
Anthony Dallas Paz

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By

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by

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Abstract

Despite the work of catechetical leaders to help fellow Catholics deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church in the US continues to lose members at an alarming rate. In other educational and professional settings, practices of assessment and evaluation have been employed to determine whether and how their missions are achieved. The literature reveals that there is very little research on evaluative practices and attitudes among professional catechetical leaders and suggests that there is a great lack of evaluation in the field of catechesis and religious education in the US.

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to learn about the attitudes and practices of evaluation among catechetical leaders. The research questions were: (1) What are the attitudes of catechetical leaders toward evaluation of adult volunteers’ discipleship status?, (2) What methods, formal and informal, do catechetical leaders report to use in evaluating discipleship?, and (3) Is there a relationship between attitudes toward evaluation among catechetical leaders and their reported practice of evaluation for discipleship? The study featured two phases, a quantitative phase, facilitated by a researcher-designed survey, and a
qualitative phase, comprised of two focus groups of catechetical leaders. Survey participants \((N = 61)\) were professional lay catechetical leaders in parishes from across a state in the Pacific Northwest. Focus group participants \((N = 7)\) were volunteers who had taken the survey.

Attitudes toward evaluation among survey participants were generally positive, with 90.2% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is helpful to discern whether volunteers are disciples. However, focus group participants expressed ambivalent attitudes. The survey also revealed that participants practiced evaluation of their volunteers’ discipleship frequently, with 86.3% reporting that they do so either almost always or more than half the time. Focus group participants showed a preference for practicing informal and incidental methods of evaluation. Survey results also revealed a correlation coefficient of \(\rho = .47 (p < .001)\) between attitudes toward evaluation and practices of evaluation. The study concludes by recommending: (a) increased training on active, intentional evaluation in formation of catechetical leaders, (b) the creation and promotion of simple, easy-to-use tools for intentional evaluation, (c) increased use of regular performance evaluation of professional catechetical leaders by their supervisors, (d) an increase in opportunities for collaboration across diocesan lines, and (e) a renewed emphasis on the discipleship formation of adult volunteers.

**Keywords:** Catechesis, catechetical leaders, assessment, evaluation, lay ministry, discernment, religious education, Christian education
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Jesus, I love you.

AMDG.
Dedication

To Angela: you are the very model of a catechetical leader, of a colleague, of a mother, of a disciple of Jesus. You are also my partner in all things for this life, including this work. Every page belongs as much to you as to me.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The last half-century has seen a decrease in the practice of Catholicism in the United States. A notable aspect of this change has been the huge numbers of defections of Catholics. Former Catholics now comprise 10% of the US population, about equal to the number of Mass-going Catholics in the US (Weddell, 2012). This decline stands in stark contrast to the mission of the Catholic Church to send its message outward, “offering good news to the poor, liberty to captives” and words of healing to any person in need (National Directory for Catechesis, 2005, p. 5). Without messengers of Good News, there is no way to send the message out. Essential, then, to the Church’s very purpose, is the preparation of Catholics to know and live the Good News in order to proclaim it. The Church calls this ministry of preparation and education catechesis and devotes vast resources to its fulfillment (National Directory for Catechesis, 2005).

Central to the topic of this paper is the nature and goals of catechesis. While detailed goals of catechesis prescribed by Church leadership will be addressed in the literature review, catechesis will be defined, generally, as “efforts within the Church to make disciples [of Jesus Christ], to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God…”
and to educate and instruct them in his life and thus build up the Body of Christ” (John Paul II, 1979, para. 1). From a Catholic perspective, catechesis concerns itself with all of the following: the learner’s personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the content of her beliefs (“to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God”), the way she lives (“instruct them in his life”), and her participation in the Church (“build up the Body of Christ”). Weddell (2012) summed this up with the term intentional discipleship. For this study, the word disciple is operationally defined as one who knows, believes, and lives out the Good News of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the Church. Catechesis, then, is the act of helping people to become intentional disciples within the structure of Catholic practice and belief.

The heavy investment in catechesis on the part of the institutional Church is most clearly illustrated by the employment of more than 23,000 lay men and women as ministers throughout the country (CARA, 2016). Prior to 1960, most catechetical work was accomplished by ordained men or vowed religious (e.g., monks and nuns) (Murnion & DeLambo, 1999). Today, most Catholic parishes have at least one employee responsible for religious education. The majority of these professional men and women are tasked with leading programs of catechesis (Murnion & DeLambo, 1999). They are well-trained, generally satisfied with their work, and represent a large shift in the way Catholics are educated and spiritually nourished in the US (Murnion & DeLambo, 1999). They will be referred to as catechetical leaders throughout this dissertation.

