

THE FAITH JOURNEYS OF CATHOLIC EMERGING ADULTS: A GROUNDED THEORY
INQUIRY

By

Sister Miriam MacLean

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Social Work—Doctor of Philosophy

2019

ABSTRACT

THE FAITH JOURNEYS OF CATHOLIC EMERGING ADULTS: A GROUNDED THEORY INQUIRY

By

Sister Miriam MacLean

Young adulthood is a life stage that includes exploring numerous identities. Emerging young adults (ages 18-29) report a range of ease and difficulty in going through the transitions of acquiring psychological, social, and physical identities (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). *Religious identity* acquisition is also an important development process for many young adults. Professionals from a broad range of professions may help Catholic emerging adults to navigate identity formation processes. However, there is insufficient knowledge of how young people develop religious identities, particularly from specific cultural and/or religious groups (NASW, 2017; Roehlkepartain, Benson, & Scales, 2011). There is a great need to explore how the subgroup of *Catholic emerging adults* develops a religious identity. There are 12 million Catholic emerging adults in the United States, who vary widely in their beliefs and behaviors, such as Mass attendance (Smith, Longest, Hill, & Christoffersen, 2014). The lack of information about Catholic emerging adults' reported experiences of exploring their religious identity is a *significant gap* within the human development knowledge base and the professional services literature.

The overarching research question that guided this grounded theory study was "*how do Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey?*" Faith journey was defined as emerging Catholic adults' reported religious-related thoughts, feelings, and behavioral experiences. Grounded theory studies often aim to understand processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This study employed a grounded theory approach to try to understand the process of how religious identity

development is incorporated into a person's identity. *Sampling and Recruitment:* This study used purposive and theoretical sampling techniques. Thirty-one Skype or Zoom interviews were conducted. The sample was composed of 31 emerging Catholic adults, ages 18-29. They identified as White, Middle Eastern, Mayan, Black, Hispanic, and Asian. The participants were geographically distributed across the United States. *Analysis:* The data was analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher and a trained research assistant used open coding to identify and define main constructs, or themes, arising from the data. The core category that emerged was the journey, which the participants defined as gradual and ongoing, with various influences that made the journey harder or easier. The main themes that emerged were the influences on the journey: external influences, internal influences and choices/action. There were several subthemes under each of the themes that specified the influences, for example, family, peers, thinking/learning.

This research added to previous research by broadening the understanding of religious development as reported by this sample of participants that described a more gradual process of faith development. Interviewees said that their faith journeys were not broken down into steps, stages, or categories. Some of the reported influences on the journey were consistent with previous research including family, peers, religious leaders, doubts and questioning, and personal traits. However, there were additional insights, especially regarding the role of choices and thinking and learning in religious development. The findings could prove useful in helping social workers respond in more culturally competent ways to Catholic emerging adults and give insight to Church leaders about the needs of Catholic emerging adults and potential responses they could make to these needs.

Copyright by
SISTER MIRIAM MACLEAN
2019

This dissertation is dedicated to our All-Powerful, All-Loving and All-Merciful Lord.
May it aid others in knowing, loving, and serving Him with ever greater interior freedom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first acknowledge the Lord, without whose help, I would not have been able to make any progress in this work. I would also like to acknowledge Saint Joseph, to whom I entrusted this work. I asked him to constantly ask Our Lord for help on my behalf as I was about the work that I needed to do.

I would also like to acknowledge my Religious Institute, the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan. I am especially grateful for the encouragement of my Major Superiors throughout this time and for all of the Sisters with whom I have lived during these years. Your prayers and encouragement (and your practical help) have been a great source of strength for me. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to live our vowed life together, which puts all things into perspective under the loving gaze of Our Lord.

I would also like to acknowledge the faithful support of my Chair, Dr. Joanne Riebschleger who faithfully encouraged me. She often reminded me of what I sometimes doubted, that this is a worthwhile work. Her openness to new ideas and her kind ways of challenging me were great helps! I am also grateful for my committee members, Dr. Anne Hughes, Dr. Angie Kennedy, and Dr. Mangala Sadasivan. Thank you for your feedback, time and support, which helped to make this work more rigorous and to ensure its academic integrity.

I would also like to acknowledge all of those who participated in this study. I am grateful for their openness, candor, and time. It was a joy to hear the stories of so many people and to be given a glimpse into their lives!

I would also like to acknowledge all of those who I worked with professionally during these years. Each of my colleagues supported me through their encouragement and patience as I worked to balance varying demands, with varying degrees of success!

Last, but not least, I would also like to acknowledge my parents. Their example of hard work and perseverance helped to give me the “raw material” that made the completion of this dissertation possible. They raised me with faith and encouraged me to integrate it freely. They have always allowed me the freedom to take unique paths, and to go where our Good Lord leads me.

A doctorate is truly a community effort, and I feel so supported by all of the people who have surrounded me throughout these years. I am very grateful to Our Lord for each of you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
The Target Population	1
Identity Development	2
Benefits of Considering Identity Development	4
Significance of the Study in Addressing Knowledge Gaps	5
Overarching Goal of the Study	7
CHAPTER TWO: THEORY	9
Theoretical Framework	9
Erikson and Marcia	10
Self-determination Theory	13
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
Factors that Contribute to Religious Identity Development	17
Coping with life challenges as a facilitator of religious identity.	17
Religious doubts and questioning as barriers of religious development.	18
Religious doubts and questioning as facilitators of religious development.	19
Internal religious motivation as a facilitator of religious development.	20
Family of origin as a facilitator of religious development.	21
Relationships with others.	25
The impact of society as a barrier to religious development.	26
Summary of findings.	27
Methods of Previous Research	27
Overview of quantitative research.	27
Overview of qualitative research.	29
Conceptual and operational definitions.	30
Gaps in knowledge.	31
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS	34
Sampling	35
Theoretical sampling.	37
Interview Protocol Development	38
Reflexivity.	38
Sensitizing concepts.	41
Interviews with a semi-structured protocol.	43
Protocol testing.	46
Procedures for the interview.	47
Analysis	48
Co-coding.	50

Open coding.	51
Axial coding.	52
Core category.	53
Selective coding.	54
Timeline.	55
Resources.	56
Summary	56
 CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS	 57
The Journey	57
External influences.	62
Internal influences.	62
Choices/Actions.	62
Changes in Relationships, thinking and actions.	63
External Influences	66
Culture.	66
Faith encouragement from family.	68
Family influence – away from the faith.	69
Peer influence – positive.	71
Peer influence – away from faith.	72
Religious leaders.	74
God’s influence.	76
External influences within the Church.	76
Feeling welcomed.	77
External attributes of the Church.	77
Groups/Organizations.	77
Internal Influences	78
Doubts and questions.	78
Personal traits that aid in faith development.	80
Attitudes or personal traits that hinder faith development.	82
Suffering.	84
Choices/Actions	85
Choices to practice faith.	85
Falling away from faith.	87
Faith activities.	87
Finding replacements for formal faith.	91
Practical challenges.	92
Thinking/learning.	93
Disagreement with the Church.	96
Faith’s Impact on the Person	97
Faith’s impact on actions.	97
Faith’s impact on relationships.	99
Ways faith helps the person.	101
Summary.	102

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	103
Overview of the Study and Key Findings	103
The Findings in Light of the Literature	106
Theory development.	106
Factors that influenced religious identity development.	107
Culture.	108
Family.	108
Relationships with others.	109
Religious doubts and questions.	110
Additional factors found to influence religious identity.	110
Adding to the Catholic literature.	110
God's influence.	111
Choices to practice one's faith.	111
Practical challenges, disagreement with the Church, and replacements for formal faith	111
Thinking/learning.	112
Summary.	112
Implications for Practice, Policy and Research	113
Practice implications.	113
Policy implications.	118
Research implications.	121
Study Limitations	123
Bias.	123
Time limitedness.	124
Sample.	124
Conclusion	124
APPENDICES	126
APPENDIX A: Interview Purpose and Consent	127
APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, with Flexible Probes	130
APPENDIX C: Correspondence with Participants and Potential Participants	135
APPENDIX D: Initial List of Open Codes from the first 10 interviews	139
REFERENCES	141

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 31)	36
Table 2. Literature Ties to Interview Questionnaire	42
Table 3. Themes and Subthemes Explaining the Core Category of the Journey	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Influences on Integrated Identity throughout the Faith Journey	65
Figure 2: Research Participant Advertisement	137

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Target Population

There are about 70 million registered Catholics in the United States. Of these, 17% are thought to be between the ages of 18 and 29, which is about 12 million. Catholic emerging adults vary widely in their adherence to the Catholic Church's beliefs and their behaviors, such as attending religious services regularly (Pearce & Denton, 2011; Smith, Longest, Hill, & Christoffersen, 2014). As of the early 2000s, only one-fifth of Catholic emerging adults attended Mass at least weekly (Smith et al., 2014).

Little is known about Catholic emerging adults' help-seeking behavior, such as how they engage with social service professionals. However, there is evidence from a nationally representative survey ($N = 2,604$) that Catholic teenagers (ages 13-17) (Smith & Denton, 2003) experience sadness or depression, meaninglessness, and guilt at levels not statistically significantly different from the general population in the United States (Smith et al., 2014). Given this information, it is reasonable to hypothesize that Catholic emerging adults engage with social workers at rates similar to the general population.

Social work has always had a strong commitment to working in culturally competent ways with diverse populations (Council of Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2015, 2017). Catholic emerging adults are among the groups social workers may encounter in various practice settings, such as in working with organizations or individuals. Catholic emerging adults may differ from other populations in ways that are important to understand. When comparing Catholic emerging adults to Evangelicals, Protestants, Jews, Mormons, and other religions, Catholics had the lowest rates of adherence to their beliefs (Trinitapoli, 2007). Moreover, having more Catholic friends did not increase their

adherence to and participation in their faith in ways that it did in other religious denominations (Trinitapoli, 2007). Catholic emerging adults were also found to be less involved in their faith than their peers from other populations (Pearce & Denton, 2011). These differences between Catholic emerging adults and peers from other faiths seem to warrant further exploration and understanding. It is hoped that a better understanding of this population will aid in more culturally competent practices.

Identity Development

One significant aspect of religious development seems to be *integrated religious identity* development. In this study, integrated religious identity is defined as freely answering the question, “who am I?” in regards to one’s religious beliefs, and/or reflecting upon the centrality of religious beliefs. People reporting high levels of religious identity also reported good health and mental health (Kim, Carvery, Spillers, Crammer, & Zhou 2011). NASW (2018) mentions that an aspect of culture is belief systems which can be a “primary source of cultural identity and create a specific worldview that affects every component of a person’s life” (p .66-67). CSWE (2015) also mentions the importance that religion/spirituality can have in identity formation and the need to understand the impact of this area of diversity on people at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. Since the Educational Policies for Accreditation of Social Work programs specifically require evidence of social work student cultural competency outcomes (CSWE, 2015), this implies the importance of at least a basic understanding of religious and spiritual diversity and its consequences in social work practice.

The current study is focused on *integrated religious identity*, however, this term is not easy to define. The identity literature notes that identity itself is difficult to define (Moshman, 2011; Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Identity may refer to individual, relational or

collective identities, but the current study is focused primarily on individual identity, in continuity with Erikson. Identity refers to how a person or group answers the question “who am I?” or “who are we?” (Vignoles et al., 2011). Characteristics such as ethnic background, abilities, religion, etc., are then seen as part of a person’s identity inasmuch as the person uses them to answer this central identity question (Vignoles et al., 2011).

When considering religious identity, the question is then specified in terms of religious beliefs and practices, and how these beliefs and practices help a person answer the identity question. Davis and Kiang (2016) define religious identity by considering the person’s religious regard (positive feelings about one’s religious affiliation) and religious centrality or “the extent to which one defines oneself in relation to one’s religious beliefs” (p. 533). While none of what is being said gives a clear definition of religious identity, they help to give a context to what is meant.

Interestingly, the most difficult word to define might be integrated. In the *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, (Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011), the term integrated identity only appears three times, and all in relation to self-determination theory (SDT) or Erikson’s understanding of identity. The *Handbook* uses Erikson’s understanding of integrated as internalizing and assimilating beliefs that have been presented in a unique way in order to personally answer the identity question. This is meant to allow a person to function in the same way in a variety of contexts. It seems that Assor, Cohen-Malayev, Kaplan, & Friedman (2005) would largely agree with this definition, but add that this integration also includes the importance of freedom or autonomy in one’s beliefs and practices rather than a sense of coercion (Assor et al., 2005).

In summary, a person may have an integrated religious identity when they answer the question of “who am I” to include their religious beliefs and practices in a way that is free from coercion and/or fear. A person may have a strong religious identity without it being integrated, for example, if they answer this identity question in relation to their religious beliefs and practices, but they do so because they feel this is necessary to be accepted in their peer group, family, etc.

Integrated religious identity development is the primary factor that will be considered in terms of religious development in the current study. How religion becomes an integral part of a person’s life seems most applicable to religious development for the purposes of social work interventions. Considering religious development from the primary, though not exclusive, perspective of identity development is consistent with well-respected development research (Erikson, 1968). Identity development also emphasizes congruence between a person’s beliefs and their understanding of their self. This congruence is consistent with social work’s principles of self-determination.

Benefits of Considering Identity Development

There is evidence that developing an integrated religious identity can increase promotive factors for individual well-being (Barry & Nelson, 2005; Beaumont & Scammell, 2012). While religious identity seems to have a positive impact, religious struggles seem to be correlated also with depression, anxiety, and lack of happiness in a U.S. nationally representative sample of American adults from a national health survey ($N = 2,208$) (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Krause, & Ironson, 2015). This study was quantitative and used correlational analyses to consider the relationships between religious and spiritual struggles, psychological distress, and well-being (Abu-Raiya et al., 2015).

There is research that indicates some of the positive impacts of religion in people's lives. For example, there is limited research that suggests that spirituality and religion have a positive impact on patient perceptions of health outcomes (Faull & Hills, 2005; Helms, Gallagher, Calhoun, Choukas-Bradley, Dawson, & Prinstein, 2015; Kim et al., 2011). Mental health seems to be one area that can be positively impacted by religious beliefs (Helms et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2011). Other studies found that religious beliefs impact patient perceptions of quality of life and meaning in life (Beaumont & Scammell, 2012; Chan, Tsai, & Fuligni, 2015). In addition to religion being associated with meaning in life, it is also associated with some positive behavioral outcomes including better adaptation and prosocial behavior (Feenstra & Brouwer, 2008; Furrow, King, & White, 2004; Yorgason, Whelan, & Meyers, 2012). Given social work's dedication to the dignity of the human person (NASW, 2017), learning more about strategies that may help to improve people's sense of meaning, quality of life, and prosocial behaviors is consistent with social work values.

Significance of the Study in Addressing Knowledge Gaps

Exploring the faith development of Catholic emerging adults is useful for many reasons. This study may help to fill the knowledge gap of the spiritual and religious development of Catholic emerging adults in social work. There is very little research that specifically focuses on the development of Catholic emerging adults. There is some research that included, but was not specifically concerned with, Catholic adolescents or emerging adults (Cramer, Griffin, & Powers, 2008; Inglis, 2007; Smith & Denton, 2016; van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011). The research that does exist is from countries other than the United States (Brambilla, Assor, Manzi, & Regalia, 2015; Negru, Haragas, & Mustea, 2014). Additionally, Catholics are people with

diverse beliefs who may benefit from more specific information on various subgroups and their particular beliefs and practices (Barga, 2015).

This study may also aid in increasing the relationship between religion and social work. Inasmuch as members of the clergy may be the first contact that a distressed person reaches out to when looking for help, having a mutual relationship between clergy and social workers may prove beneficial for Catholics. Research indicates that clergy often refer people to mental health professionals such as social workers, and often believe that a collaborative relationship is beneficial (Harr & Yancey, 2014; Kane, 2003; Openshaw & Harr, 2009). Some research suggests that some people are more likely to seek out services from church organizations than from social workers (VanderWaal, Hernandez, & Sandman, 2012; Zellmer & Anderson-Meger, 2011). If this is true among a certain subset of Catholic emerging adults, a greater understanding of this phenomenon may enable social workers to be of greater assistance. Whether or not Catholic emerging adults seek out the services of social workers now, a greater understanding of their developmental needs may aid in solidifying the relationship between clergy, Catholic emerging adults, and social workers.

Additionally, more information on how an integrated religious identity develops may help decrease some of the potentially negative impacts of a poorly developed religious identity. Identity development may occur without much effort, but may also involve a significant degree of distress (Schwartz et al., 2011). Identity development may include risky behaviors such as difficulties with alcohol, drugs and/or risky sexual behavior and greater psychological distress such as self-doubt, anxiety, or depression (Schwartz et al., 2011). Since spiritual development, which can include religious development, is increasingly seen as part of this developmental process (Benson, Scales, Syvertsen, & Roehlkepartain, 2012), helping people to navigate identity

development easefully may increase prosocial concerns and overall psychological well-being (Schwartz et al., 2011). Minority groups can face additional challenges in the process of identity development (Phillips & Pittman, 2003; Viruell-Fuentes, 2011), comprising another reason for social workers to increase their understanding of identity development.

Additionally, this study is significant in addressing knowledge gaps because there is relatively little research that seeks to understand *how* religious identity develops in any population. Peek (2005), in a qualitative study of 127 Muslims, did develop an initial theory of how integrated religious identity is formed. However, this study was not validated by any other research and is about another population. This is the closest study to the one undertaken in this dissertation.

In summary, this dissertation is significant in studying a population that is under-researched. This study can contribute to the social work education and practice knowledge base. It may enable social workers to expand their cultural competency by better understanding the developmental needs of this potentially unique target group. This study is also uniquely positioned to begin to reveal *how* religious development occurs, which may help social workers and Catholics to help young people navigate the sometimes difficult process of identity development.

Overarching Goal of the Study

The overarching goal of this study is to better understand the process of faith development in Catholic emerging adults. It is expected that the process of identity development will emerge as Catholic emerging adults describe their interaction and participation with faith in their lives. The overarching qualitative research question asks:

(1) How do Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey?

In the process of answering this question, it was hoped that several other themes might emerge:

- How faith relates to how the person understands her or his religious identity.
- The *process* of how the person has come to understand their religious identity.
- Greater understanding of what factors facilitate or hinder a person's faith journey.
- What assistance Catholic emerging adults may benefit from in their faith journeys.

These questions are explored with the starting point of self-determination theory (SDT) and Erikson's and Marcia's understanding of identity development, which will be explored in chapter two. These theories help to define integrated religious identity (Assor et al., 2005; Bell, 2008).

These theories also provide a basic explanation of the data collection process that includes asking about which factors contribute to the development of a person's faith journey, while maintaining openness to what is expressed when collecting and analyzing the data.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY

Theoretical Framework

In order to better understand the significance of this study and the gaps in research, a brief exploration of the theoretical frameworks will be undertaken. Erikson's and Marcia's theories on identity development combined with self-determination theory provide a starting point for understanding religious development and identity integration in adolescents and young adults (Assor et al., 2005; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; Marcia, 1973; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Development literature speaks about adolescence and emerging adulthood being a time of identity development (Erikson, 1968). Identity development includes developing a firm set of beliefs (Good & Willoughby, 2008). Spiritual development fits within this broader identity development as adolescents begin to think abstractly and ask questions about their own existence, the existence of the world, and the beliefs they have been taught (Good & Willoughby, 2008). Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966) help define integrated religious identity. Self-determination theory (Assor et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000) provides a framework for understanding how it may develop. In concert, these theories provide *sensitizing concepts* (Padgett, 2017; Urquhart, 2013) which serve as starting points for this grounded theory study and for future thought and research on religious development.

However, before considering these specific theories, it is helpful to briefly ask how integrated religious identity formation may be linked to identity formation in general. On the broadest level, it is thought that spirituality and religion can help individuals to grow in their own religious identity formation (King, 2003). Identity formation has often been seen as one of the developmental tasks of adolescents and young adults (Erikson, 1968). Emerging adulthood is

seen as a time to solidify one's identities; it is one stage of the developmental process (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013).

There are many factors that can be a part of a person's identity, such as race, class, occupation, sexual orientation, etc. Spirituality offers a way of thinking about how a person relates to the world and what his or her place is in the world. Spirituality and religion are also one of the things that make humans distinct from animal or plant life, allowing humans to engage in relationships with other people in a unique way and with the transcendent (Lerner, Alberts, Anderson, & Dowling, 2006). Some argue that spirituality is one setting in which identity can be explored and solidified (Hardy, Pratt, Pencer, Olsen, & Lawford, 2010; King, 2003). Religious institutions can be one place that provides individuals with a place to express their spirituality in common, provides a system of beliefs that one can assent to, and provides a way of relating to others and the world (King, 2003).

Erikson and Marcia

Erikson (1968, 1974) gives an overview of identity development as a developmental task of adolescence. Erikson's and Marcia's identity theories help to explain what a strong identity might look like in terms of thoughts and behaviors. Erikson and Marcia also give a clear expression of what main types of identity might occur. Rooted in psychoanalytic theory, Erikson sees identity formation in relation to the development of the ego in the adolescent or young adult. Erikson defines the ego as the unifying principle of a person which allows him or her to maintain a sense of sameness even in the midst of changing circumstances (Erikson, 1968, 1974). Since identity development is a developmental task, it is important to look at how this process occurs in emerging adults. Identity development can occur easily or with great difficulty (Schwartz et al., 2013).

Erikson (1968) notes that introjection and identification usually eventually lead to identity formation, typically during the period of adolescence or young adulthood. Erikson defines introjection as taking the image of another into one's self without distinguishing what is oneself and what is another. Identification is when a person takes on a specific trait from another person that he or she values. Identity formation is the process of making sense out of what one has absorbed by introjection and identification. A person then decides, either consciously or unconsciously, which parts of their identifications they want to be a stable part of how they view themselves and relate to the world.

Erikson's and Marcia's thought build on each other well. Erikson provides the components of how identity development is understood. However, Erikson does not present a coherent system for identity development. He does mention identity confusion, identity crisis, identity diffusion, and moratorium (Erikson, 1968, 1974). Marcia (1966, 1973) developed Erikson's work and operationalized it into four different identity statuses related to both whether the person is committed to an identity and whether they reached that commitment with or without exploration.

Marcia's categories, assessed during a structured interview, can be situated on a continuum (Marcia, 1973). Assessing identity on a continuum provides a more comprehensive assessment of a person's identity status. Marcia's categories provide greater ease in measurement and add conceptual clarity to Erikson's description of an identity formation process. Marcia developed Erikson's understanding of identity development to include four possible identity statuses (Bell, 2008). Both achieved identity and foreclosed identity mark a relatively stable choice of a set of beliefs. *Achieved* indicates that the person has asked questions, considered alternatives and made a firm choice of beliefs (Marcia, 1966). *Foreclosure* indicates the firm

choice without any previous exploration or questions. People who are not committed are described as either in the state of moratorium or diffusion (Marcia, 1966). *Moratorium* describes people who are questioning beliefs and actively seeking to understand (Marcia, 1966). *Diffusion* describes people who have no desire to work out these questions (Marcia, 1966). These identity statuses are not stages that are progressed through, but alternative ways that identity may (in the case of foreclosed or achieved identity) or may not (in the case of moratorium or diffusion) express itself. Erikson seems to value exploration as a key part of arriving at an achieved identity status (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). Each identity status gives a sense of where a person is, but they are not neat stages. For example, one may spend a lot of time or a little time in the moratorium or diffuse status or may not ever be in that status.

Erikson's and Marcia's concepts lend themselves to assessing a person's identity status in terms of their religious beliefs (Bell, 2008). Religious beliefs can help an adolescent or emerging adult to solidify their identity (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson and Marcia, integrated identity development involves a concrete commitment to something, whether it be civic, moral, relational, or religious commitments (Hoare, 2009). Erikson acknowledges that religious commitment is one way in which the commitment necessary to arrive at an achieved identity status can occur (Hoare, 2009). Spirituality and/or religion can help to define how one relates to the world, and what values are more important to the person (Hardy et al.2010).

Bell (2008) is able to use this theory to describe not just identity in general, but religious identity. Bell (2008) adjusts Marcia's language of achieved to "religious identity integration" (p. 137). He uses similar language to that provided by SDT, in describing religious identity integration as the process by which someone examines and questions their beliefs and then chooses the beliefs freely because they see and value them as important. These beliefs then

become a part of how the person views him or herself, becoming part of his or her identity. The additional contribution made by Bell (2008) is important because it helps to define integrated religious identity. Alisat and Pratt (2012) also note that religious identity can be a helpful piece of identity formation as it gives a structure (belief system, behaviors, etc.) to the way in which a person views and interacts with the world. SDT speaks about how integrated religious identity is developed, with less focus on defining integrated religious identity.

There does not appear to be much theory-based literature that applies specifically to Catholic emerging adults. However, some theorists apply Erikson's ideas on identity development to Christians (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009; Tate & Parker, 2007). They posit that identity theory gives a framework within which to assess religious identity development and to intervene if identity development causes stress (Tate & Parker, 2007).

The concepts from Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966, 1973) provide a means to assess whether and to what extent someone's religious beliefs are stable at any point in life. These constructs aim to give some indication of the level of questioning that has occurred or is occurring. While Erikson (1968) spoke broadly about identity formation as a developmental task, he did not go into great detail regarding *how* it is developed (Visser-Vogel, Westerink, de Kock, Barnard, & Bakker, 2012). Self-determination theory (SDT) may help fill this gap.

Self-determination Theory

Self-determination theory posits that "competence, autonomy, and relatedness" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68) are linked to healthy development. Although SDT does not specifically discuss religious identity development, SDT has been applied to religious identity development in adolescents and emerging adults (Assor et al., 2005). In some of the applications, SDT suggests that encouraging autonomy and an intellectual understanding of beliefs may lead to

integrated religious identity (Assor et al., 2005). SDT research suggests that the following *autonomy supportive practices* aid in healthy religious identity development: (1) allowing the young person to engage with content being taught (2) not forcing participation, and (3) parental intrinsic value demonstration (parents own seemingly free and happy participation in religious practices) (Brambilla et al., 2015). According to SDT, *controlling practices* that result in shame or blind acceptance and are too focused on control are more likely to lead toward rejection of beliefs or an outward acceptance without any congruence with the person's inner sense of self (Assor et al., 2005).

