study regarding the struggles experienced by spouses highlight the need for youth ministers to know how to maintain a healthy marriage. Topics of conflict resolution, communication, expectations, and time management are critical for both ministry and marriage.

Limitations

Because participants in this study were selected on a purposeful basis and not randomly, population validity cannot be achieved and care must be taken when generalizations are made from the data. Further research would be enhanced if the names of the hundreds of youth ministers and former youth ministers in the Northwest were gathered and from those names a random sample was drawn.

Although this research added the perspective of the supervising minister to the analysis of the youth minister's experience, there are other important people in the church setting from whom valuable information could have been acquired. The perspectives of students, parents, adult volunteers, colleagues, and church board members would have been very helpful because these stakeholders have different sets of expectations and definitions of success. These stakeholders often see the novice youth minister in very different settings than the supervising minister and thus have data that the supervising

minister does not have. Time did not allow for this kind of research in the present study, however.

Another limitation was the length of time between the novice experience and the time of the interview. There were times when youth ministers and supervising ministers alike had trouble answering questions because of the time lapse between the experience and the interview. Some of the participants were recalling events from 10 years prior.

The last limitation is the fact that only this researcher did the interviews and monitored the transcription of the recordings. Although reasonable safeguards were put into place, the possibility of error and bias is greater than if a team of researchers were working together on the gathering of the data and the analysis.

Recommendations for Further Research

This phenomenographic study focused on 26 youth ministers who were selected because of certain experiences they had as novices. Because the sample was small and not random, making connections between the experience of the novice youth minister and her longevity in ministry was difficult if not impossible. One of the most strategic but very demanding studies which would aid the understanding of youth ministers would be a quantitative study in which many former youth ministers were surveyed and interviewed about the factors which led to them leaving vocational youth ministry. Of interest would be their novice experience as well as subsequent ministry experiences. The present research study provides a starting point for a grounded theory of the novice youth ministry experience.

Another research possibility would focus on the spouses of youth ministers.

Considering the data gathered in this research, it would be helpful to understand more about the interplay between the experience of the youth minister and the experience of his spouse in the novice youth ministry experience.

Research needs to be done on the impact of mentors both in the training of youth ministers and during their novice experience. Is the presence of mentors inside the church or from outside the church critical for thriving? for longevity? Should supervising ministers develop mentoring skills to help novices? This kind of research would mirror the kind of research done in teacher education, such as that of Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006).

Further research should focus on the issue of preparation for youth ministry. More explicit questioning about preparation would provide insight as to how youth ministers believe their preparation or lack of preparation impacted them as novices. This research was limited in its ability to draw inferences about whether or not a certain kind of preparation would have impacted the issue of thriving or longevity. Future research could increase this understanding.

The final recommendation for further research is to conduct a longitudinal study that starts with people in formal youth ministry training programs and novice youth ministers. Important data could be gathered at the precise time when the novice youth minister moved to another church or left vocational ministry to help understand the reasons for the change. More could be learned about the origins and development of a person's sense of calling or vocation. Critical issues of financial compensation could be understood, along with the youth minister's sense of being respected as a minister by the

congregation. This study could include data gathered from other stakeholders in the local church who were not part of this study, which would help youth ministers see themselves as others see them. This would include students, parents, adult volunteers, and the spouses of youth ministers, and would provide the strengths of both greater diversity of perspective, and the opportunity for increased triangulation.

Concluding Remarks

This study was conducted to gain further insight into the lived experience of novice youth ministers. Although there is an abundance of literature in the field of education which brings understanding to the experience of novice teachers, the literature in the field of youth ministers is very limited. Because of the rise and growth of youth ministry in churches over the last 60 years and the limited research to date, this study was conducted.

For this research, 26 persons who began their novice youth ministry experience between 2000 and 2007 participated in a semi-structured interview. In order to broaden the perspective of the lived experience of novice youth ministers, 24 ministers who served as supervisors to the youth ministers were also interviewed. All 50 interviews were transcribed and analyzed using phenomenographic research methods and aided by the use of the computer software program NVivo9.

