Youth Ministry Theological Foundations and Youth Ministry Praxis: Baptists and Anglicans in Five Countries on Four Continents

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Abstract

AYME is ample evidence that church based youth work is a strong reality in the USA. Additionally, when we hear of or speak with youth workers from other countries it does not take long to see that youth ministry is indeed a global reality. Also, the more we understand the broad scope of the Christian church nationally and globally we come to understand that theological emphases vary by church tradition, and youth ministry praxis varies as well. This paper explores the similarities and differences among representative samples of Baptist and Anglican youth workers in South Africa, Australia, the UK, and the State of South Carolina and Texas in the USA. Additionally, youth workers in Finland participated in the survey as well.

What do these youth workers believe? How do they conceptualize and operationalize youth ministry in their churches? In what respects are church traditions and theological understandings salient in accounting for differences in youth ministry praxis?

The importance of this research is multidimensional. For the youth ministry academician, there is value in helping our own students understand the global nature of youth ministry as well as the connection between theological foundations and very real outcomes. For the youth ministry practitioner there is value in that much learning takes place as we "compare notes" with one another in the common cause of reaching youth. Additionally, knowledge about church-based youth groups moves forward the sociological understanding of an important component of youth religiosity research.

INTRODUCTION

That the Association of Youth Ministry Educators and the International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry exists is a reflection of both the globalization of the practice of youth ministry and the maturation of the discipline via scholarly reflection. It is particularly the later that provides the informational infrastructure which helps youth ministry education be relevant and Kingdom connected.

This also serves to support both the youth worker and the church seeking to facilitate religious youth work.[1]

The practitioner of religious youth work relies (whether knowingly or unknowingly) on a knowledge base that is truly multidisciplinary: theology, psychology, anthropology, sociology as well as history. The individual who seeks to train practitioners and/or the academician who seeks to provide conceptualizations and vocabulary in understanding religious youth work also relies on these fields of study.

This paper focuses on the potential interaction between theology and youth ministry praxis. In essence this paper is at the narrow end of a conceptual funnel. At the wide end are writings that seek to help pastors and church leaders understand the implications of biblical theology with actual day to day church ministry. For example, in the 16th century John Calvin sought to help pastors and church leaders understand the theological arc of scripture and how each piece informs the Christian individual and the Christian church.[2] Much more recently contributors to the conversation include works by Bosch, Newbigin, *Warren.*[3]

In the field of youth work, there has been robust writing in regards to the theology/praxis connection. For example, *Reaching a Generation for Christ* by Senter and Dunn (1997) was for many years *the* book evangelicals turned to for youth ministry theory and practice. Their second chapter "A theological Framework for Doing Youth Ministry" helped youth works conceptualize God's heart for people, including adolescents.[4] And most recently, *Christian Youth Work, Theory and Practice: A Handbook* edited by Nash and Whitehead (2014) includes an insightful chapter by Jeremy Thompson which states:

> "Christian theology works with a number of sources: Scripture, the teachings and practices of Church tradition, human reason and human experience…Various

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[1] However, on one hand, the "rise of youth ministry" or "religious youth work" has not yet appeared on the radar of those writing in the field of new religious movements or more recent conceptualizations of classic religious movement theory. For example, Lynn Bridgers' *Contemporary Varieties of Relgious Experience*: *Jame's Classic Study in Light of Resiliency, Temperament, and Trauma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) had ample opportunity to nuance particularly her concept of resiliency if she had considered religious youth group's role in this phenomena. Similarly, in Peter Clarke *New Religions in Global Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2006) and Eileen Baker's *New Religious Movements* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1989) it is as if people who are not adults do not exist. Clark has one sentence on German Youth Religions (p.51) and Baker only mentions children in reference to the offspring of adult cult members, such as the Children of God. On the other hand the an excellent work did appear in 2005 *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality* by K Yust, A. Johnson, S. Sasso, and E. Roehlkepartain (New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) is a comprehensive look at how all major religions conceptualize both childhood and adolescence.

[2] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), The theology/praxis connection begins in the first chapter "The Knowledge of God and of Ourselves Mutually Connected, Nature of the Connection,"

[3] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York, Orbis, 1970), Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI, Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989). Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1995).

[4] Mark Senter and Richard Dunn, *Reaching a Generation for Christ*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997) p.45.

> theological recipes have developed over time in different traditions, as I will begin to indicate; there is more than one way to bake delicious bread."[5],[6]

While there indeed there has been a good crop of serious youth ministry books which seek to connect one's theology with ones praxis in youth ministry, there is a dearth of actual social science research on this connection.