Self-determination theory has been used to understand integrated religious identity; however, the two theories have not been used together to understand integrated religious identity development. In this study, the combination of SDT with Erikson's and Marcia's understanding of identity development helps to guide the initial exploration of religious development among Catholic emerging adults. These theories also help to inform the *sensitizing concepts* of this study, which will be further discussed in chapters three and four. The principles of these theories will be used to guide initial inquiries into how integrated religious identity develops.

SDT identifies two primary ways of internalizing beliefs or practices in a way that is self-determined. The first is *identified internalization*, in which the person does truly value a certain set of beliefs, and wants to adhere to them, but has difficulty actually adhering to them (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Perhaps a person believes it is good to go to church, wants to go to church, but is too tired on Sunday to actually go to church. *Integrated identity* is consistent with what this dissertation refers to when speaking of integrated religious identity. Integrated identity occurs when beliefs and behaviors achieve a coherent schema in the person who freely accepts them. Integrated identity also allows the person to resolve any inconsistencies (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Integrated identity may be present if a person who wants to go to church on Sunday is willing to overcome obstacles that may keep them from going to church because they believe in its importance. He or she desires to worship God even when this may be difficult. The desire to go to church would not be based out of fear or compulsion. It would be based upon a desire to participate in worship that she or he views as important and consistent with who that person perceives themselves to be.

While SDT has not been fit into a Catholic framework, Assor et al. (2005) developed a framework relating SDT to Israeli Jewish youth who were raised to practice their religion. They reportedly said that the modern secular world has beliefs that conflict with traditional Jewish beliefs. Assor et al. (2005) examined the challenges in raising young people to understand and live the beliefs and practices of their faith within a secular and sometimes post-modern milieu. They expanded on previous quantitative studies, with a qualitative, phenomenological study ($N = 11$). Similar processes seem to occur in youth raised to practice their Catholic faith. It is noteworthy that Assor et al. (2005) considered people who practiced their faith instead of those raised more culturally Jewish. It seems that many Catholics may simply be raised culturally Catholic, receiving the Sacraments of Baptism and perhaps First Communion, without much further education and enculturation (Smith et al., 2014). This suggests that the theoretical framework presented by Assor et al. (2005) may apply to Catholic emerging adults whose parents helped them understand and value their faith.

SDT also seems to be consistent with some of the principles of education given within the Catholic Church and social work principles. For example, the Catholic Church already theoretically encourages autonomy, dialogue, and mutuality between the student and teacher (Baum, 1982). Interpreting Baum, this author asserts that encouraging a Catholic teenager to ask

questions about why the Church teaches certain things might help foster an integrated religious identity. The young person may know why they act in certain ways and may be more likely to keep these practices when others around them do not. SDT is also consistent with social work values of self-determination, valuing the dignity of the person, and the importance of human relationships (NASW, 2017). Since SDT is a framework consistent with social work values, it may be useful in helping social workers understand how they can assist Catholic emerging adults to grow, if they desire, in their religious development.

In conclusion, Erikson (1968), Marcia (1966), and SDT (Assor et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000) provided a framework that helped sensitize the researcher's theoretical assumptions about the process of religious identity development. Concepts from these theories were used to inform the literature review and the interview protocols for the study. It was hoped that this study would add nuance to the thoughts of Erikson, Marcia, and SDT or offer additional ways to think about religious identity development, especially in terms of Catholic emerging adults.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter looks at the literature that is most relevant to how Catholic emerging adults progress through their faith journey. This chapter will consider the following based on the empirical literature: possible factors that contribute to or hinder faith development, a summary of quantitative and qualitative research methods, gaps in knowledge, and sensitizing concepts. This section will show the current state of the research in order to further the knowledge of the faith journeys of Catholic emerging adults.

Factors that Contribute to Religious Identity Development

A number of individual factors seem to contribute to or impede religious identity development, such as how one copes with life's challenges (Kimball, Cook, Boyatzis, & Leonard, 2013; van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011), religious doubts and questioning (Fisherman, 2016; Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 2001), and internal motivation (Watson & Morris, 2005; Pedersen, Williams, & Kristensen, 2000; Ramirez, Ashley, & Cort, 2014). A number of other environmental factors such as relationships with others (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Hardy et al., 2010; Russo-Netzer, 2017), societal factors (Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994), and family of origin (Kimball et al., 2013; Leonard, Boyatzis, Cook, Kimball, & Flanagan, 2013; Lee, Miller, & Chang, 2006) also seem to impact religious identity development. Integrated religious identity is not specifically mentioned since the research focuses on varying aspects of religious identity and may or may not be speaking about integrated religious identity. The next section will review the literature on these potential facilitators and barriers of religious development.

Coping with life challenges as a facilitator of religious identity. Coping with life challenges has been found to have some impact on religious formation. Life challenges allow for greater personal integration, which may help to solidify a person's beliefs. In a mixed methods

study, using a survey and interviews, of 119 recent college graduates from two Christian colleges, successful integration of challenging life situations was found more frequently among those with a “mature faith level” than those with less mature faith levels (Kimball et al., 2013). Maturity was assessed by the level of complexity that was expressed in the interviews, considering things like perspective changes (Kimball et al., 2013). In a grounded theory qualitative study of 20 adults who were visited by parish nurses, the resolution of various health challenges also led to changes in participants’ reported spiritual identities such as a better understanding of how they related to God (van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011).

Religious doubts and questioning as barriers of religious development. Religious doubts and questioning also seem to play a role in religious formation, although the relationship is a complicated one. Religious doubts and questions are considered through questions that ask about participants’ faith journeys, as well as what types of personal traits make it easier or harder for them to believe. Religious doubts are often negatively correlated with religious identity (Fisherman, 2016). However, it is thought that religious doubts may eventually lead to a more stable religious identity (Fisherman, 2016). It is unclear whether doubts serve as a facilitator or barrier of religious identity formation. Perhaps doubts and questioning could serve as either a facilitator or barrier depending on the circumstances.

When considering religious doubts and religious identity in general, there is often a negative correlation. A study of 472 male Israeli high school students found that religious doubts were negatively correlated with religious identity in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades ($p < .001$) (Fisherman, 2016). Fisherman (2016) used their own questions (not a standardized measure) to assess religious identity. They hypothesized that while doubts increased and identity decreased, that this is still a step toward a less conforming religious identity. They thought that eventually

past doubts would lead toward an increase in religious identity, but this was not yet shown in this study. It seems possible that questioning allows for a certain integration which may lead to an integrated religious or spiritual identity at some point in the future.

However, one study of 1,246 alumni from a liberal arts university who were identified as being highly religious found that quest orientation was inversely related to religious identity ($\beta = .07$, $SE = .02$, $p < .01$) in survey results (Cook, Leonard, Kimball, & Boyatzis, 2014). They defined quest as including doubt and tensions about religious beliefs (Cook et al., 2014). Given these conflicting results, it seems that the research may currently be inconclusive about the long-term trajectory of being high in quest orientation as an adolescent or emerging adult.

Religious doubts and questioning as facilitators of religious development. Studies that considered how religious doubt impacted achieved identity status did seem to support that religious doubt may positively impact identity development (Hunsberger et al., 2001). In a two part study of college students ($N = 132$) and high school seniors ($N = 947$), it was found that people who sought information **both** to confirm ($r = .22$, $p < .01$) and to challenge ($r = .12$, $p < .01$) their beliefs were likely to have achieved identity, as measured with the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS) (Hunsberger et al., 2001). The two groups were not compared, but considered independently. Moratorium, foreclosed, and diffuse identity statuses did not show these same patterns, either avoiding both belief-confirming and belief-challenging information or seeking only one. Perhaps more studies that consider a person's thought process in developing her or his religious beliefs would be helpful.

For example, it also may be that other individual factors such as agreeableness or the degree to which a person trusts another person may impact the degree to which a person integrates his or her beliefs. Cramer et al. (2008) looked at several personality factors and

explored how they impact spiritual life integration (Cramer et al., 2008). He found in a study of 135 young adults from the Northeast United States that agreeableness and conscientiousness were related to spiritual life integration ($\beta = .26, .24$ respectively, both with $p < .01$). Further research would be needed to see if perhaps agreeableness and conscientiousness lead people to engage in more faith confirming and faith challenging conversations. Further research is needed to understand this process.

Internal religious motivation as a facilitator of religious development. There is some literature that indicates that integrated religious identity is linked to intrinsic religious orientation. Intrinsic religious orientation refers to performing a behavior not for some external reward such as praise from another person, or some physical reward, but because of an intrinsic goodness enjoyed by the act itself (Froiland, Oros, Smith, & Hirschert, 2012). It seems that understanding intrinsic religious motivation is helpful for understanding a way in which the identity development process can occur. For example, Watson and Morris (2005), in a study of 402 undergraduates, found that intrinsic religious orientation is linked with identity commitment using the Identity Style Inventory ($r = .46, p < .001$). Pedersen et al. (2000) found similar results using their own questions rather than a standardized measure to assess identity. Their cross-sectional study included 315 undergraduate students. They found that students who scored higher (as opposed to lower) in spiritual self-identity also scored higher in ends orientation ($M = .61, SD = .53, p < .05$) and lower on means orientation ($M = -.29, SD = .94, p < .05$). Means orientation refers to using one's religion as a means to some other end such as status.

These quantitative studies give very little insight into the nature of the *relationship* between intrinsic orientation and integrated religious identity. A qualitative study using focus groups, conducted by Ramirez et al. (2014) may give some insight into how religious identity is

formed. The authors did not state what qualitative methodology they were using. This study included 34 college students who identified as Black Seventh Day Adventists. Focus groups were conducted with the participants and a three-step inductive process was used to analyze the data. Those who were extrinsically oriented said in semi-structured interviews that their identity came from “a) practicing altruism, and b) embracing religious practice” (Ramirez et al., 2014, p. 60). Those who were internally oriented described their religious identity as resulting from “a) renouncing themselves, b) embracing Christ’s love, c) establishing a personal relationship with Christ, and d) reflecting Christ’s character” (Ramirez et al., 2014, p. 60). Looking further, those who were found to be extrinsically oriented often had experiences where participation in worship was mandated without their own acceptance. Extrinsically oriented participants did not necessarily believe in the importance of what they were doing, but reportedly did it out of compulsion, fear, or coercion. On the other hand, internally oriented participants noted experiences where they were invited and encouraged to participate in worship rather than forced. These findings give potential insight into what healthy development of religious identity may look like, and what factors may be involved, seeing that for those who desire to have a religious identity, one that is internally oriented may be less stressful.

Family of origin as a facilitator of religious development. Family of origin was discussed earlier in relationship to evidence that supports SDT. This section will briefly consider other research that gives evidence of the role of family in faith development. A person’s family of origin may also impact religious identity in a variety of ways. These influences may vary according to the religion being practiced by the parents and ethnic background (Croog & Teele, 1967; Lee et al., 2006; Leonard et al., 2013).

Strong parental attachment may be related to religious identity development (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008). For example, Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2008), in a chapter summarizing theoretical and empirical evidence on how attachment relates to God, suggest that young peoples' attachment to God may occur in a similar way as their attachment to other figures in their lives. They assert that it is possible that, at least sometimes, the type of attachment one has with parents is the same type of attachment one has with God (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008).

Parental attachment seems to be related to intrinsic religious orientation (Kimball et al., 2013). One mixed methods study of 117 emerging adults from Christian liberal arts colleges found that when participants were attached to at least one parent and scored high in intrinsic motivation, they also scored high in the complexity of their faith stories ($\chi^2(7, N = 117) = 18.24, p < .01$) (Kimball et al., 2013). Complexity was measured by the ability to articulate insight into one's past experiences and motives for behaviors (Kimball et al., 2013).

In another quantitative study, which utilized survey methods of 481 Christian college students, intrinsic religiosity and Christian orthodoxy were positively correlated with perceived parental religiosity.

- Perceived parental religiosity was correlated with intrinsic religiosity, $r = .45$.
- Perceived parental religiosity was correlated with Christian orthodoxy, $r = .11$.
- Similarity with mother's beliefs was correlated with intrinsic religiosity, $r = .35$.
- Similarity with mother's beliefs was correlated with Christian orthodoxy, $r = .45$.
- Similarity with father's beliefs was correlated with intrinsic religiosity, $r = .32$.
- Similarity with father's beliefs was correlated with Christian orthodoxy, $r = .38$.
- Perceived faith support was correlated with intrinsic religiosity, $r = .38$.
- Perceived faith support was correlated with Christian orthodoxy, $r = .33$.

- Attachment to the mother was correlated with intrinsic religiosity, $r = .17$.
- Attachment to the mother was correlated with Christian orthodoxy, $r = .19$.
- Attachment to the father was correlated with intrinsic religiosity, $r = .11$.
- Attachment to the father was correlated with Christian orthodoxy, $r = .1$.

All of these were positively correlated at least at the $p < .05$ significance level (Leonard et al., 2013). These studies suggest the potential importance of attachment to parents in terms of religious development. They also help to support the previous discussion on the relation of intrinsic orientation and religious identity development.

Parental involvement, defined as spending time with a son or daughter in faith related activities including going to church, praying, and talking about the faith, could impact religious identity development. For example, Lee et al. (2006) conducted a quantitative study that considered Marcia's identity statuses and other aspects that may impact it, such as parental involvement. Lee et al. (2006) found that parental involvement was positively associated with the foreclosure stage of identity development measured with the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS) ($r = .35, p < .05$) in a study of 49 Korean adolescents (Lee et al., 2006). This finding seems to indicate that for the sample reported in the study of Lee et al. (2006), Korean parents may have an impact on the faith of their children. Further information on how religious identity develops over time in other populations would be helpful.

Research that suggests family influence on faith development provides the strongest empirical support that SDT helps to explain how religious identity develops. Brambilla et al. (2015) is the only quantitative research that studied explicitly Catholic emerging adults. The study was a survey which included several scales (The Christian Religious Internalization Scale, the Perceived BAS by parents, Perceived parents' religious IVD, Perception of religion oriented

parental CR and Perceived parental warmth) (Brambilla et al., 2015). The sample included 394 Catholics from Northern Italy. The mean age was 19.29 ($SD = 2.4$). More than half of participants were female. Several scales, including ones measuring religious internalization and measuring parental practices and example, were administered. Brambilla et al. (2015) found that basic autonomy supportive behaviors statistically predicted integrated internalization of beliefs in Catholic emerging adults ($r = .26, p < .001$). These autonomy supportive practices included allowing the young person to engage with content being taught, not forcing participation, and parents demonstrating their own seemingly free and happy participation in religious practices. On the contrary, parents who tried to coerce their children by withholding affection were found to predict introjected internalization. Identified internalization occurs when a person reports understanding why he or she desires to perform an act and freely chooses to do it. Introjected internalization occurs when people perform a certain behavior, but out of a sense of compulsion, fear or obligation. Interestingly, when members of the adolescent's peer group engaged in religious behaviors with an adolescent who was internally motivated, it predicted introjected internalization ($r = .16, p < .05$) (Brambilla et al., 2015). It is unclear why this may be the case.

Negru et al. (2014), while not referencing SDT, also support the ideas of SDT in ways similar to Brambilla et al. (2015). This appears to be a thematic analysis qualitative study although the researchers do not say this specifically; Negru et al. (2014) studied 14 parent-child dyads ($N = 28$) from Romania, of different Christian faiths, including but not limited to Catholics. They conducted and thematically analyzed in-depth interviews, using emic and etic coding. This study highlighted the voices of the emerging adults themselves. It also shed light on particular types of behavior, on the part of parents or others, that encouraged emerging adults to internalize religious beliefs. Emerging adults mentioned parents' "benevolent persistence"

(Negru et al., 2014, p. 396) in shaping religious practices. This benevolent persistence was characterized by patience that allowed exploration, yet demonstrated the importance of beliefs and behaviors in the parents' own lives. This study also appears similar to Brambilla et al. (2015) in finding that parents who did not force, but rather encouraged and promoted autonomy, were perceived to help foster integrated internalization.

Relationships with others. Relationships also seem to impact how a person's religious identity develops. Teachers and school environments have been shown to potentially influence religious identity development. A survey of 2,691 high school students from Israel found that if students perceived their teachers as role models, they were more likely to find their religious studies meaningful ($r = .49$ in 9th grade, $r = .42$ in 10th grade, $r = .43$ in 11th grade and 12th grade; all have $p < .01$) (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014). This may be helpful in pointing to the importance of teachers being role models, however, the link in this study to finding religious studies meaningful does not necessarily translate into growing in an integrated religious identity. Further research on the effects of teachers as role models would be needed.

Involvement in community and religious activities also may positively impact religious identity development. In a survey of 418 adolescents and emerging adults, overall identity achievement, including religious identity achievement, as measured with the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS), was positively correlated with increases in community involvement and religious involvement ($r = .60$, $p < .05$) (Hardy et al., 2010). Russo-Netzer (2017) had similar findings in a qualitative study of 27 Israeli adults, which used phenomenological analysis. They found that people reported that participating in spiritual groups helped them to solidify their spiritual identity (Russo-Netzer, 2017). A grounded theory qualitative study of 18 Christian college students found that participants who were strong in their

faith were more likely to speak of the impact their community had on them (Bailey, Jones, Hall, Wang, McMartin, & Fujikawa, 2016).

Research conducted in four schools in the Netherlands seemed to suggest something different (Bertram-Troost, Roos, & Miedema, 2007). Students indicated that they perceived the school environment impacted their spiritual development in terms of how they view life. However, when looking at students' level of commitment to their faith and comparing schools with varying religious environments, no correlation was found indicating that the school type impacted subject reported spiritual development (Bertram-Troost et al., 2007). Due to the small sample size, lack of clear differences between schools, and the overarching exploratory nature of that study, the results are likely inconclusive of the impact that the school environment has on spiritual development.

The impact of society as a barrier to religious development. Another social factor that may impact religious identity development is society as a whole. Society is arguably changing in ways that value belonging to a particular church less and less (Hadad & Schachter, 2011; Inglis, 2007). This generation of young people also seems to be decreasing in their religious practices (Hardie, Pearce, & Denton, 2016). This may impact the ways people integrate their faith into their own sense of identity. For example, in a qualitative study of 18 Israeli Jewish emerging adults, many respondents noted that society's changing expectations, such as decreased emphasis on a stable identity and increased emphasis on being open to differences, impacted their decision to be less involved in their faith by normalizing lower levels of religious involvement (Hadad & Schachter, 2011). Inglis (2007) found that while Catholics in Ireland still considered being Catholic as part of their identity, they reported its *importance* in their lives had decreased.

There is also some speculation that there is a cultural aspect to one's religious beliefs (Markstrom-Adams, Hofstra, & Dougher, 1994; Williams, Holt, & Schulz, 2015). Some such examples may be when a person has an identity that is linked to a culture. For example, in a study of 36 Mormon adolescents and 47 non-Mormon adolescents, Mormons in minority settings were more likely than their non-Mormon counterparts to have a foreclosed identity (Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994). Identity was measured with the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS) (Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994). This makes one wonder whether people are more likely to have a foreclosed identity if they experience themselves as a minority. This may add an interesting dimension in considering how identity develops.

Summary of findings. Overall, the research shows that it is in its beginning phases in terms of how integrated religious identity develops. The quantitative research presented provides suggestions for what may impact the development of integrated religious identity, such as an ability to cope with life challenges, the processing of religious doubts and questions, internal religious motivation, family of origin, and relationships with others and society, but clear links are not made between these factors and integrated religious identity. Further research would need to take the information provided in these studies and begin to show a clearer link to integrated religious identity and its development.

Methods of Previous Research

Overview of quantitative research. The studies mentioned above are primarily cross-sectional and quantitative in nature. There were some longitudinal studies (Alisat & Pratt, 2012; Foster & Laforce, 1999; Hall, Edwards, & Wang, 2016; Helms, Gallagher, Calhoun, Choukas-Bradley, Dawson, & Prinstein, 2015). Given the exploratory nature of the knowledge base, the nature of quantitative, cross-sectional studies makes it very difficult to capture the process of

development in Catholic emerging adults. Additionally, all the quantitative research examined used self-report surveys and was descriptive or correlational in nature, making it difficult to answer the question of *how* religious identity develops in Catholic emerging adults or other populations.

Most research samples were gathered from college students, and seem to be convenience samples. The samples obtained also varied greatly in their religious affiliation, making the generalizability to a specifically Catholic population difficult. A number of studies from groups that may be similar to Catholics, such as Israeli populations (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Fisherman, 2004; Fisherman, 2016; Russo-Netzer, 2017) and evangelical Christians (Hall et al., 2016; Leonard et al., 2013; Cook et al., 2014), have been conducted.

As noted, there is very little research that specifically focuses on Catholic youth. The research that does exist is from countries other than the United States (Brambilla et al., 2015; Negru et al., 2014). Additionally, Catholics are people with diverse beliefs, who may benefit from further explanation of this population based on reported practices and beliefs (Barga, 2015). There is some research that included, but was not specifically concerned with, Catholics, and therefore lacks information that may be helpful in understanding the potential cultural nuances of Catholic emerging adults (Cramer et al., 2008; Inglis, 2007; Smith & Denton, 2016; van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011). Additional research that focuses on Catholic emerging adults may build knowledge about the development of an integrated religious identity in this population. This could lead to new knowledge about some aspects of the overall developmental processes of Catholic emerging adults.

It is also noteworthy that the quantitative literature does not use the term integrated religious identity. It seems that the literature that discusses factors contributing to achieved

identity may be the best fit in helping to understand the research question in this study. The research is still helpful because it allows the researcher to see specific factors that influence identity, such as life challenges, doubts, internal religious motivation, and family of origin, even though the research speaks of identity more broadly.

Overview of qualitative research. Several qualitative articles seem to shed light on religious development (Bailey et al., 2016; Kimball et al., 2013; Negru et al., 2014; Russo-Netzer, 2017; van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011). The qualitative research used a variety of methods including thematic analyses (Negru et al., 2014), grounded theory (Bailey et al., 2016; van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011), and phenomenological studies (Russo-Netzer, 2017). Qualitative research is sometimes thought to come from a constructivist or participatory epistemology, meaning that qualitative research is not coming to understand a pre-existing reality, but is constructing its own reality based on the experiences of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). However, the qualitative research reviewed in this paper seems to be post-positivist in nature, meaning that the basic presupposition is that there is a reality that can be known, at least in part, and the research is trying to understand that reality. For example, the qualitative research reviewed in this dissertation helps to shed light on the following ideas: a person's faith journey (Kimball et al., 2013), the developmental process of their identity development (Negru et al., 2014), and categorizing people according to their identity status using Erikson's and Marcia's categorizations (Kiesling, Montgomery, Sorell, & Colwell, 2006). Additionally, qualitative research relied on people's perceptions and self-report without verifying them with observational data.

Most qualitative studies used semi-structured interviews (Kimball et al., 2013; Kiesling et al., 2006; Negru et al., 2014; Russo-Netzer, 2017; Rymarz & Graham, 2006; van Dover &

Pfeiffer, 2011), although some used focus groups (Ramirez et al., 2014), and one used both individual interviews and focus groups (Crawford & Beard, 2014). These studies are helpful because they are more readily able to align with the question of *how* integrated religious identity develops.

While the qualitative studies were better positioned to capture the voices of their participants, only Negru et al. (2014) captured the voices of Catholic emerging adults in a way that is relevant to the question of what factors contribute to or inhibit their integrated religious identity development. Other studies were able to capture emerging adults, even though specifically Catholic voices were not captured (Kimball et al., 2013; Kiesling et al., 2006; Russo-Netzer, 2017; Rymarz & Graham, 2006; van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2011). None of the qualitative studies mention using *in vivo* coding, another indication that the voices of the participants may not be fully highlighted in the research findings (Saldaña, 2016).

It is also noteworthy that the qualitative research does not specifically use the term integrated religious identity. Instead of integrated religious identity, the qualitative research looks at things like why a person continues to or does not continue to practice their faith (Negru et al., 2014) or what religious orientation a person has (intrinsic or extrinsic) (Rymarz & Graham, 2006). These factors seem to provide some glimpses into the question of how integrated religious identity develops without defining integrated religious identity explicitly.

Conceptual and operational definitions. Another area of concern in regards to research methods includes a lack of conceptual and operational clarity. This and the lack of consistency make synthesizing and building upon past research more difficult. Conceptual definitions of religious identity vary widely. For example, Negru et al. (2014) did not define identity, although they used the word. The most common way of defining identity in the literature was based on

Erikson's understanding, using Marcia's stages of identity development more broadly (moratorium, foreclosure, achieved, and diffuse) (Kiesling et al., 2006; Kimball et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2006; Leonard et al., 2013). Other research used identity to refer to how a person labelled themselves (Croog & Teele, 1967). A clearly stated and consistently used definition of the term identity would be helpful. However, the current state of the literature indicates that knowledge development in this area is in the exploratory phase. The natural limitations of quantitative studies in exploring processes are also evident.

Gaps in knowledge. This study of Catholic emerging adults' reports of their faith journeys may build knowledge that could be used to try to help Catholic emerging adults move forward in their integrated religious identity development. If Catholic emerging adults are able to grow in their integrated religious identity, they may benefit from some of the positive outcomes that are associated with integrated religious identity, such as positive health outcomes and improved mental health. This research may help social workers to aid Catholic emerging adults in developing the *kind* of religious identity that has the potential to lead to these positive outcomes, such as a more intrinsic and integrated religious identity. In this way, social workers may be able to build upon potential strengths of clients to improve things like health, well-being, and moral reasoning.

This study may also help to improve collaboration between social work and the Catholic Church. This research could also help Catholic leaders to better assist Catholic emerging adults through improvements in their religious education programs, young adult ministry programs, and collaboration with social workers. Understanding how a person's faith journey progresses may help to improve religious leadership's response to Catholic emerging adults (Byrd, Hageman, Isle, 2007; Lawson & Masyn, 2015; Lemberger & Hutchinson, 2014), as well as aid in

increasing Church attendance. This may give social workers a way to intervene on a more macro level of intervention, such as in cooperation with the Church, based on what is learned on the individual or direct practice level. One way of doing this may be through establishing referral policies on the part of churches and social work agencies so that each party is able to contribute to the development of Catholic emerging adults. This may help to promote better spiritual/religious development especially among emerging Catholic adults by giving the Catholic Church more tools to help Catholic emerging adults.