The findings of this study were presented using eight categorical themes and, for six of those themes, theoretical constructs that were supported in the data. From these findings conclusions and implications were presented which will hopefully contribute to the thriving of novice youth ministers and increased longevity, which will lead to healthy

church youth ministries in which youth come to faith in Christ and grow as disciples of Christ. Important limitations of this research were presented, focusing on the nature of the sample not being random and the lack of helpful data that could have been gathered from other stakeholders in the church youth ministry context. Recommendations for further research include a study of former youth ministers to determine factors that led to their departure from youth ministry. Further study of the spouses of youth ministers, the preparation of youth ministers, and the mentoring of youth ministers would be valuable. A longitudinal study which followed people from their formal preparation for youth ministry and into their novice youth ministry would be of extreme value.

The stories of novice youth ministers told in this study reveal the need for the church to give great care and consideration to this group of people who seek to live out the gospel in the context of youth ministry. The hope and prayer of this researcher is that those who have a stake in the lives of youth will be diligent to raise up a generation of youth ministers who will minister to youth in such a way that youth come to Christ and grow as his followers.

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APPENDIX A

EMAIL LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Email Letter to Prospective Participants

I am conducting research for my Ph. D. dissertation which is designed to learn about the novice youth minister's experience in his/her first church youth ministry position. The potential benefits of the study include finding ways to help youth ministers thrive and the acquisition of knowledge which will help in the promotion of better relationships between youth ministers and their supervising ministers. Findings may provide strategies for the encouragement of novices to consider long term youth ministry service. Insights may be gained to help Christian universities and seminaries train youth ministers for service in local churches.

I'm asking you to help me because I think you fit the following criteria:

1. He/she started their first youth ministry position in an evangelical Protestant church in the Pacific Northwest between the year 2000 and 2007 and spent at least 1.5 years in a novice youth minister experience. The reason for this criteria is that the study is limited to novice youth ministers in evangelical Protestant churches in the Pacific Northwest. A person is likely to remember much of the circumstances if the ministry started within the last 10 years. The individual should have started the youth ministry before June, 2007 so that 3 years have passed since the beginning of the novice experience. A required tenure of at least 1.5 years in the novice experience is likely to exclude those who had no intention of staying in youth ministry when they began the ministry. The foundational idea is that three years have passed since the beginning of the novice youth minister experience which lasted at least 1.5 years.

2. The position required at least 30 hours of work per week with youth ministry responsibilities as at least ½ of the ministry portfolio.

If you fit these criteria, you will be asked to participate in the following way:

1. Participate in a 60–75 minute interview with me. This will be face to face or via Skype.

2. Allow your supervising minister during their novice experience to be interviewed. (Reporting of results will disguise the participants so they are not recognized. Information obtained will not be shared with any other participants.)

Before I interviewed you I would have to be certain that your supervising pastor is willing to participate in a 60–75 minute interview. (I would tell him that the reporting of results will disguise the participants so they are not recognized. Information obtained will not be shared with any other participants.)

Participation is entirely voluntary and the information will be held in absolute confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used and every effort will be made to prevent readers from identifying you or your church. Information that is not disguised will not be shared with other participants.

What do you think? Do you fit the criteria? Are you willing to help me out? Let me know as soon as possible, please?

Sincerely,

Ron Marrs

APPENDIX B

ONLINE SURVEY TO COLLECT SAMPLE POSSIBILITIES

Marrs Youth Minister Research

Youth Pastor Research in the Northwest: How long do we stay and what's goin...

If you are a youth pastor or former youth pastor, I would appreciate it if you would take the five minute survey below no matter when you started your youth ministry experience. This will help with the knowledge of how long youth pastors stay at one church.

My primary research for my Ph. D. is designed to learn about the experience of people in their first paid, church youth ministry position (novice/rookie position). The potential benefits of the study include finding ways to help youth ministers thrive as well as the acquisition of knowledge which will help in the promotion of better relationships between youth ministers and their supervising ministers. Findings may provide strategies for the encouragement of novices to consider long term youth ministry service. Insights may be gained to help Christian universities and seminaries train youth ministers for service in local churches.

