Developing the Whole Student: Campus Ministry's Impact on Spiritual Development

Zachary D. Samples

Eastern Illinois University

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Developing the Whole Student: Campus Ministry's Impact on Spiritual Development

(TITLE)

BY

Zachary D. Samples

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Sciences in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2016

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE
Developing the Whole Student: Campus Ministry's Impact on Spiritual Development

Zachary D. Samples

Eastern Illinois University

Committee Members
Dr. Dianne Timm
Dr. Jennifer Sipes
Mr. Roy Lanham
Abstract

College students at both public and private institutions across the country are involved in campus ministry organizations; however, not much is known about how such involvement translates into the students' faith and spiritual development. This study aimed to gain a better understanding of how students are involved in campus ministry organizations, how faith and spiritual development is affected, and how students are generally impacted by campus ministry organization involvement. The researcher conducted six interviews with juniors and seniors involved in three different campus ministry organizations. Results showed that participants have grown in their faith and spirituality through membership in campus ministry organizations. The results also provide evidence that students involved in leadership capacities within campus ministry organizations developed leadership skills.

*Keywords*: faith development, spiritual development, religious organizations, campus ministry organizations, college students, student affairs
Dedication

This study is dedicated to individuals, both ordained ministers and lay faithful, who tirelessly impact the faith and spiritual development of college students across the country that are involved in campus ministry organizations. These campus ministry professionals are on the front lines of working with students to develop, keep, and advance their faith at such a critical age. Campus ministers, do not sell yourself short and do not lose sight of why you entered the campus ministry profession.
Acknowledgements

I would be remiss if I did not start by acknowledging the tremendous amount of blood, sweat, and tears that was put into this project by the formidable and exceptional Dr. Dianne Timm. While I sort of said that in jest, I know that this project would not have been completed without countless “Mass and Breakfast” meetings, late night edits, and thought-provoking questions all provided by Dr. Timm. For that, and for much more, thank you. Within that same vein, thank you to my thesis committee for providing expertise and guidance along the way: Dr. Jennifer Sipes and Mr. Roy Lanham.

I also want to acknowledge the countless friends that I have made from my own involvement in campus ministry. For fear of leaving someone out, I will not list every name, but I would not have the passion for campus ministry that I do without the exceptional group of people that I have had the sincere privilege of getting to know through participation in campus ministry. Similarly, the tireless dedication of the campus ministers in my life have shown me that the labor of love that is campus ministry is as important to the students as it is to the campus ministers. It is no question that I would not be the person that I am today without the impact and influence that campus ministers have had upon my life. So to Fr. John Titus, Fr. Steve Arisman, Roy Lanham, Doris Nordin, and Edrianne Ezell, thank you for you constant support of me.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my parents, my sister, my grandparents, and my extended family for the love and support that you have given me over the past 24 years. Mom and Dad, thanks so much for supporting me throughout my entire EIU experience. I would be nowhere without your influence, love, support, and guidance over the years. Meghan, I guess you are okay too... At every stage of my life, God has blessed me with the people necessary to help me keep moving forward. This thesis process was no different. To God be the glory.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In higher education, student affairs professionals often talk about the need to develop the whole student (Capeheart-Meningall, 2005). In order to develop the student holistically, student affairs professionals aid in the transition process from high school to university, work to foster academic success, encourage the socialization of their students through a variety of activities, establish safe living and learning environments, provide counseling services in a variety of capacities, create safe places to maintain their physical health through exercise, assist them when they have been accused of wrongdoing, and so much more (Capeheart-Meningall, 2005).

Essentially, student affairs professionals, in tandem with the faculty, are the lifeblood of the university and the front line of student support and advocacy. Student affairs professionals and practitioners, however, often neglect a very important aspect of many students’ lives: religion, faith, spirituality, and overall spiritual development of college students (Bowman & Small, 2010). This leads to a critical aspect of student development essentially being unaddressed, and therefore a drift from developing the whole student.

According to researchers, student affairs professionals do not spend enough time focusing on the spiritual development of college students, and as such, little research exists on the topic (Bowman & Small, 2010; Small, 2014; Bryant, 2007). Several possible explanations for this apparent lack of research have been cited. Bryant (2007) argued that this neglect might have to do with student affairs professionals’ own discomforts with their personal spirituality, faith development, and/or religious identity, as this is often lacking among higher education professionals from all areas and departments of the academy. Small (2014) agreed, but added that it is especially difficult for student affairs professionals working on public campuses to
address ideas of spirituality and overall spiritual development due to the division of church and state. Further, Small stated that despite the fact that student affairs professionals tend to struggle with this more on public campuses, the issue still arises on private school campuses as a multitude of religious backgrounds still exist there. Despite these somewhat compelling arguments, these researchers agree that a student’s spirituality is an essential component of a student’s overall development while in college, and therefore deserves appropriate attention and research.

At most institutions, the spiritual development of college students is not the sole responsibility of student affairs professionals employed by colleges and universities, but instead another group of student affairs professionals employed off campus assist with the process as well. Campus ministers, employed by campus ministry organizations affiliated with colleges and universities, make it their business to ensure that students have a spiritual home when they are in college. These groups function along both denominational and nondenominational lines. They offer programming, worship services, bible studies, retreats, mission trips, community service opportunities, ecumenical dialogues, spiritual guidance, and so much more to ensure that students develop spiritually. Campus ministry organizations exist on or near most public and private college and university campuses nationwide (Cawthon & Jones, 2004). Even most private, religiously affiliated, colleges and universities offer a wide range of campus ministry organizations—even outside the religious denomination of the school. Often they are denomination or religion specific (e.g. Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, Muslim); however, many are nondenominational, or more focused on the general spirituality of college students (Cawthon & Jones, 2004).
This study targeted students involved in campus ministry organizations at a public institution to determine if involvement in campus ministry positively or negatively affects a college student's spiritual development. Given the multitude of issues that higher education in general is faced with, a conversation about the role of spirituality is very apropos and a timely addition to conversation within the larger academy about how to best serve and develop the whole student.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the impact that involvement in a campus ministry organization has upon the spiritual development of students at the undergraduate level. The study examined the impact of being involved in a campus ministry organization in terms of the students' spiritual development. Understanding the role that campus ministry organizations play in students' spiritual development will allow student affairs professionals to gain a better sense of the need and importance of these organizations on college campuses. This study will assist student affairs professionals in the process of becoming more aware of the impact that campus ministry has on students' overall perception of their college experience. Further, the study shows how campus ministry involvement supports the holistic development of college students enrolled in colleges across the country.

My own spiritual development and identity is directly related to the time that I spent involved in a campus ministry organization for the entirety of my undergraduate experience. Over the course of four years, I was a very active member of the Newman Catholic Center. I formed lifelong relationships with a host of peers and campus ministers. Perhaps my strongest influences during that time period were the priest assigned to our Newman Catholic Center. His influence and guidance certainly helped to shape and to form my own spiritual and religious
identity. The other campus ministers also had a strong impact on my faith development. In addition to this guidance, I have come to realize that my own spiritual development really took hold through a series of events and programs that occurred during the four years that I was involved at the Newman Center. Retreats, pilgrimages to the March for Life in Washington, D.C., alternative spring break trips, serving as a liturgical minister at Mass, and joining several organizations under the Newman umbrella essentially served as stepping-stones and building blocks that helped me to achieve a heightened sense of my own spirituality, religious affiliation, spiritual development, and growth as a leader. The people and events sponsored by a campus ministry organization directly shaped my spiritual development.

Research Questions

The following four research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. How do students describe their involvement in campus ministry organizations?

2. How do students describe how they are personally impacted by their involvement in campus ministry organizations?

3. What campus ministry organization sponsored programs, events, and/or initiatives do students identify as having an impact on their time in college?

The research questions will be answered through six qualitative interviews of college students who are active participants in three different campus ministry organizations.