For clarity’s sake, the term catechetical leader is to be contrasted with the term volunteer. Catechetical leaders are an example of what Burgess (1993) called
professionals, or individuals who are paid to practice a mastered theory or set of theories. Catechetical leaders are paid for their work by their parish, to put into practice their mastery of the practice of catechesis. Often they train and empower unpaid members of their communities to collaborate in their work of catechesis. These unpaid collaborators are volunteers, who are very often called *catechists* in the context of Catholic parishes (Murnion 1992). Burgess (1993) pointed out that religious education volunteers very often possess a great deal of mastery over the theory they employ and find themselves tasked with a great deal of responsibility. However, for the purposes of this study, they are understood to be unpaid collaborators, whose gifts of service allow catechetical leaders to accomplish the jobs they are paid to do.

Catechesis produces disciples. Kaster (2011) notes that church documents and research lack a clear and consistent definition of discipleship. Therefore, this study will operationally define a *disciple* as one who knows, believes, and lives out the *Good News of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the Church*. Discipleship is the result of evangelization and deepening of discipleship is the result of catechesis. Catechesis empowers disciples to evangelize in the greater world. Disciples, in turn, return to catechize their community.

How do catechetical leaders know they’re doing their jobs effectively? There are many ways to evaluate educational effectiveness. Although this will be discussed in greater detail within the literature review, it is important to point out that we are discussing *evaluation* over *assessment*, and that these are different concepts. *Assessment* lacks a judging quality and carries an empirical connotation, (Jurkowitz, 2003). *Evaluation*, on the other hand, uses assessment to judge the value of an overall
program or effort (Severe, 2010). Assessment asks, what does the student know? Evaluation asks, does the assessment provide evidence that goals were met at specified predetermined levels? Assessment provides the data necessary for evaluation: “evaluation is a systematic undertaking of applying judgment to data gathered through assessment according to certain guiding principles and using carefully defined criteria” (Severe 2010, p. 6). This dissertation, then, focuses on catechetical leaders’ attitudes toward judging the status of the adult volunteers, often catechists, they work with, or evaluation, with the knowledge that any evaluation is based upon assessment of some kind.

In the realm of catechesis and Christian religious education, there is little research on evaluation and some evidence that formal assessment and evaluation are uncommon (Severe, 2010). The change in number of self-identified Catholics alone indicates that the practice of catechetical leadership in the US requires some investigation (Monglos-Weber & Smith, 2014). Contemporary research indicates that truly effective catechesis results in communities of engaged, faith-filled adults who can describe themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ and participate in the Sacraments of the Church (Regan, 2002; Weddell, 2012). However, when it comes to the everyday work of catechetical leadership, how do the practitioners know they’re successful and how do they determine the changes they need to make in response? That is the question at the heart of this study. It is important because it can shed light on some of the ways catechetical leaders improve their work and expose deficiencies in their programs. With such information, it may be possible to suggest best practices for the profession of catechetical leadership. Such course-correction is necessary for the
health of the Church in the US. The rest of this chapter will delve more deeply into the
problems faced by the Church in the US and argue for the necessity of evaluation in
catechesis. Finally, this chapter will propose a mixed methods study of the attitudes
and perceptions of lay catechetical leaders toward evaluation of catechetical work.

Catholicism in the US

Business-as-usual within Catholic religious education is not an option. Some
statistics make this clear. According to the Center for Applied Research in the
Apostolate (CARA, 2016), there were 62.4 million self-identified Catholics in the
United States in 1990. In 2016, there were 74.2 million. Over the same period, the
number of self-identified “former Catholics” increased from 10.3 million to 30.1
million. Further, the number of Catholics who say they regularly attend Mass
decreased from 39% to 22%. This paints a clear picture: although the overall number
of Catholics in the US has increased with the general Population, the rate of defection
has doubled, with numbers holding steady due primarily to immigration (McGill,
2015)

Weddell (2012) looked at some of the different religious groups former
Catholics go to and the reasons why they left their faith. Weddell found 10% of these
former Catholics joined a non-Christian religious community, another 45% considered
themselves unaffiliated, and a final 45% joined Protestant Christian churches, most of
them Evangelical or non-Denominational. The author further stated that the primary
reason former Catholics give for becoming Protestant (71% of them) is that their
“spiritual needs were not being met” (p. 27). For those who became religiously
unaffiliated, 71% “gradually drifted away” and 65% “stopped believing in the religion’s teachings” (respondents selected more than one answer) (p. 31).

Manglos-Weber and Smith (2014) looked at “emerging adults” (adults ages 23-28) as a way to project the future of the Church in the US. They found that, even at this early adult stage, the number of former Catholics in the whole population (11%) nearly equals the number of those who identify as Catholics (12%). In digging deeper into the group of former Catholics, they found patterns in reasoning that catechetical work seeks to address, especially adult/parental engagement in religious education and the fostering of a personal relationship with God. Many of the former Catholics in the survey did attend catechetical programs of some kind but did not leave with the tools to maintain religious faith in US society. By the same token, the great majority of catechetical resources are directed toward primary school-aged children, even though their parents, in many cases, are the ones who could use help strengthening their faith (Regan, 2005) to become intentional disciples within the structure of Catholic practice and belief.