For my interviews I am looking for people who started their rookie youth ministry experience in 2000 or after. This may be you or may be someone you know. Please take this brief survey if you fit the profile or if you have someone to recommend. The survey should take five minutes or less. Thank you.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO RECOMMEND PEOPLE FOR ME TO INTERVIEW.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO PASS ON THE LINK TO THIS SURVEY SITE: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HSYZ8TX>

For a longer explanation of this research go to
http://westernseminary.edu/Admissions/Faculty/PDX/Pages/marrs_ron.htm

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 Western Seminary
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1. In what year did you start your rookie youth ministry experience?

- ☐ Prior to 2000
- ☐ 2000
- ☐ 2001
- ☐ 2002
- ☐ 2003
- ☐ 2004
- ☐ 2005
- ☐ 2006
- ☐ 2007
- ☐ 2008
- ☐ 2009
- ☐ 2010
- ☐ 2011

2. How many years did you serve in your rookie youth ministry experience?
3. In what city and state was your rookie youth ministry experience?
4. In your rookie youth ministry position did you work for at least 30 hours per week with at least $\frac{1}{2}$ of your hours in the area of youth?
5. In just few sentences, how would you describe your rookie youth ministry experience?
6. Please list the four jobs you had after your rookie youth ministry experience and your present job.

Occupation

City

Year started

Years in the occupation

Occupation

City

Year started

Years in the occupation

Occupation

City

Year started

Years in the occupation

Occupation

City

Year started

Years in the occupation

Present Occupation

City

Year started

Years in the occupation

Questions 7–10 are for people started their rookie experience between 2000 and 2008 and who are willing to be interviewed. Question 11 is for your recommendation of others.

7. Are you willing to participate in a 60 minute interview with me in person or via phone/Skype?
8. Would you be willing to allow me to interview the person who was your supervisor at the church? (If you say “no,” I may still want to interview you.)
9. If you are willing to have the supervising pastor for your rookie experience to be interviewed, please provide his/her name and contact information.
10. Please provide your name, email address and phone number if you are willing to be interviewed.
11. If you have people to recommend please provide their name, email address, phone number and the reason why you think they would be good to contact. Feel free to provide more than one person.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

Participant's name: _____

I authorize Ron Marrs of Talbot Seminary, Biola University, La Mirada, California, and/or any designated research assistants to gather information from me on the experience of novice youth ministers.

I understand that the general purposes of the research are to understand the perspective of youth ministers on their novice youth ministry experience and the perspectives of the youth ministers' supervisory ministers on that same novice experience and that I will be asked to participate in an interview and that the approximate total time of my involvement will be 75 minutes.

The potential benefits of the study include helping youth ministers thrive better in their early years of ministry, promoting more supportive relationships between youth ministers and their supervising ministers, and healthier youth ministries in churches.

I am aware that I may choose not to answer any questions that I find embarrassing or offensive and I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue anxiety or stress or have questions about the research or my rights as a participant, that may have been provoked by the experience Ron Marrs will be available for consultation, and will also be available to provide direction regarding medical assistance in the unlikely event of physical injury incurred during participation in the research.

Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. My individual results will not be released without my written consent. This means that no information will be released to the novice youth minister provided by their supervising pastor and vice versa.

Signature

Date

There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher with your responses. The other copy you may keep for your records.

Questions and comments may be addressed to Ron Marrs, Talbot Seminary, Biola University, 13800 Biola Avenue, La Mirada, CA. 90639-0001. Phone: (562) 903-6000).