Due to the current research lacking cohesiveness, any future research should give clear descriptions of study research methods along with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the work. This may help to provide a clearer path, with a potential for greater dialogue between the researchers moving forward. Right now, there are a variety of threads of research that have not yet been woven together. One example of this is that Brambilla et al. (2015) only cited works having to do with SDT. Brambilla et al. (2015) did not overview any other research on Catholic emerging adults, such as Negru et al. (2014). This could be a result of them being published in close time proximity, but further research that attempts to bring together the various strands from SDT and from the development of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity literature may be beneficial to viewing the knowledge base of religious identity.

Better understanding of religious development may lead to a clearer theory, particularly as targeted toward Catholic emerging adults. Clearer theory may best be attained through grounded theory research. As *how* integrated religious identity *develops* is better understood, the knowledge base of human development in this area will be expanded. It may also be helpful to consider Catholic emerging adults, as well as if and how the development of integrated religious identity varies in an array of populations, cultures, and age groups. Ensuring that the voice of

Catholic emerging adults is heard in future research is also important. Research should seek to learn from their experience and allow their experience to become the basis of theory. Better understanding of specific groups' cultural norms may also allow researchers to conduct more culturally sensitive future studies (Manders & Galvani, 2015; Mohammadi, Jones, & Evans, 2008).

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

The gaps in knowledge regarding Catholic emerging adults' faith development lead to the research question. The research question for the grounded theory study proposed is: *How do Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey?* A grounded theory research design seems to be a natural fit for this research question. Grounded theory often seeks to better understand a process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Padgett, 2017). This question of exploring people's faith journey is essentially aimed at understanding more than the pieces contributing to faith development, but a *process* of faith development. This approach is consistent with grounded theory research, which seeks to derive theory from the reported experiences of people (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Padgett, 2017; Thyer, 2010).

It is helpful to note that no one grounded theory approach was used in this dissertation. The methods of data collection and analysis leaned toward the methods of Corbin and Strauss (2008) since I began by considering theory, and used sensitizing concepts from the theory to inform my data collection, which Glaser and Strauss (1967) would not suggest (Kelle, 2011). Additionally, this grounded theory study made use of some of the broader methods employed by qualitative research, such as interrater reliability and a codebook, due to the need to increase the trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017).

The literature suggests that the qualitative researcher should first understand her epistemological framework, then consider theories/sensitizing concepts, and then the methodology/approach (Padgett, 2017; Urquhart, 2013). This research, consistent with previous research, was post-positivist. The sensitizing constructs, drawn from Erikson (1968), Marcia (1966), and SDT (Assor et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000), also have this epistemological framework of post-positivism, in that they seem to indicate that there is a universal human

experience which can be known, at least in part. These theories, as well as the previous literature discussed in chapter two, provided an initial line of inquiry into what factors may shape a person's faith journey. In the early stages of integrated religious identity development research, there is not a clear and coherent understanding of *how* a person's faith journey develops. It is hoped that this dissertation research can contribute knowledge toward faith development among Catholic emerging adults.

Theory development is the goal of grounded theory research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory has the possibility of making formal or substantive theory. This research resulted in a substantive theory, which is based on a *particular* group (Lempert, 2011). Multiple substantive theories and theory testing with a variety of groups could lead to formal theory, but at this time, the hope is to learn more about the particular needs of Catholic emerging adults. In subsequent research, it may be possible to explore how Catholic emerging adults' needs are similar and different from other groups.

Sampling

The number of participants was not pre-determined in this type of study, since data are collected until saturation occurs (Charmaz, 2014; Oktay, 2012; Padgett, 2017; Urquhart, 2013). However, grounded theory studies typically conduct between 20-30 interviews (Stern, 2011). Grounded theory aims at theoretical saturation (Hood, 2011). Theoretical saturation occurs when all of the main concepts have been clearly defined and there is understanding of how and in what circumstances the concepts work and what limits they have (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hood, 2011; Oktay, 2012). I ended up conducting 31 interviews.

The potential participants were first contacted through Life Teen. Life Teen is a Catholic organization that helps thousands of parishes to reach out to their young adults and teenagers

through Eucharistic centered catechesis offered to parishes (Life Teen, 2018). This means that Life Teen has access to many parishes throughout the country and even the world. Life Teen has a list of contacts at approximately 1,700 parishes in the United States. Initially, the staff at Life Teen said they would be willing to send out an e-mail inviting participation to all of these parishes. When the time for the study arrived, Life Teen sent out the study information to their area contacts in each of the states, who were then invited to disseminate. This initial inquiry did not result in many interviews. Potential participants e-mailed me directly. Life Teen staff or parish staff did not know who responded. After this, parishes and young adult organizations were directly contacted throughout the United States (East Coast, West Coast, Midwest and South). Many responses came through this. Still, I began looking for some negative case examples of people who were not recruited from Catholic sources. I was able to find these participants through Michigan State University's School of Social Work sending my request to three of their listservs. The e-mail in Appendix C was sent out and disseminated by the parishes.

The sample, as reported below in Table 1, was composed of Catholic emerging adults (18-29 years old, $M = 24$, $SD = 3.5$). Eighteen were from the Midwest, 4 from the West, 4 from the Northeast and 5 from the South. 19 participants were White/Caucasian, 3 Middle Eastern, 2 White/Hispanic, and 1 of each of the following groups: Asian, Biracial, Black, Hispanic, Mayan, White/Chinese and Other. All self-identified as Catholic.

Table 1.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 31)

	Mean (SD)
Age	24 (3.5)
	Frequency (%)
Race/Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	19 (61.3)
Middle Eastern	3 (9.7)

Table 1 (cont'd)

White/Hispanic	2 (6.5)
Asian	1 (3.2)
Biracial	1 (3.2)
Black	1 (3.2)
Hispanic	1 (3.2)
Mayan	1 (3.2)
White/Chinese	1 (3.2)
Other	1 (3.2)
Geographic Region	
Midwest	18 (58)
South	5 (16)
Northeast	4 (12.9)
West	4 (12.9)
Gender	
Female	24 (77.4)
Male	7 (22.6)

Theoretical sampling. Grounded theory literature suggests theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in order to allow the researcher freedom to fully understand additional concepts that come up in data analysis. Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to seek people with specific experiences or backgrounds. Theoretical sampling is employed if themes or experiences emerge in the early interviews that need to be further explored (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Therefore, during the course of research, additional people may need to be recruited (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, if a particular age group or family background seemed to be appearing in the data in such a manner as could be part of theory development, it may be necessary to search for additional interviewees of aligning ages and family backgrounds.

In grounded theory research, the researcher seeks to obtain not just theoretical saturation of the data (no new information), but also conceptual saturation (all of the concepts of the theory being sufficiently defined) (Hood, 2011). In order to reach theoretical saturation, constant

comparison was used (comparing what the data says each time a code is used) in on-going analysis. Conducting analysis after each of the interviews allowed adjustments to be made in order to more fully develop concepts. For example, it was clear to me early on that I was not always getting enough information regarding the *process* of faith development or regarding why certain things helped people, so more probing questions around these issues were needed in subsequent interviews.

Negative case examples were sought to further explore whatever major themes emerged in order to understand potential differences and to try to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Negative cases help to ensure that what is being found in the data would not be contradicted by cases that are different (Creswell, 2003). For example, if I were to find that certain parental influences were helpful in most cases, but I interviewed participants that had these same parental influences with a different outcome, that would necessitate further distinction and exploration in the research process. Six negative cases were obtained. These cases were predominantly found through reaching out to a University to have the research participation opportunity advertised through them. Negative cases are participants whose experience does not match the experience of the majority of the participants. This was done to try to ensure that the research would access a wider array of responses to potential influences on religious development, and increase the trustworthiness of the data by seeking to understand a variety of responses.

Interview Protocol Development

Reflexivity. Before beginning to develop the interview protocol, it is important to consider the possible biases of the researcher and how these biases can be reduced in the data collection and analyses. Qualitative research method authors strongly recommend that the researcher examine his or her own biases including his or her personal views (Corbin & Strauss,

2008; Creswell, 2003; Padgett, 2017). This is called reflexivity, which adds to the trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017). It is important to note that I am a Roman Catholic religious sister. I wear a habit, or religious garb that clearly identifies me as a religious, which may impact how people relate to me. I have been living in religious life for about 13 years. I have been formed in the Roman Catholic intellectual tradition, which seeks to integrate objective truth with subjective experience, not putting these at odds with one another but acknowledging the complexity of our lived experience. I am also generally pro-religion.

One of the primary assumptions that I bring to this research is my belief in the value of personal freedom. I believe social interactions and personal traits that foster personal freedom and free assent to the truth will be more helpful than things which foster blind acceptance. This belief comes largely from my formation as a religious sister, which has stressed an active and free obedience, avoiding outward conformism. My upbringing as a very loved only child also impacted my own appreciation for the “space” that I was given to think through problems and make my own decisions. My independence was always respected and encouraged by parents and teachers. This makes me inclined to believe that independence is an important part of faith development, realizing that I need to be open to people’s unique experiences.

Another primary assumption is that the journey of faith is important and helpful. I believe the joys and challenges of this journey are helpful to human development. This comes from another assumption, that people are created for union with God and that union will be sought either on a conscious or unconscious level.

I am also a social worker, which creates a dual role, being both a religious sister and a social worker. I am trained to give voice to the participants in the research and to respect their self-determination. My role as a social worker influences my desire to uphold the norms of the

profession. It is important to note this dual relationship because I may want to give particular emphasis to one role or the other during the process of data collection and analysis, and being aware of why I am making decisions in this process is important.

These are the main beliefs and assumptions that I bring. I worked to maintain awareness of how these beliefs may impact my data analysis. One way this was done was through writing *memos* that note my reaction to the data and how the data may stretch my thinking beyond these assumptions. Memos are an essential part of grounded theory both in combatting bias and in achieving fuller analysis (Lempert, 2011; Padgett, 2017). Memos are the place where the researcher can think freely; reflect on the research, how concepts interact, and what from one's own life is impacting the research; and explore a variety of themes emerging from the data with freedom (Lempert, 2011). Memos also contribute to increasing the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2003; Padgett, 2017). Memos are done both during the collection of data and during analysis (Padgett, 2017).

Memos were written during the process of analysis, especially when potential connections were being made and possible areas of insight were considered. Memos allowed the researcher to articulate her thought process during coding and integration (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Memos included not only the researcher's thought process, but also her feelings about the content, struggles in maintaining objectivity, questions about the data, etc. These memos were an integral part of the integration phase of the analysis as a theory is developed (Lempert, 2011). Memos may increase the trustworthiness of the data through helping the researcher to identify and block potential bias within data collection and analysis (Padgett, 2017).

As an example, one memo I wrote, helping me to identify my response and also to plan for future interviews was:

I had a hard time with this interview. The fact that I couldn't really see the participant made it difficult. I wondered if she was really telling the truth, or if she may be lying to get the \$25 gift card. This feels very judgmental to me, which I don't want to be. At the beginning of the interview, her lack of depth in answers was hard for me. She gave so few specifics. I tried to ask for them, which isn't my strength since I like to respect people's freedom to share what they want to share. By the end, I felt slightly more convinced that she was genuine (maybe not the right age, but at least actually speaking from her own experience). She did demonstrate, what I would call a simple faith... I could have asked more about what she has grown in understanding of, that would have helped me more.

Sensitizing concepts. In addition to considering the researcher's biases, prior to beginning to develop the interview protocol, it is important to consider the sensitizing concepts that may need to be taken into account. Sensitizing concepts are found in the literature and provide a basic, although inadequate, understanding of a particular research question (Bowen, 2006). Sensitizing concepts have a contested position in grounded theory research, some saying that no literature review should be done before research begins in order to allow themes to emerge from the data (Kelle, 2011). However, others argue that sensitizing concepts can be used in order to give possible direction as to what one may find in the research (Kelle, 2011). The most important consideration if using sensitizing concepts is to ensure that the researcher does not impose these ideas on the research, but waits to see what emerges from the data, avoiding being constrained to concepts from one particular theory (Kelle, 2011). Table 2 shows how the sensitizing concepts from chapter two relate to the development of the interview questions and probes. The semi-structured research protocol is found in Appendix A.

Table 2.

<i>Literature Ties to Interview Questionnaire.</i>		
Sensitizing Concept	Question	Literature
Facilitators of Faith Development		
Autonomy supportive practices	Question 2 Question 3 (with all probes)	Assor et al. (2005) Ryan and Deci (2000)
Identified internalization	Questions 2, 3, 5	Ryan and Deci (2000)
Integrated identity	Question 2, 3, 7, 8	Bell (2008) Erikson (1968) Marcia (1973) Ryan and Deci (2000)
Coping with Life Challenges	Question 2, probe f, describing one's faith journey; Question 8	Kimball et al. (2013) van Dover and Pfeiffer (2011)
Religious doubts and Questioning	Question 2, probe g	Fisherman (2016) Hunsberger et al. (2001)
Faith journey as a process	Question 2, describing one's faith journey; Question 8	Brittian and Lerner (2013), Cheon and Canda (2010), Good and Willoughby (2008), Hall et al. (2016), Hardie et al. (2016) Hartley (2004), Peek (2005), Stewart (2002)
Motivation for Practicing Faith	Question 2, Question 7	Watson and Morris (2005) Pedersen et al. (2000) Ramirez et al. (2014)
Family of Origin (Facilitator and/or barrier)	Question 4, probe a	Kimball et al. (2013)
Parental Involvement		Leonard et al. (2013)
Parental Attachment		Lee et al. (2006)
Relationships with others (teachers, friends, families)	Question 4 probes a, b, c	Cohen-Malayev et al. (2014) Hardy et al. (2010) Russo-Netzer (2017)
Society	Question 4, probe d	Markstrom-Adams et al. (1994)

Table 2 (cont'd)

Barriers of Faith Development

Religious doubts and Questioning	Question 2, probe g	Cook et al. (2014)
Family of Origin	Question 5, probe a	Assor et al. (2005) Ryan and Deci (2000)
Society	Question 5, probe d	Hadad and Schachter (2011) Inglis (2007)

Interviews with a semi-structured protocol. Padgett (2017) suggests that the semi-structured interview is most fitting for grounded theory studies. In a semi-structured interview, the main questions are constructed in advance, but other questions may be emphasized and probes used depending upon how the participant responds. Additionally, if a particular theme comes up in one interview, additional questions may be added to subsequent interviews in order to understand all of the aspects of the theme (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The interview protocol (Appendix B) was developed through careful consideration of the research question in concert with the sensitizing concepts from the theories.

Qualitative research literature suggests that semi-structured interviews include only a few, very broad questions (Padgett, 2017). In order to capture the sensitizing concepts from the literature, ten broad, open-ended questions were developed to obtain a sense of the person's faith journey, the place of faith in a person's life, and the aids and barriers to faith in the person's life, possibly including other people, events, situations, and personal characteristics. The probes were developed to gather more information (if the participant struggled to expound on the broader question) or further information (if further information about what the participant shared was desired). If a participant began to discuss something in a later question, that information would be covered at the time the participant brought it up. As much as possible, the interviewer tried to

follow the train of thought of the participant to encourage participant generated conversation (Padgett, 2017).

In order to help develop a theory on faith development, participants were asked to describe their faith journey. This included participants considering facilitators and barriers to their faith development process. Participants were also asked to report what motivates them to attend or not attend faith services, believe or not believe Church teaching, etc. Participants reported what their relationship with the Church is like and their rationale for what their relationship with the Church is like. Participants also explained the meaning that they make out of participating or not participating in their faith. This method allowed the voices of the participants to emerge.

Using the sensitizing concepts, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed with the following topic questions: (1) How do young people in your town relate to the Church? (2) How would you describe your faith journey? (3) How does your faith relate to how you see yourself? (4) Can you tell me about things that help your faith journey? (5) What kinds of things get in the way of your faith journey? (6) Would you describe your religious involvement? (7) What personal traits affect how you engage in faith activities and beliefs? (8) Imagine yourself in 10 years. Where do you see your faith in 10 years? (9) If you could advise someone else in how to move forward in their faith journey, what would you say? (10) Is there anything else that you feel like I should know? Anything I did not ask about, or things you would like to clarify? New things you just thought of?

The demographic questions were asked verbally at the end of the interview as suggested by Padgett (2017). The questions are about the person's age, gender, race or ethnicity. The main reason for asking the age is to verify the person is between 18 and 29. All of the demographic

information may be helpful in noticing similarities and differences between ages, genders, races, or ethnicities.

After gathering the demographic information, the interviewer used member checking to help increase the trustworthiness of the data. *Member checking* included using the notes taken during the interview on main themes presented by the participant and summarizing what the interviewer heard the participant say during the interview. The participant was then asked to make clarifications or additions to their information. This technique is suggested by Creswell (2003) and Padgett (2017) in order to have the participant confirm that the interviewer has the correct understanding of the main themes of the interview. This helps to increase the trustworthiness of the data. Padgett (2017) also suggests that this is a helpful way to close the interview.

Field notes were also be written by the researcher immediately after each interview. Field notes are written in the field and provide observation from the setting (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this case, 29 interviews were done by Zoom and 2 by Skype, which allowed the researcher to see where the person is situated. Field notes also included the main ideas written down during the interview and from member checking at the end of the interview. The researcher also used the field notes to comment on how the person is situated in the interview—how they are seated, what they are wearing, how they are carrying themselves, the type of room they are in, background noises, interruptions, distractions, etc. The field notes were used to note any other information about the interview such as technological difficulties, distractions on the part of the researcher, or her environment. The field notes were also used to record decision making processes regarding which questions to include or not include and any perceived barriers in the interviewer to conducting the interview. The researcher's thoughts and feelings were also

recorded as suggested by Padgett (2017). Field notes are also a way of trying to ensure the trustworthiness of the data through triangulation (Padgett, 2017). Unlike memos, which are written during data collection and analysis, field notes are only written during data collection.

Protocol testing. As suggested by Padgett (2017), the interview protocol was tested on two Catholic emerging adults, one male and one female. The researcher explained to the participants that the data collected would not be analyzed for the purposes of the study. The researcher also explained at the beginning of the interview that the purpose of going through the interview is to see if there are any areas that are unclear. The researcher asked that they either say during the interview that something is unclear, or do so at the end. Before the interview ended, the researcher also did member checking by giving a short summary of the participant's main points and asking if the researcher understood correctly and if the participant wanted to change or add anything. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked again if there was something unclear or if they had any other thoughts.

One of the participants asked at the end of the interview when this study would be conducted. The researcher said that it would be done sometime in 2019. The participant wondered how the current abuses going on in the Church would impact people answering. The researcher stated that she would hope that people may mention the abuses when discussing things that get in the way of a person's faith journey. It is noteworthy that people might be fearful to bring up this topic.

From the researcher's own observations, it seemed that participants did not speak in great detail about the "downs" of their faith journey. They did mention times when they were less involved, but did not speak a great deal about what this time was like for them or the circumstances that led them to a more difficult time. In order to account for this, additional

information was added to the explanation to “normalize” the more difficult part of one’s faith journey. For example, a sentence was added in the transition to question two: “A lot of people will report that their journey moved ahead sometimes and sometimes it didn’t and other times it seemed to move backward. I just want to know your experience.” Additional probes were also added that sought more information about times when the participant was struggling in his or her faith.

Procedures for the interview. Interviews were conducted via Skype or Zoom. Skype and Zoom are both video conferencing software that allow people to speak with and see each other using their computers. They were recorded via Zoom itself or the voice recorder on my iPhone. They were saved via electronic file and sent to a reputable transcribing company for transcription. The transcribing company provided information to ensure the confidentiality of the data. The researcher was either at her home or work office when she conducted the interviews. No one else was in the room or able to hear or see the interview. Full *transcription* provides another way of trying to ensure the trustworthiness of the data since the entire content of the interview is entered into the data base, making it more likely that the researcher is working with what really was said, versus what he or she remembers.

This was a completely voluntary study. This was explained both in the initial e-mails and also in the informed consent (See Appendix A). A \$25 Amazon gift card was offered as an incentive. Once consent is obtained the interview proceeded as outlined in the interview protocol development section.

A verbal consent, which was read to participants, was developed (Appendix A). The consent was designed to ensure that participants understand the goals of the research, the risks and benefits to them, who to contact if they have questions or experience some kind of

psychological or physical injury from the interview, the voluntary nature of the interview, and their rights; and to ensure they are 18 years of age or older (Oktay, 2012). This consent form was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Michigan State University for approval. Participants were given a \$25 Amazon gift card as an incentive for participation in the interview. Incentives are recommended to encourage participation (Padgett, 2017).

No participants seemed distressed from the interview; however, there was a plan in case this situation was encountered. If the participant seemed to be distressed in association with the interview, the interviewer would have offered to connect the participant with possible resources for counseling, if the participant agreed. The interviewer would have then asked where the participant is located. The interviewer would then call the Diocese where the person is located for recommendations. The researcher would then suggest 2-3 potential places for counseling. If the participant reports information that is required to be reported to law enforcement, such as harm intended to self or others, the appropriate offices would be contacted for the state where the participant is located. These procedures were important to minimize and anticipate any potential harm that could occur for interview participants (Charmaz, 2014).

The data are being stored on a USB drive, backed up onto a second USB drive, and stored in a locked area. The data will be kept for three years after graduation, at which time they will be destroyed.

Before the first interview was conducted, the research was presented to the Institutional Review Board at Michigan State University. The study received exempt status.

Analysis

Data analysis began as soon as the first interview was transcribed. This allowed for subsequent interviews to be modified by seeking more information regarding certain concepts,

depending on how the data began to emerge. This is consistent with theoretical sampling techniques described by Corbin and Strauss (2008). This in fact did happen, as I realized in each interview ways that I could improve my questioning to get more information from participants about the process of faith development and the reasons certain influences were helpful. For example, even though I had added an explanation to my question which articulated that there can be ups and downs in a person's faith journey, I realized that it would be helpful to ask people directly about times that have been challenging in their faith journey.

Dedoose is a secure online platform that helps to facilitate the storage and coding of qualitative data (Dedoose, 2019). Both coders used Dedoose. Any identifying information was taken out of the data. The initial consent and any small talk (not related to the content of the analysis) before or after the interview were coded or transcribed. In addition to the interview transcriptions, memos and field notes were also inputted into Dedoose but were not analyzed or reported in the data findings.

Grounded theory seeks to move from descriptive codes to analytic codes. This is done through constant comparison, an essential aspect of grounded theory (Glaser, 2011). Holton (2011) explains:

Theoretical saturation is achieved through *constant comparison* of incidents (indicators) in the data to elicit the properties and dimensions of each category (code). This constant comparing of incidents continues until the process yields the *interchangeability of indicators*, meaning that no new properties or dimensions are emerging from continued coding and comparison (p. 2).

The conceptual codes were not just described with details, but higher levels of abstraction needed to occur indicating how the concepts interact with other concepts. Saturation occurs when

additional interviews would add no new understanding of the concept, but only serve to show one or more aspects of what has already been described (Hood, 2011). Once a code is saturated in this way, the researcher can begin to explore how the codes interact with other codes, allowing the emergence of a theory (Holton, 2011). The data were analyzed with open, axial, and selected coding.

Co-coding. The data were coded by two researchers, known as *co-coding*. The second coder was a Louisiana State University doctoral student in social work who served as a research assistant. The research assistant signed a confidentiality agreement stating that she will keep any identifying information of participants confidential. The research assistant took the Michigan State University initial Institutional Review Board training. I provided training to the research assistant about open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The other coder was also informed that the goal of this study is to let the voices of the participants emerge from the data, not to impose ideas or concepts on the data. The other researcher was also shown examples of codebooks so that they understood the goal of coding. The research assistant also had the coding process explained in detail through reading the sections of this proposal on data collection and analysis. This author provided the training for the research assistant, under the direction of her chairperson.

The co-coder began coding the interviews from the very beginning to help generate the initial 10 to 12 main themes. Each coder read the interviews independently, generated a list of main themes, discussed them and decided which ones were most helpful. Memos were written during this process to record the decision making process. This team approach was used in order to grapple with the complexities of the data and to see multiple facets of the data through conversation (Wiener, 2011). After several interviews were completed, the two coders began to

make a very loose codebook that began to define the categories or subcategories. Regular meetings were scheduled to discuss the choice of codes and to develop the codebook.

Using a second coder also aids in trying to increase the trustworthiness of the data through ensuring that one's own ideas are not subconsciously imposed upon the data, providing for greater objectivity (Padgett, 2017). Wiener (2011) discusses the benefit of diverse perspectives in understanding the complexities of the data and coming to deeper insights in grounded theory research. Team coding is thought to help increase the ease of moving from descriptive to abstract codes that are precise (Wiener, 2011). This leads to an analysis with greater depth and precision. Glaser (2011) also notes that grounded theory does not meet the typical norms of qualitative data analysis, and that grounded theory is frequently changed to meet the expectations of qualitative data analysis. This difference seems to mean that sometimes further strategies must be incorporated into grounded theory in order to make it more current.

During the initial stages of coding, main themes and subthemes emerged with multiple quotes to support each theme or subtheme. As the codebook was developed, the researchers looked for both the context of the themes and subthemes and the process within them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Context refers to what events, thoughts, feelings, personality traits, etc. people find themselves in during various parts of their faith journey. Process would be the person's interpretation (logically, emotionally, and spiritually) of events, as well as what motivates people's decisions in regard to their faith journey. Each category should be seeking to define the "six C's: causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions" (Kelle, 2011, p. 15) of each code.

Open coding. Open coding is the first stage, which consists of reading the data and attaching one or two words that best summarize the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Open coding

used *in vivo* codes whenever possible. *In vivo* codes seek to use the participants' own words in the code. This helps to ensure that the voices of Catholic emerging adults are captured (Charmaz, 2014).