The Necessity of Evaluation in Catechetical Leadership

The Congregation for the Clergy (1998) of the Vatican, the office responsible at the time for the norms and standards around catechesis for the entire Catholic Church, makes no mention of evaluation or assessment in any part of its General Directory for Catechesis. Although it treats both catechetical content and methodology broadly and suggests many particular methods for programs of catechesis, testing, assessing, reviewing, and evaluating of students and programs are not prescribed. The closest analogue to evaluating a program of catechesis comes through the statement,
“experience confirms the usefulness of such a program of action for catechesis” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998, para. 281). Instead, the bishops of the Congregation for the Clergy recommend that “it avails of the pedagogical sciences” to help determine methodology as long as they are not “contrary to the Gospel” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998, para. 148).

Severe (2013) refers to evaluation as being embedded into Christian Scripture and tradition itself. Noting that “judgement, discernment, and wisdom are major concerns of Scripture,” he highlights the less technical vocabulary of evaluation and assessment present in both the Old and New Testaments (Severe, 2013, p. 287). He cites Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians as a command to perform “evaluative judgment:” “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Cor. 13:5). There is, therefore, reason to believe that systematic evaluation, even if it not explicitly discussed by the leaders of the Church, is consistent with both Christian Scripture and Tradition and not “contrary to the Gospel” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998, para. 148).

If systematic evaluation on the part of educational leaders can be shown to provide a real benefit to success in achieving institutional goals, then there can be an argument for the potential of catechetical evaluation to further the mission of the Church to “make disciples of all nations” (Mat. 28:19). Eisner (2002) offers five functions of evaluation in education, all of which seem pertinent to the current issues faced in the Catholic Church. Those five functions are: (a) “to diagnose, (b) to revise curricula, (c) to compare, (d) to anticipate educational needs, and (e) to determine if objectives have been achieved” (p. 171). Diagnosis tries, “at its most general level,” to
determine whether students have learned that which the teacher intended (p. 172). This comes in many potential forms, both formal and informal: tests, verbal questions from teachers and students, observation, and many more. In the context of catechesis, the catechetical leader would somehow seek to discover whether and how well 2nd grade students, for example, can describe the Eucharist as the true presence of Christ or how an adult in a social justice study group feels about church teaching on abortion or the death penalty. Discovering these elements would allow for a leader to change course or move forward, depending on the data gathered from assessment. The other four functions of evaluation could be similarly applicable to catechesis.

**Lack of Catechetical Evaluation in the Literature**

There is evidence that formal evaluation is not common among catechetical leaders. In addition to the lack of any suggestion to perform evaluation from the Bishops noted above, there is little research on catechetical evaluation and assessment to inform common practice. In the index of a recent, widely circulated book by a top researcher and writer in the field of catechetics, there is mention of neither “evaluation” nor “assessment” (Groome, 2011). Although Groome (2011), in this book explains both rationale, theory, and methods for creating school and parish programs of catechesis, he offers no suggestions for assessing their results or evaluating their impact. Groome’s (2011) suggested program for catechetical sessions involves an introductory “act” followed by five “movements,” which he describes in detail and summarizes (p. 299). None of these movements suggest either time for reflection on the part of leaders or a request for feedback on the part of learners.
Kaster (2011) describes the lack of research on evaluation and assessment in catechesis, stating that, in an academic search for articles on adolescent catechesis, only six could be found. English (2002) states that evaluation, although “essential,” is “frequently neglected” for numerous reasons. She goes on to state that “the lack of attention to evaluation in Christian education has been noted by innumerable researchers” (p. 25). Severe (2010) found that youth ministers claimed to practice evaluation, but, upon further qualitative research, intentional and high-quality evaluation among Christian educators was very rare.

**Purpose of this Study**

This mixed methods study will explore Catechetical Leaders’ attitudes toward and practices of evaluation of discipleship status among adult volunteers. The aim of this project is to gain insights that could lead to suggestions of best practices for the profession of catechetical leadership.

**Research Questions**

I. What are the attitudes of catechetical leaders toward evaluation of adult volunteers’ discipleship status?

II. What methods, formal and informal, do catechetical leaders report to use in evaluating discipleship?

III. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward evaluation among catechetical leaders and their reported practice of evaluation for discipleship?
Significance

Severe (2013) engaged a similar main question, interviewing numerous youth ministers in Illinois. In his conclusions, he suggests that other researchers should learn more about evaluative practices among other subsets of religious educators. Severe found that the youth ministers he studied engaged in both helpful and unhelpful evaluation. Sometimes the evaluation helped them to change their thinking and improve their ministry. In other cases, assumptions were merely confirmed through simplistic and unintentional methods of evaluation. If improvement is desired among lay catechetical leaders, not just for personal professional practice but for the future of the Catholic Church, then high quality evaluation must be the norm (English, 2002).