The purpose of this paper is to broaden the understanding of youth ministry through a cross national comparison of two major "brands" of Protestantism: Baptist and Anglican. It is well understood that Baptists and Anglicans differ theologically when it comes to baptism: infant or believers only?[7] Is this difference salient when it comes to how youth workers conceptualize and operationalize youth ministry? Here I also explore the theological concept of Christology. If a youth worker believes that Jesus is the one and only way to salvation do ministry any differently than one who believes Jesus is a good way to salvation, but perhaps not the only way. Included in this research are youth workers in the Church of Finland. The only Baptists and Anglicans in Finland are very recent immigrants and it was important to include a Scandinavian country in the analysis.[8] The Church of Finland is Lutheran in heritage, a tradition which baptizes infants. Additionally, this paper, in the process of fulfilling the above, explores youth ministry praxis in five countries.

For the youth ministry academician, there is value in helping our own students understand the global nature of youth ministry and feel a part of a world wide Kingdom movement. There is value for the youth ministry practitioner in that much learning takes place as we "compare notes" with one another, regardless of denomination, in the common cause of reaching youth. This is primarily research that is exploratory and

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[5] Jeremy Thomson, "Theological Inquiry in Christian Youth Work" in Sally Nash and Jo Whitehead, *Christian Youth Work, Theory and Practice: A Handbook* , (London, SCM Press, 2014) p.51.

[6] Other noteworthy books including a theological basis for youth ministry or some aspect of youth ministry include: Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998; Jeremy *Thomson*, *Telling the Difference* (UK: YTC Press, 2007); Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Work* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007); Andrew Root and Kenda Creasy Dean, *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011); Steve Griffiths, *Models for Youth Ministry* (London, SPCK: 2013); Mark Cannister, *Teenagers Matter*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, (2013); Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engag*ement with Teen Life and Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013); and Len Kageler, *Youth Ministry in a Multifaith Society*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014). And Christians are not the only youthworkers seeking to anchor youthwork theologically. Muslim youth work thinkers in the West are similarly anchoring their praxis in religious the Qu'ran. A recent example is Brian Belton and Sadek Hamid, eds. *Youth Work and Islam*, (Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2011).

[7] For a thorough exploration of this issue see Donald Bridge, *The Waters That Divide* (STL distribution North America, 2007. See also Paul Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978).

[8] Why, you might ask? Because the Church of Finland has radically transformed how confirmation is done. Listening to colleagues from all over the world tell me that the "baptize as infants/confirm when they are in early teens" has resulted in most teens exiting the church after confirmation. The Church of Finland has changed the paradigm of confirmation to be a 7-10 day residential retreat lead by trained youth workers (compared to many months of weekly class lead by a priest). This paradigm shifting model has had dramatically positive results. And this has drawn international attention among churches who practice the infant baptism/confirmation model. In 2014 I attended the "Third Annual Conference on Confirmation in Europe" which seeks to provide an academic forum for social science research on aspects of confirmation praxis.

descriptive in nature and contributes to the discipline's conversation of theology and praxis.

HYPOTHETICAL HUNCHES

1) That there will be a broad similarity in the programmatic components of Baptist and Anglican youth ministries in the studied countries. This similarity, I posit, extends to Church of Finland youth ministry as well.

2) That denominations whose theology results in infant baptism (Anglican and Church of Finland) will place less emphasis on "outreach" or "youth evangelism" than Baptist, whose theology results in "believers only" baptism.

3) The joys and frustrations of church based youth ministry will be similar in the countries and denominations studied.

DATA AND METHODS

The present research is based on an extreme makeover of a survey used first for a plenary paper presented at the 2007 IASYM gathering in Cambridge. Some categories were consolidated, and questions related to Christology were added. Prior to and during IASYM 2013 (Cambridge) key leaders with wide connections were sought for the countries of UK, South Africa, and Australia. Key leaders in a Scandinavian country were also sought who would have wide contacts in their country among either Baptists or Anglicans. It was in this process that it became clear that there were insufficient numbers of these two groups in any Scandinavian country to meaningfully be able to study. Thus it was decided to include the Church of Finland (COF) in the analysis. Key leaders in the US from the states of Texas and South Carolina were recruited as well.[9]

These key leaders were asked to send the on-line survey (using surveymonkey.com) invitation to a random sample of 40 of their Baptist or Anglican or COF colleagues. Because the survey did not ask for names or other identifiers, we did not know who of the 40 had responded. The leaders were asked to keep reminding people until a 50% response rate was reached.