I did begin coding after the first interview, and noted in a memo after the first interview that I thought I should have probed more about the process of the person's development. This did not mean a shift in my overarching questions, but just in my application of them. This process of continually assessing how I could have better asked the questions continued throughout all 31 interviews. I also asked my co-coder for input regarding the questions I was or was not asking, as well as for any input into how the interviews were conducted. She indicated that she felt the interview process was adequate. Appendix D shows the open codes that were developed from the first 10 interviews. Open coding continued until all the interviews were completed and initially analyzed, even while axial coding also began.

Axial Coding. During the process of open coding, axial coding, in which the researcher began to develop categories and subcategories and to understand their unique components (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), began. For example, the coders began to identify their 10 main categories and then subcategories. *In vivo* coding was preserved as much as possible during axial coding. Categories and subcategories should not simply be descriptive, summarizing the data, but move to abstraction (Kelle, 2011).

Both coders open coded the first 10 interviews and then compared the main themes that were found in this first stage. From these first interviews, we both identified cultural impacts, aids to religious participation, prayer, challenges and doubts. My co-coder identified different influences (peer and family), participation in going to Church services, understanding faith, individualism (personal relationship, finding your own way), religious leaders, and faith origins.

I identified relationships (positive influence, changes in relationship and family), thinking (reading, learning), making faith my own, faith's impact on actions and decisions, and the role of emotion. After this, we both continued (independently) with open coding and axial coding of the interviews.

The major work of axial coding occurred after the completion of the open coding of the 31 interviews. At this point we had over 90 codes, and worked to reduce them through combining similar codes and identifying some major categories. There were still many codes, which did not point to a structure of the data. It was only after doing an initial chart that put together all of the codes that were used that it became clear that there were overarching categories to the results (external influences, internal influences, and choices and actions). At this point, I was able to reduce the codes, as they fit into those categories.

Core Category. During the process of open and axial coding, as well as memo writing, a core category should emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This core category “can be any kind of theoretical code: a process, a typology, a continuum, a range, dimensions, conditions, consequences, and so forth. Its primary function is to integrate the theory and render it dense and saturated” (Holton, 2011, p. 18). All of the subcategories should help to explain this core category and integrate the different aspects of it (Holton, 2011).

Holton (2011) notes that one does not simply move from one stage of coding to the next, but rather uses each type of coding as it helps the researcher to define the core concepts. For example, perhaps a researcher can begin to move into axial or even selective coding after just a few interviews, but this does not mean that open coding will not need to be used if new data emerges in subsequent interviews. The core category will be discussed in chapters five and six.

Selective coding. Selective coding is the last step of the analysis, which seeks to understand the relationships between the categories and subcategories (Padgett, 2017). Padgett (2017) notes that this is a demanding form of analysis, but necessary for grounded theory research. Selective coding means coding around the categories that relate to the core category (Holton, 2011). This usually allows for the dimensions of the core category to be fully explored and defined, without having to code all of the data which may not pertain to these core categories (Holton, 2011). This information is essential in developing the codebook so that all possible indicators of what is included (or excluded) from a particular code are easy to understand. The *codebook* is meant to allow the research to be replicated (Charmaz, 2014). A codebook defines the codes in a way that allows another researcher to know exactly what type of data should be classified as that code (Patton, 2015). This also helps to increase the trustworthiness of the data, since it allows for transparency (other researchers know how you coded and can assess whether they agree), and also for the possibility of replicability. It also provides an audit trail so that people can see how the research progressed and why certain decisions were made and certain conclusions were found.

In this case, after all 31 interviews were open coded, an initial coding schema was developed and put into writing in a codebook. Both coders began using this codebook and independently coding and comparing interviews (one or two at a time). During this process, definitions were solidified, discrepancies noted, and some minor changes to the coding schema made. Once the codebook was finalized, an *interrater reliability* of .81 was achieved using a pooled Cohen's kappa (Padgett, 2017). The Cohen's kappa seeks at least a .80 agreement between the two coders when independently coding a text.

Notes on analysis. A thorough process of analysis is meant to lead to conceptual saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Conceptual saturation means that the categories and subcategories are fully understood in terms of how they work, how they are defined, and what constitutes normal variation within the theme. Interview questions or probes may need to be modified during the process in order to ensure conceptual saturation. In this case, modification was not necessary, but particular attention to prompts and to certain questions was necessary.

Analyzing for process requires a more overarching view of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Analyzing for process attempts to understand how a change may have occurred in a person over time, what the interactions are between concepts, and how emotions and experiences impact change. This process uses previous memos and creates new memos to make sense of the process in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This stage of the analysis was done just by this writer, but was discussed with the other coder for additional insights.

The final stage of grounded theory research is integration. This stage seeks to understand all the pieces of the research as fully as possible and to have at least a beginning sense of an explanatory theory, in this case of how faith develops in Catholic emerging adults (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It requires reading through all of one's data about the categories and subcategories and coming to find a way that they make sense together. It also involves diagrams that include the various main categories and subcategories, showing their relationships to one another. Integration also includes looking at negative cases and seeing how they fit.

Timeline. The data were gathered from April – June, 2019, and analysis began immediately. By the time the data were finished being collected, preliminary analysis for each interview and a working codebook had been completed. Selective coding began and interrater

reliability was achieved in early September. After that point, the final integration analysis occurred to see how the findings fit together.

Resources. I also received financial resources from the College of Social Science and the Graduate School of Michigan State University. This allowed me to provide the \$25 incentive for participants. It also allowed me to have the data transcribed, which allowed for more timely analysis.

Summary

It is hoped that this study will be able to contribute to the knowledge base of religious identity development among Catholic emerging adults through rigorous methods and transparency of data collection and analysis. Creswell (2003) suggests that “qualitative researchers engage in at least two of them in a given study” (p. 209). It is hoped that the many precautions taken in this study to try to ensure the trustworthiness of the data led to study findings that contributed to the understanding of Catholic emerging adults’ faith journey in an authentic and integral way.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

This chapter will outline the main findings with transcription excerpts from the interviews. It will show how the study achieved its overarching aim of answering the research question of how do Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey? How the study met its stated aims will be further explored in chapter six. Although it was hoped that a clearer explanatory model would be developed, this section will shed light on the basic theory that was developed that seemed to fit the data.

The basic pieces of the preliminary model are from the core category and main themes. The core category that emerged from the data was the *journey* itself. The main themes were *internal influences, external influences and choices/actions*. Participants engaged with these main themes in a variety of ways. It did not appear that the ways that these influences were engaged with necessarily led toward or away from integrated religious identity.

Participants seemed to emphasize the idea of journey. This was the core category that emerged. It seems to explain how the person answers the central identity question, of “who am I?”. As they answered this question, participants did not report reaching a definitive place of integration, but rather an ongoing process of development. This chapter explores the core category of the journey and the influences on the journey. A preliminary model will be suggested and then each of the pieces of the model will be explored.

The Journey

The overarching model can be understood by considering the core category of journey as articulated by the participants. The journey gives a framework for considering the various influences the participants describe on their journey. The data regarding faith journey did not necessarily revolve around dramatic events, specific milestones or transition times. Occasionally

interview participants mentioned transitions a time of growing in faith. For example, one person stated:

Yeah. Um, I feel like I've thought about it a good bit 'cause I... It's- it's very counter to the way a lot of people, you know, they don't go to college and become, often deeply involved, if they weren't already, um. And I think for me it was just a time where it was a big change to go from living at home to living on my own at college, um, and I think I just was- was open at that point to people that were gonna be put in my life to help me and to lead me (Interview 30).

One young man made a perceptive comment that, “I’m not sure that I really like this idea of faith being a journey that you move forwards and backwards in someway. So, I don't- I don't think faith is linear at all” (Interview 19).

Another person described different “moments” in her faith journey in this way:

Um, well, of course, I- I came from the um, not caring about God to uh, seeing God as like real, and helpful and everything from um, the really hard times that I went through. I mean, it was clear that I was going to die, like I'm going to die. And so to me it was, it was actually like I was, I would tell people that dreams do come true (Interview 23).

Another aspect of the journey seems to be that people reported their faith journey being steady. There were no dramatic events reported, but rather simple decisions that either increased or decreased one's commitment one's religious beliefs and practice, and internal and external influences that either increased or decreased one's commitment to one's religious beliefs and practices. People who indicated adhering to their Catholic faith, did not seem to indicate that difficult events led them backwards, but just that they were additional data points on the journey.

According to the 31 Catholic emerging adults that participated in this study, a number of influences are a part of their faith journeys. These influences were coded as themes and subthemes. In addition to the themes and subthemes, texts that particularly added understanding of the journey were coded. Coding for the core category of journey helped to capture some particular instances where the journey could be better described. From excerpts coded as journey, it seemed that this journey was made up of various influences that resulted in people choosing to engage with faith beliefs and behaviors or choosing not to engage in faith beliefs and behaviors. Many of the themes and subthemes also capture this idea of a steady journey. For example, several participants noted that their faith journey included acquiring more understanding, and of being able to be a better example of their faith to others.

Most people described their faith development as gradual and continuous (not something that ever stopped). One participant said:

It was gradual. I had to keep going and keep going and started getting understanding. I didn't know too much in the beginning, and what I did is I did a lot of research and all the readings, and I started to see change in myself. When you jot down what you're doing in life on paper and you start to see change during that paper that you have kept, documented it, you notice that there's something in your life that's happening special, and it isn't just you. If it was just you, then you wouldn't need to write it down, so once I started seeing the change, I knew that I was doing the right thing by going to Mass every Saturday (Interview 3).

Although the participants did not emphasize the role of life-events or transitions as shaping their faith, in tracing various faith-journeys, certain milestones or life-events did emerge as significant to the faith journey. For example, the transitions into college and out of college

seemed to be important moments. Several people mentioned that while it is not the typical experience to go to college and become more religious, that it was their experience. Several young people out of college also mentioned the need to make their faith more their own when they were no longer surrounded by the community they had in college. One person described how the shift to college impacted her faith in this way:

Yeah. Um, I feel like I've thought about it a good bit 'cause I... It's- it's very counter to the way a lot of people, you know, they don't go to college and become, often deeply involved, if they weren't already, um. And I think for me it was just a time where it was a big change to go from living at home to living on my own at college, um, and I think I just was- was open at that point to people that were gonna be put in my life to help me and to lead me (Interview 30).

Some people also discussed their journey in terms of how they grew in various ways. For example, one person articulated how she has changed in this way:

And I wouldn't be able to believe it. And I feel like now I'm able to sort of ... um embrace that. And I think too, I'm less afraid to ... um ... I guess to like be ... like to be proud of my faith. So if people ever ask me about it, I'm definitely more confident than I ... if you would've asked me three years ago, like "Would you openly talk about your faith to your friends that don't all go to church or that don't all agree with you?", and I feel like then I would be like absolutely not, I would just be like, "Oh yeah, like I go to church", and then like just say that (Interview 15).

Even times of going away from one's faith, were sometimes seen, in retrospect, as helping the person. One person experienced the ups and downs of his journey in this way:

Um, I, I, I guess the other way to answer that question is that, um, um, uh, the, the, you know, hav- having grown up going to Catholic school, um, you know, the faith just kind of seem like the default, for the first part of my life until I had to the opportunity to like make a choice of my own. I made the wrong choice when I was in high school and I made the right choice when I was in college. But nonetheless, I think making that bad decision, it's actually great learning opportunity and is, is, is what made my, uh, faith as strong as it is now. I don't think I could, I don't think I could have had that experience without the bad experience (Interview 10).

From these quotes it seems that many of the influences on the faith journey that will be discussed are important parts of its graduality. Others described their journey as “sporadic” (Interview 22). Another person described a similar phenomenon saying:

So yeah, when I was younger, I, like, I was baptized Catholic, and then I had, like, my first communion in the Catholic church. Um, and I used to go to CCD, which was like catechism after school some days. Um, and nobody really liked to go to that. I remember not liking going to that. Um, then in fifth grade I stopped going to that 'cause I was just, like, old enough. Uh, and then I wasn't really, like, a part of really any church until eighth grade again. Um, like, we were on and off with the Catholic church. We would sometimes go, but like, not really consistently. And then, when, yeah, when I was in eighth grade, I started going more to a non-denominational church, and I went to, like, sometimes the Catholic youth group, but sometimes denominat- denominational youth group, um, with my friends (Interview 21).

Some, who disagreed about the Church in many matters, indicated they may someday return to the Church (Interview 31). Another person also emphasized a sense of exploration saying:

But I expect to kind of with-in the next ten years to figure out what I actually believe, and cause there's a lot of development right now, I'm going to graduate college, um I plan to get my masters in social work right away and start a job and stuff like that so, I think I will figure out more so- I-I, my views change every couple months so I think I will have more concrete idea of what I do believe. So, we'll see (Interview 27).

External influences. Participants also described being influenced by external things on their journey. Things that participants reported were: culture, family, peers, religious leaders, God's influence, and various aspects of the Church. From what the participants indicated, these factors seemed to take the form of particular moments of interaction that either influenced the person toward or away from their faith or had a neutral impact on the person.

Internal influences. Participants described being influenced by things within themselves either toward, away from, or neutrally in regard to their participation in the faith. Internal influences included: attitudes, doubts, suffering, searching, and personal traits. From the participant's reports, these influences seem to impact what the person's journey looks like, what sorts of questions they ask, what their engagement with belief is, etc.

Choices/Actions. Participants reported choices in a variety of ways. They indicated ways of participation in the Church (frequenting Sacraments, concrete choices and decisions to engage in a faith related activity or belief, retreats, prayer, Scripture and Service). Thinking and learning about the faith also emerged as a concrete action that tended to increase identity integration. Things participants tended to report as difficulties in their faith journey were: practical challenges (such as being too busy, too tired, Mass schedules, transportation, etc.), disagreement with the Church, finding replacements for formal faith, and either active or passive choices away from practicing one's faith.

Changes in relationships, thinking and actions. Additionally, some people reported that their faith impacted their relationships, thinking and actions. Some of the changes mentioned were: changes in relationships, such as more tensions with non-religious family members.

Overall, these all emerged as pieces of the journey, helping the observer to look not so much at stages, but rather, the influences that a person is experiencing. Since integrated religious identity achievement could not be clearly pinpointed, participant's adherence to the Catholic Church's beliefs and their engagement in Catholic religious practices were seen as their religious identity. People did not give the impression that they had "arrived" at what it meant to be an integrated Catholic, but rather simply that they were on the journey, and continuing to grow.

Table 3.

Themes and Subthemes Explaining the Core Category of the Journey.

Theme	Subtheme	Notes
External influences	Culture	
	Faith encouragement from family	
	Family influence – away from faith	
	Peer influence – positive	
	Peer influence – away from faith	
	Religious Leaders	
	God's influence	
	External influences within the Church	Feeling welcomed, external attributes of the Church, Groups/Organizations
Internal Influences	Personal traits that aid in faith	
	Development	
	Doubts and questions	
	Personal traits	
	Attitudes or personal traits that hinder faith development	Fear, self-image, etc.
	Suffering	
Choices/Action	Choices to practice faith	

Table 3 (cont'd)

	Falling away from faith	
	Faith activities	Prayer, retreats, sacraments, Scripture and service
	Finding replacements for formal faith	
	Practical Challenges	
	Disagreement with the Church	
	Thinking/Learning	
Faith's Impact on the Person	Faith's impact on actions	
	Faith's impact on relationships	
	Ways faith helps the person	

The preliminary theory can be depicted graphically through Figure 1, showing the gradual and continuous sense of how people reported their identity development taking place. The image hinges on the idea that faith development is not a linear process, but a journey, as was reported by the participants in this study. The whole figure is seen as the process of the faith journey. It should conjure the image of walking down a path on which each of these things influences the path, making it rocky or smooth, painful or joyful, arduous or easy. The various influences on the journey might impact the journey in a given instance, but do not necessarily predict the end result.

Figure 1: Influences on Integrated Identity throughout the Faith Journey



External Influences

This section will review the main themes and subthemes for external influences on a person's faith journey that emerged from the data. These themes include, culture, family, peers, religious leaders, God's influence, and various aspects of the Church. These factors sometimes took the form of particular moments of interaction that either influenced the person toward or away from their faith or had a neutral impact on the person, or a more overarching influence.

Culture. The cultural impacts subtheme was used when the person described that the atmosphere or culture in which they were living or had lived in impacted them positively or negatively. Often, participants would refer to the secular environment of the Universities they attended, saying things like "I think just college campus culture in particular is, is difficult" (Interview 28). One person, when describing things that hinder his faith journey said:

I think it's the temptations of the world ... today we have this uh, I would say different morality, where, especially in movies and TV shows we see some things that are seen as normal and even, desirable. And that we know from our faith that it's the opposite. So I would say it is a main, um, yeah, hurdles is to overcome this new morality that is arising (Interview 12).

One person articulated why this secular environment is challenging for her by saying:

I constantly have a fear of missing out of things that, you know, some of my friends who aren't as religious or don't have like a faith life. You know, I let the fear of being not participating in things with them kind of keeps me from doing other things, like going to Mass or that kind of thing. So, just kind of just the-the general secular things that I, like, I might miss out on (Interview 18).

A couple of participants mentioned challenges reconciling their identity as Catholic with some other subculture in which they engaged. For example, one participant mentioned being part of the pop punk culture and struggling to see how that fit with being Catholic (Interview 1). Another participant, mentioned integrating their work with a secular organization, asking the question “how do I integrate my values in the work that I am doing?” (Interview 28). Another participant mentioned that it can be difficult to hold counter cultural views saying “...the work community, um, that’s predominately secular, holds a certain, certain standard that, ‘Oh, if you believe this then you hate ‘x’ you know?’ (Interview 14).

Among those interviewed, some described the faith-culture of their locality as being either helpful or negative. For example, some participants from the south, mentioned that faith was presupposed as part of life, and they found that culture helpful in leading toward a more integrated faith identity. One participant felt that the Protestant churches had a stronger culture of reaching out to young people (Interview 7), and another participant suggested that adults helping young people grow in their faith ought to ensure that they understand the culture young people are coming from (Interview 6). One participant, who grew up in Brazil, noted that the Catholic culture there gave a context to his faith in a helpful way. However, another participant who was of Middle Eastern descent, mentioned some of the negative aspects of a Chaldean Catholic culture, where people practiced their faith because it was a cultural norm, but not because they believed it themselves. He said:

It’s like being Chaldean like me, like it’s our faith is so attached to it, and I guess that’s kind of backfired because it’s just cultural now for them ... which I think is not a good thing because it’s you just do it because okay, you know, you just have to go through the motions, and you tune out, and you’re not really there to actually partake (Interview 5).

Faith encouragement from family. The next several subthemes will consider a variety of ways that people influence faith development. The family was one aspect that influenced Catholic emerging adults' faith journeys. Varying aspects of faith encouragement seemed to emerge as most helpful, especially parents talking to their children about faith and making it a part of their everyday experience together. One participant expressed that:

...based on how my parents approached it [religion], really set me up for a great foundation that was, I was able to dive deeper into through high school, and then come college I could put, because I had the right foundation, I could put the fancy, ornaments and stuff like on top of it (Interview 13).

Later this same participant said that her family “pushed to understand the personal relationship with Jesus first, and then all the bells and whistles of the Catholic faith second” (Interview 13). Another participant described her family's influence as “essential” (Interview 12). Another participant mentioned that his family was an important influence, especially “conversations about faith were a huge part of it” (Interview 19).

For participants whose families were not reported to have a strong influence (and even sometimes a negative influence) on their faith development, they still reported some faith encouragement behaviors such as one or both of their parents being a good faith model, going to Church together, and extended family members or siblings encouraging participation in the Sacraments. Others reported participation in Church activities out of a sense of obligation “the main reason I-I wanted to get married through the Church’ was honestly, I knew that was what would make my parents most happiest” (Interview 25). Another participant mentioned that having only one parent who was encouraging their faith made it more difficult. Overall, there

seemed to be faith encouragement from parents to participate in Church, but not to make it a part of their lives through regular prayer or additional activities.

Family influence – away from the faith. Interestingly, many people reported either no faith encouragement from their family, or that their family discouraged their faith practices. One participant, who was raised without religion, said that his parents were drug addicts and did not expose him to any religion. Another participant, who was Baptized Catholic, but then raised without any religious involvement said that her parents are:

[B]oth fallen away Catholics, uhm, and they don't get it. Uhm [coughs], my parents were part of the, like 60s sexual revolution. And, uhm, my mom, the first time she tried to put me on birth control, I was 14. So she just doesn't get it like from a very ... like their experience of Mass growing up was go into like, they would be told by their parents to go to Mass" (Interview 1).

For participants who were raised non-Catholic, their families sometimes had difficulty with their new religious beliefs. One participant recalled that:

[M]y whole life I'd been, I'd been told, you know, don't be Catholic. Catholics aren't Christian. Um, like when I was eight my father explained to me what transubstantiation was. I was like, "That's, that's whack." Don't ever trust anyone who talks about this crap" (Interview 24).

One participant said that when she told her mother that she was becoming Catholic her mother said, "Well that's sad" (Interview 4).

Even for participants, whose families largely encouraged their faith, they sometimes reported other difficulties from familial influences. For example, one participant commented:

Um I think some other things too and again all of these are kind of like outside influences but...in...especially when you're around family it's... they know that you're into your faith and they know that they're not... sort of like that fear of sharing too much but also that they're like... okay they already know what I'm trying to say. Do I want them to think that I'm even more far removed from what they see every single day. Again sort of like that acceptance, like kinda blind acceptance but also knowing there are things about my faith that I mean, they really don't want in their lives or they don't care about so I guess like fears. Like what other people think about you that (Interview 8).

Other people also mentioned their family's negative reaction to their faith, "I don't know, my sister, my mom, like, she thinks like, she thinks I use it as a crutch I think. Even though she herself, as I told you, is like, you know, Catholic" (Interview 7).

Another participant mentioned that although they were encouraged to practice their faith by their family, the way in which they were encouraged was unhelpful:

I said, "Dad, you didn't love us into the church. You didn't love ..." I told this, I was like, "I'm just straight up, you did not love us into the church. You yelled at us into the church, you, you know, threw shoes at us to come to church like." (laughing) "This is not the environment, and this is not the, the, the type of things you do to impress upon your children that this is important, it makes them go away" (Interview 5).

Some reported the incongruity they saw in family members with belief. For example, one participant noted:

...family but definitely more of ah, family that um, and, and I'm referring this time more to the family that live here in the US, that, you know, will- will post um, a Bible message in, on social media one day and then the next day post something so hateful, ah, towards,

you know, a certain group of people, um, and it's completely contradicting that. Um, it ... being of- of- of Mexican descent, seeing the crisis at our border and just seeing so many people that are, ah, that are Christians just turn those back ... turn their back on, on all their, the people, ah, the immigrants that are trying to come in here, um, that, that definitely (Interview 25).

Peer influence – positive. Peer influence-positive was a subtheme used to indicate anytime that peers (not family members and not religious leaders) helped in some way in one's religious development. This was a very broad subtheme. From many of the participants, it seemed that peers often helped in providing an example of the faith, accountability to faith practices, and mutual understanding. One participant summarized how positive peer influence worked for them in terms of faith development:

[His friend] said, "A friend is someone, who, who wants to get you to Heaven, wants to make you a saint." And I would say he's been a, a huge inspiration in my life, and really keeping me accountable to, you know, are you coming to mass, are you coming to confession, better be here, and, you know, and stuff, he's been awesome (Interview 5).

One young woman who started practicing her Catholic faith in college described the value of the example of her peers saying:

Meeting really, um, meeting (laughs), my, one of my roommates, just watching her pray the rosary that was such a big factor in my conversion, 'cause I had never really understood that, why anyone would do that and just the conviction that she prayed it with every single day, I was like, "She's got something there" like, "There's something there, this isn't" um, "made up" (Interview 14).

In other cases, respondents also recounted the importance of positive peer-influence, but participants did not always have the same emphasis on the value of example or accountability for faith practices. For example, when one person was asked why he stayed Catholic although he disagreed with much of what the Church taught, he said, “So, right now what keeps me is a wonderful church community that I found at my current parish” (Interview 19). This theme was echoed by others. Another person said that friendships were the main reason she participated in Church:

For the most part it seemed that everyone wanted to go, like all, plus... Having your friends there kind of made it more enjoyable and fun, it wasn't just kind of sitting through mass, listening to the long homilies, cause our priest was notorious for that (Interview 22).

Overall, the community aspect of faith was emphasized as very significant for faith-integration for all emerging adults.

Peer influence – away from faith. Peers were also reported by participants to sometimes lead Catholic emerging adults away from their faith. Sometimes, peer influence – away from faith, referred more to difficulties that non-believing peers caused for the Catholic emerging adults. For others, this subtheme was used to capture reported difficulties with other practicing Catholic peers that led them away from their faith.

Some participants reported difficulties with peers in terms of being unsure how to interact with them, feeling judged by them, or leading them away from faith. For example, one young woman said of the influence her peers had on her faith life:

Um, and I think the biggest factor for me was, you know, in high school, I was missing out on faith-based opportunities because I was afraid of speaking out on other things with my friends (Interview 18).

Others similarly expressed an awkwardness or uncertainty in relating to others who had different views. One expressed, “and so I feel like it's hard to be surrounded by people that used to agree with you and now they don't anymore. I feel like that's much harder than people that never went to church” (Interview 15).

Another, young man said his friends similarly did not help him because of a lack of example to live in accordance with his faith:

I think, uh, and then there were things in college that you know I probably shouldn't have done and just being in, in relationships and you know, didn't help me in my faith. It was more of a kind of ... or it's the friends I would go with. So I don't ... I won't ... I don't want to say that I had, you know, I guess a Christian connection with any of my friends. Uh, so yes we had lots of fun. We traveled, ... good stuff with them, but it didn't necessarily [help] in growing my faith (Interview 17).

One young man who practices his faith, but disagrees with much of what the Church teaches, said that peers made the practicing of his faith difficult for him at one point because, “especially the community of young people there, I felt, had a quite regressive interpretation of, um, Christ's teachings” (Interview 19). These thoughts were similar to others. One person expressed:

Um, and I think, um, one of- like the friend who had the Catholic bible study that I attended in college, her friends were super, like, um, "Oh, people who are gay are

terrible," and things like that. So I think that was definitely like a, oh yeah I definitely don't want to align myself with that at all (Interview 21).