A significant finding of Severe’s (2013) study was the relationship to theological and cultural norms surrounding hierarchy and the way this affected evaluative practices among youth ministers. As the literature review will show in more detail, the pastor/lay minister dynamic is one that is worth exploring in its relationship to practices of evaluation.

Discovering some of the attitudes and perceptions that catechetical leaders hold around evaluation could reveal insights for increasing and improving evaluative practices within the profession. It is difficult for any researcher to make well-founded recommendations for improving the effectiveness of evaluation in catechesis without knowing more of the day-to-day experiences and practices of catechetical leaders. Implications of the research could yield practical recommendations for improving the utilization and quality of catechetical evaluation.
Summary

This chapter has argued for the importance of better understanding evaluative practices among catechetical leaders. In order to stem the tide of Catholics falling away from their faith, leaders must know that what they are doing is having the desired effect. There is little research into evaluation in catechesis and religious education. Knowing more about catechetical leaders’ attitudes toward evaluation could provide insight into why they do or do not practice it, which, in turn, could suggest methods to strengthen and refine their methods of evaluation.

Chapter two will look closely at relevant research concerning catechesis, evaluation, catechetical leadership, and their places of intersection. Chapter three will propose and describe a mixed methods study utilizing survey research and focus groups for the purpose of exploring catechetical leaders’ approaches to evaluation. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings, propose implications of the results, and offer suggestions for further research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

A review of the literature reveals a relatively small amount of empirical studies related to catechetical work, especially when coupled with the phrases evaluation or assessment. In addition to reviewing the most pertinent studies and articles related to catechetical evaluation and assessment, this literature review will present an overview of the nature and goals of catechesis in the modern world as proposed by the Vatican (Congregation for Clergy, 1997). This is followed by a conceptual framework for the proposed study. Relying upon Regan (2002) and Weddell (2012), it will demonstrate the need for catechetical leaders to focus upon adult discipleship as a means to improve parish-wide catechetical outcomes. The literature review also explores the demographics and job responsibilities of catechetical leaders. Next, the merits of educational assessment and evaluation are considered. Finally, the chapter presents relevant studies and articles concerning evaluation and assessment of catechesis.

Restatement of the Problem

The Catholic Church in the US is losing members at an alarming rate. Catholic adults must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to
maintain their faith. These qualities stem from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the context of the community of faith. Parishes across the country devote resources to the effort of religious education, or catechesis, both for children and adults as a way to bring men and women into closer communion with God and the local community. Lay Catechetical Leaders, who are trained professionals, have responsibility to provide effective catechesis within their congregations. However, there is little research into the practices of assessment and evaluation among catechetical leaders. In order to promote best practices among this relatively new (within the scope of Church history) profession, it is important to know what is working and what is not within catechetical leadership. In order to begin to establish good evaluative practices in the profession, this study seeks to reveal the attitudes toward and practices of evaluation among catechetical leaders within two dioceses in the Pacific Northwest of the United States.

The following literature review offers an overview of topics related to catechesis, catechetical leadership, educational evaluation, and evaluation within the field of catechesis. It begins with some background on the nature and goals of catechesis as an educational endeavor, and, in particular, what qualities and skills a catechetical leader might assess in order to evaluate catechetical effectiveness. As a conceptual framework for the study, the literature review will highlight the necessity of adult catechesis as posed by Regan (2002) in conjunction with Weddell’s (2012) emphasis on discipleship in the 21st Century Church. The review then looks at the value of evaluation and assessment within mainstream education. Finally, the review
addresses research on evaluation within catechesis and non-Catholic Christian religious education.

**The Nature and Tasks of Catechesis**

Central to the topic of this paper is the nature and goals of catechesis. However, catechesis in 21st century America must be understood alongside *evangelization* and *discipleship* (Hofinger, 1976; Weddell 2012). The Bishops tell us that catechesis is a moment within the larger process of evangelization, serving the mission of the church to proclaim the Good News to all people (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). Catechetical theorists and practitioners have increasingly focused on discipleship as the method and results of effective catechesis (Groome, 2011; Weddell, 2012). This section of the literature review seeks to articulate the purpose and goals of catechesis through the lens of these two additional concepts.

There is no single, clear definition of *catechesis* in the literature (Kaster, 2011). It has been defined by John Paul II (1979) as any “efforts within the Church to make disciples [of Jesus Christ], to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God… and to educate and instruct them in his life and thus build up the Body of Christ” (para. 1). Miller (1980) defined Christian “religious education” similarly, as the process of bringing “the individual into the right *relationship* with God and one’s fellows within the perspective of the fundamental truths about all of life” (p. 156).