Significance of the Study

A number of studies have been conducted on the relationship between involvement in campus ministry and student development in general and spiritual development specifically; however, many of these studies are outdated (Astin, 1993; Evans, 1996; Mankowski & Thomas, 2000). For the most part, these studies tend to confirm the positive impact of campus ministry
involvement, but the dated nature of the currently published studies confirms the need for updated scholarship. Such updated scholarship helps to identify whether or not a relationship exists between campus ministry involvement and the spiritual development of college students. The studies have not always addressed the idea of the development of the whole student including: spirituality and spiritual development, academic success in the classroom, socialization, etc. This study aimed to bring these elements together by focusing on each of these essential facets of student development, and determining the relationship therein.

The findings of this study benefit several audiences. Campus ministry organizations and campus ministry professional staff members will benefit from the study due to the fact that the findings will assist them in their efforts to foster the spiritual development of college students. The findings will help campus ministry organizations at public institutions to refine their approach to ensure that they are accomplishing their own aims and goals, and will provide further rationale for support from the greater higher education community. Student affairs professionals at public institutions will also benefit from the findings of the study, as it will assist these professionals in their endeavors to encourage the holistic development of their students through multiple avenues of development—paying special attention to spiritual development as a central tenet of student development.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, and the fact that the sample was comprised of a limited number of student interviews, one limitation was the representativeness of the sample to the larger population of students involved in campus ministry. While this type of study can never be generalizable, every effort was made to ensure that the sample was representative, while maintaining a small interview pool. The study was conducted on a regional mid-size public
university in the Midwest. As with many mid-size public institutions in the Midwest, Christianity is the dominant religion present on campus. In addition, Christianity is often the only faith tradition that is represented by a full-fledged campus ministry program (full-fledged meaning a campus ministry organization that is professionally staffed by campus minister(s) and has its own physical property). This did not allow for many students to be interviewed outside the realm of established Christian campus ministry organizations, meaning only students involved in Christian campus ministry organizations were interviewed for the purposes of this study. Therefore, findings from this study may not be transferable to conceptualizations of spirituality, spiritual development, and/or religiosity outside the realm of Christianity on the college or university campus and in campus ministry organizations therein.

The biases that I brought to this study as the primary researcher could potentially have skewed the findings of the interview process. I am a devout and practicing Roman Catholic who has been very involved with the Roman Catholic campus ministry organization present on the university campus where the study is being conducted. Despite the fact that I am very open and accepting of other Christian denominations I understand the importance of the same. I understand the role and importance of campus ministry involvement on the spiritual development of college students in terms of their overall development regardless of their own religious background and/or affiliation. I interviewed students involved at the Newman Catholic Center that I have also been active in and have relationships with the students there, which might have provided for further bias. Despite these limitations, I aimed to be as objective as possible, and to ensure the integrity of this study by maintaining professional standards and sought out students I had little prior contact with through involvement in campus ministry organizations. It is also important to recognize that each individual has their own unique set of experiences that cannot
be minimized in the student’s telling of their experiences. Further, the thesis committee and advisor assisted with ensuring that the study did not suffer due to my biases.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Campus minister.** A student affairs professional, often affiliated with and/or employed by a campus ministry or college/university, who focuses on the spiritual development of students through spiritual-based programming, assisting in the transition from high school to college faith communities, and other spiritually-based initiatives to ensure the spiritual development of college students (Mankowski & Thomas, 2000).

**Campus ministry.** Any student-based religious and/or spiritual organization that exists solely to foster the spiritual growth and development of college/university students (Bryant, 2007).

**Faith.** The generally strong belief and feeling that a higher power, specifically God, exists and intervenes on behalf of the individual in times of need and in times of positivity in the individual’s life (Small, 2014).

**Spiritual development.** The process by which individuals develop their own personal spiritual awareness through ideas of faith, religion, and belief or disbelief in a higher power (Boyatzis, 2003).

**Spirituality.** Refers to the process by which individuals construct knowledge and meaning, and how individuals connect themselves to the world (Small, 2014).

**Student affairs professional.** A person employed by a college or university who focuses on the holistic development and academic success of college students by linking experiences occurring inside the confines of the classroom with experiences occurring outside of the classroom (McClellan & Stringer, 2009).
Religion. An organized group of individuals who believe in some form of a higher power(s) (e.g., god or gods), and that links the meaning of life to this higher power through joint customs, activities, culture, practices, doctrine, and religious attitudes (Small, 2014).

Summary

Chapter I includes an introduction to the topic of the spiritual development of college and university students. Specifically, this chapter includes an introduction to the role that campus ministry involvement leads to the spiritual development of college and university students. Further, Chapter I identifies the purpose and significance of this study, potential limitations that occurred throughout the research and analysis phase of the study, defines terms pertinent to the study, and perhaps most importantly identifies the questions that were utilized to guide the study.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Religion within the realm of higher education is often a taboo subject; however, that has not always been the case. At points throughout the history of both religion and higher education, the relationship has been strong—even symbiotic (Cawthon & Jones, 2004). Today, as the division between church and state has become more pronounced, and many private institutions have become more secular in scope, the once symbiotic relationship between organized faith-based communities and institutions of higher education is no longer the norm, but, rather, the exception. Studying the history and development of religion within the context of the academy provides a strong foundation to this study, and will offer the context for this review of the literature. Research will be examined as to the effect that campus ministry involvement has upon the student’s development while enrolled in college. Finally, a review of the theories associated with the spiritual development of human beings, specifically adolescents and college-aged students, will be presented.

History of Religion and the Academy

The intersection between faith, reason, and the quest for knowledge has its roots in higher education. Higher education and spiritual development have long been connected to one another in the United States. According to Bryant (2007), countless colleges and universities across the United States have religious backgrounds or began as places of theological instruction and/or seminaries. Many institutions of higher learning, specifically private ones, across the country began as theological seminaries (many still are), are tied to Roman Catholic religious orders of consecrated men and women or Roman Catholic dioceses, and are affiliated with a host of other Protestant faith traditions (Bryant, 2007). Despite the fact that many of today’s public
universities are not religiously based, many sponsored and encouraged attendance at chapel services during their early years of existence. For example, the first university President of what is now Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, IL, Livingston C. Lord, led chapel services himself in the main administration building, where attendance by all students was mandatory (Tingley, 1974).

Cawthon and Jones (2004) agreed with Bryant and stated that many of these universities were chartered in the 18th century—a time period that historians refer to as a religious awakening. Despite this storied history, religion and the academy have not always gone hand in hand. As the university modernized in the 19th century, a growing discomfort manifested between religion and the academy (Bryant, 2007). Instead of encouraging spirituality on campus, colleges and universities increasingly became less likely to encourage this. Often, this was due to growing laws surrounding the division of church and state (Mayhew, 2012). Mayhew (2012) lamented that this could be due in part to the cultural shift from more concrete and direct ideas of faith and religions to what he says are more vague ideas of spirituality. Due to this, campus ministry organizations began to pop up on or near college campuses across the country to address the spiritual needs of college students, and continued to gain prominence into the 20th century (Cawthon & Jones, 2004).

Scholars now suggest that since the idea of spirituality and the academy has been taboo for so long, there is now a shortage of scholarship pertaining to the issue. Mayhew (2012) began his study by ascertaining the need for, and apparent growing renaissance of, literature and research pertaining to the spiritual development of college students. More recently, Small (2014) began her work with a plea to student affairs professionals, practitioners, and scholars to step out of their comfort zones and start the conversation with their students about spirituality on the
college campus. Her work claims that student affairs professionals are uniquely qualified to
discuss issues of faith and spirituality with students—they just have to be willing to do so. Small
(2014) also bemoaned that since the subject had been largely avoided for so long, many student
affairs graduate programs have not and are not equipping budding professionals with the tools
necessary to have spiritual dialogues with students. She also stated that there is a dearth of
spiritually based studies in the student affairs literature—thus further perpetuating the taboo in
the academy.