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH MINISTER INTERVIEW

Questions for Youth Minister Interview

1. Could you give a little background of how you got started in youth ministry?
2. What was your ministry title in your first youth ministry?
3. What were your primary responsibilities?
4. How would you describe your novice experience in general? Please explain your answer.
5. What were the major aspects of youth ministry that brought you joy?
6. What were some of the major challenges?
7. Were your salary and benefit package satisfactory?
8. How did your novice experience lead you to where you are today?
9. If you moved out of church youth ministry into another area of ministry, what impact did your novice experience have on that decision?
10. If you left vocational ministerial ministry, what impact did your novice experience have on that decision?
11. In general, what connections do you make between your novice youth ministry experience and your subsequent vocational trajectory?
12. Was it your thought during this time that you had the skills and abilities to be a youth minister?
13. How did your thoughts about vocation/call impact your entry into youth ministry?
14. How did your novice experience impact your perspective on a call to ministry?
15. What factors caused you to think you were a fit or not a fit for youth ministry in that church? Church youth ministry, in general?

16. Who were your mentors prior to and while you were in your novice experience? How did they contribute to your ministry development?
17. What aspects of your personality did you consider valuable for youth ministry?
18. What aspects of your personality did you consider detrimental to youth ministry?
19. Please describe the areas of youth ministry where you felt effective. Please describe the areas of youth ministry where you struggled to be effective.
20. In what areas do you think your supervising minister may have felt you were effective as a youth minister? In what areas do you think your supervising minister may have felt you were not effective as a youth minister?

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS FOR SUPERVISING MINISTER INTERVIEW

Questions for Supervising Minister Interview

(numbers in parentheses indicate a match to the youth minister interview questions)

1. Why did you choose _____ to be a youth minister at your church? (#s 1–3)
2. Was it your perception that _____ was thriving or not thriving while at your church?
(#4)
3. What did you perceive were _____'s joys in youth ministry? (#5)
4. What did you perceive were _____'s challenges in youth ministry? (#6)
5. Did you think _____ salary and benefit package was satisfactory? (#7)
6. What factors do you believe caused _____ to stay with your church or leave? (#s
9–10)
7. In general, how do you think _____'s novice youth ministry experience influenced
his vocational trajectory? (#11)
8. Was it your thought during this time that _____ had the skills and abilities to be a
youth minister? (#12)
9. By the end of the three years, did you think _____ was called by God to be in church
youth ministry? (#13)
10. What factors caused you to think _____ was a fit or not a fit for youth ministry in that
church? Church youth ministry, in general? (#15)
11. In what ways did you intentionally attempt to mentor _____? (#16)
12. What aspects of _____'s personality did you consider valuable for youth ministry?
(#17)

13. What aspects of _____'s personality did you consider detrimental to youth ministry?

(#18)

14. In what areas did you feel _____ was effective as a youth minister? In what areas did you feel _____ struggled to be effective as a youth minister? (#19)

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions

1. What are your general reflections as you read the result of these interviews?
2. Do the interview citations used to illustrate the theoretical constructs actually support what I am maintaining?
3. Does anything surprise you with the findings?
4. Do you think there are any alternate explanations for the data that I have presented?
5. What questions arise for you out of what you read?

APPENDIX G

TRANSCRIPT ASSESSOR'S QUESTIONS

Transcript Assessor's Questions

1. Did the interviewer appear to be open to hear whatever the participant said?
2. Did the interviewer guide the interview in such a way that his presuppositions intruded on the interview?
3. Did the interviewer appear at any time to silence any concerns, preoccupations, or judgments of the participant?
4. Did the interviewer "use prompts to pursue/clarify the participant's own line of reflection and allow the participant to elaborate, provide incidents, clarifications, and maybe, to discuss events at length?
5. Did the transcription accurately reflect the emotions and emphases of the participant?

VITA

NAME:

Ronald G. Marrs, Portland, OR

EDUCATION:

Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, CA	Ph.D.	2012
Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary Portland, OR	Th.M.	1980
Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary Portland, OR	M.Div.	1977
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR	B.A.	1972

EXPERIENCE:

Assistant Professor of Youth and Pastoral Ministry Western Seminary, Portland, OR	2003 to present
Pastor of Shepherding and Discipleship, Worship Westwood Baptist Church, Olympia, WA	1999–2003
Youth Pastor Westwood Baptist Church, Olympia, WA	1978–1999