Groome (1980) provides a brief history of the use of the word “catechesis” in the Church. This term, he argues, properly refers to the passing on of the Good News of Christ in verbal form. Indeed, in its original Greek, catechesis (*katachein*) is directly related to the word “echo,” (*kata-echo*) and could translate more literally as
“to resound against” or to “ring out” (Groome, 1980, pp. 26-28). *Catechesis* referred to a specific type of religious education within the life of the Christian: verbal instruction. Consequently the term *catechesis* is not the most appropriate way to describe the practice of helping others to form a “relationship with the transcendent ground of being” and instruct them in the particular symbols and practices necessary for that relationship (Groome, 1980, p. 26). Groome stated a preference for the term *Christian religious education* in place of the word *catechesis*. This term, he argued, conveys the methods and nature it has in common with other efforts to transform lives, which is, to him, the aim of all types of education, Christian and non-religious alike (Groom, 1980). He was responding to what he considered to be an over-broadening of the term after the Second Vatican Council, for *catechesis* received renewed attention by the popes who came after that Council (John Paul II, 1979).

Just a year prior, Pope John Paul II (1979) described *catechesis* as any and all efforts at bringing Christians into closer relationship with Jesus Christ. For him, *catechesis* is the necessary term because it involves the fostering of a relationship with a real person: God in Jesus Christ (para. 5-8). John Paul II was concerned with the uniqueness of this effort to impart and nourish the faith of Christians and emphasizes strongly that learning formulas, morals, rituals, and doctrine must all be at the service of this relationship. For John Paul II, there is no act in the world quite like the Christian handing-down of faith, for in true transmission of Christian faith, the one handing it down is resounding in his or her very person with the life of Christ. In order, then, to emphasize this distinctiveness, *catechesis* has become the preferred term within the Catholic Church. Searching for the term in the ATLA Catholic
Periodical and Literature Index returns 938 results from 1960-2016. Of those, 36 were published prior to 1980, the remaining 902 came after John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation. Just as Groome (1980) does not truly wish to be the final word on what the most appropriate term for passing on the faith might be, this study does not seek to establish a single term for such a complex topic. However, it is clear, even from Groome’s (2011) later work, that catechesis has become the dominant term to refer to all efforts at Catholic Christian education.

Catechesis is not a commonly understood term and could be considered a technical term within the world of Catholic religious education. Therefore, it is important to describe the well-used standards for catechesis within the Catholic tradition. Although dominant catechetical assessments focus on correct identification of doctrinal formulations (Convey, 2010), knowledge of religious doctrine is just one goal of catechesis as articulated by the Vatican (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). The Vatican office tasked with directing catechesis for the whole Catholic Church lists “knowledge of the faith” as just one task of six (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, p. 71). Groome (2011) distinguishes between helping people to learn about religion, to learn from it, and to “become” it, to “form their identity in a particular tradition” (p. 91). It is one thing to test someone’s knowledge of a certain set of facts or teachings. It is another thing to ask whether they believe those things. It is a third altogether different thing to evaluate whether a particular program has successfully changed their essential worldview and behavior, even on an unconscious level.

In their General Directory for Catechesis, the members of the Congregation for the Clergy propose a simple theory for the Object of Catechesis: “to put people not
only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (1997, p. 71). Here the bishops specify a relationship with God in Jesus, discipleship, as the goal of religious education. For them, this is achieved through a combination of six observable “tasks of catechesis,” which are based on the Jesus’ own methods of relating to and training his disciples (p. 73). These tasks are:

- “Promoting knowledge of the faith,” or knowing concrete articles of “Tradition and Scripture;”
- “Liturgical education,” or understanding the practice and meaning of communal celebrations of worship and sacraments;
- “Moral formation,” or “interior transformation” that enables the Christian to live in conformity to Christ’s example and commands;
- “Teaching to pray,” or the cultivation of intentional sentiments directed toward God, such as praise, thanksgiving, and supplication, in addition to an ability to enter silent contemplation;
- “Education for community life,” or inculcation of a specific set of positive and helpful attitudes toward other Christians; and
- “Missionary initiation,” or adopting an ethos of reaching out to all members of the human community to build them up and help them to know God (1997, pp. 75-79).

These six tasks guide the curricula and objectives of individual catechists and directors of catechetical programs. They also indicate the outcomes sought for all
efforts at catechesis. Catechesis is the method by which the church develops believers into transformed and world-transforming followers of Jesus.