Academic Success

According to Schubmehl, Cubbellotti, and Ornum (2009), several studies have been
conducted to show the impact of campus ministry involvement on academic success. They go on
to say that students also have a greater sense of spiritual development when they are involved in
campus ministry organizations. Schubmehl, et. al. (2009) suggested that this heightened sense of
spiritual development is what leads to the students achieving higher levels of academic success.
Similarly, Mooney (2010) found that there was a direct correlation between spirituality and a
higher GPA. After surveying 4,000 college students, Mooney found that even when controlling
for other demographic factors (e.g. gender, age, denomination), a heightened sense of spirituality
led to a higher GPA and strong sense of academic success. In Schumehl et al. (2009), no
correlation was found between campus ministry involvement and academic success, but the
study did show increased levels of spiritual development of the 247 students who were
interviewed. Bryant’s (2007) review of the spiritual development literature, pointed to three
studies that show that campus ministry involvement directly correlates to higher levels of
academic success. Perhaps the contradictory evidence from a variety of studies tells us that no
specific statement can be made about the direct impact of campus ministry involvement on students’ academic success.

**Campus Involvement**

College campuses nationwide are filled with copious amounts of activities for students to get involved in (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). From fraternities and sororities to residence hall councils to intramural sports to community service-based organizations, and everything in between, college students have seemingly countless options and ways to get involved on campus. Each of these activities and organizations provide great ways for students to make friends, have fun, get connected to the campus, and to occupy their free time. However, according to Alexander Astin, campus involvement is about quite a bit more than just getting involved (as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Astin theorizes that campus involvement directly relates to a heightened sense of development in the student, a stronger devotion to academic success, and a stronger likelihood for institutional satisfaction (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). He goes on to state that the actual activity (e.g. intramural sports, community service organization, fraternities and sororities, etc.) does not necessarily matter; instead, what matters is the fact that the student is involved on campus in some capacity (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Campus ministry organizations would be included in this theory of involvement as they provide many ways for students to get connected. According to Astin, the more a student puts into the organization, the more that he/she will get out of the organization, and thus achieve a heightened sense of student development (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Based on Astin’s theory, students involved in campus ministry organizations should feel more connected and satisfied with the campus, their academic studies, and have a stronger sense of student development.
Character Development

Several studies suggest that campus ministry involvement leads to a better sense of worldview and pro-social character development. For example, Jenney (2012) hypothesized that students involved in campus ministry organizations experience a heightened sense of what she referred to as pro-social character development. According to Jenney (2012), character development is largely based upon spiritual identity, and that campus ministry involvement, in addition to strong spirituality, directly leads to a better sense of personal character. Overall, Jenney’s hypothesis that a higher sense of spirituality and spiritual activity leads to a stronger character proved to be correct in nearly every level of pro-social character development. Furthermore, students involved in spiritual-based activities during their college years reported a stronger ability to establish life direction, purpose, goal setting, fostering a meaningful and fulfilling lifestyle, and growth as leaders (Jenney, 2012). Other scholars suggest that campus ministry development leads to a stronger and more complete worldview. For example, Mayhew (2012) states that students involved in campus ministry establish a more ecumenical worldview, and as such, become more tolerant of religions different from their own.

Theoretical Framework

Human development theorists have conducted and published prominent scholarship on the topic of both faith and spiritual development (Parks, 2005). While some of this research is not specifically tailored to college students, the scholarship includes stages and time periods relative to the college years. On the other hand, some scholars have focused their research specifically on college students. Faith is a difficult subject to theorize about due to the fact that people experience faith, spirituality, and religion in very different ways (Parks, 2005). With that
said, it is possible to generalize and determine stages of faith and spiritual development. James W. Fowler and Susan Parks authored two of the most prominent spiritual development theories.

**Fowler’s Stages of Faith.** Generally considered to be the foremost authority on spiritual development, James W. Fowler’s theory of faith development was first published, in book form, in 1981 (as cited in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) when he published *Stages of Faith.* This proved to be a watershed moment in the faith development literature. Fowler began formulating his theory shortly following his training as a Methodist minister while working with both Methodist clergy members and Methodist laypeople at a Methodist retreat center (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Fowler’s (1981) theory of faith development is closely related to, and loosely based upon, Erik Erikson’s theory of identity development, Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, and Jean Piaget’s theory of intellectual development. Due to the fact that Fowler was an ordained Christian minister, this theory is primarily associated with the Christian faith tradition and how Christians develop their own faith and spirituality. This theory also looks at the lifelong process of spiritual development, and not necessarily just the young adult or adolescent years.

Fowler’s theory states that there are seven general stages of an individual’s faith development. Fowler starts his theory with prestage 1: primal faith. In this prestage, the individual begins to develop faith in relationship with the faith of their primary caretakers (e.g.s. parents, guardians, etc.), and the conceptualization of the Christian God begins (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). In stage 1: intuitive-projective faith, the child around the age of two begins to develop language and their first images of God based upon ideas conveyed to them by primary caretakers (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Stage 2: mythic-literal faith begins to develop within the individual during the ages of six to seven while the child is enrolled in elementary school.
During this time, the child begins to attain the ability to understand the point of view of others. Here, they take stories about faith told to them by authority figures as truth and they work to form their own basis of faith. It is possible to stay in this stage past elementary school into adulthood (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). College students coming into college during this stage of faith development may be open to faith traditions that are different than their own, but they are more likely to hold true to the beliefs given to them by their parents.

The third stage, stage 3: synthetic-conventional faith, begins during the early adolescence years. During this stage, adolescents begin to think more conceptually and base their ideas of faith upon their faith community, caretakers, friends, media, and other outlets. Despite these advances, some college students still may not be able to make decisions about faith on their own (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). As with stage 2, it is possible to stay in this stage through adulthood. College students in this stage likely still see their parents as their most important faith influence and will participate with those communities with which they grew up in; however, in college they may begin being influenced by friends, faculty, staff, and campus ministers in exploring their faith.

At some point, most college students will be in stage 4: individuative-reflective faith, where the individual begins to own their faith and spirituality by independently self-defining and self-authoring their own beliefs (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). It is possible that these beliefs are centered on an organized religion’s belief structure, but the individual must accept these beliefs as his or her own. This stage typically begins in early adulthood, but may take until much later in life to develop (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). College students at this level will likely become involved in their faith development by becoming active members of their faith
community, engage with others in and out of their faith community, and begin to question what they believe and why.

Stage 5: conjunctive faith, happens during the middle part of the individual’s life, and sometimes closer to the end of one’s life. The individual becomes increasingly aware of life’s complexities, and becomes more tolerant of the faith traditions of others while maintaining their own beliefs (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). It is not likely to see college students who are in this stage of faith development. The final stage, stage 6: universalizing faith, occurs when the individual begins to know and see the world through other people, and by linking their love and value of God through others (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). This theory gives a framework by which the student affairs professional and/or campus minister can determine what stage in faith development students are located in, and what stage their students are at. This will help to tailor programming and the approaches needed to work with students of all ages and at all stages of faith development.

Parks’s Faith Development Theory. A second, widely accepted, theory of faith and spiritual development was developed by Sharon Daloz Parks in two books: The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment (1986), and Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith (2000) (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Parks bases her theory on her firsthand experience working with students in higher education and religious settings throughout the course of her professional life (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Much like James Fowler, Parks’s theory is linked to Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg; however, she also utilized Carol Gilligan’s theory, William Perry’s theory, and Robert Kegan’s theory to form a basis of her own theory.
Parks suggests that while Fowler’s theory is important, and largely accurate, it is missing an essential time period of faith development: young adulthood (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). She stated that due to the fact that young adulthood is dominated by a quest to determine vocation, career path, and an overall sense of purpose and belonging, young adulthood is a pivotal time period for faith development. Due to this, Parks argued, Fowler’s theory, while generally acceptable, is flawed (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Parks determined through her research that three forms of student development contribute to spiritual development. These three forms of development are as follows: cognition, dependent, and community (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Cognition, dependent, and community then lead to four periods of faith development: adolescence or conventional, young adult, tested adult, and mature adult (as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Parks’ theory is very multi-faceted, and includes many working parts. However, one of the most compelling components of Parks’ theory is that of the role that community plays in the spiritual growth and development of college and university students. She identifies five areas of community that are deemed essential components of development: conventional, diffuse, mentoring, self-selected, and open to the other. Each of these components are important, but Parks strongly stressed that the need for a mentoring community with young adults was very much a necessity in terms of overall spiritual development (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Parks (2005) argues that higher education institutions are uniquely qualified to be places of spiritual growth. Faculty and staff, in tandem with campus ministry organizations, have the ability to really assist students with their spiritual development (Parks, 2005). Mentoring communities and relationships, such as those that exist in higher education institutions, can be on the front lines of the spiritual development of college students.
Summary

This literature review shows some of the history surrounding campus ministry. This provides a foundation for the proposed study. Furthermore, the literature review includes an array of scholars and their take on different facets of campus ministry involvement in terms of socialization, character development, and academic success. Finally, the review shows the theoretical background of the proposed study through the identification of the two primary theories of the faith and spiritual development of college and university students in terms of their overall development.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology that I employed in this study of the impact that campus ministry organizations has upon the holistic development, specifically spiritual development, of college students. A qualitative approach was used to allow the participants to share their experiences, and to allow me to go in depth to understand the individual students’ experiences related to their involvement in campus ministry organizations.