The survey introduction included standard human subject protocol formalities. The leaders were free to launch the survey in their country when they felt it was an opportune time in the months of October 2013-March 2014.[10]

Table 1 Response Rates by Country

[9] My thanks to these key leaders: Graham Stanton and Steve Dixson (Australia), Mark Montgomery and Iain Hoskins (UK) Dave WWright, Frank Shimkus, Seth buckley, and Steve Tighe (US), Nathan chiroma (South Africa), and Salla Poropudas (Finland).

[10] An additional push to obtain COF respondents was made at the 3rd Annual Conference on Confirmation held in Finland in June 2014, and Finish completed surveys came in until late July.

Country:	Sent survey invitation	Returned Survey	Response Rate (%)
Australia Anglican	39	21	54
Australia Baptist	80	44	55
South Africa Anglican	10	3	30
South Africa Baptist	15	4	27
UK Anglican	71	30	42
UK Baptist	40	20	50
US Anglican	86	29	38
US Baptist	117	61	52
Church of Finland	70*	45	64
Totals	**528**	**259**	**49%**

*estimate

It became apparent that South Africa was problematic in terms of finding Anglican and Baptist youth workers to complete the survey. Sufficient numbers of youth workers in the other countries were found. For those with 50% or greater response rates, the results may be generalizable to the larger population of youth workers with that country's Baptists, Anglicans, or Finnish youth workers.

Survey results were exported into Excel and relevant variables were loaded into SPSS for statistical analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient procedure.

Of the 259 respondents, 65% were full time paid youth workers, the rest were part time paid. Males constituted 73% of this group and the modal age of all respondents was 31-35. Eighty percent of the respondents were married and the modal time spent so far in their position at their church was 4-6 years. Their ministry settings were revealed as 25% urban, 62% suburban, and 12% rural. How old is their church, modal response (ahead by far with 34%) was 100-500 years. Eight percent of the respondents were in churches older than 500 years.

RESULTS & DISUCSSION

Hypothetic Hunch **#1: That there will be a broad similarity in the programmatic components of youth ministries in the studied countries.**

Here we arrive at a subject of interest to sociologist. If the religious youth *group* is the unit of analysis, sociological interest focuses on, for example, the youth group as an organization, which means, then, it is a *system*[11]. And sociologists love systems! As a

[11] Michael Beer, Organizational *Change and Development,* (Santa Monica CA: Goodyear, 1980).

system, any group or organization can be said to have a certain *ecology.*[12] The tables in this study are one way to understand a youth group from the standpoint of human ecology. The classical sociological theorist Max Weber gave considerable attention to organizations, analyzing them in terms of structure, function, internal reward, and the role of leadership.[13] Though of interest, further analysis in these terms is not the central focus of this paper.[14]

If the individual young person is the unit of analysis, by contrast, sociologists don't much care about the youth group as an organization or if X percentage of youth attend a youth group meeting compared (or in addition to) a student led cell group. *It is that they attend at all is what is so interesting*. Why do they attend? What is the self perceived benefit a young person derives? Are there any benefits that are not self perceived, to society, for example?

This, of course, connects to the virtual revolution in sociology departments around the globe begun by Leslie Francis in Wales.[15] In short, Leslie Francis, in his study of UK young people, found that youth who were high in religiosity (and youth group attendance being a component of religiosity) have *assets* their less religious peers do not have. Said another way, religiosity in youth makes a difference in lives and that this difference is important for the maintenance of a civil society[16]. This religiosity-prosocial behavior linkage, is completely contrary to sociology's Founding Fathers Karl Marx and Emil Durkheim's negative assessment of religion.[17] It is enough to make senior tenured sociologists go to the nearest Starbucks (or pub) with their colleagues and remember the good old days when it was fashionable to disparage religious faith and expression.

Sociologists have extended and deepened this analysis beyond connecting religiosity with the presence or absence of certain behaviors. An example of one such extension, very germane when thinking about young people in youth groups, would be the social

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[12] Michael Hannan and John Freeman, *Organizational Ecology*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[13] Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: Free Press, 1964).

[14] Those who are interested in conceptualizing youth groups in this vocabulary will profit from a couple of other foundational works. See Wendell French and Cecil Bell Jr.'s *Organizational Development*: *Behavioral Science Interventions for Organization Improvement*, (Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984) as well as Stanley Seashore, et al., *Assessing Organizational Change*, (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1983)

[15] Leslie Francis, ed. *Fast Moving Currents in Youth Culture*, (Oxford: Lynx, 1995). Though not an academic text, the scope of his research findings published here are of interest to both the youth ministry practitioner and the academician. Dr. Francis presented his finding at the first IASYM conference in January 1995. Those of us in attendance then did not know it, but we were watching history being made.