**Catechesis and evangelization.** Catechesis and its constituent tasks are the means by which disciples are prepared and empowered to bring Good News to the world, a process known as *evangelization*, which is itself the mission of the Church (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005b). However, Church documents and many theologians, going as far back as the early 20th century, have expressed an increasing need for Catholics themselves to hear, understand, and identify with the Good News (Hofinger, 1976; Paul VI, 1975). Jungmann (1962) identified the fact that many Catholics did not have an understanding of the essential proclamation of faith, also known as the *Kerygma*. This proclamation is, in essence, the central belief of Christianity that may be considered *Good News* by its adherents: that God became human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; that he taught, died, and rose from the dead as means to offer divine salvation to humanity; and that he empowered his chosen disciples to continue to proclaim his message (Hofinger, 1976). Hofinger (1976), citing scripture and numerous Church documents, insists upon a relational core of the Good News: that God has reached out to humanity as a group and as individuals, has extended an offer of eternal and complete love through Jesus Christ. Evangelization is the process of bringing an individual to believe this Good News and to *relate* to God as loving Creator and Savior in Jesus Christ (Hofinger, 1976). This belief coupled with the relational quality of faith “brings into being the first adherence to the Gospel of Christ on the part of the person to be catechized” (Hofinger, 1976, p. 8).
Evangelization does not stop when catechesis begins, though. Catechesis itself
serves evangelization, as the catechized will appropriately become an evangelizer, an
individual committed to participating in the mission of the Church (Francis, 2013;
Groome, 2011; Hofinger, 1976; Weddell 2012). Those who catechize are also
evangelizing via missionary transformation cultivated in the catechized (Hofinger,
1976). Regan (2002) noted that the community of the individual disciples is greater
than the sum of its parts, becoming an “evangelizing community: a people who have
their focus living and proclaiming the Good News of the reign of God in order that it
penetrate all the various layers of the human family” (p. 25). The Catechetical Leader
then, must see herself as an agent of evangelization in the contemporary world (United
States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005a). When she instructs and forms other
adults, be they volunteers like catechists in Sunday School or participants in a
sacramental preparation program, she deepens their understanding and commitment to
the Good News and makes them more effective agents of relating that Good News to
the rest of the world (Hofinger, 1976). Given that faith in the Good News itself is
essentially about a relationship, it follows that the necessary instrument of
evangelization and catechesis is the one who can relate to others in the first place, the
transformed human follower of Jesus: the disciple.

This, then, leads to the conceptual framework of this study: adult discipleship
as the focus and goal of catechetical work. This section has offered a look into the
current understanding in the Church and in the literature of catechesis and its emphasis
on evangelization via discipleship. The following section will place such discipleship
at the center of this study and the information to be gathered from participants.
Conceptual Framework

The central question of this study is whether catechetical leaders engage in evaluation of discipleship among adult learners, which would include, adult volunteers. This question is formulated with two concepts of religious education in mind. First, that adults ought to be the primary recipients of parish catechetical efforts (Regan, 2002), and second, that intentional discipleship should be the focus of catechetical programs in the Church’s present situation (Weddell, 2012). Taken as a single framework, these concepts become a powerful vision for the mission and orientation of catechesis in the United States of American. This is the framework that directs the subjects and variables of the proposed study.

Adults, community, and discipleship. Catholic bishops and scholars of religious education have increasingly promoted discipleship as the goal of catechesis. Groome (2011) describes discipleship as the end and means of catechetical work. Following the lead of the Vatican (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997), influential catechetical authors like Regan (2002), Groome (2011), and Weddell (2012) refer to the local Christian Community as the agent for catechesis. An entire culture of “missionary discipleship” must be in place in a given church community in order to effectively form all members.

Regan (2002) argued for an emphasis on adult catechesis as the starting point for bringing a community of disciples into fruition. Citing the bishops and contemporary adult educational theory, she called for a radical shift in the way churches design catechetical programs. Adults are the only members of the
community who are capable of a “fully responsible” faith life and, as such, effective catechesis for children and adolescents depends upon well-catechized adults (Regan 2002, p. 19). She envisioned an American Catholic Church in which each parish places adult discipleship and adult ways of learning at the center of their catechetical initiatives and programs (Regan, 2002). This is dependent upon the ethos of a community, one in which adult catechesis is expected and valued at least as much as children’s, and the use of effective adult education strategies (Regan 2002).

Regan (2002) also drew upon established organizational systems theory to describe how a parish could grow as a community of disciples. Senge’s concept of the “learning organization” becomes one means of breaking down a community in which effective adult catechesis is taking place (Regan, 2002, p. 116). One empirical study by Fleischer (2006) took a close look at a highly effective parish in New Orleans and compared it to Senge’s “five disciplines” of a learning organization: personal mastery, shared vision, unearthing mental models, team learning, and systems thinking. This parish was known throughout the region as a community committed to social justice and transforming the world through its members (Fleischer, 2006). Through surveys and interviews with highly involved professional and volunteer leaders in the parish, the data yielded evidence of the presence of all five disciplines of the learning organization. Ministry leaders were engaged in practices that led to personal goal-setting and skill improvement (personal mastery), common articulation of goals for the community (shared vision), team learning through common dialogue (team learning), revelation and questioning of individually-held assumptions (unearthing mental models), and references to the way the paid leadership kept all ministries together as a
parish (systems thinking). This catechetically effective and missional parish had structures in place to make strong interpersonal relationships and evaluate programs at every step. One significant result of this study was that it validated Regan’s (2002) application of Senge’s organizational theory to parish life, strengthening her and the bishops’ claim that a community of intentional adult disciples is what can achieve the mission of the Church.