Design of the Study

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used for the collection of the data for this study. Shuttleworth (2008) suggested that qualitative studies are best suited for studies including the observation and understanding of human behavior and habits. Due to the fact that an individual’s spirituality would fall under that category, a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study. For the purposes of this study, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with students enrolled at a Midwestern public, regional, comprehensive, mid-size institution. The denominational identifications of the campus ministry organizations used in this study were Lutheran, Catholic, and a non-denominational Christian campus ministry organization. These denominations were selected as they are well established at the institution. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded.

Participants

The participants used in this study were undergraduate students who are involved in a campus ministry organization at the selected institution. Students targeted for interviews were identified in consultation with the campus ministry staff at each of the three campus ministry organizations in this study: Christian Campus House, Newman Catholic Center, and the Lutheran
Campus Ministry Organization. Campus ministers were asked to identify members of their organization who have completed their third year of college at the site campus, and have been actively involved with the organization for a period of at least two academic years. Upperclassmen were selected because they had been involved in the campus ministry organization for an extended period of time, and were able to speak to their experiences over the course of that time. Further, campus ministers were asked to identify members of their organization that have been actively involved in the organization in some substantial way (e.g. retreat leader, worship leader, executive board, liturgical minister, etc.). At the outset of the study, participants were informed that their participation in this study was entirely voluntary and up to their own personal discretion. They were informed that they could remove themselves from the study at any point in the process. Below is a brief description of each of the participants

Lori. Lori is a Caucasian female in her fourth year at the site institution. She is an English major from a smaller rural town near the institution. She has not completely decided upon what she might want to do professionally, but she might pursue a career in publishing or campus ministry work. During her time at the institution Lori has been involved with Sigma Tau Delta English Honorary, the Association of Honors Students, and has worked for an institutional literary magazine. Despite this involvement across campus, she has primarily been involved with Lutheran Campus Ministry, and she currently serves on their student leadership board. Lori has been Lutheran her whole life and she comes from a very devout Lutheran family. In fact, her father served as a Lutheran pastor until she was sixteen years old. It is apparent that her love and devotion to her faith was present before being involved in campus ministry.
Meghan. Meghan is a Caucasian female in her fourth year at the site institution. She is an accounting major, and she is from a suburban area. After graduation, Meghan plans to pursue a job at an accounting firm. During her time at the institution, Meghan has been involved in community service organizations including Epsilon Sigma Alpha, a service sorority. In addition to community service work, Meghan has been actively involved in Lutheran Campus Ministry. For the past two years, she has been involved on the student leadership board. Meghan was raised Lutheran, but only her dad and sisters identify as Lutheran. Her mother is a Presbyterian. Both of her sisters were involved with the Lutheran Campus Ministry while they were students at the site institution, which influenced her interest and involvement in campus ministry.

Elizabeth. Elizabeth is a Caucasian female in her fourth year at the site institution. She is an elementary education major, and she is from a suburban area. Despite a degree in education, Elizabeth is not entirely sure where her career path will lead, but she is considering a career in student affairs or in some other higher education related field. During her time at the institution, Elizabeth has been very involved on campus through the New Student and Family Programs Office and the Student Life Office. In addition to this involvement, Elizabeth has maintained active involvement at the Newman Catholic Center where she currently serves as President and as an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) site leader. Elizabeth was raised in a devout Roman Catholic family and she went to Catholic schools until high school.

David. David is a Caucasian male in his third year at the site institution, after transferring to the site institution following his freshman year at a larger public institution. He is a kinesiology and sports studies major with teacher licensure, and he is from the same town in which the site institution is located. Following graduation David plans to teach for a few years and then enroll in a theology graduate program to prepare him for work in high school campus
ministry. During his time on campus, David has been a campus tour guide, has been involved in intramural sports through Campus Recreation, and was a student athlete on the football team for one season. David has also been a very active member of the Newman Catholic Center. Currently, David serves as Deputy Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus College Council at the Newman Catholic Center, as the Praise and Worship Leader, and as a member of the outreach team. David was raised Catholic, was active in youth ministry, and even attended Mass on occasion at the Newman Catholic Center as he was growing up.

**John.** John is a Caucasian male in his fourth year at the site institution. He is a marketing and management double major, and he is from a rural area. Following graduation, John plans to enroll in a masters in business administration program at a private religiously affiliated institution in Texas. Ultimately, he plans on becoming a business professor in a university setting. During his time on campus, John has been involved in the Entrepreneurship Club, Phi Beta Lambda Business Honorary, the American Marketing Association, and as a campus tour guide. In addition, he has been actively involved at the Christian Campus House (a non-denominational campus ministry organization) where he served as the Executive Chair (President) for one academic year, and in a variety of other leadership capacities prior to his term as Executive Chair. John was raised in a non-denominational church, and he was active in his faith prior to college.

**Mary.** Mary is a Caucasian female in her fourth year at the site institution. She is an English major, and she is from a suburban area. Following graduation, she plans to pursue a career as an English teacher in a high school setting. During her time on campus, Mary has been involved as the co-coordinator of Amigos and Friends (an organization that teaches English as a second language to Spanish speakers) and as a member of Sigma Tau Delta English academic
honorary. Further, Mary has been involved at the Christian Campus House, a non-denominational campus ministry organization, in a variety of leadership roles including currently serving as the Executive Chair (President) of the campus ministry organization. Prior to this term as Executive Chair, Mary served as Vice Chair of Christian Campus House and in other leadership capacities within the campus ministry organization. Mary was raised in a non-denominational church, and was active in her faith through youth ministry and bible studies prior to attending college.

Site

Collection of the data for this study took place at a public, comprehensive, regional institution in a rural area within the Midwestern United States. The institution is located within a community that is home to nearly 20,000 residents, which includes the total student population of the institution. The predominant faith tradition both on campus and in the surrounding communities is Christianity. Approximately 8,300 undergraduate students are enrolled at the institution. Located in the Midwestern United States, only 3% of students are from outside the state. In terms of the composition of the student body, 59% of the student body is female, and 41% of the student body is male. Diversity is on the rise at the institution despite the fact that 71% of the student body is white. Interviews were held after the students’ third year of college. The interviews were conducted in the Vice President for Student Affairs’ Conference Room, and ranged in length from 25 to 45 minutes.

Instrument

For this qualitative study, I developed a series of interview questions (Appendix A) that coincided with the three primary research questions of this study. The goal was to find answers to the research questions during the interview process. Prior to the interviews, I provided each
student participant with a demographic survey (Appendix B) to complete. The survey asked basic questions regarding the student’s major, where they lived on or off campus, what year in school they were, whether they were from a rural or urban setting, what Christian denomination they were a part of, which campus ministry organization they were affiliated with, what their involvement looked like on campus, and what leadership roles they have held on campus. This survey was utilized to provide further context to the interviews, and to the data gleaned from the interviews.

Data Collection

Prior to the interview process, the six student participants were given an informed consent form (Appendix C), which informed them of their rights as participants in this study. The participants were asked to sign the form to ensure confidentiality between myself and the participants. Interviews were conducted in a one-on-one and face-to-face manner between myself and the six participants. An electronic voice-recording device was used to record interviews for this study during the interview process. Following the interview process, the I took care to accurately transcribe the interview recordings into a Microsoft Word document, and then reviewed and coded the transcripts.