Some participants reported "falling outs" with their peers that caused difficulty in their practicing their faith. Others reported that "It wasn't like cool, necessarily, but like, really liked to act religious or act like you care about God and stuff. If that was a thing, it was like "Yeah, keep it to yourself" (Interview 23).

Religious leaders. This subtheme was used any time a person mentioned a religious leader (teacher, youth group leader, priest, religious sister) who either helped or hindered religious faith development and involvement. Most people talked about religious leaders and how helpful it was for them to get to know priests, and other religious educators of good example. Several participants echoed the idea that having a personal relationship with a priest was helpful to them. One participant put it this way:

Uhm, and just the ability to like joke around with a priest and like feel like he's a real person, you know, uhm, was really important in building that relationship, uhm, and trusting in God's word, uhm, and in that spiritual direction with Father [omitted name] just like really learning to, to listen for God's voice and to trust His voice, uh, where He's calling me, I think. (Interview 1).

Others noted how important it is to have a mentor who is living the Christian life:

Um, I would say, like, being a good mentor, and practicing what you preach because I think, like, if you're preaching like, "Don't have sex before marriage," and like, "Don't go out every weekend," but you're also doing it, it's hard. Like, that was something I kind of noticed with my- in my sorority bible study. Um, it would say about these things, but

then I would recognize them doing those exact things, so it was kind of hard for me to be like, "Oh that's okay." You know? (Interview 21).

A similar theme was expressed in the idea that people teaching religion should do so by expressing the full truth of what the Catholic Church teaches:

And I think that sometimes having like my theology teachers even in high school, it was a much better experience. But sometimes like even like they seemed like on a little like rocky ground with sometimes with Catholicism. And like their own faith and I was like, they're supposed to like, be able to be like role models for us. And that like, sometimes didn't come through or sometimes they seemed sort of like not wanting to like take like a strong stand on things. Because we were talking about, I had one semester that we were talking about like morality and things like that. Which I found really helpful and I like still think about those things um, to this day. And sort of the, the teachings on it. But my one teacher seemed to me sort of hesitant to like take a like black and white stance on some things that are like a black and white thing. Like you don't live together before marriage. Like the church concretely will say that and like most Catholics will agree on that. But then she's like, "Well like, I'm not gonna judge anyone." But like, you don't have to judge people by like condemning certain actions as wrong. Like, you can like say like, "Okay, this is wrong and like the church teaches that." Because it's not saying that like, "Oh, you're cousin is like a totally bad person." Just by saying those things so she sort of seemed reluctant to sort of like say those things so we wouldn't get up in arms about her (Interview 6).

Overall, the role of leaders and mentors in faith development was cited as important. The participants expressed that these mentors ought to express the truth and live in a way consistent with what they are teaching.

God's influence. This subtheme was used any time the person described a sense of God working in his or her life in terms of perceiving God's plan, God's help, God's presence, or a relationship with Jesus that is helpful or if they perceive His intervention in some way. This subtheme also seemed to capture the sense of relationship people have with God. One person described her relationship this way:

Uhm, and through that, I was able to just like put my intentions before God, uhm, and, and allow him to like work through those things and look at them. And I'm not going to say that there weren't times where, where, uhm, where it didn't feel like He was present, because there definitely were (Interview 1).

Many others talked about God's plan and influence in their lives, in ways such as this:

That's why he created us, and he wanted to share that love with us, which is why he gave us free will and free choice and all that, so, um, I think the faith is what I would associate with Christianity and with who Christ is and all that but yes, I, there have been times where I've slipped, um, as a Christian, but at the same time he's always got my back (Interview 17).

External influences within the Church. Lastly, there are several subthemes, that are not directly referring to God's or other people's influence on a person's faith journey, but other aspects of the Church. These last three external influences are feeling welcomed, external attributes of the Church and organizations and groups.

Feeling welcomed. This subtheme did not occur a great deal. Some people mentioned how open and friendly people were in the Church and how that helped them on their journey. Others said that their advice in working with Catholic emerging adults is to be welcoming. For example, one person said,

I think it's important to invest and invite and um, investing, invest in people, you know, show, show that, you know, you're wearing, you know.... I think there's some like individualized attention... You know, um, and, and it's definitely an investment, um, you know, a of time and uh, and everything. Um, but invest and invite ... (Interview 16).

The idea of inviting was brought up by several people.

External attributes of the Church. This subtheme was used to capture any attributes or activities of the Church that contributed to the person believing in her or his faith. These included charitable activities, beauty, music or tradition leading the person to feel more connected or involved with his or her religious beliefs and practices. One person mentioned that the services provided by the Church (food, financial assistance, etc.) were the first thing that got him involved (Interview 3). Others mentioned beauty and tradition as being things that led them to conversion. One person put it this way:

I love beauty. Like whether it's in art, whether it's in music... those are things that are just really... move me a lot. And I've always been into art and music and things like that. So I know that in my relationship with faith, it definitely deepened through that. (Interview 8).

Groups/Organizations. This subtheme was used anytime that the person was predominantly talking about a religious group or organization and how that led them to greater belief or participation in the Church. Among the most frequently mentioned groups or

organizations were Bible Studies and Catholic Student Centers. One young woman, when asked what helped her faith journey, said:

...organizations in which I was a part of a small group that met weekly because I felt like the weekly meetings really helped me rely on, um, a social support system that could help me admit when I have problems. Um, especially since my Catholicism was kind of, um ... (Interview 9).

Others also echoed the idea that groups provided a sense of community and social support for people to discuss and live their faith together.

Internal Influences

In addition to external influences on a person's faith journey, there were internal thoughts, questions, dispositions and attitudes that seemed to impact how people's faith journey developed. This section will explore the main internal influences that emerged from the data. The internal influences are: doubts and questions, suffering, seeking wholeness or truth, personal traits that lead toward faith behaviors and beliefs, and attitudes or personal traits that lead away from faith behaviors and beliefs.

Doubts and questions. There were very many aspects of faith or responses to faith that caused doubts. Many people described wrestling with the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and that it took time to come to believe it. Others wondered why bad things happen. For example, one person described his response to his Godmother dying saying:

So when that happened I became really angry at God, and, uh, sometime later, um, you know, I, I decided that I no longer believed in God. I was, I was kinda bitter and angry at the world and you know, the usual teenage angst and, and doubt" (Interview 10).

Some expressed questioning attending Mass. One person expressed doubting because her teachers did not seem convinced of the Church's teachings and she wondered why she should believe, if her teachers did not.

These doubts did not necessarily hinder faith practices. One young woman stated, "So there's been a few moments in my life that I can hold onto and feel like, um ... I don't know if I can call it atheism because I go to church every Sunday, but I'll question whether God exists" (Interview 9). Others expressed this same idea, that although they doubted, they continued to be involved in the Church.

Others seemed to struggle with their own response to God. For example, one young woman described a struggle and questioning within herself this way:

Especially like end of college and stuff, you can kind of catch yourself being like, defining yourself by maybe your job or like what you're doing, like that becomes a sort of identity. So that, I know, I've always known that was something that I struggled with in terms of like success and pride as like an identity versus, um, but I think that ends with most people, they're like I really feel like I need to earn God's grace and something that I have been rest- like I've been wrestling with something like very personal in my relationship with Christ this past year. So last few months really, and I think that is a big thing I've learned that, is I realized I like didn't want to go to confession over it, I didn't feel like worthy being in a church over it. All these barriers that I put up to receiving, um, and I'm not, I think this is a big like calling out of that, like if I actually, you know ... (Interview 14).

For some, doubts and questions were not able to be adequately answered by the person. One person stated:

Uh, so I started to, like, view, um, this ... how do I say this? Like a [inaudible] a conflict between, like, my- my career of, like, a- a belief in science and like, my faith and a belief- belief in the- in God and the Bible and e- everything like that” (Interview 31).

Some people expressed ambivalence about their current situation. A couple of people expressed the possibility of one day being more involved in faith. One person stated:

I hope that my faith would be a lot stronger, back to what it used to be, originally. Um, I hope I find just something that, um, that brings me back where it used to be. I would love to- to um, I would love to just go back to that relationship that I used to have with God (Interview 25).

Doubts and questions seemed to be a part of most participants faith journey in one way or another.

Personal traits that aid in faith development. This subtheme was used anytime a person mentioned personal traits that they felt helped them to believe or practice their faith. These included: curiosity, humility, individualism in faith, being introverted, keeping to oneself, being laid back, opening one’s heart, being empathetic, independent, persistent, desiring to grow in self-knowledge, etc. When the person mentioned that they saw himself or herself as a child or son or daughter of God, this was also coded here, or when the person mentioned identity. The main points emerging from this theme follow.

Some participants were able to clearly articulate how different attributes were helpful to them. One described persistence as something she had and needed to keep practicing her faith:

Um, I feel like persistence would be a good word because I think a lot of people would have given up if they, like moved away from their very, like fulfilling, exciting, like group of friends and community and all that. I feel like a lot of people wouldn't have

continued to go to church or would've of like ... like fought with their parents about, like, "Why are you making me go?", and things like that. And I think that I sort of just like, stuck it out a lot more- (Interview 15).

Other participants mentioned their curiosity and intellectualism as helping them to grow in faith. One young woman described this process well saying:

So my brain is like often very like, very research driven. Which helps me sort of like, be like, "Okay, so I wanna understand like the why." So, like I know the church teaches this. And I'm like, "Okay, I'm like wholly gonna agree with that." But I kind of like wanna know like the why. And sort of like, why people are like saying like, "Okay, this is a church teaching." But like, why does it make sense? Like, why does all of like sexual morality makes sense? Okay, I wanna learn more about like theology of the body and things like that. So like, that's what like driver me to like to learn more and wanna do the research behind it (Interview 6).

For some, their personal traits seemed to enhance their Catholic identity and their Catholic identity seemed to enhance their personal traits. For example, one young man said:

So the way that I see myself is like, um, to a Catholic gentleman, I try to be that, that's, that's (laughs) really, you know, a gentleman and a scholar, but if it happens as well. It feels ... You know, it's like it's a noble thing, that's how I- (Interview 5).

Being a child of God, or daughter of God was also something mentioned fairly regularly. One person was able to articulate particularly well why this knowledge is helpful to integration:

... but if you actually believe that at the forefront of your identity is that you're a child of God, then it makes the redemption and all the, the sacrament of graces and stuff more, I don't know, tangible. So it, it's, yeah, I think the last years have kind of been figuring out,

yes, like as fact this is the most important thing to me, but how do I actually live that out and how do I view myself and my self worth in light of that? So, yeah (Interview 14). One person noted, “I mean I do see myself as, as a, as child of God. Um, and I like, I do like knowing that” (Interview 25).

Attitudes or personal traits that hinder faith development. Many people also gave some indicators about what types of attitudes made their faith engagement difficult. Fear of being ostracized sometimes posed an obstacle to people growing in their faith. For example, one young man felt that rap music kept him from a fuller participation in his faith and was encouraged to rap about God, but he candidly expressed:

I'm afraid that I won't reach anybody where I live, and so I don't know. I don't want to do it. I don't want them to call me church boy rapper, obviously, so I'm struggling. I'm struggling to do the right thing” (Interview 3).

Others talked about fear keeping them from asking the questions they had about faith or from talking about their faith. One young woman described her fear of not wanting to talk about her faith saying:

So, the old- like it's just an awkward line of navigating like, your old life and your new life sort of. Or like, I don't know. And it's like, yeah. And- and certainly my shame of like ... It's not- this is terrible, but like, there- of course there are times where I'm like, ashamed of my faith, sort of, or I don't want to talk about it, because it's awkward, and because people will judge you, and because I'm a coward. Like, I don't know. Um, anyways. So- and- and because I like, you know, like, pride, like you want to be liked, and- and sometimes that, I guess, becomes its own idol and all that. So, um, yeah. (Interview 7).

Another person described self-image difficulties as hindering her relationship with God, saying:

I ... I struggle with a ... a lot of like self-image issues, they've definitely improved. But I feel like definitely in high school, I, ya know struggled with that a lot and I think my mom would just always remind me, like that we were created in God's image and I think that a lot of the time that was difficult for me to remember or I would like turn my self-hatred into, like not being angry with God, but just being sort of just like, "Well, why ... like why would You make me like this?", like, "You really like me like this?", sort of thing (Interview 15).

Others tended to hold values they perceived as incompatible with their Catholic beliefs. For example, one young woman, when describing things that get in the way of her faith journey said:

Um, I think definitely, like, kind of the social work, like, social justice aspect of it definitely, um, just because I don't believe that people should, I don't know, like, who people are is wrong and you should love them. And I think, like, the bible preaches all about love, but then people don't act on that. Um, and I guess ... yeah, I think, um, definitely, like, how empathetic I am, like, I don't think that people should have to suffer for eternity just because they don't believe in God or Jesus. Um, like, those things (Interview 21).

Others described not wanting to engage in faith behaviors for fear of being hypocritical. One young woman said:

Like, I feel very impostor-y when I go to church with my family, the few times that it has- has happened, I've been like, "Ugh, this feels ... I feel gross. I don't feel like someone

who- who should be here right now." (laughs) So, um, yeah, that's- that's- that's the whole thing (Interview 31).

Another person described a similar sentiment saying:

I just kind of- I guess became more open minded and skeptical in ways. I just don't know where I necessarily stand, right now, so I think it would be hypocritical of me kind of to be going to the Catholic church and attending mass and stuff like that if it's not what I fully believe myself right now. So that's kind of where I think I stand (Interview 27).

Suffering. While suffering was not a dominant subtheme, it was noteworthy because for some people, it helped their faith become stronger. For example, one participant described his faith journey in relationship to a physical illness he had:

So then also I would say, um, my faith journey in that moment, probably from ninth to, uh, I wanna say 11th grade, it was just I really embraced the suffering of it. And, uh, I, you know, embraced the pain (Interview 5).

Another person said that suffering helped her turn toward her faith:

Um, I had a friend who committed suicide and, uh, I went to church that day that I found out to act in a memorial service at a band hall at a high school. I went to church and I basically just turned towards the faith and some of my friends turned away from faith, um, when that happened. But, I needed something to hold on to (Interview 9).

One person was able to describe the importance of suffering in the faith journey saying: You have to be uncomfortable, you're gonna go through pain. I mean I think it was a philosopher who said this, you know, it's, "To live is to suffer." You're gonna suffer, and if you realize that now you're already ahead, um, because, and this is key when you're suffering, St. Padre Pio said this, "When you're in pain, when sorrow, solitude, in those

moments this is when Jesus is closer than the very air you breath.", so totally I'll remind them of that in their moments of suffering (Interview 5).

Suffering was not helpful for everyone. One person mentioned two moments of suffering (deaths of family members), and how these moments of interacting with the Church were not helpful to her faith journey:

... then about a year later, my grandma passed away, um, which was ... and she was very Catholic, um, and very active in the Church, um, until very close to her death, and she, um ... I remember like, we- we got a new priest at my church like, when I went to high school, so he had been there for about, like, seven years at that point, but he was not as, like, he didn't recognize my grandma as as much of a cont- contribution to the church as she was- (Interview 31).

Suffering appeared important for those who mentioned it.

Choices/Actions

This main theme, in some ways, may seem less like an influence than the first two main categories, however, it seems that one's choices and actions are in fact an influence on identity formation. This section will consider the subthemes that emerged that both led to choosing to practice one's faith as well as choosing not to practice one's faith. The subthemes that emerged were: choices to practice faith, practical challenges, disagreement with the Church, finding replacements for formal faith and thinking/learning will all be considered.

Choices to practice faith. This subtheme included anytime that a person mentioned the words decided, makes an effort, seek out, taking more time, chose to, in relation to some faith behavior. A choice is revealed wherever an extra effort is made or they indicated a moment of

decision. This subtheme was given preference to other subthemes because it gave a sense of the person's participation.

One participant emphasized this aspect of choice saying:

Yeah. I could have been in prison. I mean, I could have went to prison. I could have been murdered. I didn't ... I chose a different lifestyle so I wouldn't put myself around people who were harmful or they really didn't mean any good for me, and I started seeing the love and care from other people from Mass. They were living the simple life, and I'm like, "Wow. Okay. I want the simple life. I don't want to be harassed or beat up all the time, or chased around by police," and so I chose the simple life, and it's definitely working out for me (Interview 3).

Many of the participants mentioned making choices to pray more frequently, go to Mass more frequently, etc. One participant was able to articulate why choice is so important:

I mean it just became more mine than like it had been before. Because it wasn't just like I was piggybacking off of what my family was already doing. It was like now I'm choosing this to be like my faith. This is my choice to ...my decision to do this sort of thing. So I think because it became more mine, it just became easier to talk about it. And it also just wasn't something all these people already knew about me (Interview 15).

Another person also emphasized the importance of personal responsibility in faith development saying: "I think it's all up to me, up to the person themselves. For example, this person's faith is not my faith. I have to develop my own faith" (Interview 2). One person suggested that these choices are what God uses to help the person grow in faith:

I would keep giving yourself opportunities to grow. Yeah, and I guess, I told this to a confirmation class I spoke at, but just keep showing up. (laughs) Even, you know, like,

even when times are hard and you just, you know, like, well, you know, I have other things that are gonna make me feel better, or whatever it is. Um, just show up every Sunday (laughing) at a minimum. Even if that's the bare minimum. But, I think God can use that (Interview 20).

Some participants reported choices that seemed to be influenced by others. For example, one young woman said, “Mainly, um, the main reason I- I wanted to get married through was honestly, I knew that was what would make my parents most happiest” (Interview 25).

Falling away from faith. Closely related to choices to practice one’s faith is the subtheme falling away from faith. This subtheme was used to capture the process and actions/inaction taken to stop practicing one's faith. This included feeling disconnected with one's faith, choices to learn about or start practicing another faith in an attempt to move away from Catholic faith, or passivity in regards to practicing one's faith. This subtheme was used when falling away from faith was the main point of the passage.

One person described falling away from their faith in this way:

And I think that's what ultimately led to me, like, losing touch with my faith, is that it was- it was largely contextual and community based, um, most of my life and, um, as I like, fell out of touch with a lot of the people who did continue at that church, um, I never tried to seek out a community when I got out of school and I- I found, like, meaning and spirituality in other aspects of my life. So I don't- I don't continue to practice Catholicism, and now I think I have a lot of, um ... I'm not sure how I identify myself, maybe. Like [inaudible] agnostic is the correct term here, um, but I think I have too many, like, political and social differences with any religion to ... (Interview 31).

Another person described a similar phenomenon, also with a lack of motivation to participate:

Sure, so, um, I just moved to New York, um, about two years ago and ever since I moved here, that's when I've really been struggling to get more involved. Um, I- I- I struggle to find a church, ah, community here. I finally found it, um, I have trouble to wanna participate in everything. Um, so right now, I'm not very involved with my parish community (Interview 25).

Some people also described faith no longer relating to how they see themselves, and so they stopped making choices to practice the Catholic faith. For example, one woman said:

Um, like in the end of high school, beginning of college, I used to pray multiple times a day, just kind of to myself as like a tranquility thing and now I will never find myself doing that, so I just think it doesn't really relate to my daily life at all now really (Interview 27).

People also reported periods of falling away from their faith. For example, one person stated:

And then I think like, there's times when I like stop praying, I just think like, oh my gosh things are going so badly and I don't realize like why it's happening at the time and then that sort of leads to some sort of mistrust of God and sort of, yeah (Interview 6).

Faith Activities. The next several subthemes reflect ways that people actively engage in their faith. These subthemes will be looked at together: prayer, retreats, Sacraments, Scripture and service. Where they were more significant events in a person life, or represented moments of decision, they were coded as such, so each of these subthemes captured the remaining and usually less significant moments of prayer, retreat, participation in the Sacraments, reading Sacred Scripture or service.

One person articulated how prayer helped them in this way:

In ways that I, honestly wouldn't have thought I could hear God as clearly as I did in high school. Whether it was through Eucharistic adoration and just, you know hearing Him say that He loved me or that He was going to use me to pray over His kingdom or you know, just that really, really helped (Interview 8).

Retreats also served as moments for people to grow in their faith. One person said that a retreat “was actually a powerful experience for me and, uh, I, I decided I would be open to giving the faith another chance. Um, but, that wasn't the right time for me. I was just open to it” (Interview 10). Another person described how the retreat helped them to get to know how they could be more involved:

It exposed me to all these organizations at campus and it showed me that there's like, I don't know, like five times to go to church every Sunday. So you really don't have an excuse. You can go at like 8AM or 7:30PM” (Interview 9).

The Sacraments were mentioned many times. One person mentioned how important they realized the Catholic Mass was to them saying:

When I started, I met my now husband, but he was going to a - kind of a fundamental church and I felt like something was missing, something was different from when I was going there, from when I was going to Catholic church. And for a long kind of period I realized that, it was um, the Eucharist. You know, it's like the main component of Catholic Mass and I didn't realize how important that was for me until like I didn't have it at a nondenominational church, and I really did start believing that, um, that it really was Jesus and that's what changed it for me (Interview 23).

Most other times the Sacraments subtheme was used, it was just to indicate that the person was participating in the Sacraments.

Reading Sacred Scripture was also frequently mentioned. Several people described how they used the Word of God in order to find examples of how to live. One person described why it was important in these terms:

I mean to have read the word of God, it's, it's, I mean and that's where I really like started reading. Like coming to [School deleted], and ha- and I would go to small group, like last year I wasn't a leader, and we'd read scripture every week. I was like wow, that's, uh, there's some wisdom in this book, huh, after all. (laughs) So it's like a lotta the questions and things you can't articulate they're already articulated and answered in the Bible- (Interview 5).

Some people expressed belief in Sacred Scripture, but not religion, saying:

Um, I feel like definitely I believe in a higher power. I think that's important to know.

Um, and I like, I guess like the teachings of the bible- of the bible, I definitely agree with.

Um, but I guess, like, religion as a whole and, like, how it plays out in society nowadays I guess is something that I don't agree with more. It's like I'm a fan of, like, God and the bible and the teachings, I guess, but not of religion (Interview 21).

Service was another aspect of faith activities. People articulated that serving others helped them encounter Christ in unique ways and made their faith real. One person articulated this well saying:

I think I experience God through service. I think these are all ways that worked for me in the past and that I would like to continue, uh, uh, as, as means of practicing my faith. You know, faith isn't just, um, you know, sitting in a church and praying on Sunday. It's also going out and serving, start acting on Jesus' called the serve and, uh, loving one another. I think having people, surrounding yourself with people who do that in, in, who share these

experiences and values with you, uh, it fosters a sense of community in, I think it offers an opportunity to continue growing in taking that next step in your faith (Interview 10).

Some people also mentioned service as a way of feeling connected with God and others. One person noted that, “even if I was, like, having a moment of doubt in the- in my faith, there was still, like, I was- I knew that I was doing good in those moments ... I felt connected to it in that way” (Interview 31). This sentiment was echoed by others, who indicated that service was their way of connecting to God.

Finding replacements for formal faith. Related to faith activities is the subtheme finding replacements for formal faith. This subtheme was used when people reported finding replacements for more formal faith. This included, but was not limited to, service not connected with faith, feminism, activism, spirituality without religion, etc. One person aptly explained the process of replacing one’s faith with other things in this way:

Um, I feel like I have other ... like, it's not like I don't do those behaviors, but I have other things that aren't religious that have taken the place of those now. Um, maybe I- I research, like, uh, feminist theory the way that I used to, like, research the Bible. That makes it sound weird. It's not as weird as it sounds. Um (laughs), but it's ... like, I'm- I explore my values system in ways that maybe, um, are similar to how I explored Catholicism a long time ago (Interview 31).

Another person described this process in another way:

As I've gotten older, um, it has kind of been replaced, right now. I still believe in God, um, and I still go to church but I don't go to church as often. Um, especially if I have to go by myself, I- I can't find that motivation anymore, to go. Um, yeah, right now, I'm struggling, ah, with my faith, a little bit (Interview 25).

Practical challenges. Many practical challenges emerged in people's faith journeys. This subtheme was used when the primary point of the excerpt was that there were practical challenges (transportation, not enough ministries to participate in, Mass Schedules, being too busy, too tired, etc.), and that these either led them away from the Church or served as an obstacle the person needed to overcome.

While many people listed things like being too busy or too tired as obstacles to their faith journey, one of the major recurring themes was difficulty finding community, especially for people after college. One person articulated it this way:

And, um, there's often not a community and, but at the same time, I've also noticed at least at my parish that there are... I don't see a lot of other young adults. Um, and so in a way that could be discouraging, but I, like I know from- from college I- I also attended, um, the focus conferences a couple of years and so like there was thousands of people there (Interview 30).

Another practical challenge was the lack of proper education of Catholics. One person explained it this way:

Um, but it feels like a lot of modern Catholics want to not see that picture and they want to [inaudible] elements because they don't understand the faith. Uh, the more I see what Catholic catechesis looks like, the more I am so glad I converted and wasn't raised in it, because I know like we, um, if I had been just, just with the level of education those people are getting. Uh, but it, it gets frustrating to see that. Uh, when there's so much beauty to be had and people aren't engaging with it and aren't understanding the reasons for it, the precepts of the church. (Interview 24)

Some participants also listed difficulties finding community. Others also mentioned this sense of busyness. One person said:

Um, I think myself mostly because I always like to continuously keep myself busy with a lot of things, um, since I can remember, my mom has always said, "You put too much on your plate." But, that's how I like to be, I have very bad anxiety, and I get anxious about things if it's not organized so that's why I'm like, okay let's keep multiple things. But then it doesn't leave much time for leisure or time to practice my faith the way that I would want to because I know it may seem like, oh, it's super easy, just take up an hour or two out of your day to be able to go to mass but my head is spinning with these assignments and internships and two jobs and this and that, so (Interview 22).

Thinking/learning. This subtheme was used whenever the person described thinking or learning as a way of either growing in their faith or as an obstacle to faith. This subtheme was used when the primary point of the passage was how thinking or learning something about the faith helped them, or when their thinking and learning was an obstacle (if it is explicitly disagreement with the Church that led them away, then it would be coded in that way). Many people reported the importance of reading, of coming to understand, of seeking answers to their questions. This seemed to be a primary way of people integrating their faith.