[16] There are now hundreds of studies, around the globe, demonstrating the religiosity/asset link. For example, in South Africa youth high in religiosity were shown to be less involved in pre-marital sex than their peers according to L. Nicholas's "The Association Between Religiosity, Sexual Fantasy, Participation in Sexual Acts, Sexual Enjoyment, Exposure, and Reaction to Sexual Materials Among Black South African Youth" *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* Vol 30, 2004, 37-42.

[17] Karl Marx, *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegels Philosophy of Right.* (Germany: Deutsch-Franzosische Jahrbucher (1944). See also Emil Durkheim's *Moral Education* (New York, Free Press, 1947). More anti religious invective can be found in pschologist Sigmund Frued's *The Future of an Illusion*, (New York: Norton, 1994, paperback edition).

capital conceptualizations developed by theorists Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman[18]. Like money in the bank that can be withdrawn and used for a variety of purpose youth gain *social* capital in their interaction with peers and adult youth leaders.

From a sociological point of view, then, youth groups themselves are interesting (as, for example, ecological systems), as well in that they are generators of high religiosity (which, results in good for society). So what does this study reveal about youth groups?

Before considering comparison of specific program features, how many youth are involved in the groups represented in the survey?

Table 2 (Q15) Number of Youth Involved on a Regular Basis, Modal Responses, By Country N=260

	Modal Response
Australia	20-40 (44%)
South Africa	20-40 (57%)
United Kingdom	20-40 (33%)
United States	40-80 (29%)
Finland	40-80 (37%)

It is interesting to note here US and Finnish youth groups tend to be larger than in the other countries in the study. This, of course, has implications for trainers of youth workers. The larger the group, the greater the importance of team ministry. Skill of recruitment, training, and supporting other workers are quite different than the skills needed only to work with youth themselves.

With the basic attendance demographic in mind, then, we now turn to the first hypothetical hunch that there will be a broad similarity in the programmatic features around the world.

Table 3 (Q10) Percent Using This Program Element for Spiritual Growth. N=260

	AU Anglican	AU Baptist	SA Anglican	SA Baptist	UK Anglican	Uk Baptist	US Anglican	US Baptist	Church of Finland
Weekly Yth Mtg	90	81			83	71	90	85	71
Sunday School	57	44			83	88	65	77	3
Small Groups	85	66			52	53	55	62	52

[18] Pierre Bordieu, "The Forms of Capital" in Jay Richardson, ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, (New York, Greenwood Press, 1983). James Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital" *Journal of Sociology* Vol. 94, 1988, 94-120.

Confirmation	43	0			34	6	62	0	81
Other	19	16			24	24	14	11	23

To foster spiritual growth the majority of respondents used a weekly youth group meeting. Indeed, it is easy to imagine that when you workers gather, wherever they may be, a topic of discussion will eventual become the comparing of notes related to the actual features of this weekly meeting. Producers of youth ministry resources are aware of this, apparently, and provide abundant curriculum options for youth workers in this regard.[19] Of course the subject of spiritual growth, also popularly called *spiritual formation,* is a deep and rich topic generating much academic and practitioner interest.[20] Other tools in the spiritual growth tool box used by most are Sunday school and small groups. One notes that Sunday school is not part of the scene in Finland. And it is no surprise that catechism is not part of the suite of spiritual growth formation programs used by Baptists.

A typical youth ministry, however, involves not only spiritual growth, but social interaction, enjoyment of peers, and the inclusion of friends outside the groups.

Table 4: Programs/Events for FELLOWSHP, OUTREACH, OR EVANGELISM
(Percent using this program component.) N=260 (Percent using each component.)

	AU Anglican	AU Baptist	SA Anglican	SA Baptist	UK Anglican	Uk Baptist	US Anglican	US Baptist	Church of Finland	Mean %
school ministry	86	58			90	53	31	39	45	57
youth centre	0	12			48	41	17	20	32	24
coffee house/club	0	2			28	29	3	7	42	16
Youth Alpha	0	5			21	35	3	0	0	9
retreat / residentials	71	58			83	65	76	84	87	75
go to Chr. Music event	5	23			21	29	31	23	71	29

[19] UK youth workers are well familiar with *Youthwork* and its inclusion of some weekly meeting guides. In the US *Group* also gives sample outlines of youth group meetings.