Treatment of Data

I safely stored each of the interview recordings, transcriptions, field notes, informed consent documents, and other documents needed for this study in a locked space that only I had access to. These items were stored in a locked filing cabinet, and on a password-protected computer. The names of each participant were kept anonymous, and were given pseudonyms for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality in this study.
Data Analysis

The data that I gleaned from the interview process was transcribed, evaluated, and analyzed. Coding helped me to arrange the key concepts from the interviews into a systematic order, which helped identify patterns that helped to answer the primary research questions of the study (Saldana, 2013). An independent reviewer, the thesis advisor, also reviewed all transcripts to further support the results of the present study.

Summary

The methodology of this study included six interviews of upperclassmen undergraduate students involved in three different campus ministry organizations. Each of the six participants also completed a demographic survey that was used to gain more information about them and their background. After the data was collected, I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the data to determine the findings of the study.
Chapter IV

Results

This chapter presents and summarizes the findings that manifested from the qualitative interviews that were conducted with six upperclassmen students enrolled at the site institution. The study was designed to determine what, if any, impact that membership in campus ministry organizations has upon a student’s spiritual development. The research questions utilized to guide this study were (a) How do students describe their involvement in campus ministry organizations? (b) How do students describe how they are personally impacted by their involvement in campus ministry organizations? (c) What campus ministry organization sponsored programs, events, and/or initiatives do students identify as having an impact on their time in college? Two students from each of the following campus ministry organizations were interviewed: Lutheran Campus Ministry Center, Newman Catholic Center, and Christian Campus House. While transcribing, coding, and analyzing each of the six one-on-one interviews, several main themes emerged that each work to provide a framework for better understanding the three primary research questions involved in this study. Each theme provides a snapshot into how campus ministry organizational involvement directly impacts students. This chapter will utilize these themes in order to determine answers to the three primary research questions present in this study.

Students describe their involvement in campus ministry organizations

Participants were asked to describe their campus ministry organization, how they first became involved in the organization, how long they have been involved in the organization, and how the organization is structured. Taking this a step further, participants were asked to describe what they see as the best part of being involved in the campus ministry organization and how
leadership in the organization has affected their ability as student leaders. Themes that
developed through the responses to the interview questions were friendship and relationship
building and leadership and organization of the campus ministry organization.

**Friendship and relationship building.** Several participants stated that one of the most
beneficial aspects of being involved in campus ministry organizations are the friendships and
relationships that are fostered through involvement in the campus ministry organization. When
asked about her favorite part of being involved in a campus ministry organization, Meghan
stated:

The friendships. Definitely. You get to be around people that know you and know how
to help when you’re struggling with something. I hang out with one of my best friends,
Alana, she’s a leader there as well, and we are attached at the hip most of the time. We
all hang out together, we all plan events, we all do everything together.

When asked about her favorite part of being involved in a campus ministry organization,
Elizabeth stated, “I would have to say the community aspect of Newman. Just with all of the
people who you’ve met, who I’ve met, in my time here, everyone is just welcoming and always
positive and encouraging.” Several of the students suggested that this camaraderie is based
largely upon shared values, beliefs, morals, and ultimately faith. John stated:

Having a solid friend group that shares my values, and my morals, and my faith where
they can hold me accountable to certain things, but also when I’m struggling with life or
when I’m down or anything like that, they are kind of there to lift me up and support me.

Mary stated:

The relationships are at a level deeper than just friendships because they are friends and
relationships in which you are not just friends, but you are friends pursuing the same
goal...They are friendships with a deeper meaning, and grounded in similar thoughts and beliefs.

The students identify that these friendships are at the center of their involvement in the campus ministry organizations.

**Leadership and organization of the campus ministry organization.** Each of the students interviewed were involved in leadership roles within the campus ministry organization, but the leadership roles and organization differed among the groups. Lori stated that the student leadership team at Lutheran Campus Ministry drives the day-to-day operations of the organization. Lori has been involved in student leadership for three years. Explaining the organizational set up, she said:

So, we just have student leaders, and there’s no President, Vice President, etc....Basically, what we do is have weekly meetings to discuss what we can do better with campus ministry, and make those connections with students. We plan beginning of the year events, and throughout the rest of the semester to try to continue to foster those relationships with students as they get involved.

Meghan is also a member of the student leadership team at the Lutheran Campus Ministry and said:

We do have meetings to discuss how things are going, and how to make [Lutheran Campus Ministry] better, how we can get more people to join, etc. It’s just trying to get more people to come, and just have fun. It’s not just all about the bible—it is about having fun as well.

Lori stated that this organizational set up has led to her own leadership growth. Explaining this, Lori stated:
When [campus minister] asked me to be a leader at the end of my freshman year, I was just thinking of it more of like a resume builder, and a cool leadership opportunity—not necessarily a way for me to really grow in my faith, and help in a ministry capacity. I was just thinking that it would look good on my resume. That’s how I got started getting involved, but it’s evolved into something more.

The interview participants from the Newman Catholic Center also discussed student leadership and indicated that involvement in this had led to their leadership growth. Currently, Elizabeth is the President and serves on the outreach team. Explaining the organization at the Newman Catholic Center, Elizabeth stated:

We have a student outreach team that deals with encouraging students to get involved at the Newman Catholic Center. Basically, it is a group of students who try to outreach to other students on campus to get them to be more involved at the Newman Center. Whether that be just coming to Mass, or joining different groups we have at Newman as well.

Despite some initial hesitation, for Elizabeth, this involvement has led to support and development as a leader. Explaining this, Elizabeth stated:

Getting involved in leadership definitely had to do with the invitation from an older student on campus, so when I was a freshman, I was asked by a senior to get involved in leadership here. I had definitely personally wanted to get involved. I know as a freshman I didn’t know exactly how to do that, but getting asked meant that I knew someone else had thought of me, and thought that I was a good prospective student to then help the Newman Center in a leadership role. The ability to be involved in the outreach team has increased my leadership abilities.
David also serves on the outreach team, but also serves as the Deputy Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus Council based at the Newman Center. He also leads their Wednesday night worship service. David explained student leadership, saying:

As a student outreach team, we have a lot of power in the sense that we can generate things that we want to do, and different sorts of ministry things, and other activities. You name it, we are able to kind of initiate that, and take the lead on that. The staff is there to support us in whatever we want to do, which is awesome.

David also explained that the reason he chose to get involved as a leader was directly related to wanting to learn more about his faith. Explaining why he became a student leader at the Newman Catholic Center, David stated:

I just love the faith. That’s really what it came down to. The Newman Center allowed me to learn more and more, and still today, to learn more about my Catholic faith. The more I learn, the more I just love it. I really love it. So, my days at Newman, every day, just like learning things and just reading. I even go there just to study. The bottom line is that I fell in love with the faith, I fell in love with the Catholic Church, and I wanted to share that with others, so a leadership role was the way to do that.

Currently, John is a member of the Christian Campus House Council of Ministers (COM), and he had previously served as Executive Chair (President) for two terms and treasurer for one term. John explained the structure of student leadership at Christian Campus House as:

COM is a group of seven students that are the executive board. They are the Executive Chair (President), Vice Chair (Vice President), Treasurer, Secretary, and then three members of the exec board who are pretty much the sole decision making body for the ministry. ... Those student leaders also lead either a life group or an action group. Life
group is a small group bible study. An action group is in charge of different things like social events, community service, or connecting the ministry to campus. The ministry as a whole is student led, so the paid staff is there for guidance, and direction as to what has happened in the past, and what they would advise, but overall, the final decision is up to the students.

John also stated that once he became involved in student leadership, he was able to receive additional support from Christian Campus House. John stated:

> When you’re on the student leadership, you have a weekly meeting with one of the staff members where they go and it’s a discipleship meeting. They are an hour long every week, and it’s very personalized, but very much about just where you’re at in life, what you’re going through, and how that relates back to your faith and applying your faith to those situations. Just to make sure that’s always a visible part of our lives. I think that’s probably the biggest way I’ve seen support.