One person, a convert to the Catholic faith, articulated well why thinking and learning about the faith was important to them:

Really, I guess there was one thing in particular that made a pretty big impact. Um, in a class with this professor, um, near the beginning people were arguing about like faith and the fallibility of God's plan and all that. And he went like no, your faith is reasonable there, there is no conflict between faith and reason because our God is a God of wisdom

and truth and reason, and he can be known, at least to a greater extent than most people like to acknowledge. Um, and that really hit me because before I always had to check my brains at the door of the church (Interview 24).

Another person emphasized the importance of reason with faith in this way:

I'd say, um, study is really helpful. I'd say reading and reasoning and questioning as much as you can is really nice. And I think that, you know, the writings of the doctors of the church and all those really great theology scholars are, uh, really wonderful ways to learn about the faith. I'd say personal, intimate conversations with people you admire in the faith are a really good way to grow and develop too (Interview 19).

It is important to note that for some knowledge itself did not seem to be enough. Another person was able to articulate how thinking and learning became integrated into their emotions and personality, and this integration was important to their journey:

Sure, so I would describe my faith journey as um I learned a lot about my faith but I didn't really have my heart involved in my faith until later in high school and again even later in college. So um, I guess what I mean by that is, I understood like going to mass on Sunday and praying and all those basic things about the Catholic faith. Um, but when it came to my personal prayer life, um and even just um wanting like a relationship with Jesus, that I think didn't come along until like later in high school and then, you know, college started and I didn't want to come back again until later in college. And even then though I think I struggled a lot with wanting to know a lot of things instead of wanting to know Jesus. And what He wanted to say to me and what He what I should be saying to Him not that I should be saying like specific things but that having that relationship with Him (Interview 8).

Another person encouraged religious leaders to clearly articulate Church teaching, saying:

Like, don't water down church teachings. People are curious about like different aspects of how like Christian morality like affects like, aspects of their life. And like, the way the church teaches, we should, so like, don't water this down (Interview 6).

For example, others thinking and learning did not lead to more clarity about their beliefs:

Yeah, see I did... That's kind of tough because I always go back to my old ways of thinking and how things should be based on the way I was taught in school, but then I also teeter-totter with, okay well I know the church says this about a certain issue but I also can think this. So I do believe in those things because it was what I was taught for so many years, but now I'm trying to find like my happy medium where, it's like, okay I know I was taught this, and then I think this so where is this. So, that... Cause it really confuses me, (laughs) (Interview 22).

Another person articulated these conflicting thoughts in this way:

Um, it was just kinda part of me, it was what I knew, and going to Michigan State I saw, like um, I made so many friends and acquaintances and people I-I've met who are in so many different religions and ways of life and before college I never experienced that. So like se- like freshman year I, one of my suit mates was um really Jewish and I-I never really met anyone that was Jewish before college. So my town's very typical same kind of life style, so I think maybe seeing that in all the different people in my classes and taking social work classes, learning about all the like differences is really what made me think about how it doesn't need to just be that one way and how we can have different thoughts and ideas of what religion is to us (Interview 27).

Disagreement with the Church. Related to the subtheme thinking/learning is disagreement with the Church. For those were not currently practicing their Catholic faith, disagreement with Church teaching was a primary reason. One person articulated disagreement with the Church being their greatest difficulty this way:

So, I think my biggest thing is, like, heaven and hell. Like, I think it's, like, kinda horrible that hell even exists. I think that's just, like, a pathetic thing. Um, and then obviously, like, Christian Republicans, like, that's kind of the image that people get. Um, and especially, like, with the Catholic church and all, like, the sexual, um, assault allegations. And um, being against homosexuals or, like, transgender, the LGBTQ community as a whole. Um, and then the pro-life versus pro-choice debate within, like, the Christian community. Um, so I think, like, politically definitely is one of, like, my biggest thing that I just don't agree with (Interview 21).

Another person similarly stated that certain issues made them less inclined to the Church saying:

Uh huh (affirmative). Um, well, like, I've become, uh, very, uh, like, strong and educated on feminist issues more recently. Um, so things like access to abortion, access to birth control, um ... uh ... and like, LGBT rights, um, and so I don't ... even like, uh, you know, female priests, things like that. Like, these things seem very antiquated to me, um, and tho- those definitely weren't the primary reasons for- for pulling away from everything, but they kind of like, um ... uh, strengthened that- that resolution (Interview 31).

Overall, it seemed that issues of abortion, LGBT rights, and women's issues were the main areas of disagreement. One person mentioned many areas of disagreement (similar to those above), but said that he stayed practicing his faith because:

I don't know. Also, just like, uh, yeah, defiance. Like, you know, like... I don't... and I think defiance has defined a lot of my faith to be honest. This idea that, you know, it's just as much my church as it is the set of [inaudible 00:13:23] church. And, you know, I think that by abandoning faith institutions, as many young liberal Catholics have, you conceded to the reactionaries. And I don't want to do that (Interview 19).

Another recent convert, also expressed difficulty with the Catholic Church's teaching on abortion, but expressed it as more of a struggle of figuring out how to reconcile her beliefs:

The sticking point... there were other sticking points for me too, just even social ones. So something that got brought up in the class were things about sexual relationships between couples and abortion, and I have views on that based on my experience with another religion and also social context that I grew up in outside of religion that I thought, "Oh I don't know if I can be fully on board with this (laughing), this doesn't..." And there's still points, there's still points within that, that I ca- that I struggle to reconcile with myself. Okay I have this faith that I really love now but there are also parts of it that I don't, I don't like so what do I...? (laughing) What do I say? (Interview 4)

Faith's Impact on the Person

This next section will briefly explore how faith impacted the person. This means, how did faith influence what a person chose to do, how they engaged in relationships and how they interacted with the world. Sometimes these subthemes were difficult to distinguish from choices to practice one's faith, but there is a subtle difference in that choices to practice faith is about the action of faith, whereas faith's impact is about how those choices have other effects.

Faith's impact on actions. This subtheme was used anytime that a person mentioned how faith changed their actions (or decisions). Any time a person articulated how they act

differently because of their faith. For example, because I have faith I decided to volunteer more, because I have faith I try to not steal, etc. My faith helps to inform my decisions, etc. This subtheme was used if this is the major point. If the person emphasized the idea of choosing, like a concrete act of the will, that code would be used instead.

Many people articulated that faith was the way they discerned their actions. One person said it this way:

Oh, so like I said it's kind of that foundational question of where, how do I want to make my decisions. So, who do I check in with to say, you know, 'Is this the right job to take? Should I go to law school?' And, I was praying about that. Um, that tended like the, the starting point (Interview 13).

Another person made a similar point of how faith helps inform their decisions saying:

I go to church every Sunday. And that really helps a lot of social situations for me because maybe they'll be people who are, are drinking or smoking and they know that they don't have to ... Like any peer pressure that they're going to give me is kind of just gonna bounce back because, um, I'm strong in my faith and I'm probably not going to be interested in those things (Interview 9).

Another person was able to articulate more precisely the *way* in which her faith helps her to make decisions:

Yeah, I've used like Church teaching serves like a basis of like how I make decisions and how I like view certain like issues especially since I've come on the college campus or like most views don't align with Church teaching or like anything like that. I sort of, it's nice to sort of have like some larger institution but also just like really wise and knowledgeable people to like give me advice, like it's not even specifically to me but sort

of having that as like a basis is not just like my own opinions or just like what the opinions of my friends are sort of using that as like, like a benchmark of decision making and sort of finding guidance there, find it like, reassuring where I'm like, okay, I can like ask a priest this question and I'm like fairly trusting that his answer is like pretty good and like fairly mind of Gods will 'cause he's listening to God so I use like Catholic like morality to try to like make decisions (Interview 6).

Faith's impact on relationships. This was a very interesting subtheme because it showed both the ways that faith helped with positive relationships in people's lives, but also how faith caused discord and tension within relationships. Some people indicated that their faith had caused significant division in their life. One convert to the Catholic faith said:

...there were, there was really something I'd have to leave behind for it, too. Um, like I said, I had a very anti catholic upbringing. And a lot of my friends, very strongly anti catholic. Um, I, I effectively alienated my whole church (Interview 24).

Others were not necessarily alienated by whole groups of people because of their faith, but had difficulty navigating certain relationships. For example, one person said:

Uhm, and then recently, I found out that he has HIV and that was just a really, really hard conversation, uhm, because he didn't tell me for about a year, thinking that I would react poorly to it, uhm, and I didn't. Uhm, I reacted with as much charity as I think I would have before becoming Catholic and, uhm, I think he saw that and was grateful to that. But I think the, the, the like chasm there is just too hard for us to have the same relationship that we used to, uhm, which kind of breaks my heart because he was a good friend for all of high school, uhm, so it's just been difficult in that, I guess (Interview 1).

It is clear that sometimes having a Catholic faith caused tension in the person's relationships.

This subtheme also included some instances where relationships were strengthened. One person articulated why friends were sought of the same faith, in this way:

Well, so over time all of my friends, kind of, ended up being other Catholics, and, um, a lot of the other converts just because, you know, we had, like, similar values and, I guess, like, C. S. Lewis has, like, friends, or people who see the same truth, kind of (Interview 26).

Others also indicated that faith impacts *how* they relate to others. One person articulated how faith impacts her own responses to people in this way:

And I feel like that's probably the biggest situation in my life, consistently, that I have to like ... I'll look back after something happens and I'll think like okay ... like I didn't really need to react like that or I didn't really need to say those rude things or I know this year I struggled a lot with my roommates and sometimes I would just do little petty things or I would know I was doing them, but I wouldn't think like, "Is this really ... like how I want them to treat me back?" Like I should just be like ... be the bigger person and just like not ... not react in like harsh ways. So I feel like just ... like little things like that ... that in the moment you don't seem like a big thing. But then you look back on it and you think like, "Is that really how I'm supposed to be acting? Like is that a good (chuckle) way for me to like handle situations?" (Interview 15).

Participants seemed to indicate that their Catholic faith puts them in a unique situation of how to navigate friendships with those who do not share the same faith, and those that do. One person articulated this struggle like this:

Anyways, so, I think having new friends that are like, on the same page is super important. But then um, yeah, you don't want to neglect your old friends either, because

like, that's just not- you- you know, like, you shouldn't do that, I don't know. And like, they're your friends for a reason. I mean, I guess sometimes maybe they're more superficial friendships, like, you were just friends because you liked to go out together, like maybe you can't be friends with them. But if they're like your childhood friends who, like, love your family and love you, like, I don't know, it just seems terrible to just like, abandon them. And even, um ... Anyways, yeah, so I think you should try to keep your old friends but like, you should also put like- you need to have new friends that can support you, and vice versa. So, yeah (Interview 7).

Ways faith helps the person. This subtheme was used anytime a person mentioned ways that faith helps them (emotionally, relationally, intellectually, etc.). This subtheme was used whenever the person answered the question of how faith helps them as a person, or some of the benefits of their faith. Most people mentioned peace as the primary way that faith helped them, saying things like: “’Cause it brings me closer to God. So that brings me more peace” (Interview 2).

One person said this about what people think they get from going to Mass:

Well, they respond very well. It's a lot of people who, young people who go to Mass. I believe that faith is a very strong thing in this community because of a lot of violence, so people respond by going to Mass and keeping their faith strong so they know that they're protected (Interview 3).

Another person mentioned feeling happier because of their attentiveness to God in their life, saying:

Happiness is such a dangerous emotion to tie to religion. Because, obviously, when bad things happen you're not happy all the time. But I have found a correlation in my life that

when I am more faith involved, when I do follow those urges that I feel like the Holy Spirit has within me ... Um, like for example, when they're like go help that person even though you don't know that person. Maybe they just like dropped their books and it's all the way across the road and it's like cross the street and go help them. And, if I, if I follow that urge, I feel happier. I feel more secure in my life even in the midst of like bad things happening (Interview 9).

Overall, people mentioned things like this, that their faith brought them greater peace, stability and happiness.

Summary

In sum, it is clear that there are a variety of influences on a person's faith journey. This section presented the data that supports each of the themes and subthemes. The next chapter will suggest some potential interpretations for this data as well as the implications.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study and Key Findings

Chapter five began to give an answer to how the research answers the overarching research question of: how do Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey? The research question could be broken down into the five aims of the study. The aims were as follows. 1) Answer the overarching question of how Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey; 2) Aid in the understanding of how faith relates to how the person answers the question “who am I?”; 3) Shed light on the *process* of how the person has come to answer the question “who am I?”; 4) Contribute to a greater understanding of what factors facilitate or hinder a person’s faith journey; and 5) It was also hoped that Catholic emerging adults may indicate what assistance they may benefit from in their faith journeys. This chapter will briefly consider how this study answered this research question and how well it met these aims. It will then consider the findings in light of the literature, the implications for practice, policy and research, the study limitations, and then briefly conclude.

The first aim of the study is also the research question. This question seemed to be sufficiently answered, although in an unexpected way. It seemed that research participants described their faith journey as gradual, with many influences which helped them to think about their faith and decide whether or not to make decisions in keeping with their faith. It seemed that there was not a place of “arrival” where integration had occurred, but a continuing journey of growth and interaction with the many influences that a person faces. Participants viewed seemingly negative influences, like challenges from their family or periods of doubt, as aspects of their lives that contributed to their own identity, especially seen through how they came to think about things and make choices.

The theoretical model presented in chapter five attempted to give one possible interpretation of how participants described their faith journey, being respectful of their own understanding of growth. While participants did not use the metaphor of walking down the road, it seemed an appropriate one to capture all of the pieces of what they said in a way that did not force what they were saying into a more linear model that was clearly not what they were articulating.

It seems that people were able to answer the question of “*who am I*”? in relationship to their faith, by identifying as a child (son or daughter) of God, and allowing this relationship with the Lord to impact their choices and relationships. While the participants did not consistently explain why their understanding of being a child of God helped with identity integration, some indicated that knowing one’s dignity as a child of God changed their actions and engagement with faith. It also seemed that, in this sample, the more one made choices and performed actions in relationship to their faith, the more their faith seemed to be an important part of how they identified themselves. Alternatively, when people were not making choices to practice their faith, they often made comments that it just was not “who they were” anymore.

The *process* of faith development was probably the least evident piece to emerge from the research, however, several things about the process did become evident. Participants noted that the faith journey is not linear, nor are there concrete steps to go through. It tended to be a gradual process, in which things, positive and negative, were seen as contributing to an increased understanding of their own relationship with God. Different life events did not emerge as major turning points, but were used to mark periods of intensifying or lessening faith, or increasing or decreasing in struggles. This will also be further explored when considering the findings in light of the literature.

In terms of coming to understand the *factors that contribute* to religious identity development, it seemed that participants noted many influences (external, internal and choices/behaviors). These influences, listed in Figure 1, such peer influence, family influence, thinking/learning, etc. often led the participants to engage with faith behaviors and beliefs in ways that led to concrete choices and behaviors around faith. The person him or herself seemed to emerge as the primary determinant of how this journey progresses, because despite what influences the person does or does not have, choices and actions seemed to emerge as the most important pieces. For example, some people had similar influences, but varying current beliefs and practices, seemingly indicating that it is the person's own engagement with these factors that is most important.

While most Catholic emerging adults did not explicitly state what assistance they would find helpful, a number of them did indicate that their faith sometimes caused tensions in relationships. Several participants also indicated that clear and consistent teaching from the Church was important to them. These seem to be areas where Catholic emerging adults may benefit from additional help.

It seems that this study moderately met its aims. While greater understanding of process would have been hoped for, these findings seem to give voice to the experience of Catholic emerging adults in ways that were perhaps not previously considered. However, it is also true that in considering the *process* of faith development, the influences on this developmental process did become very clear (external, internal and choices/behaviors). This next section will more thoroughly consider the findings in light of the previous literature.

The Findings in Light of the Literature

The findings in this study were somewhat consistent with previous literature but added additional insights. This section will briefly explore the following: 1) How the theory developed in this dissertation compares to the literature; and 2) How the factors that facilitated and hindered integrated religious identity compared to the literature and new understanding gained in this study.

Theory development. As noted in the chapter on theory, it was expected that Erikson and Marcia's ideas on identity development as well as Self-Determination Theory may shed light on how integrated religious identity develops in Catholic emerging adults. This study seems to suggest that Erikson's and Marcia's understanding of identity development as clear categories (diffused, moratorium, foreclosed and achieved) are, perhaps, insufficient for explaining religious identity development. Catholic emerging adults seemed to describe more of a steady journey that encompassed constant exploration, questioning, learning, and choices, sometimes occurring simultaneously.

However, it may also be that what many of the participants described as coming to a stronger faith through a variety of experiences is an achieved identity that could be fleshed out by this data. For example, when people stated things like, "I don't think I could have had that experience without the bad experience" (Interview 10), this could indicate coming to an achieved identity through a process of questioning. Others, perhaps, described a foreclosed identity by describing just "going through the motions" (Interview 5). Some healthcare professionals may hold that this data is consistent with Erikson and Marcia's understanding of identity development due to data like this, however, participants seemed consistently to emphasize the idea of on-going process. However, this research may perhaps shed light on the depth of what an achieved

identity could look like with its complexities. Integrating the emphasis on process and graduality emphasized by participants with Erikson and Marcia's understanding of identity may lead to a richer understanding of identity development.

Self-determination theory, which noted the importance of "competence, autonomy, and relatedness" (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in identity development seems more consistent with the findings than Erikson and Marcia's ideas. Participants mentioned these elements as being pieces of what aided them in developing an integrated religious identity. The search for, and attainment of, competence can be seen in the thinking/learning subtheme, as well as for those who currently had rejected the faith in the disagreement with the Church subtheme. The need for autonomy can be seen in the choices to practice the faith subtheme. The need for relatedness can be seen in many of the exterior influences subthemes, such as peer influence, family influence and the influence of groups and organizations. Further exploration of how these subthemes fit with SDT, and where the findings diverged from what was expected given the tenants of SDT will be explored in the internal and external factors that influence identity development.

Factors that influenced religious identity development. This study seemed to confirm some of the areas that the professional literature reported may have helped young adults move toward religious development. For example, the young adults in this study reported family, peers, religious leaders, doubts and questioning, and personal traits were important to increasing faith development. These constructs were suggested in previous literature to potentially aid in religious development (doubts and questioning: Fisherman, 2016; Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 2001; family: Kimball et al., 2013; Leonard, Boyatzis, Cook, Kimball, & Flanagan, 2013; Lee, Miller, & Chang, 2006; internal traits: Watson & Morris, 2005; Pedersen, Williams, & Kristensen, 2000; Ramirez, Ashley, & Cort, 2014; relationships with others: Cohen-Malayev et

al., 2014; Hardy et al., 2010; Russo-Netzer, 2017;). This study did provide evidence that seems to confirm these areas of potential growth, with some additional nuances, which will be discussed below.

Culture. Previous research suggested that society might be one reason that people struggle to form an integrated religious identity (Hadad & Schachter, 2011). This study did suggest that society is an influence in religious development, but more from the perspective of the challenges faced by Catholic emerging adults who were practicing their faith. Some Catholic emerging adults said they found that society's "different values" posed a challenge in learning how to express themselves in these environments. For example, one participant mentioned the different morals that are portrayed on television and in the media being difficult to respond to. Another participant mentioned struggling to incorporate her values into her work. Other participants did not mention the role society had in this choice, although they did mention disagreement with Church teaching. Further exploration of ways that people experience tension between their beliefs and the beliefs of the dominant culture may be helpful in coming to better understand people's experiences.

Family. The role of family in faith development was one of the greatest surprises in this research. It would have been expected that the family would have had an entirely or mostly positive influence on faith development, but this is not what the participants of this study revealed. For example, much of the previous literature emphasized the role of the family in contributing to religious development (Brambilla et al., 2015 & Negru et al., 2014). These studies provided the strongest empirical evidence for SDT, and suggested that parental influence was a major contributing factor. This research seemed to indicate that parents may have a smaller role than would be expected. While some of the participants did report that having faith

encouragement from their family was a very important part of their faith development, a number of participants reported that their families were unsupportive of the prominent role that faith was taking in their lives. Also, there were a surprising number of people who had converted from other faiths in this study (especially seeing that we did not try to recruit converts). Both Brambilla et al. (2015) and Negru et al. (2014) conducted their studies in other countries, so perhaps the role of the family in those cultures differ. Also, it is possible that there are cohort effects on the role of the family in religious development, and the current cohort of Catholic emerging adults may be different from past cohorts.

Relationships with others. Previous research also seemed to indicate that relationships with teachers or mentors (here coded as religious leaders), relationships with peers, and participation in organizations and groups all seemed to lead to potentially stronger integrated religious identity development. This study seems to confirm these results. For example, Cohen-Malayev, et al. (2014), in a quantitative study, found that students who found their teachers to be role models in their faith, found their religious studies more meaningful. This data, while not directly confirming that, adds to this understanding by participants mentioning the importance of good role models, and finding hypocrisy in their role models to be a stumbling block to faith.

Groups and organizations also were found in previous literature to have a potentially positive impact on religious development (Bailey et al., 2016; Hardy et al., 2010; Russo-Netzer, 2017). This study seemed to confirm these past studies. Groups and organizations were mentioned by many participants as helpful in their faith development. Having a sense of community was an important part of people learning more about their faith and making decisions congruent with their beliefs. Also, for those who had recently graduated from college, the adjustment to not having as strong of a community, was almost always mentioned as a difficulty.

Others mentioned that when they had a Catholic community, they were active, but when it was not there, they stopped.

Religious doubts and questions. Religious doubts and questioning were also found in previous literature to perhaps contribute (or detract) from religious identity development. Fisherman (2016) suggested that, in the long-term, religious doubts and questioning may contribute to a more stable sense of religious identity. This research seemed to confirm that religious doubts are not necessarily factors that lead away from religious identity development. Religious doubts and questioning, for the most part, were seen by participants as things that helped them to seek out more information and find answers. However, a few of the participants said they did not attend Mass due to disagreement with the church; they also said that this disagreement was part of their doubts and questioning.

Additional factors found to influence religious development. This study seemed to point to several factors that have not been explored in previous literature. It is possible that at least some of these additional factors are unique to Catholics. For example, the following subthemes all were themes that were not discussed in previous literature: God's influence, various aspects of the Church, disagreement with the Church, finding replacements for formal faith, practical challenges, thinking/learning, and choices to practice the faith. Each of these subthemes will be briefly explored below.

Adding to the Catholic literature. It seems that the additional knowledge gained from the various aspects of the Church code and disagreement with the Church are both codes that gave helpful information about how Catholic emerging adults relate to the Church. These codes seemed to surface ideas particularly related to Catholicism, like the beauty of the Church or the Tradition of the Church, or Church teaching as it relates to issues like sexuality. Previous

research did not focus on Catholic emerging adults, or Catholics at all, and so it makes sense that issues which may be particular to Catholics would not have surfaced in previous literature. It was helpful to learn that things like the tradition of the Church and the beauty in the Church were things that contributed to Catholic emerging adults' adherence to the Church. It was also helpful to hear articulated why some Catholic emerging adults disagreed with the Church teaching, which may help Catholic leaders to better respond to the questions of young people today.

God's influence. God's influence was another aspect of faith development that was not considered in the literature. This code is helpful because it suggests that the person does not see themselves acting alone in regards to faith development, but rather cooperating with God in some ways. It also suggests that the person often experiences God as helping him or her on the journey.

Choices to practice one's faith. This code was another surprise in the emerging data, as choice was not seen in the literature as something that would impact identity development. Even when revisiting the literature on religious development and identity development, choice did not appear as an aspect of development. Perhaps this is because the literature tends to view identity as informing choices, rather than choices shaping identity. Further research that comes to understand how choice interacts with identity may be helpful.

Practical challenges, disagreement with the Church, and replacements for formal faith. Practical challenges, disagreement with the Church, and replacements for formal faith, were also not themes that surfaced in the literature review. Many of the elements of these codes may also be specific to Catholics. For example, the practical challenge of having difficulty finding community, may be something specific to Catholics. In terms of finding replacements for formal faith, this would likely apply to people leaving many religions. When consulting the

literature, it does appear that feminism is used for some as a type of spirituality or religion (Aune, 2015). However, the literature did not specifically explore how views like feminism may relate to Catholicism. Despite helpful information in these subthemes, they were not as beneficial to answering the research question of *how* the religious journey unfolds.

Thinking/learning. This code was one of the biggest findings in this research. In seeing what an important part thinking and learning was for most (nearly all) Catholic emerging adults and their faith journey, it seemed surprising that it had not surfaced in other literature. Upon returning to the literature, I did find evidence in the developmental research that thinking can be an important aspect of psychosocial identity development (Njus & Johnson, 2008). This study of 400 randomly selected college students, found in a quantitative longitudinal study that the need for cognition (NFC), defined as “the desire to engage in effortful thinking” (Njus & Johnson, 2008, p. 645), was associated with achieved identity. More specifically, they found that higher NFCs scores were correlated with higher identity scores at the $p < .05$ level. This suggests that the findings in this study are consistent with developmental literature, but should be further explored in light of religious development.

Summary. Overall, previous research is, for the most part confirmed, with additional nuances of understanding. This qualitative research seemed to find what may be a broader understanding of the impact of some of the factors can be explored such as the impact of society or the impact of the family. Additionally, particularly unique factors in religious development emerged, which may also add to the breadth to the understanding of religious development, e.g., not limiting it only to internal and external factors - but also choices/actions, with thinking and learning standing out as particularly important.

Implications for Practice, Policy and Research

While the data cannot be generalized to all Catholic emerging adults, this section will explore some specific suggestions for practice, policy, and research for this sample of participants. These suggestions may be especially useful results if the findings of this study are supported with future studies. Recommendations for future research to expand on the findings of this study are offered.

Practice implications. Social work values cultural competence as a part of ethical social work practice (NASW, 2015, 2017, 2018). It is thought that when social work's knowledge of cultural competency with specific groups is limited, the help offered to them may be limited (Hodge & Nadir, 2008). For example, social workers may feel less professionally prepared to work with certain groups, not knowing about their specific needs (Hage et al., 2006; Magaldi-Dopman, & Park-Taylor, 2013). The results of this study did indicate some of the potentially unique needs of Catholics. This section will explore possible ways that these unique needs could be addressed in practice settings.