[20] For example see Sheryl Kujawa's "Courage and Resistance: spiritual formation and mentoring girls for religious leadership" *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* Vol. 6 (3) 2001. pp. 299-310. Or Daniel Scott's "Rights of Passage in Adolescent Development" *Child and Youth Care Forum* Vol 27 (5) 2001, 317-335. Examples of book length discussion of this important topic include the work by Mike King *Presence Centered Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, Intervarsity 2006) and the very relevant *Jesus Centered Youth Ministry* by Rick Lawrence (Loveland CO: Simply Youth Ministry, 2014)

sports team	0	14			7	6	7	13	10	8
attend sport event	5	16			3	6	34	43	6	16
event to bring non-Chr friend to	52	74			59	47	59	80	29	57

There are several way to consider the findings of Table 4. The greatest commonality is that of camps and retreats. Schools ministry seems to be the clear norm among Anglicans in Australia and the UK, compared to the US where a youth worker must be creative in the extreme to set foot on a school campus. The other very common fellowship/outreach program (except in Finland) is to host some kind of event at the church building, to which friends are invited.

Most youth workers would love a youth center whose space is 100% dedicated to providing a quality venue for youth ministry to occur. Few, however, will achieve the youth ministry nirvana of the youth workers of Lake Point Baptist Church in Texas, which is 44000 sq ft, on two levels, includes a gym, café, well equipped game room and an 800 seat concert auditorium.[21]



[21] **http://www.blumeng.com/develop_public/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/lake-pointe-baptist-church.jpg**. Accessed 10 September, 2014.

A balanced church based youth ministry often has an additional broad component of ministry beyond spiritual growth and beyond fellowship or outreach. Youth groups typically attempt in some way to get youth involved in doing something beyond themselves: some kind of service or social action. .

Table 5: (Q12) Programs/Events for SERVICE OR MINISTRY (Percent using each component.) N=260

	AU Anglican	AU Baptist	SA Anglican	SA Baptist	UK Anglican	Uk Baptist	US Anglican	US Baptist	Church of Finland	Mean %
help church	52	48			62	47	34	56	23	46
mission trip	24	30			24	41	76	82	13	41
service project	12	40			52	41	93	92	45	54
visit sick, orphans	0	0			3	6	17	23	3	7
dance group	0	0			0	6	3	8	10	4
yth choir, band	52	48			45	47	34	40	58	46

We see here some interesting variation by country. Nearly 50% of every country/denomination has programs which help the church in some direct way. These direct methods could include physically assisting with cleaning floors or doing yard work on the church property, or methods of helping emotionally in reaching out to pensioners or young children.[22]

The Americans love mission trips. Service projects, like helping pick up trash in a neighborhood park, or doing simple house improvements for a poor family in another place, are part of the youth ministry in nearly half of AU Baptists, UK Anglicans and Baptists, and Finland youth ministry. For the Americans, however, service projects are

[22] For example, in the ministry I am involved in, our young teens (ages 11-13) monthly, instead of the regular youth meeting, split in half. Half go to the home of a pensioner who has difficulty coming to church on Sundays…to hear their stories, share theirs, and to offer prayer. The other half bake cookies in the church kitchen. When the adult prayer meeting finishes that night, these young teens have a plate of cookies for each of these (usually older) adults, given as a thank you for their prayer support of them and the whole church. One can easily imagine that while both of these options do help the church in some way, it also results in very good public relations between adults and youth in the church. Our adults think the teens are WONDERFUL, despite their loud music, sometimes ruckus behavior, or occasional messes made which are not cleaned up sufficiently.

virtually mandatory…(over 90% for both Anglicans and Baptists). Indeed, when US youth workers get together, it is not uncommon for the discussion to turn to how to serve God by serving the community in practical and tangible ways.

While very few are into dance groups, almost half of (with the exception US Anglicans) have some kind of other musical outlet for their youth such as a worship band or youth choir.[23]

Another way to look at youth ministry "programmatic elements" of youth ministry cross nationally is to explore how youth workers engage students as leaders. This could include and actual student leadership team (appointed or elected) which is involved in planning or leading youth meetings, student lead small groups at school or in youth group, or student lead media/drama/art/music groups. Still another way to look at student leadership is what percentage of time in a typical weekly youth meeting are young people themselves up in front leading. Survey Questions 13 and 18 addressed these notions.

Table 6 (Q13) In the Category of Youth Leadership, Your Ministry Includes (check all that apply) N=260 (percentages)

	AU Anglican	AU Baptist	SA Anglican	SA Baptist	UK Anglican	Uk Baptist	US Anglican	US Baptist	Church of Finland	Mean %
leadership team/elected officers	24	47			28	41	28	57	39	38
student led cell groups in youth group	10	28			17	24	24	26	16	21
student led Bible studies at school	33	23				18	24	29	3	22
student led media/drama/music groups	10	30			21	24	24	57	29	29
None at all	43	35			55	41	41	16	45	39

We see here that on average more than a third of the youth ministries represented have some kind of student leadership team (be it volunteer, appointed, or elected) and about the same percentage, on average, have none of the student leadership opportunities.