Groome (2011) outlined the qualities required for a community to be one that nurtures discipleship: (a) “Welcome” or cohesiveness as an “assembly of disciples bonded in faith,” (b) “Witness” or a willingness among members to profess their faith through word and deed, (c) “Worship” or strong habits of communal ritual prayer, especially in the sacraments, (d) “Well-being” or service to one another and especially to the most vulnerable members of the larger community, (e) “Word/Preaching” or consistently returning to the basic proclamation of the Gospel in Scripture and Tradition, and (f) “Word/Teaching” or “informing, forming, and transforming” members to become disciples (Groome, 2011, pp. 165-166). Groome’s (2011) “sixfold schema” (p. 165) of the Christian community that promotes discipleship parallels the Bishops’ (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005b) six tasks of catechesis, noted above, closely. This reinforces Regan’s (2002) notion that a focus on adults within the parish will create a whole community of missionary catechesis, allowing the local church to accomplish its mission of proclaiming the reign of God in the world.

**Intentional Discipleship.** Weddell (2012) proposed that parish communities double down on their commitment to “forming intentional disciples” as a way to
promote the kind of dynamic, evangelizing communities that the Church wishes to see and that Catholics want to be part of (p. 61). A major stumbling block in this process, however, was that most parishes catechize their members before they even know whether they have been evangelized and become at least beginning disciples of Jesus (Weddell, 2012). In numerous non-scientific surveys, Weddell (2012) found that pastors of Catholic parishes tend to estimate that 5% of their parishioners are actually disciples, that is, believers who would confess to having a personal relationship with Jesus as followers. Weddell (2012) emphasizes the intentionality of discipleship throughout her book, recognizing that all people have the freedom to choose whether to follow Jesus and must continually make such a choice to remain disciples. If catechesis comes after evangelization to strengthen discipleship, it is essential to discover whether the Catholics in church even have a sense of themselves as committed followers of Jesus. Weddell (2012) found that fewer than half of all self-identified Catholic adults felt certain that a personal God existed. If a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for intentional discipleship, then it is not hard to see how so few Catholics might consider themselves to be disciples. Knowing whether your learners are disciples is essential to appropriately helping them grow in their faith (Weddell, 2012). However, it is also necessary for catechetical leaders to know what discipleship looks like in order to discern or assess whether their students are disciples and to evaluate whether their learners have deepened their discipleship in the end (Weddell, 2012). Figure 1, below, displays a visual representation of the relationships between discipleship, catechesis, and evangelization.
Discipleship as a concept is found throughout literature related to Christian religious education, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. Weddell (2012) advises pastors and catechetical leaders to spend time discerning where an individual to be catechized
might be according to the *Thresholds of Conversion* posed by Everts and Schaupp (2008), a pair of Evangelical-affiliated college campus ministers. Everts and Schaupp (2008) interviewed thousands of recent converts to Christianity over the course of five years and, through qualitative analysis, identified “five thresholds” that each one passed through at least once on the way to claiming discipleship (p. 15). These five thresholds were:

1. “Trust,” or an initial feeling of trust in individual Christians and/or institutions,
2. “Curiosity,” or a casual desire to learn more about things related to Jesus and the Christian tradition,
3. “Openness,” or a basic willingness to change behaviors based on what one is learning about Jesus and Christianity,
4. “Seeking,” or an intentional search for answers to questions about God, Jesus, and the role of faith in one’s life, and
5. “Discipleship,” or the intentional and professed state of being a follower of Jesus and believing in Christ as savior (pp. 16-17).

Discipleship, however, is merely a beginning, never the end of Christian formation. There is always further integration into the Christian community, new struggles in faith and in society, different life situations that require spiritual wisdom and deepening of faith in Christ.

Weddell (2012) adapted this *thresholds* framework into a Catholic context. Each catechetical leader must be aware of the various stages of conversion that exist among a given group of Catholics. Pope Francis (2013) acknowledges the reality of
baptized Catholics who may have very different needs when it comes to experiencing the joy that comes from a relationship with Christ, noting that some “preserve a deep and sincere faith, expressing it in different ways, but seldom taking part in worship.” At the same time, many others “no longer experience the consolation borne of faith” and others remain hostile to the message of Christianity (para. 15). This great spiritual diversity within the Church requires educational practices that are adapted to meet the needs of many. Weddell (2012) suggests that knowing the status of our adult learners is a first step in improving the outcomes of the Church’s efforts at catechesis.

Catechetical leaders find themselves responsible not only for traditional catechesis, or the deepening of a faith already present, but of meeting all members of the community where they are, whatever their discipleship status. This study seeks to gain insight into the attitudes of catechetical leaders toward the idea of evaluation. It focuses on the evaluation of adults and their discipleship as a starting point, given that the literature points to adult discipleship as the proper focus of catechetical work for today. It is important to understand who these catechetical leaders are and what challenges they may face in their work when it comes to decisions of evaluation. The following section looks more closely at the history of lay catechetical leaders in the US and presents some data that will clarify who they are as subjects of this study.