One unique need of Catholic emerging adults that emerged was the tensions they said they experience regarding "being different" from the dominant culture. Some Catholic emerging adults in this study, noted that they sometimes experience difficulties in relationships with their peers and families because of their beliefs. Social work could address these difficulties by being prepared to engage with Catholic emerging adults around faith-based relationship difficulties in individual, couple and family psychotherapy. Social workers can participate in Catholic centered cultural competency training. They can learn how these faith considerations in relationships can cause tension and, as desired by clientele, help them to work through faith-based tensions within relationships. At the very least, social work can try to be more culturally competent with

Catholics so as to try to ensure that the therapeutic relationship between the worker and the client is not an area of faith culture misunderstandings.

Cultural competence activities like those suggested in social work literature on cultural competency may prove helpful. For example, it is recommended that social work students engage in activities that increase their own self-awareness in regard to religion, i.e., what their own beliefs are, and how these may impact interactions of people who are different from them (Rahill, Joshi, Lucio, Bristol, Dionne, & Hamilton, 2016). Increasing social workers comfort in discussing religion as a potentially important aspect in people's lives, may aid them in being willing to explore the complexity of the impact that religion may have in a person's life both as a potential strength and a potential source of tension. For example, social workers need to be able to ask spirituality questions, and for those clientele reporting specific faith affiliations, consider faith development as part of the assessment process.

Although there are many Catholics in the U.S., they still comprise a minority culture that appears to sometimes expose emerging Catholic emerging adults to what may be negative remarks from others about their faith affiliation. In this study, Catholic emerging adults clearly reported tensions stemming from belonging to a minority culture that they seemed to view as "different" from the mainstream culture. Social workers need to listen and affirm client feelings about these negative statements. Social work educators need to address religious minority statuses within social work curricula that include a range of religious affiliations in human development and behaviors, including having a Catholic identity.

Specifically aiding social workers in learning more about how religious groups may experience stigmatization could prove helpful. Hodge (2009) suggests educating social workers about religion, and its potential benefits and challenges. Hodge (2009) also recommends

promoting structural changes where people with religious beliefs are more adequately represented in a variety of fields, including social work. These steps may help to reduce the feelings of Catholic emerging adults being different in a way that negatively impacts their relationships and interactions with society as a whole.

In terms of increasing social work education and promoting social work practice skills, this research on religious development may help students to better reach competency two from the CSWE (2015) which focuses on engagement with diversity. This competency mentions that religion may be an important part of shaping a person's identity. Understanding religious development from the perspective of Catholic emerging adults themselves is consistent with social work's desire to empower people through helping them engage in behaviors that they find helpful. This research could provide an aid in educating people on competency two through giving some insight into the possibly unique needs of Catholic emerging adults. Content on Catholic identity should be included in diversity content of social work education curricula.

Educating Catholic leaders about these potential relational tensions may aid in increasing awareness of group support for Catholic emerging adults. One possible way to do this would be through facilitating groups between social workers and Catholic leaders where Catholic leaders could express what they would consider as the risks and benefits of working with social workers to help meet the needs of Catholic emerging adults. Social workers could ask for assistance in learning about Catholic faith development and they can explain the kinds of services they can, and cannot, provide. A mutual understanding could be developed through honest dialogue. Dessel and Rodenburg (2017) suggest a pedagogy for intergroup dialogue that aims to help students understand segregation and race dynamics, through ongoing contact with a group that is somehow different from themselves. A similar group between Catholics and social workers or

social work students could be conducted that aimed at helping students “identify, examine, and share their experiences of social identity intersectionality” (p. 225).

Additionally, since a number of study participants who said they were converting to the Catholic faith, mentioned difficulties with their families, training those working with people entering the Church to be sensitive to what tensions people may experience as a result of their choice may prove helpful. This is especially important since some people reported that they felt like their instructors did not fully comprehend the impact of their choice to become Catholic, and they found this an area of misunderstanding that was difficult. In this regard, exposing Catholic leaders to classes or literature which may both give them insights into the possible difficulties converts to Catholicism face, and what practical aids they could use to help avoid such misunderstandings may be helpful. For example, it could be suggested that inviting participation from group members about the impact their faith is having on their family may be helpful. Alternatively, perhaps having someone speak to people coming into the Church about how they navigated difficult family situations, may normalize such experiences and open the door to seeing what additional support may be helpful, such as pairing the person with a mentor.

The need for community that is expressed by Catholic emerging adults was also mentioned. This expressed need for community may be related to the tensions that Catholic emerging adults sometimes experience in relationships. Social workers can be attentive to this and learn about opportunities for Catholic emerging adults to engage in community activities such as young adult groups, service groups, and parish ministries, etc. Social workers could reach out to a Catholic Priest or a youth minister or young adult group, in order to learn more about opportunities that they could propose to Catholic emerging adults that seek their help. They can be attentive to the possible benefits of referring clients to these groups. The Catholic

Church can also be attentive to ensure that these groups are available in every area, especially for those who are graduating from college and are experiencing transitions.

Service may be one way that community building could be encouraged. Service was surfaced by participants, as an avenue that Catholic emerging adults identified as aiding them in their faith development. Service may also be a point where both social workers and the Church could engage, with social workers developing greater cultural competency with Catholics. This may be especially true since both social workers and the Catholic Church share some similar emphases in regards to social justice, especially concerning the poor and immigrants. It would be important for social workers to expand their knowledge of Catholics beyond their understanding of service, but this may be a starting point.

Also, while it only came up in one interview, it may be noteworthy that one person did express that they had an encounter with a therapist where they felt misunderstood regarding their beliefs (Interview 1), they noted that having someone who was more supportive of their beliefs and its requirements for their behavior would be more helpful. This is also helpful information in helping social workers to know some of the needs and expectations of some Catholic emerging adults. Also, social workers coming to understand that a person's faith journey has ups and downs, which do not necessarily indicate a mis-match of beliefs with the persons, may help social workers to aid individuals navigating these struggles in a way that respects this sense of on-going journey.

These findings revealed that some participants emphasized the importance of religious leaders in people's faith development. It seems that social workers could benefit from referring Catholic emerging adults to speak with religious leaders, especially in order to help them understand their faith better. Since this study was focused more on people's faith journey, little

understanding of the help seeking behaviors of Catholic emerging adults emerged. However, if social workers see that a person is experiencing a lack of understanding about her or his beliefs that is causing difficulty, they could refer them to an appropriate religious leader to seek resolution to these difficulties. Alternatively, clergy also could benefit from being aware of what social workers demonstrate cultural competency with Catholics, in order to refer Catholic emerging adults to them when they are experiencing relational or psychological difficulties.

This research also could contribute to building upon a strengths-based approach with clients. Using people's religious development as a strength, may aid them in reaping the benefits sometimes associated with religion including better health and mental health. Religion has also been thought to be a resource to aid in overcoming difficulties (Berkel, Constantine, & Olson, 2007; Callahan, 2015; Rosenfeld, 2010; Rothman, 2009). Indeed, this research did find that people said that their faith brought them comfort; gave them a framework for understanding themselves and the world, and helped them to respond to life concerns. Social workers having greater understanding of these potential benefits may help them to assist Catholic emerging adults to rely on their faith for strength. For examples, if a client once found faith activities to be a source of strength in their lives, but they have stopped engaging in such activities, a social worker may encourage the client to begin making choices to practice their faith again and evaluate together the effect of such actions.

Policy implications. As an understanding of religious identity development grows, policies can be expanded to ensure that healthy development is being supported. Specific references to spirituality or religion may be helpful to include in more social work policies. Religion and spirituality perhaps merits its own policy in *Social Work Speaks*. Even if religion and spirituality were not given its own section, it may be helpful to add sensitivity to spiritual or

religious concerns to some of the policies that currently do not mention religion or spirituality. This could be done in ways like the policies that do include religion and spirituality. For example, the adolescent and young adult health policy could add a statement like the one in the aging and wellness section which states support for the “optimal physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and functional well-being of all people as they age” (NASW, 2018, p. 23). This research does suggest the importance of religion and spirituality in some people’s lives, with many participants noting that their beliefs are central to how they see themselves and the world. Social work policies that reflect that this component of people’s lives needs to be cultivated in certain situations is important.

Another potential area of growth is mentioned in some of the literature, which suggests adding a competency specifically for teaching spirituality and religion. Depending on the context of social work education, Seitz (2014) suggests one way to increase spiritual competence is through a competency that helps students to “apply Christian faith development principles to inform and guide professional and ethical practice” (p. 342). While this approach would likely be too narrow for most contexts, it gives an example of one approach, which may be helpful if a social worker were going to work primarily or solely with people from a Christian background. This research did point to the idea that for Catholics emerging adults, a specific approach may be able to be developed and practiced, but the research did not give a full picture of what that might look like. What the research does seem to suggest is that Catholic emerging adults may need help navigating the tensions between societal norms and their religious beliefs. They may also need help coming to understand their beliefs and be given forums where thinking and understanding are encouraged. Catholic emerging adults may also benefit from relationships with others who

share their faith. Social workers knowing these potential needs and being attentive to their presence in clients is one way that social workers can increase in cultural sensitivity.

Additionally, church policy may be impacted by this research. Specifically, this research seemed to point to the important role of thinking and understanding in people's faith development, and the importance of Catholic teaching being taught without compromise. Some participants also mentioned the difficulties in not being taught well the reasons for the Church's teachings. These findings could give a context for exploring education practices and policies in the Catholic Church. For example, perhaps Catholic school teachers could be presented this research, and someone could explore with them how they present the Church's teaching, and how they might do this more effectively and clearly.

Religious education programs could also be more intentional about requiring education of parents about how they can support their children's faith development. Classes for parents could include the importance of encouraging children to make choices around their faith, (for example, being sure to bring their children to Mass when they ask to attend, or finding a time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation when asked). Parents could also be informed that difficulties along the faith journey are a normal part of life and resources should be made available to children to have their questions answered, whether setting up a meeting with a religious leader or being given more educational material. Normalizing difficulties may help young people to perceive themselves still on the journey, rather than seeing difficulties as a removal from the journey.

Another possible policy change could include developing memorandums of understandings and inter-personnel relationships for mutual referrals between social work agencies and Church organizations. These referrals could be helpful to both sides in articulating clearly what services may be able to be provided by each party. For example, the Priest

understanding that social workers may refer Catholics to them who are struggling to understand certain aspects of their faith may be helpful. Or, the social worker may be useful for the work of the Priest in that the social worker may be a resource for Catholics who may be struggling to navigate the tensions that they are experiencing due to their faith. Memorandums of understanding could aid in assuring each party is respecting the boundaries and expertise of the other, in order to promote the flourishing of the individual.

Research implications. This research was especially helpful because it suggests that stage theories of development may not be sufficient to understanding the lived experience of development of Catholic emerging adults. Especially if these findings were replicated in future studies, many more ideas could be explored. Some questions to be explored may include the following. Can people tell if they are in a stage? Do people's understanding of where they were on the journey at particular points of time change over time? Were previous theories more external or expert driven, or drawn from the internal views of the people they studied? What does it mean for studying human development if the journey for religious identity is more of a steady state of growth and integration versus a set benchmark to attain? In later life, do these factors that were identified as impacting the journey remain the same or change? How does the journey change across the lifespan? These questions help to stage the stage for future research. While participants did not emphasize the idea of stages, further research seeking to understand how a stage model may fit with participants experiences, may be helpful.

This research could serve as a starting point for ongoing research on faith identity development, especially among Catholic emerging adults. It leads to several research recommendations. First, researchers could further explore the findings of this study. This could be done in several ways. Further qualitative research that explores any of the main aspects of the

findings could be undertaken. For example, a qualitative study that looks only at the place of thinking and learning in religious development may be helpful, or that looked solely at the role of relationships. Also, an understanding of the role of families in faith development could be further explored, with special attention to possible cohort effects.

Also, greater understanding of the process of religious development in Catholic emerging adults could still be further explored through taking what was learned in these interviews and expounding upon them. Each influence could probably be a sole source of consideration for extensive interviews, in order to better understand the process. Looking in a more in-depth way at any of these areas may lead to growing in the depth of understanding of the process of faith development. Also, more longitudinal studies that consider faith development through the lifespan could be undertaken. This may help to test the idea of whether or not an on-going journey of development is more helpful to understand faith development or whether a stage model does indeed make more sense. If these ideas were developed through quantitative research, perhaps some of the factors that impact religious development could be measured with scales and greater understanding could develop, potentially indicating what variables statistically predict smoother spiritual identity journeys for emerging Catholic adults or Catholic throughout the lifespan.

A quantitative study may also be helpful in which the various influences on a person's faith journey are rated in terms of the extent of their influence. Quantitative studies that measure participants' need for cognition, as done in studies like Njus and Johnson (2008), levels of autonomy in their faith journey, and the degree of relatedness they experience in regard to their faith, may also help to confirm some of the results of this study and help researchers better understand the potential relationships of these variables.

Future research, quantitative or qualitative, should aim to confirm or add depth and nuance to the current study. Larger studies with more rigorous designs, would be especially helpful, and would become more and more possible, if some of the still exploratory research suggested above occurs. This would be beneficial in continuing to explore the role that social work may have in assisting Catholic emerging adults and Catholics throughout the lifespan. It would also help to add to the developmental research in terms of understanding the developmental process of religious development.

Study Limitations

Bias. Padgett (2017) gives several ways that bias can present itself in research: reactivity, researcher bias and respondent bias. Reactivity is the bias that may occur from the presence of the researcher and his or her impact or influence on the responder. Because the researcher is a Catholic emerging adults, it is possible that they will have some response to the habit, either positive and/or negative. For example, some participants may be more likely to share some things, and less likely to share other things, depending upon their own past and how they view religious leaders. The researcher's own background and beliefs may also impact researcher bias (Padgett, 2017). As noted in the reflexivity statement, the researcher has potential biases which could influence the lens with which the data is viewed.

The researcher worked to reduce bias with the following measures. The interview protocol uses normalizing statements about the ups and downs of a person's faith journey. The interview protocol also verbalizes that the researcher is not making a judgment about the person. The researcher has also allowed for small talk in the beginning, as well as a more neutral first question in order to build rapport. The trustworthiness of the data was also increased through

precautions such as reflexivity, memorandums, member checking, field notes, negative case analysis, a codebook, and inter-rater coding (Padgett, 2017).

Time Limitedness. Another limitation of this study is its time limitedness and that the data is drawn from the self-report of participants and is not verified. Although these are limitations, the aspect of self-report will allow the researcher to allow the voices of participants to be heard. This was done especially through the analytic techniques of using *in vivo* coding, especially in open coding, and having a second coder to ensure objectivity. It is hoped that the impact of the research being time limited will be mitigated through having participants reflect on their whole experience of their faith journey.

Sample. Although the sample of 31 would be small for a quantitative study, this is actually a good size sample for a qualitative study (Padgett, 2017). One limitation is that the study uses only one interview per participant, so it does not have a long range view or multiple measurement points of the interview participants. However, many participants reported facilitators and barriers to their faith journey over time. In addition, the sample is purposive, meaning it targets the exact target group – emerging Catholic adults. In addition, qualitative studies offer the possibility of *generating rich, thick* data which is appropriate for exploratory topics, about which little is known, such as Catholic emerging adults (Patton, 2015). Rich, thick data is also a method of increasing trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017). While this research does not generalize to all Catholic emerging adults, it does represent this sample, which may have important features in common with some groups of Catholic emerging adults.

Conclusion

This study aimed to better understand the process of integrated religious identity development and factors that facilitate or hinder that development. An initial model is suggested

that may help to better conceptualize a variety of aspects on the faith journey. The complexity of the faith development journey was certainly captured. Some ideas from previous research were confirmed namely the role of things like family, peers, culture, religious leaders, etc., but many nuances were suggested, and the important role of thinking/learning emerged more strongly than anticipated.

Despite some limitations, this study contributes to the knowledge base of religious identity development. It shows the central role that religion plays in some people's lives and suggests ways it can serve as a strength. It also suggests the importance of thinking and learning, as well as choice, in terms of development which could be explored with further studies. It shows a promising, though preliminary, path forward for social workers to engage the needs of Catholic emerging adults in increasingly culturally competent ways along their developmental paths.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Interview Purpose and Consent

Interview – Purpose and Consent

(Small talk for a few minutes). Then move to purpose.

Purpose and Consent: *I want to be sure you are adequately informed about the subject of the research.* Specifically, I am asking for your consent to participate in a research project called, “Catholic Emerging Adult Faith Journeys”.

The purpose of the study is to learn about your perspectives and experiences in your own faith journey. I want to understand what your faith means to you and why. I am also interested in learning about things that have helped and gotten in the way of your faith journey.

The study is conducted by the School of Social Work at Michigan State University. Joanne Riebschleger is the primary investigator. I am the secondary investigator, a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University. My name is Sister Miriam MacLean.

Data from the study will be used to build knowledge about how faith develops in Catholic emerging adults. The data may be used to build knowledge of how faith develops in Catholic emerging adults. It may also be used to adapt how social workers or those within the Catholic Church help Catholic emerging adults use their faith as a strength. Data from this study could also be used to adapt religious education practices to better meet the needs of Catholic emerging adults.

You have been contacted because you responded to a social media ad, or bulletin announcement that invited participation in this research study. To participate in this study, you must be an adult – defined as age 18 years or above. (Pause for respondent affirmation of adult status).

What to Expect: Today’s meeting is a brief Skype (or telephone) interview. The interview will take about 50-60 minutes. I will ask you some basic questions and ask you to respond. The interviewer (me) will be taking notes during the interview to gather your comments and ideas. Once in a while, I may ask for a few moments to jot down comments. At the end, I will ask you to fill out a short questionnaire with some demographic information. Then I will quickly check in with you from my notes to make sure I got things right. Then we will be done.

Voluntary participation: Participation in this research project is **entirely voluntary**. You may choose to not to participate in the project. You may choose to NOT participate in certain procedures, **or to answer questions, to answer parts of questions, or to discontinue participation at any time.** There is ***no penalty for refusing to participate or discontinuing participation.*** .

Benefits and Risks: There is no known direct benefit to you for participation in this study. The only benefit will be contributing to knowledge about the faith development of Catholic emerging adults, which may help other Catholic emerging adults who desire to have faith be a part of their life.

It is possible that talking about your faith journey may bring up unpleasant or negative memories of your experiences as a child or young adult. If you are not comfortable talking about a particular issue or answering a question, you may choose to not participate and/or to not answer.

Confidentiality: Your confidentiality will be protected to the full extent of the law. No information shall be released that can identify you.

Exceptions to confidentiality: If someone should reveal that he or she were intending to hurt herself or himself, or someone else, I cannot keep that confidential. If someone reveals information about abuse of a child who is currently 17 years or younger, I am required by law to report that as well. Finally, it is possible that staff from the Human Protection Program of Michigan State University may audit our records for compliance with ethical research standards.

Data Protection: The notes I take today shall be typed and stored in a locked file cabinet in the office of Sister Miriam MacLean. They will be stored there until such time as they are destroyed. I will also record the interviews and will keep that information under password protection and also in my locked office.

Incentive: Participants will be offered an incentive of a \$25 Amazon gift card to help offset any travel, child care, and time costs. Before we are finished today, the interviewer will make arrangements with you to receive this card and to confirm receipt.

Contacts: If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report a research-related injury (i.e., physical, psychological, social, financial, or otherwise) ***please contact the primary investigator Joanne Riebschleger, at:***

Social Work Program, Michigan State University
254 Baker Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824
E-mail: riebsch1@msu.edu or Work Phone: 517-353-9746

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, and would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study you may contact, anonymously, if you wish:

Human Protection Programs
Michigan State University
Put their Collins Road address here
Lansing, MI
Add their phone number
E-mail: irb@msu.edu

Do you have any questions so far? (Pause and allow the person time to respond. Answer their question/s).

Consent: Your continued responses to this Skype (or telephone) interview shall serve as consent for your participation in this study. (Pause – Ask the person if he or she consents. Get oral okay).

APPENDIX B:

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, with Flexible Probes

Transition: Now I will begin my more broad questions. There will be 10 questions like this. There are no right or wrong answers to this question, or any of the questions. I will let you answer the question, and may then ask for clarification. I may also ask some other questions to help you expand your answer. Take your time in answering each question.

This first question is meant to help me get to know you a little bit and get us used to this format.

Question 1: How do young people in your town relate to the Church?

Probes:

- a. Tell me a little bit about how people in your town relate to faith?
- b. Tell me a little bit about how people in your town relate to the Catholic Church?
- c. What do people think about the Churches in your area? Strengths? Weaknesses?
- d. What are the experiences of people in your area with Sunday School?
- e. How do the people in your area relate to the Priest or other religious leaders?
- f. Can you give me an example of that?
- g. Can you say more about that?

Transition: Now I am going to move into a question asking you broadly about your faith journey. Again, as with all of the questions, there are no right or wrong answers to this, or any of the questions. You might want to talk about what your faith has been like at various times in your life, particular events of importance to you etc. When you think about your whole faith experience – what comes to mind? A lot of people will report that their journey moved ahead sometimes and sometimes it didn't and other times seemed to move backward. I just want to know YOUR experience.

Question 2: How would you describe your faith journey?

Probes:

- a. Tell me about moments in your life where your faith changed in some way?
- b. What was your faith like as a young child?
- c. What was your faith like as an older child?
- d. What was your faith like as an adolescent?
- e. What is your faith like now as a young adult?
- f. Tell me more about some challenging times in your faith journey.
- g. Tell me more about times in your faith journey when you had doubts or questioned aspects of your belief.
- h. Can you give me an example of that?
- i. Can you tell me more about that?
- j. What was happening during the times in your life that were particularly difficult? What were those times like?
- k. What seemed to make faith more easy or hard?

Transition: This next question is going to try to get at how faith relates to who you are, how you understand yourself, and how you relate to the world. Faith might be a huge part of how you see yourself, or a little part, or somewhere in between. I just want to get a sense of how you see things. Again, there are no right or wrong answers, I just want to get a sense of how faith impacts your understanding of yourself.

Question 3: How does your faith relate to how you see yourself?

Probes

- a. Where does Catholicism fit in terms of how you identify yourself?
-Is it important to you to be identified as Catholic? Why?
- b. How does your faith relate to what you see your future looking like?
- c. What is the likelihood that a future marriage may take place in the Church?
- d. How does your faith impact what you think about yourself?
- e. How does your faith impact big decisions that you make?
- f. How does your faith impact little decisions that you make?
- g. Can you give me an example of that?
- h. Can you tell me more about that?

Transition: This next question is trying to better understand the things in your life that have helped your faith journey. You can tell me as many things as you'd like. I'm wanting to know what has helped your faith journey.

Question 4: Can you tell me about things that help your faith journey?

Probes

- a. How does your family impact your faith?
- b. How does your Priest or other adult at Church impact your faith journey?
- c. How do your friends impact your faith journey?
- d. How does society impact your faith journey?
- e. How does the culture at your school impact your faith journey?
- f. How has the Church has helped your faith journey?
- g. Can you give me an example of that?
- h. Can you tell me more about that?.

Transition: This next question is meant to help identify some of the things that get in the way of your faith journey. Some of the things you listed as helping your faith journey in some ways may also get in the way of your faith journey in other ways.

Question 5: What kinds of things get in the way of your faith journey?

Probes

- a. How does your family get in the way of your faith journey?
- b. How does your Priest or other adult at Church impact your faith journey?
- c. How do your friends impact your faith journey?
- d. How does society impact your faith journey?
- e. How does the culture at your school impact your faith journey?
- f. How has the Church has hindered your faith journey?
- g. Can you give me an example of that?.
- h. Can you tell me more about that? .
- i. In the previous question you listed a lot of ways that _____ (family, friends, society, etc), helped your faith in the previous question, what are any ways they get in the way?
- j. Have some of the things you mentioned helped your faith journey at some points, but gotten in the way at other points?

Transition: The next question is meant to help me understand what your religious involvement has been like and why.

Question 6: Would you describe your religious involvement?

Probes:

- a. What is the pattern of how you go (or do not go) to Church?
- b. What led you to receiving (or not receiving) the Sacraments? Which ones? What did they mean to you?
- c. What leads you to pray? How often does this happen?
- d. How are you involved with your Church Community?
- e. Can you give me an example of that?
- f. Can you tell me more about that?

Transition: This next question is meant to help me understand if there are things unique to who you are, how you think, what you believe that have impacted your faith journey.

Question 7: What personal traits affect how you engage in faith activities and beliefs?

Probes

- a. How does your thinking impact your faith journey?
- b. How does how you relate to others impact your faith journey?
- c. What things about yourself make you more inclined to doubt or believe?
- d. Can you give me an example of that?
- e. Can you tell me more about that?

Transition: This next question is meant to help me understand what your plans for the future are in terms of your faith, or how you think future life events might impact your faith.

Question 8: Imagine yourself in 10 years. Where do you see your faith in 10 years?

Probes

- a. Can you tell me about how you see yourself being involved in faith related activities in 10 years? What factors do you think will impact your level of involvement?
- b. How do you think your relationship with God will be different in 10 years?
- c. What do you think the reasons you will be either more or less involved in your faith will be?
- d. Can you give me an example of that?
- e. Can you tell me more about that?

Transition: The next question asks for your recommendations for how to help people who want to move forward in their faith journey.

Question 9: If you could advise someone else how to help a person like you to move forward in their faith journey, what would you say?

Probes:

- a. How can social workers and other professional helpers work with the person best? What should they do? Not do?
- b. How can the people working within the church help someone like you to move forward in their faith? What should they do? Not do?
- c. What can individual do by themselves to move their faith forward?
- c. Can you give me an example of that?
- d. Can you tell me more about that?

Transition: This last question is just to allow you a chance to add anything you would like and to clarify. Perhaps there are things I did not ask about that you think would be important for me to know in understanding your faith journey.

Question10: Is there anything else that you feel like I should know? Anything I did not ask about, or things you would like to clarify? New things you just thought of?