Mary currently serves as President of Christian Campus House, and basically summed up student leadership there in the same way that John did. She did add that COM does some assessment of the ministry. She said:

> We look at the different events that we are having, and the different things going on, to see how it went, how it can be better, and what we can do differently in the ministry to improve it.

For the students in this study, involvement in the campus ministry organization was about more than just leadership, faith development, or involvement, but a combination of each of these elements.
Personal impacts of involvement in campus ministry organizations

Participants were asked to describe how they are supported through participation in a campus ministry organization. Participants were also asked how faith helped them as they were struggling with problems on campus. Finally, participants were asked to describe what they see as the best part of being involved in the campus ministry organization. Themes developed from these interview questions were community support, leadership development, and faith development.

Community support. The participants in this study each mentioned various ways they receive support from the community. Generally, this support came from one of two areas: from the friends and relationships among the other students involved in the campus ministry organization and from the campus ministry professional staff members. This support included faith and spiritual development, assisting the participants with personal problems, helping the participants to find internships, and everything else in between. Speaking about the support from a campus minister, Lori stated:

[Campus minister] is a supportive person whenever he notices that we are acting different, he asks to pray for us and if there is anything that he can do for us. And also, just like this past year, he sent me a link about an internship that he thought I would be interested in. I did it this summer, and it was the greatest thing that has happened in my life, and I wouldn’t have been able to do that if I wasn’t involved in the campus ministry. So, I think I’ve just been supported academically, spiritually, and all of those different ways.

Participants identified that campus ministers provide support in numerous areas of the student’s life. David stated:
I've had absolutely great experiences with people at the Newman Center, from talking to the priests, to talking to campus ministers, and talking to my friends. It's amazing how loving and supportive they are no matter what it is; I am able to open up to them. No matter what is going on, they provide a lot of help and support. That makes you feel good.

Support is not just coming from the campus ministers, but others involved in the campus ministry organization as well.

**Leadership development.** The participants frequently mentioned how leadership allowed for them to assist others in growing in their faith and spirituality, and oftentimes came as a result of feeling called. This call was defined as finding a sense of purpose allowing them to engage in leadership within the campus ministry organization. Mary provided an example of this:

One of the things that I was really excited about, I really spoke of those four girls that poured into me, I was excited about being a part of other girls’ lives in that same way. Our life groups are single gender. To have the opportunity to do that, to build relationships in that intentional way, is something that being a life leader gives you the opportunity to do. Also, to facilitate conversations of depth—that both encourage people in their walk with God, but also encourage those relationships within the community and between the girls themselves. I wanted to be a part of what had helped me.

John stated:

In my opinion, if I have those qualities, they should be used. Not for selfish purposes, but to come and be able to keep other people interested and empowered, and things like
that, so I just saw that opportunity for not only my own personal growth, but to potentially serve as a catalyst for growth in other people.

Participants also discussed feeling obligated to serve within the organization, as it was a means for helping others grow in their faith. And, as a result of this, participants acknowledged that they were able to gain leadership skills that they can use in their future careers.

**Faith development.** Campus ministry organizations exist, in large part, to assist students as they grow in their own faith and spirituality while they are in college. Faith development is the main focus of the campus ministry organization experience, and this happens in a variety of different ways according to the participants. Some indicate that this happens through leadership involvement, some indicate that it comes from the friendships and the relationships developed through campus ministry, and others indicate that it comes through their relationship with their campus ministry staff. When asked about what her favorite part of being involved in campus ministry, Lori had this to say:

I think my favorite part of being involved in [Lutheran Campus Ministry] is, I mean first of all growing in my faith, but growing in my faith with others who are going through the same thing as me. I mean the majority of us are Lutheran; we are all students, so we can talk with each other about things going in our lives. We can just talk about basically anything: things going on in the church, or just with school, or whatever. So it’s cool to grow in your faith with people who are in a similar position.

Participants spoke of how these relationships they developed through the campus ministry organization led to a further development of their own faith development and spirituality.

Elizabeth indicated that as she became more involved in her campus ministry organization, the campus ministers really impacted her own spiritual development. She said:
Then, as I’ve grown and become more involved at Newman these past three years, I’ve met with a campus minister now for spiritual direction to help grow within my faith life. Our priests here at the Newman Catholic Center have also supported me. Whether that be meeting with them one-on-one, giving them a call or email when I have a question, or need a prayer request. Then, also going along with our graduate assistant, meeting with her every so often to meet for some spiritual direction and some help with prayer life or just getting more involved as well.

Participants shared how through relationships formed with the campus, they became more involved and felt a deeper connection to their own faith.

**Campus ministry organization sponsored programs, events, and/or initiatives impact on students in college**

Participants were asked to describe what types of events, programs, and/or initiatives were impactful to their experience, especially as they were incoming students at the site institution. Further, participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had been able to observe these same events, programs, and/or initiatives make an impact on incoming students since they have been members of the campus ministry organization. Themes identified from these interview questions were social activities and faith-based activities,

**Social activities.** The interview participants indicated that many of the social events sponsored by campus ministry organizations have directly led to the formation of these friendships. Many of these events occur during the opening weeks of the semester. Reflecting on her own experience as an incoming student, Lori said about the opening week events, “I went because I knew that I wanted to get involved and that was a crucial opportunity to meet new people…it was helpful to my transition.” During this time period, campus ministry
organizations engage in intentional programming to actively recruit students to become involved in the campus ministry. Elizabeth stated, “Those first few days of social activities are really what helped me click with a bunch of different students at the Newman Center without being super intimidating.” Referring to the opening week events, Meghan said, “They got me out of my dorm room. It made me, it kind of forced me, to get out of my comfort zone a little bit and actually meet people and do something.” Mary did mention that a bit of caution was on her mind as she went to the opening week events. She said, “They were a bit intimidating, because I tended toward introversion at that point in my life, and so it was like ‘oh my gosh all these new people,’ but that is also the entrance into college.” She was able to overcome that, and was happy to find a “community of believers” early on during her time at the site institution. The experiences fostered in those opening week events were identified as essential to the student experience in campus ministry organizations.

**Faith-based activities.** In addition to social activities during the opening weeks of the semester, students indicated that faith-based activities sponsored by the campus ministry organization were critical to their own early experience with the organization. For example, when asked whether or not the opening week events were helpful to his transition, David said:

They were very helpful. For me, the most helpful thing was the small group (bible study). I got so connected to people within that small group. It was awesome—being able to read and share and open up. It was nerve-racking at first, but the more and more you do it, you get more comfortable. I really got to know those people, two of those people are on the outreach team today, and they are two of my best friends.

Elizabeth also discussed how an integration of both social and faith-based activities during those opening weeks was essential to her own transition. She talked about how the integration of the
two seemed to foster a sense of community and a good rapport among the individuals involved.

Elizabeth said:

Personally, for me, it was important my freshman year to come to a social event, and then have the next one be more faith-based. I was more comfortable with those people already, so then doing something faith-based with those same people was more comfortable.

Students identified that both social and faith-based events are essential for them as incoming students themselves, and they are able to see the effectiveness of the same events as new students enter the campus ministry organization.

Summary

Participants identified that involvement in campus ministry organizations led to their ability to gain a support system that includes friendships with peers involved in the ministry as well as strong relationships with campus ministers. Through this involvement, the participants were each asked to get involved in a leadership role(s) within the campus ministry organization. This leadership involvement led to their own growth as a leader, allowed them to assist others with faith development, and allowed their own faith and spirituality to grow. Much of this growth stems from the relationships developed from mutual involvement in the organization, but also through social and faith-based events sponsored by the campus ministry organization.
Chapter V
Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to provide a discussion of the results, discuss implications, and make recommendations based upon the research findings for student affairs professionals, campus ministers, and college students. Recommendations for future research on campus ministry organizations will also be provided. The purpose of this study was to determine what, if any impact, student participation in campus ministry organizations has upon students’ faith and spiritual development, how students describe their involvement, and what events, programs, and/or initiatives have the greatest impact. The research questions utilized to guide this study were (a) How do students describe their involvement in campus ministry organizations? (b) How do students describe how they are personally impacted by their involvement in campus ministry organizations? (c) What campus ministry organization sponsored programs, events, and/or initiatives do students identify as having an impact on their time in college? Discussion of the results of this research follows.