[23] Interestingly, my 2007 survey included continental Africa as distinct from South Africa. Over 75% of the youth ministries in continental Africa included one or more dance groups. Indeed, around New York city where I reside, almost all African American Church of any size have multiple dance groups…contributing to the worship service, or performing at street fairs, parades, or other public events.

The UK Anglicans and the Finnish youth ministries seem to be the furthest behind in engaging student leadership. However, if we look at the issue another way, the Finnish actually are engaging students in leadership.[24]

Table 7 (Q18) If you have a regularly scheduled youth group meeting (such as, weekly) what percent of the time would you estimate youth themselves are up front leading? Percent of youth ministries by country with youth "up front" more than 25% of the time: rank order (N=233) (Percents)

Finland	56
US Baptist	42
US Anglican	38
UK Anglican	22
AU Baptist	22
UK Baptist	12
AU Anglican	10

One would surmise that if youth are themselves leading in a typical meeting more than 25% of the time, there is an intentionality on the part of adult leadership to facilitate and nurture this leadership. In the case of Finland, while their results in Table 6 seemed regressive, here they seem, by contrast, progressive. I would suggest that there is something about what is happening in the confirmation residential retreats (for which they are rapidly becoming globally famous) that is preparing youth for active leadership in their youth groups at home.

Table 7 implies, for better or worse, something about the nature of youth ministry education within those denominations and countries. This is a rich field for further research, to be sure.

Hypothetical Hunch #2 That churches and denominations which baptize infants will place less emphasis on "outreach" or "youth evangelism" than churches and denominations that do not.

Here we have the most obvious question on the survey directly and explicitly related to theology. "Does your church/denomination baptize infants?" (Q7) Religious denominations that practice infant baptism/confirmation (or catechism), understand their youth are already saved and part of the faith community. They may not be, therefore, as motivated to make sure youth ministry programs are attractive,

[24] In my 1999 Ph.D. dissertation on youth group numerical growth in the US, one variable that strongly correlated (positively) with growth was the percent of time during the groups' main meeting youth themselves were actually up front leading. In Table 7 we see considerable variation in this regard cross denominationally and cross nationally.

innovative, and contain enough "entry level" activities and teaching. If the youth group is in a social context in which the vast majority of youth are from similar religious backgrounds, having evangelistic programs may seem pointless, since attracting a new youth to one's youth group is, in a sense, like stealing. The young person is already saved, and part of a faith community…why try to attract and have them switch? (Religious switching is a huge interest of sociological inquiry, well beyond the scope of this paper.)

Survey responses indicated that in regard to many of the questions on the survey, there were no appreciable differences correlated to the yes/no respondents related to infant baptism. There were, however, some items on the survey in which this infant baptism yes/no question revealed substantial differences.

Table 8: Pearson Correlation and Significance of Infant Baptism "Yes" Responses and Survey Questions 10,11,12, and 13 (N=259)

	Pearson Correlation	Statistically Significant?	If yes, to what level?
Q10 Total sp. Growth venues	0.099	no	
Q11 Total outreach/fellowship venues	-0.057	no	
Q12 Total Service venues	-0.199	yes	**
Q13 Total Student Leadership	-0.299	yes	**

(** significant in that less than one chance in a 1000 that this correlation is by chance)

What we see here is that there is no statistically significant difference in the number of spiritual growth OR outreach/fellowship possibilities between youth ministries which baptize infants compared to those who do not. This is quite contrary, then to the hypothetical hunch #2. Surprisingly, however there is an inverse correlation with infant baptism and youth ministries providing opportunity for service or helping others. Additionally, there is an even stronger inverse correlation with offering opportunities for student leadership. Said another way, youth ministries in churches that baptize infants are less inclined to offer opportunities for serving others and student leaderships than the youth ministries in churches that do not baptize infants.

However, does measuring simply the total number of opportunities (as listed in Tables 3,4,5) give us the clearest picture? It gives us one picture, to be sure, but looking at baptism and the specific ministry options in each category nuances the issue considerably.