Probes:

- a. Can you give an example of that?
- b. Can you tell me more about that?
- c. Thoughts?
- d. Ideas?
- e. Suggestions?
- f. What else? How?

*Transition: Alright, we're almost done. I just have a few demographic questions for the record.
Hand paper to participant:*

Demographic Questions

- 1. How old are you?**
- 2. What is your gender?**
- 3. What is your race or ethnicity?**
- 4. What state are you from?**

Transition: Okay, the last thing today is the check in with you about what you told me. I'll just go over a few highlights of your answers to the questions and review my notes. You can help by telling me if something is right or if something needs to be edited or added.

Facilitator Check In: (Briefly summarize my notes to capture the main ideas. Pause and check with the participant about the accuracy of the notes. Record any needed changes or additions they suggest.

Gift Card: (Facilitator- Make clear arrangements for gift card distribution and collection of the receipt. The gift card would be e-mailed). They can respond saying they received it and I will just keep record of their responses with my other data.

Closing: I really appreciate you taking the time to participate in this interview. Thank you.

APPENDIX C:

Correspondence with Participants and Potential Participants

Lifeteen is a youth ministry organization that has access to over 1,500 Catholic Church parishes in the United States. They have said that they would send out an e-mail to their database for me, or share their database with me.

Send out an e-mail to all of Lifeteen's contacts that says the following. If not enough participations are gained in this way, send out e-mails directly to various Church parishes in the United States.

Subject: Catholic Emerging Adult Faith Journey Research Project Invitation
Hello,

I would be very grateful for your help in reaching out to Catholics between the ages of 18-29 who may be interested in participating in a research project. I am a PhD candidate and would be grateful for your help in coming to understand better how faith development occurs.

I would be grateful if you could either, post this social media ad on your Facebook, Instagram, or other social media, and/or forward this e-mail to your e-mail lists, or post the following paragraph in your Church bulletin:

If you are a Catholic between the ages of 18 and 29 and would like to participate in a research study on the process of faith development, please contact Sister Miriam MacLean, RSM at maclea20@msu.edu. Telling your story would help social workers better understand faith development, which may help other young people through their own journeys. If you decide to participate, it would involve a 1 hour confidential interview by Phone or Skype. You would receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. If you are unsure about participation, but have questions, please feel free to be in contact.

You can also reach me at maclea20@msu.edu with any questions or concerns you may have. Thank you for taking the time to read this note.

Gratefully,
Sister Miriam MacLean, RSM

Figure 2: Research Participant Advertisement

The advertisement is a vertical poster with a background image of a person in silhouette holding up a cross against a cloudy, sunset-colored sky. The text is arranged in four distinct horizontal sections with different background colors: a dark top section for the title, a black section for the main question and participation details, a gold section for contact information and incentives, and a dark bottom section for the research program details.

**HELP RESEARCHERS
UNDERSTAND THE FAITH
JOURNEYS OF CATHOLIC
EMERGING ADULTS**

**ARE YOU A CATHOLIC BETWEEN THE
AGE OF 18-29?
RESEARCH SUBJECTS WILL
PARTICIPATE IN A 50-60 MINUTE
CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW**

**INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING? QUESTIONS?
\$25 AMAZON GIFT CARD FOR THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE
CONTACT SISTER MIRIAM MACLEAN, RSM, LLMSW
MACLEA20@MSU.EDU**

**MSU Human Research Protection Program 4000 Collins Road, Suite 136,
East Lansing MI 48824 517-335-2180**

When People Respond to me with interest in the Survey:

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate as a *research subject in a study*. I will ask you to engage in about a 50-60 minute interview. The research study focuses on the process of faith development in Catholic emerging adults.

To be clear, I want to know about YOUR perspectives and experiences in your own faith journey. I want to understand what your faith means to you and why. I am also interested in learning about things that have helped and gotten in the way of your faith journey.

The name of the study is, “Catholic Emerging Adults’ Faith Journeys” The primary investigator is Dr. Joanne Riebschleger from the Michigan State University School of Social Work. The secondary investigator is Sister Miriam MacLean (Julia Eden MacLean), a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University.

Data from the study will be used to build knowledge about how faith develops in Catholic emerging adults. The data may be used to build knowledge of how faith develops in Catholic emerging adults. It may also be used to adapt how social workers or those within the Catholic Church help Catholic emerging adults use their faith as a strength. Data from this study could also be used to adapt religious education practices to better meet the needs of Catholic emerging adults.

If you are interested in learning more about participating in the project, please respond to me at Sister Miriam MacLean, RSM at maclea20@msu.edu with 3 possible dates and times that you could be interviewed.

Gratefully,
Sister Miriam, RSM

APPENDIX D:

Initial List of Open Codes from the first 10 interviews

Adoration	Difficulties in faith journey	Reasons for practicing faith
autonomy	discussion	religious items
Background in other faith	don't water down the faith	Religious Practices
beauty	Doubts	role of faith/prayer in
comfort	Ease of Participation	decisions
convert	empathetic	Role of Prayer
curious	Faith Environment	Role of relationships
daughter of God	faith tested	Routine
dignity	Faith's impact on judgment	saints
evangelization	faith's impact on relationships	Scripture
faith as a resource	faith's impact on thinking	Seeking after truth
faith as protection	Family Influence	Seeking wholeness
friendship in Christ	Fear	Self-help ways to greater
God's help	fear of hell	faith
identity formation struggle	Feeling welcomed	self-knowledge
introverted	Feelings about religious	sense of self
learning about chastity	beliefs and practices	Service
learning to explain the faith	future	silence
Lector	How other cultures fit with	spiritual direction
make my faith my own	being Catholic	Steady Journey
making faith practical	How the mind works with	Steps toward belief
modelling	faith	teacher's influence
mortification	impact of culture	Thoughts about the Church
music	impact of negative example	time/practice
passing on faith to children	integrating different parts of	Understanding the faith
process	self	Universality
relationship with Jesus	interaction with therapists	Ups and Downs
retreats	lack of understanding	wasting time
rude	listening	ways faith helps the person
suffering	make fun of you	welcoming
tone	Mass	
vocation	missing Mass	
accountability	needing to change behaviors	
Aids to faith journey	Open my heart	
areas on tension	Organizations/Groups	
barriers to religious	Personal response to	
participation	difficulties	
Belief in the Lord's working	personal traits	
even when difficult	Prayer	
Confession	prayer	
Connect intellect with	pride	
emotions	Priest	
didn't love us into Church	questioning/questions	
	reading	

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Abu-Raiya, H., Pargament, K. I., Krause, N., & Ironson, G. (2015). Robust links between religious/spiritual struggles, psychological distress, and well-being in a national sample of American adults. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85, 565-575. doi: 10.1037/ort0000084
- Alisat, S., & Pratt, M. W. (2012). Characteristics of young adults' personal religious narratives and their relation with the identity status model: A longitudinal mixed methods study. *Identity*, 12(1) 29-52. doi: 10.1080/15283488.2012.632392
- Arnett, J. J., & Jensen, L. A. (2002). A congregation of one: Individualized religious beliefs among emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 17, 451-467. doi: 10.1177/0743558402175002
- Assor, A., Cohen-Malayev, M., Kaplan, A., & Friedman, D. (2005). Choosing to stay religious in a modern world: Socialization and exploration processes leading to an integrated internalization of religion among Israeli Jewish youth. *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, 14, 105-150. doi: 10.1016/S0749-7434(05)14005-9
- Aune, K. (2015). Feminist spirituality as lived religion: How UK feminists forge religio-spiritual lives. *Gender and Society*, 29, 122-145.
- Bailey, K. L., Jones, B. D., Hall, T. W., Wang, D. C., McMartin, J., & Fujikawa, A. M. (2016). Spirituality at a crossroads: A grounded theory of Christian emerging adults. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 8, 99-109. doi: 10.1037/rel0000059
- Barga, M. J. (2015). Social work and cultural competency with Roman Catholics. *The Catholic Social Science Review*, 20, 75-86.
- Barry, C. M., & Nelson, L. J. (2005). The role of religion in the transition to adulthood for young emerging adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34, 245-255. doi: 10.1007/s10964-005-4308-1
- Baum, W. (1982). *Lay Catholics in schools: Witnesses to faith*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html
- Beaumont, S. L., & Scammell, J. (2012). Patterns of spirituality and meaning in life related to identity. *Identity*, 12, 345-367. doi: 10.1080/15283488.2012.716380
- Bell, D. M. (2008) Development of the religious self: A theoretical foundation for measuring religious identity. In A. Day (Ed.), *Religion and the individual* (pp. 127-142). Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

- Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Syvertsen, A. K. & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2012). Is youth spiritual development a universal developmental process? An international exploration. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 7, 453-470. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2012.732102
- Berkel, L. A., Constantine, M. G., & Olson, E. A. (2007). Supervisor multicultural competence. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 26(1), 1-15. doi: 10.1300/J001v26n01_02
- Bertram-Troost, G. D., Roos, S. A., & Miedema, S. (2007). Religious identity development of adolescents in Christian secondary schools: Effects of school and religious backgrounds of adolescents and their parents. *Religious Education*, 102, 132-150.
- Bowen, G. A. (2006). Grounded theory and sensitizing concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5. Retrieved from https://sites.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_3/PDF/bowen.pdf
- Brambilla, M., Assor, A., Manzi, C., & Regalia, C. (2015). Autonomous versus controlled religiosity: Family and group antecedents. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 25, 193-210. doi: 10.1080/10508619.2014.888902
- Brittian, A. S., & Lerner, R. M. (2013). Early influences and later outcomes associated with developmental trajectories of Eriksonian fidelity. *Developmental Psychology*, 49, 722-735. doi: 10.1037/a0028323
- Byrd, K. R., Hageman, A., Isle, D. B. (2007). Internal motivation and subjective well-being: The unique contribution of internal religious motivation. *The International Journal of the Psychology of Religion*, 17, 141-156. doi: 10.1080/10508610701244155
- Callahan, A. M. (2015). Key concepts in spiritual care for hospice social workers: How an interdisciplinary perspective can inform spiritual competence. *Journal of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work*, 42(1), 43-62.
- Chan, M., Tsai, K. M., & Fuligni, A. J. (2015). Changes in religiosity across the transition to young adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44, 1555-1566. doi: 10.1007/s10964-014-0157-0
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Kindle Edition]. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cheon, J. W., & Canda, E. R. (2010). The meaning and engagement of spirituality for positive youth development in social work. *Spirituality in Social Work*, 91, 121-126. doi: 10.1606/1044-3894.3981
- Cohen-Malayev, M., Schachter, E. P. & Rich, Y. (2014). Teachers and the religious socialization of adolescents: Facilitation of meaningful religious identity formation processes. *Journal of Adolescence*, 37, 205-214. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2013.12.004

- Cook, K. V., Leonard, K. C., Kimball, C. N., & Boyatzis, C. J. (2014). The complexity of quest in emerging adults' religiosity, well-being, and identity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 53(1), 73-89.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Council of Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational policy and accreditation standards*. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Standards-and-Policies/2015-EPAS/2015EPASandGlossary.pdf.aspx>
- Cramer, R. J., Griffin, M. P., & Powers, D. V. (2008). A five-factor analysis of spirituality in young adults: Preliminary evidence. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 19, 43-57.
- Crawford, S. C., & Beard, R. L. (2014). Faith and forgetfulness: The role of spiritual identity in preservation of self with alzheimer's. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging*, 26(1), 65-91. doi: 10.1080/15528030.2013.811462
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Croog, S. H., & Teele, J. E. (1967). Religious identity and church attendance of sons of religious intermarriages. *American Sociological Review*, 32(1), 93-103.
- Davis, R. F. III, & Kiang, L. (2016). Religious identity, religious participation, and psychological well-being in Asian American adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45, 532-546.
- Dedoose. (2019). *Great research made easy*. Retrieved from <https://www.dedoose.com/>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *The landscape of qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Dessel, A.B., & Rodenborg, N. (2017). An evaluation of intergroup dialogue pedagogy: Addressing segregation and developing cultural competency. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 53, 222-239.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1974). *Dimensions of a new identity: The 1973 Jefferson lectures in the humanities*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

- Faull, K., & Hills, M. D. (2006). The role of the spiritual dimension of the self as the prime determinant of health. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 28, 729-740. doi: 10.1080/09638280500265946
- Feenstra, J. S., & Brouwer, A. M. (2008). Christian vocation: Defining relations with identity status, college adjustment and spirituality. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 36, 83-93.
- Fisherman, S. (2004). Ego identity and spiritual identity in religiously observant adolescents in Israel. *Religious Education*, 99, 371-384. doi: 10.1080/00344080490513090
- Fisherman, S. (2016). Development of religious identity through doubts among religious adolescents in Israel: An empirical perspective and educational ramifications. *Religious Education*, 111, 119-136. doi: 10.1080/00344087.2016.1107950
- Foster, J. D., & LaForce, B. (1999). A longitudinal study of moral, religious, and identity development in a Christian liberal arts environment. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 27(1), 52-68.
- Froiland, J. M., Oros, E., Smith, B. S., & Hirschert, T. (2012). Internal motivation to learn: The nexus between psychological health and academic success. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 16, 91-100.
- Furrow, J. L., King, P. E., & White, K. (2004). Religion and positive youth development: Identity, meaning, and prosocial concerns. *Applied Developmental Science*, 8(1), 17-26. doi: 10.1207/s1532480xads0801_3
- Glaser, B. (2011). Doing formal theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
- Good, M., & Willoughby, T. (2008). Adolescence as a sensitive period for spiritual development. *Child Development Perspectives*, 2(1), 32-37. doi: 10.1111/j.1750-8606.2008.00038.x
- Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2008). Attachment and religious representations and behavior. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 906-933). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Hadad, T., & Schachter, E. (2011). 'Religious-lite': A phenomenon and its relevance to the debate on identity development and emerging adulthood. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14, 853-869. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2011.616487

- Hall, T. W., Edwards, E., & Wang, D. C. (2016). The spiritual development of emerging adults over the college years: A 4-year longitudinal investigation. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 8, 206-217. doi: 10.1037/rel0000051
- Hardie, J. H., Pearce, L. D., & Denton, M. L. (2016). The dynamics and correlates of religious service attendance in adolescence. *Youth and Society*, 48, 151-175. doi: 10.1177/0044118X13483777
- Hardy, S. A., Pratt, M. W., Pencer, S. M., Olsen, J. A., & Lawford, H. L. (2010). Community and religious involvement as contexts of identity change across late adolescence and emerging adulthood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 35, 125-135. doi: 10.1177/0165025410375920
- Harr, C. R., & Yancey, G. I. (2014). Social work collaboration with faith leaders and faith groups serving families in rural areas. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 33, 148-162. doi: 10.1080/15426432.2014.900373
- Hartley, H. (2004). How college affects students' religious faith and practice: A review of research. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 23, 111-129.
- Helms, S. W., Gallagher, M., Calhoun, C. D., Choukas-Bradley, S., Dawson, G. C., & Prinstein, M. J. (2015). Intrinsic religiosity buffers the longitudinal effects of peer victimization on adolescent depressive symptoms. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 44, 471-479. doi: 10.1080/15374416.2013.865195
- Hoare, C. (2009). Identity and spiritual development in the papers of Erik Erikson. *Identity*, 9, 183-200. doi: 10.1080/15283480903344497
- Hodge, D. R. (2009). Secular privilege: Deconstructing the invisible rose-tinted glasses. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 28, 8-34. doi: 10.1080/15426430802643281
- Hodge, D. R., & Nadir, A. (2008). Moving toward culturally competent practice with Muslims: Modifying cognitive therapy with Islamic Tenets. *Social Work*, 53(1), 31-41. doi: 10.1093/sw/53.1.31
- Holton, J. A. (2011). The coding process and its challenges. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941
- Hood, J. C. (2011). Orthodoxy vs. power: The defining traits of grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941
- Hunsberger, B., Pratt, M., & Pancer, S. M. (2001). Adolescent identity formation: Religious exploration and commitment. *Identity*, 1, 365-386. doi: 10.1207/S1532706XID0104_04

- Inglis, T. (2007). Catholic identity in contemporary Ireland: Belief and belonging to tradition. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 22, 205-220. doi: 10.1080/13537900701331064
- Kane, M. N. (2003). Skilled help for mental health concerns: Comparing the perceptions of Catholic priests and Catholic parishoners. *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture*, 6, 261-275. doi: 10.1080/1367467031000100993
- Kelle, U. (2011). The development of categories: Different approaches in grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941
- Kiesling, C., Montgomery, M. J., Sorell, G. T., & Colwell, R. K. (2006). Identity and spirituality: A psychosocial exploration of the sense of spiritual self. *Developmental Psychology*, 42, 1269-1277. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.42.6.1269
- Kiesling, C., & Sorell, G. (2009). Joining Erikson and identity specialists in the quest to characterize adult spiritual identity. *Identity*, 9, 252-271. doi: 10.1080/15283480903344554
- Kim, Y., Carvery, C. S., Spillers, R. L., Crammer, C., & Zhou, E.S. (2011). Individual and dyadic relations between spiritual well-being and quality of life among cancer survivors and their spousal caregivers. *Psycho-Oncology*, 20, 762-770. doi: 10.1002/pon.1778
- Kimball, C. N., Cook, K. V., Boyatzis, C. J., & Leonard, K. C. (2013). Meaning making in emerging adults' faith narratives: Identity, attachment and religious orientation. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 32, 221-233.
- King, P. E. (2003). Religion and identity: The role of ideological, social, and spiritual contexts. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7, 197-204. doi: 10.1207/s1532480xads0703_11
- Lawson, M. A., & Masyn, K. E. (2015). Analyzing profiles, predictors, and consequences of student engagement dispositions. *Journal of School Psychology*, 53, 63-86. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2014.11.004
- Lee, J., Miller, L., & Chang, E.S. (2006). Religious identity among Christian Korean-American adolescents. *Psychological Reports*, 98, 43-56.
- Lemberger, M. E., & Hutchinson, B. (2014). Advocating student-within-environment: A humanistic approach for therapists to animate social justice in the schools. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 54(1), 28-44. doi: 10.1177/0022167812469831

- Lempert, L. B. (2011). Asking questions of the data: Memo writing in grounded theory tradition. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941
- Leonard, K. C., Boyatzis, C. J., Cook, K. V., Kimball, C. N., & Flanagan, K. S. (2013). Parent-child dynamics and emerging adult religiosity: Attachment, parental beliefs, and faith support. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 5(1), 5-14. doi: 10.1037/a0029404
- Lerner, R. M., Alberts, A. E., Anderson, P. M., & Dowling, E. M. (2006). On making humans human: Spirituality and the promotion of positive youth development. In R. M. Lerner, A. E. Alberts, P. M. Anderson, & E. M. Dowling (Eds.), *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 60-72). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. doi: 10.4135/9781412976657.n5
- Life Teen. (2018). *About*. Retrieved from <https://lifeteen.com/about/>
- Manders, G., & Galvani, S. (2015). Learning from the research process: Discussing sensitive topics as a cultural outsider. *Social Work Education*, 34, 199-212. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2014.977630
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 3, 551.
- Marcia, J. E. (1973). Ego-identity status. In M. Argyle (Ed.), *Social encounters: Readings in social interaction* (pp. 340-354). Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Markstrom-Adams, C., Hofstra, G., & Dougher, K. (1994). The ego-virtue of fidelity: A case study of religion and identity formation in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 23, 453-469.
- Mohammadi, N., Jones, T., & Evans, D. (2008). Participant recruitment from minority religious groups: The case of the Islamic population in South Australia. *International Council of Nurses*, 55, 393-398. doi: 10.1111/j.1466-7657.2008.00647.x
- Moshman, D. (2011). *Adolescent psychological development: Rationality, morality, and identity*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- National Associations of Social Workers. (2015). *Standards and indicators for cultural competence*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=PonPTDEBrn4%3D&portalid=0>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2017). *The Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC: Author.

- National Association of Social Workers. (2018). *Social work speaks*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Negru, O., Haragas, C., & Mustea, A. (2014). How private is the relation with God? Religiosity and family religious socialization in Romanian emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 29, 380-406. doi: 10.1177/0743558413508203
- Oktay, J. S. (2012). *Grounded theory*. New York, New York: Oxford Publishing.
- Njus, D., & Johnson D. R. (2008). Need for cognition as a predictor of psychosocial identity development. *The Journal of Psychology*, 142, 645-655. doi: 10.3200/JRLP.142.6.645-655
- Openshaw, L., & Harr, C. (2009). Exploring the relationship between clergy and mental health professionals. *Social Work & Christianity*, 36, 301-325.
- Padgett, D. K. (2017). *Qualitative methods in social work research*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pearce, L. & Denton, M. L. (2011). *A faith of their own: Stability and change in the religiosity of American's adolescents*. [Kindle Edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Pedersen, D. M., Williams, R. N., Kristensen, K. B. (2000). The relation of spiritual self-identity to religious orientations. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 28, 138-148.
- Peek, L. (2005). Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity. *Sociology of Religion*, 66, 215-242.
- Phillips, T. M., & Pittman, J. F. (2003). Identity processes in poor adolescents: Exploring the linkages between economic disadvantage and the primary task of adolescence. *Identity*, 3, 115-129. doi: 10.1207/S1532706XID030202
- Rahill, G. J., Joshi, M., Lucio, R., Bristol, B., Dionne, A., & Hamilton, A. (2016). Assessing the development of cultural proficiency among upper-level social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 52, 198-213.
- Ramirez, O., Ashley, G., & Cort, M. (2014). What does it mean to be a Christian? Exploring the religious identity of intrinsically and extrinsically religious black Seventh-Day Adventist university students. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 23(1), 56-69. doi: 10.1080/10656219.2013.810558
- Roehlkepartain, E. C., Benson, P. L., & Scales, P. C. (2011). Spiritual identity: Contextual perspectives. In S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles, (Eds.), *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. New York, NY; Springer, p. 545-562.

- Rosenfeld, G. W. (2010). Identifying and integrating helpful and harmful religious beliefs into psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy theory, research, practice, training*, 47, 512-526.
- Rothman, J. (2009). Spirituality: What we can teach and how we can teach it. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 28(1), 161-184. doi: 10.1080/15426430802644198
- Russo-Netzer, P. (2017). "Sometimes I don't even know where I am going": What supports individualized personal spiritual change? *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 9(1), 82-94. doi: 10.1037/rel0000092
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of internal motivation, self-development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. doi: 10.1037/10003-066X.55.1.68
- Rymarz, R. M. & Graham, J. (2006). Drifting from the mainstream: The religious identity of Australian core Catholic youth. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 11, 371-383. doi:10.1080/13644360601014114
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Schwartz, S. J., Luyckx, K., & Vignoles, V. L. (2011). *Handbook of identity theory and research*. New York: Springer.
- Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., Luyckx, K., Meca, A., & Ritchie, R. A. (2013). Identity in emerging adulthood: Reviewing the field and looking forward. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1, 96-113. doi: 10.1177/2167696813479781
- Seitz, C. R. (2014). Utilizing a spiritual disciplines framework for faith integration in social work: A competency-based model. *Social Work & Christianity*, 41, 334-354.
- Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2003). *Methodological design and procedures for the national survey of youth and religion* (NSYR). Chapel Hill, NC: The National Study of Youth and Religion. Retrieved from https://youthandreligion.nd.edu/assets/102496/master_just_methods_11_12_2008.pdf
- Smith, C., Longest, K., Hill, J., & Christoffersen, K. (2014). *Young Catholic America: Emerging adults in, out of, and gone from the church* [Kindle Edition]. Oxford, UK: Oxford Press. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Stern, P. N. (2011). On solid ground: Essential properties for growing grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941

- Stewart, D. L. (2002). The role of faith in the development of an integrated identity: A qualitative study of black students at a white college. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*, 579-596.
- Tate, Y. B., & Parker, P. (2007). Using Erikson's developmental theory to understand and nurture spiritual development in Christians. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 26*, 218-226.
- Trinitapoli, J. (2007). "I know this isn't PC, but...": Religious exclusivism among U.S. adolescents. *The Sociological Quarterly, 48*, 451-483. doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.2007.00085.x
- Urquhart, C. (2013). *Grounded theory for qualitative research: A practical guide*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publ. doi: 10.4135/9781526402196
- VanderWaal, C. J., Hernandez, E. I., & Sandman, A. R. (2012). The gatekeepers: Involvement of Christian clergy in referrals and collaboration with Christian social workers and other helping professionals. *Social Work and Christianity, 39*(1), 27-51.
- van Dover, L., & Pfeiffer, J. (2011). Patients of parish nurses experience renewed spiritual identity: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 68*, 1824-1833.
- Vignoles, V. L., Schwartz, S. J., & Luyckx, K. (2011) Introduction: Toward an integrative view of identity. In S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles, (Eds.), *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. New York, NY; Springer, 1-27.
- Viruell-Fuentes, E. A. (2011). "It's a lot of work" racialization processes, ethnic identity formations, and their implications. *Du Bois Review, 8*(1), 37-52. doi: 10.1017/S1742058X11000117
- Visser-Vogel, E., Westerink, J., de Kock, J., Barnard, M., & Bakker, C. (2012). Developing a framework for research on religious identity development of highly committed adolescents. *Religious Education, 107*, 108-121. doi: 10.1080/00344087.2012.660413
- Watson, P. J. & Morris, R. J. (2005). Spiritual experience and identity: Relationships with religious orientation, religious interest, and intolerance of ambiguity. *Review of Religious Research, 46*, 371-379.
- Wiener, C. (2011). Making teams work in conducting grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Retrieved from Michigan State University Library. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781848607941
- Williams, B. R., Holt, C. L., Le, D., & Schulz, E. (2015). Characterizing change in religious and spiritual identity among a national sample of African American adults. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging, 27*, 343-357. doi:10.1080/15528030.2015.1073208

- Yorgason, D., Whelan, J. P., & Meyers, A. W. (2012). Perceived religious support for problem gambling: Does church doctrine influence help-seeking? *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture*, 15(1), 87-102.
- Zellmer, D. D., & Anderson-Meger, J. I. (2011). Rural Midwestern religious beliefs and help seeking behavior: Implications for social work practice. *Social Work & Christianity*, 38(1), 29-50.