Discussion

Astin (1993) theorized that campus involvement directly impacts student development. A critical aspect of student development is faith and spiritual development. This study has shown that faith and spiritual development is directly related to membership in a campus ministry organization. Each of the participants discussed how their involvement led to new opportunities and through these opportunities they found themselves becoming better leaders, more connected, and stepping into greater leadership opportunities. This study specifically showed that students involved in leadership positions within campus ministry organizations grew
spiritually and in their faith. The study showed that involvement in the campus ministry organization impacted the development of participants’ faith, spirituality, leadership, and led to increased involvement.

According to Astin (1993), the more involved a student is, the more that he or she is going to feel connected to the institution, and therefore the more likely the student will retain at the institution. Each of the participants indicated that membership in the campus ministry organization is what they enjoyed most about being a student at the site institution. Each of the participants indicated that both the social and faith-based events that are sponsored by campus ministry organizations fostered the connections that they have made. Small group bible studies, mission trips, retreats, and social functions were each mentioned as important aspects of the campus ministry organization. They have developed friendships among their fellow students and have created mentoring relationships with their campus ministers. This directly related to their level of increased involvement in the campus ministry organization, and their level of connection to the institution.

Astin (1993) identified a link between students partaking in events, programs, and initiatives sponsored by the campus and by campus partners as a way for the students to become further engaged at the institution. The participants of this study talked about the events sponsored by campus ministry organizations, specifically those geared to incoming students, and how they provided opportunities for the students to get involved and connected to the campus ministry organization. Students who attended events sponsored by the campus ministry organization became more connected to the organization, and therefore more involved in a campus-based organization. This involvement then led to a heightened sense of self awareness and growth.
Jenney (2012) theorized that involvement in campus ministry organizations directly led to a heightened sense of character development including ability to set life direction, establish goals, and grow as leaders. This study showed that campus ministry organizational involvement directly led to leadership growth and development among the student leaders involved in the organization. Each of the participants indicated that they grew as leaders through student leadership roles that they held within the respective campus ministry organizations. All of the study participants stated that leadership growth resulted from relationships with their campus ministers and through the programs, events, and initiatives sponsored by the campus ministry organization.

Fowler’s stages of faith development includes seven general stages of an individual’s faith development (as cited in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). There are several stages that a student could be in during their college years depending upon their faith and spiritual development prior to enrolling in college (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). In stage three, or synthetic-conventional faith, faith is directly related to and impacted by faith communities. The individual’s faith community both defines and develops the individual’s sense of their own faith and spirituality (as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Each of the six participants in this study indicated that their faith and spirituality had grown as a result of being involved in campus ministry organizations which are critical faith communities to students in their college years. This growth primarily resulted from the friendships that they fostered with fellow students, and through relationships developed between the student and the campus minister. Students in stage three of Fowler’s stages of faith development would be well served by such a faith community.

In stage four, or individuative-reflective faith, people begin to adopt a faith that is more adult in nature, and begin to self-author their own beliefs. Five of the six participants in this
study indicated that their faith had grown, the knowledge of their faith had increased, and that their faith had become their own and not just something handed to them by their parents. Two of them specifically stated that their faith had become more “adult,” the other three just indicated that their faith had grown. Each of the six participants stated that this growth stemmed from leading small group bible studies, planning retreats, and other social and faith-based events within the campus ministry organization. Campus ministry involvement has a direct impact on faith and spiritual development, and based on Fowler’s research is a necessary part of every college campus. The participants in this study all took advantage of these opportunities, which helped propel them toward their further development in the area of spiritual development.

Getting involved during the undergraduate experience is important for more than just making friends; it also assists the student in growing and developing as a leader. Each of the student participants were involved in leadership within their respective campus ministry organizations and each indicated growth and development as a leader from that involvement. The participants frequently mentioned how these leadership positions allowed for them to assist others in growing in their faith and spirituality as well as their own. Some of these participants talked about stepping into leadership positions as a result of feeling called to engage in leadership within the campus ministry organization. Campus ministry organizational leaders feel some sense of obligation to serve this population and to empower others to grow in their faith. In serving in these leadership capacities they are also able to gain critical leadership skills that will help them as they move forward from the organization and graduate from the institution.
Implications

This study comes with implications and recommendations for several groups of people associated with the college campus. Student affairs professionals play a vital role in the development of college students. Campus ministers are on the front lines of faith and spiritual development of college students. They need to ensure that the work that they are doing directly impacts their students' faith and spiritual development and leadership development. Students play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the campus ministry organization, and therefore directly impact the faith and spiritual development of their peers and of themselves. The findings of this study can be directly applied to the work that each of these groups within the campus community are doing.

Student affairs professionals. This study shows that membership in campus ministry organizations is important for students as they develop their faith, spirituality, leadership ability, and overall experience at the institution. As such, student affairs professionals need to have a better understanding of the campus ministry organizations and how they impact the students that they serve. All too often, student affairs professionals see campus ministry organizations as taboo, or something they cannot engage in, especially at state institutions. Sometimes this is because of conflicting points of view, fear of overstepping division of Church and State, their own preconceived faith-based shortcomings, and so on. While each of these points might have semblance of merit, student affairs professionals need to look past these concerns for the sake of the students they serve. At the same time, student affairs professionals need to assess their own personal faith and spirituality. This assessment would not only benefit themselves, but would also benefit the students they are serving. The more comfortable student affairs professionals are with their own sense of faith and spiritual development, the more comfortable and better
equipped they will be having faith and spirituality-based conversations with the students they are serving.

When a student comes to the office of a student affairs professional and begins to ask questions about faith and spirituality, the student affairs professional needs to be able to have an intelligent and coherent conversation with that student. If a student was having a mental health crisis, they would be referred to the counseling center; if they were not feeling well, they would be directed to the health center; if they were struggling academically, they would be referred to their academic advisor. Students who are struggling in the area of faith development need guidance to these communities on or around the college campus. Student affairs professionals need to see campus ministry organizations as vital—if not critical—campus partners in order to foster a strong sense of camaraderie between the two groups. Student affairs professionals are called to meet students where they are at, and to work with them to foster their own development as a student. Faith and spiritual development are important aspects of student growth and need to be addressed by student affairs professionals.

While campus ministers are definitely on the front lines of meeting this need, student affairs professionals need to have a role in the process. It is understandable that student affairs professionals, especially at public institutions, have to walk a fine line between the issues of faith and spirituality. However, there is a difference between walking a fine line and completely not addressing or ignoring something. Joint programming in residence halls, lecture series, interdenominational worship services, roundtable discussions, and volunteerism projects are all possibilities of potential collaborations between student affairs professionals and the departments they run and campus ministers and campus ministry organizations. These collaborations could benefit the student affairs professionals, student affairs departments, campus ministers, campus
ministry organizations, and most importantly the students themselves. It is time for student affairs professionals to begin to bridge the gap between the institution and the campus ministry organizations.

**Campus ministers.** This study shows that a relationship between a campus minister and a student leader is a critical part of a student leader’s life while in college. Campus ministers are on the front lines of the faith and spiritual development of the students that they serve. As such, they play a significant role in that development and need to make sure that the faith and spiritual development of their students is the first priority. This means engaging in spiritual direction with their student leaders, being present at all faith-based events, educating their students about central tenets of the faith, checking in with their students to see how their prayer life is going, and living a life in line with the teachings of the faith. Just like student affairs professionals, campus ministers often get over-extended and stretched in many different ways. They end up participating in campus wide committees, in activities in local churches, administrative tasks, student organization advisement, and so on. All of this work is good and is significant, but campus ministers need to make sure that their priorities are in order with developing students in their faith being their chief priority. Further, campus ministers need to make sure that they stay current in the study of theology and are actively engaged in furthering their own education. This will allow them to better serve their students.