Table 9 Baptism (Answered yes) and Specific Ministry Options in Q10,11,12 & 13) N=259

	Pearson Correlation	Statistically Significant?	If yes, to what level?
Spiritual Growth			
weekly youth group mtg	-0.065	no	
Sunday school	-0.164	yes	**
small groups	-0.067	no	
confirmation	0.57	yes	**
Outreach/Fellowship			
schools ministry	0.081	no	
youth centre	0.046	no	
coffee house/club	0.128	yes	*
youth alpha	-0.023	no	
camps/retreats	0.027	no	
go to Chr. Concert	0.091	no	
have sports team	-0.133	yes	*
attend sporting event	-0.182	yes	**
event at ch to invite friend	-0.264	yes	**
Service, Helping Others In/Out of Ch			
youth choir/band	-0.002	no	
dance group	-0.033	no	
visit hurting	-0.122	yes	*
project outside of ch	-0.115	no	
missions trip	-0.265	yes	**
help with something at ch	-0.037	no	
Student Leadership Opportunities			
student leadership team/officers	-0.257	yes	**
student led cell groups	-0.153	yes	*
student led groups at school	-0.119	no	
stu. Led media/drama/music	-0.237	yes	**

Related to hypothetical hunch #2, then, we see that in four of the ministry choices there is indeed a significant difference when it comes to baptism, especially the hosting of

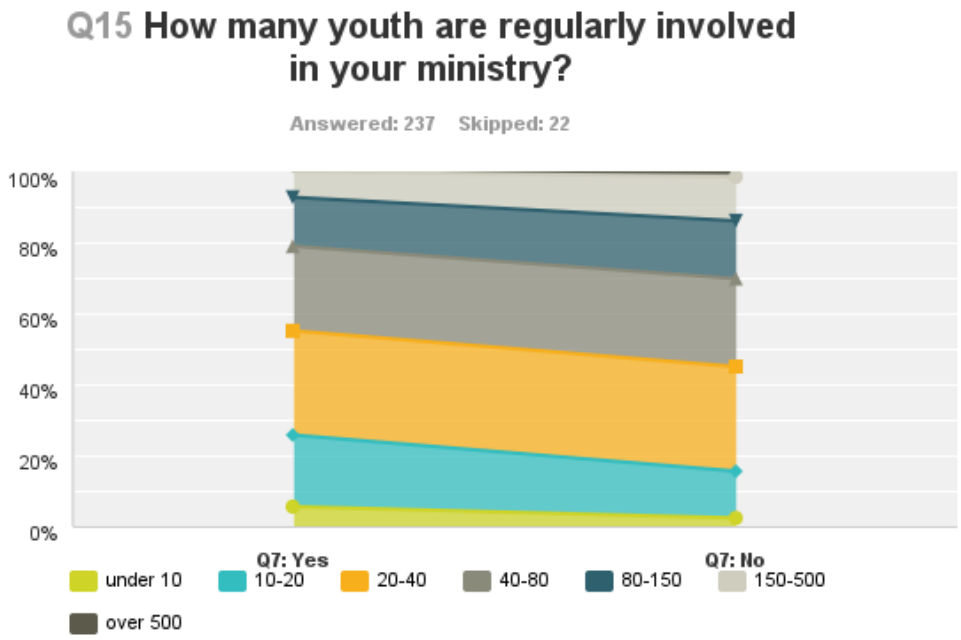
events at church to which a churched young person may invite a non-churched friend. And when it comes to student leadership, the association is inverse in all categories and significant in three of the four.

Interestingly there is another correlation that emerges when examining the spss output (not on Tables 8 or 9). The higher the number of opportunities for spiritual growth (without regard to baptism) the higher the positive correlation with outreach (.531**), service (.488**), and student leadership(.299**). One could argue that the higher a youth leader's awareness of providing for student spiritually, the more motivated she or he is to provide for the evangelistic, social, and sacrificial service aspects of the gospel that are thrown in to relief.

It would be interesting to see if there were statistically significant differences within countries by baptism, and compare these results cross nationally, but that is beyond the scope of the current project. Having said that, this is the first attempt that this researcher could find anywhere with *representative samples of youth workers* in which the praxical implications of theological differences are specifically explored in an academic context.

Aside from the items we had discussed already, curiosity leads me to ask two additional questions. Is there any diference in size of youth groups (by baptism)?

Table 10: Normal Attendance of Weekly Meeting (by baptism)
N=237



We see in table ten there are more small youth groups (under20) by baptism (yes) and more large youth groups (over 150) by baptism (no) but the percentage of groups in the 20-40 and 40-80 are virtually the same.

It would have been interesting to explore praxis by Christology (that was certainly my intention). One question (#22) asked "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, that only Christianity, no other religions ore religious leaders, provides a way for salvation? Ninety one percent of the 230 who answered responded indicated yes. Only four persons responded with "not really" and fifteen with "not sure." With such a lopsided response, it is not possible do any (statistically) significant analysis.

Hypothetical Hunch #3 The joys and frustrations of church based youth ministry will be similar world wide.

Happily, the vast majority of respondents felt supported by their pastors and the people of their church.