Whether or not they realize it, campus ministers play a significant role in the leadership development of their students. Students who are active in leadership capacities within a campus ministry organization grow in their leadership ability. This leadership growth happens through leadership roles, event planning, faith-based retreat planning, bible study leadership, and so on. Therefore, campus ministers need to ensure that they are personally equipped to foster that
leadership development and that they are devoting the necessary time and resources to their students.

Campus ministers also need to ensure that there is a place for each of their student leaders to be successful within the organization. Student leaders within a campus ministry organization need to be able to use their own personal gifts to further the mission of the organization. Too often a student leader within a campus ministry organization is expected to be all things to all people at all times in all capacities. Not every student is cut out to lead a bible study, or plan an event, or evangelize, or lead a mission trip. The beauty of a student-based organization at a university is that each student brings a different set of gifts and talents to the table. Instead of having a blanket student leadership organization where student leaders are tasked with accomplishing everything that the campus ministry organization sets out to do, campus ministry organizations should empower their students to be successful based upon their own gifts and talents. For example, campus ministry organizations could have a dedicated group of student leaders to plan social events, a group of student leaders to lead bible studies, a group to plan service-based events, and a group that is tasked with faith-based retreat planning. This organization would allow for more students to be involved in leadership capacities in different ways, would ensure that no single student leader is being stretched too thin, would increase social and faith-based programming within the campus ministry organization, and would provide for leadership opportunities within the scope of each student’s gifts, talents, and personal interests.

Campus ministers also need to be more present on campus and need to foster relationships with student affairs professionals and student affairs departments. These should be two-way relationships that take time to establish. In many ways, campus ministers function as
student affairs professionals. As such, campus ministers need to partner with student affairs professionals and departments to further advance their mission, meet students where they are at, and continue to accomplish the aims and goals of their campus ministry organization. Student affairs professionals can be willing partners; they often just need to be engaged. Campus ministers can take that initiative toward establishing these critical relationships. The results of such an initiative would bear significant fruit because both campus ministers and student affairs professionals are serving the exact same population of students. A united front between student affairs professionals and campus ministers would lead to more holistically developed students, a stronger sense of community and camaraderie, and key collaboration of time and resources.

**Students.** This study shows that campus ministry organizational membership directly relates to a student’s spiritual development and development as a leader. Students involved in campus ministry organizations can serve as a natural bridge between the campus ministry organization and the institution. Obviously, there would be no need for either the campus ministry organization or the institution if there were not students to serve. Students involved in campus ministry organizations need to be proud of that fact, and need to be willing to have tough conversations about faith and spirituality with their faculty, staff, and fellow students at the institution. Students involved in campus ministry organizations need to be open to stepping into leadership roles and open to questioning how the campus ministry organization operates. Every new student involved in a leadership capacity can bring fresh energy, ideas, and perspective to the table, and thus make a positive impact. Student leaders in campus ministry organizations need to be willing to voice their opinions in order to further advance the mission of the campus ministry organization.
Students involved in campus ministry organizations also need to ensure that they do not silo themselves away from the rest of the campus. Instead, they need to ensure that they are an integral part of the campus community. This can be done by actively seeking membership in a variety of student organizations such as student government, intramural teams, attending organizational fairs, hosting events on campus, setting up information tables in high student traffic areas, and advocating for their campus ministry organization. This would allow for their personal faith life to expand and could help them reach out to otherwise uninvolved students to get them engaged in a campus ministry organization. It would also work to begin removing the taboo of faith and spirituality on campus by ensuring that campus ministry organizations are integral aspects of the campus community.

While the roles of developing students spiritually starts with the campus minister, this could be assisted by campus ministry organization student leaders as they reach out to their peers. Student leaders involved in campus ministry organizations should not be afraid to exert their influence, advance the campus ministry organization, ask questions implement fresh ideas, and reach out to their fellow students to get them fully engaged in the campus ministry organization.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study needs to be repeated at the site institution utilizing a larger sample size, additional campus ministry organizations, campus ministry organizations that are not predominantly white, and non-Christian campus ministry organizations. The study needs to also be repeated at larger public institutions and religiously affiliated institutions. More knowledge is needed about the freshman and sophomore student experience in campus ministry organizations. To fulfill this need, this study needs to be modified to track students involved in campus ministry
organizations as they progress from freshman year into sophomore year. This longitudinal study could even follow students from freshman year up until they graduate from the site institution.

A campus climate survey needs to be conducted at the site institution to get a better handle on the status of faith and spirituality on the campus. This survey would be able to gauge the presence of faith and spirituality of students overall, and not just specifically students who are involved in campus ministry organizations. Research needs to be done on the faith and spiritual development of students who are not involved in campus ministry organizations to see if a lack of faith and spiritual development has any effect on the student’s overall development. A study also needs to be done with students who are involved as student leaders on campus in a variety of different registered student organizations to gain a better understanding of what, if any, support these students receive on or off campus in terms of faith and spiritual development. A similar study needs to be conducted regarding the faith and spiritual development of students who are not involved on campus and/or commute to the campus. The faith and spiritual development of graduate students, specifically those involved in student affairs or higher education graduate degree programs, needs to also be conducted.

More knowledge is needed on the campus minister and student affairs professional experience through the lens of faith and spirituality on the college campus. As such, a study conducted to analyze the campus ministry profession including campus minister training, longevity, burn out, educational background, and understanding of student development theory would be beneficial. Similarly, a study needs to be conducted regarding student affairs professional’s interaction and collaboration with campus ministry organizations, and their general perception of the role of campus ministry organizations on the campus.
Conclusion

Campus ministry organizations are critically important to the college campus. They provide a safe space for students to discover, grow, and develop their own faith and spiritual development. They provide an avenue for students to get involved and connected with a strong group of students with similar backgrounds, beliefs, morals, spirituality, and outlook of the world in an environment that includes both social and faith-based activities, initiatives, and programs. It is clear that students are positively impacted through involvement in campus ministry organizations as they develop spiritually, grow as leaders, and reach out to new students as they get engaged in the organization. Student affairs professionals, campus ministers, and student leaders are all vital to the success of the campus ministry organization. Most importantly, however, is the fact that membership in campus ministry organizations directly impact the student faith development, spiritual development, and leadership development, which leads to the student’s overall development as a student. At the end of the day, that is the goal of higher education.
References


Appendix A

Interview Questions
Interview Questions

1) To start with, let's talk about your experience here so far. What has your experience at the institution been like?

2) Where are you from?

3) What were you involved with in high school?
   a. Student activities, religious/faith-based organizations, community organizations, etc.

4) Now that you've been at this institution for a while, what all have you gotten involved in?

5) Which campus ministry organization are you involved with?
   a. How did you get involved in the organization?
   b. How long have you been a part of that community?
   c. What's the best part of being involved in your campus ministry organization?
   d. How is your campus ministry organization set up in terms of staffing and student leadership?
   e. In what ways have you been supported through your involvement?

6) Have you held any leadership positions in the campus ministry organization?
   a. If so, what positions?
   b. What made you decide to get involved in a leadership role?

7) What kinds of activities does your campus ministry organization sponsor for incoming freshmen?
   a. Were these events helpful in your transition to college?
   b. Have you been able to observe their effectiveness with incoming students?
8) Before getting involved with campus ministry, how important was your faith and spirituality?
   a. How has this changed since being involved with campus ministry?

9) Let's talk a little bit about academics. How important is this to you?
   a. What kind of student are you?
   b. What impact does your involvement in campus ministry play on your academics?

10) When you are struggling on campus with a problem, whatever that problem may be, how do you handle it?
    a. Does faith play a role in that?

11) What has your college experience been like overall?
    a. How has your involvement in campus ministry affected your overall college experience?

12) How satisfied are you with your college experience?
    a. What impacts your level of satisfaction with your college experience?
Appendix B

Demographic Survey
What is your age?

What is your gender?

What type of population setting are you from (e.g. urban, rural, suburban)

What is your major?

What is your religious denomination, and how long have you been practicing?

Do your parents share the same religious denomination? If not, what, if any, faith tradition do they practice?

What campus ministry organization are you involved with?

What organizations are you involved with on campus?

What leadership roles have you held on campus?