Table 11 (Q25,26) Pastoral & Congregational Support: Percent answering "generally yes" to the question "Do you feel supported by your pastor (congregation)? N=230

	AU	FN	SA	UK	US
Pastor	92	77	50	85	85
Congregation	81	62	17	63	77

At least pastors, it seems, recognize the importance of youth ministry in the church and are supportive of the youth worker. Most pastors want church families to feel cared for. A dynamic youth ministry certainly helps with congregant satisfaction so it makes intuitive sense that a pastor would want to support the youth worker. One wonders if there were a more representative sample of South African youth workers (an N of only 8 in in their column) if their numbers would have been more positive.

Interesting is the gap, all five countries in youth worker's sense of pastoral support compared to their sense of support from the congregation. This would be a fruitful field for further research. The topic should certainly come up in youth ministry training. It is very easy for particularly a young youth worker to alienate the parents and other adults in his/her church.[25]

[25] In our youth ministry degree program at Nyack College we go to great lengths to help our students gain an understanding of the "adult point of view". For example, the 4th year students are required to come to my home for a meal. To get full credit they must: 1) call to ask what they can bring and what appropriate attire is for the occasion 2) come within 10 minutes of appointed time, 3) bring a gift for the hostess if not asked to bring something for the meal 4) turn off their mobile phone, and 5) be careful to engage in wide

As for specific joys and frustrations of youth ministry, 80% of the respondents chose to answer survey questions 27 and 28. The lists were almost identical from each Continent/country with respect to both joys and frustrations. Here are some of the responses in their own voices.

Joys of Youth Ministry
To see transformation, and when youth are taking responsibility. (South Africa)
Leading students to Christ and seeing them grow in their faith as they strive to lead their friends to Christ. (US)
Seeing young people grow in their faith and awareness that Christianity should effect all their lives. (Australia)
When young people find meaning for their lives in Christ. I'm happy when I'm listening to or praying with them. (Finland)
Seeing young people encounter God. Being on a journey with them. (UK)

Frustrations and Sorrows of Youth Ministry
When the church expects me to be a miracle worker. (South Africa)
Parents, lack of finances. (US)
"Entertain me" mentality of some young people. Not seeing the results of ministry. (Australia)
Too little money!! When I meet parents that don't care about their childs' spiritual life. (Finland)
Trying to balance my family life against the demands of a fully committed youth ministry. (UK)

The hypothetical hunch number 3, that the joys and sorrows of youth ministry will be similar around the world, is certainly illustrated here. Space does not permit to provide additional examples and analysis. Every single comment, whether positive or negative, could be empathetically understood by each other person who completed the survey. Youth ministry is a global community of joy… and suffering.[26]

CONCLUSIONS

The results of Hypothetic Hunch #3 are a good place to begin when thinking about conclusions. Youth ministry is, indeed, a world wide expression of what God is doing. As a youth worker it is easy to think we are alone, particularly when things go wrong. It

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conversation instead of only the persons on either side. In East Coast USA culture, this is normal behavior for adults in "invited to a meal" situation.

[26] In my Muslim youth worker research of 2012-2013 I was very interested to learn that the frustrations of being a mosque based Muslim youth worker would be well understood by Christian youth workers. I interviewed (phone or face to face) the top Muslim youth worker trainers in the US, Canada, and the UK. Top three frustrations: 1) lack of funding, 2) no respect from parents/adults in the mosque, 3) sheiks and immans who are so stuck in tradition and their own ways that they don't "get" the importance of youth work. (See chapter two of my book *Youth Ministry in a Multifaith Society* (InterVarsity Press, 2014).

is an encouragement to know that we are part of a world wide community, experiencing and overcoming the typical frustrations and obstacles of youth ministry.

Regarding the other hypothetical hunches, the first (programatic similarity) was substantiated, though weakly. One could just as easily emphasize the diversity. As regards to the second hunch, that youth ministries within churches who baptize infants will do less outreach than those who do not…it's complicated. Yes, there are some youth praxis differentials but instead of residing largely in the "outreach" category the difference reside in the "service" and "student leadership" categories.

There is a Kingdom connection of all the numerical and statistical tables for the practitioner here. On who sees the specific results, may be motivated to try something he or she sees other youth worker doing in other countries. For example, to the one who has never thought of giving young people more leadership "up front" in meetings would quickly see here that this is a big deal in much of the world.

The youth ministry academician or denominational leader may here find many possible avenues of further study. For example, why is there a gap between the sense of support youth workers feel? Why, globally, do youth workers feel less supported by the congregation than by the pastor? And if the results from South Africa are even close to being representative, leaders there would want to urgently address this (perhaps cultural) issue. Another issue is student leadership. How (or do?) youth ministry training programs actually teach the theoretical importance and practical application of student empowerment?

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