**Catechetical Leaders**

In 1965 there were 58,632 Catholic Priests in the United States, 94% of whom were not retired and remained engaged in “active” ministry. These priests served the 48.5 million Catholics living here through the 17,637 parishes around the nation. Today there are 74.2 million self-identified Catholics in the US served by 37,192
priests (63% in active ministry) through 17,233 parishes (CARA, 2016). Put in clearer terms, there are now 42% of the Catholic priests serving about 135% of the number of Catholics. Despite this dramatic change in the composition of Catholic leadership, Catholics still retain needs for spiritual support, for theological guidance, for community formation, and for religious education (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005a). It is lay women and men who have responded to this need. These lay catechetical leaders are the subject of this study.

The decline in number of priests led to what some researchers have called a “virtual revolution in parish ministry” (Murnion, 1992, p. 9). These needs have been addressed by the organic development of “lay ecclesial ministers” and a subsequent increase in their presence over the last 40 years (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005a, p. 11). As late as the 1960s, the only professional ministers in a Catholic context were priests, with religious sisters normally running the parish schools1 (Murnion, 1992). In the early 1990s, over half of parishes were employing full- or part-time lay people to do the work that had been reserved exclusively to priests previously. In 2005, that number was closer to 66% of parishes, with greater numbers of lay faithful in ministry-training programs than ever before (United Stations Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005a).

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1 It seems important to note that, technically, religious sisters and brothers are lay people, but, by virtue of their vows and participation in their religious communities, they have a special institutional status that leaves them outside the commonly understood definition of “lay.” Murnion recognizes this tension and differentiates between “religious lay” and “true” lay, referring to the latter by an unmodified “lay” throughout his study (1992, p.10-11).
Not all lay ecclesial ministers engage in catechesis. However, the largest group, over 40%, do this full time, with most others having responsibility for religious education some of the time (DeLambo, 2010). Other responsibilities include liturgical planning and coordination, music ministry, spiritual counselling, business administration, medical care, and many, many more. Murnion (1992) also makes it very clear, after having collected and analyzed a large national sample of job descriptions and lists of responsibilities, that each paid employee’s position is unique and determined based on a combination of the parish’s needs, the priest-pastor’s priorities, and the abilities of the individual lay minister. Further, the Vatican’s Congregation for Clergy (1997) described catechetical ministry as necessarily including some things that might not be considered educational endeavors in other places; namely, community-building, participation in liturgical ministry, and outreach to family and friends outside the church. All this makes extant research on lay ecclesial ministers as a group, limited though it is, very relevant to the topic of assessment in Catechesis.

In the earliest national study of lay parish ministry, Murnion (1992) found that this group could be characterized as mostly women, locally recruited, predominantly white, and, while well-educated, non-professional. In subsequent follow-up studies, DeLambo (2005, 2010) confirmed that white women still dominated the group’s composition, but that the trend toward professionalism had moved forward steadily, with many more having received professional training in theology or ministry. Examples of this kind of training include undergraduate and graduate programs in theology or pastoral ministry, diocese-sponsored certificates, and online classes
(DeLambo, 2005). Murnion (1992) recognized that the change from an all-male, clerical population of catechetical leaders to a majority women, lay population was a major change for Catholics. This change has accompanied the profound changes in church membership and practice mentioned in chapter 1: namely that the number of former Catholics has skyrocketed. Whether or how they are related is not clear; however, it is important to note that such change within the scope of a generation could have an effect on the way lay ministers are treated by their learners and collaborators (Murnion, 1992).

**Hierarchy and the catechetical leader.** Severe (2013) found that attitudes toward evaluation among youth ministers in Illinois were affected by the relationship between the youth minister and the pastor or church council. Some youth ministers in this study described pressure from pastors to have high participation numbers, without regard to the quality of programming (Severe, 2013). This study was conducted among Protestants, who have a decreased role for church hierarchy and authority compared to Catholics. If non-Catholic Youth Ministers were affected by this kind of power/status dynamic, it seems important to examine the potential dynamic between lay professionals and their ordained priest employers.

Indeed, even today, many Catholics have lived through the shift from exclusively clerical leadership (pre-Vatican II) to a leadership inclusive of professional lay women and men. Murnion describes the previous qualification for ministry as having been predicated upon *status* (whether ordained or avowed as sister or brother). Lay ministry’s authority to Catholic parishioners, on the other hand, is based in “general relational attributes” and education or training (1992, p. 15). The
U.S. Bishops spend much of their 2005 “resource for guiding the development of lay ecclesial ministry” defining lay ecclesial ministers in relation to ordained men (p. 20-25). In fact, the US Bishops’ direct all instructions for formation of lay ministers to the ordained, who are the only ones who may authorize a lay person to “serve publicly in the church” (p. 5).

Theologically, the hierarchy hold a unique status in the eyes of the faithful; they are, it is believed, fundamentally changed men. The Sacrament confers upon them a new ability to receive divine favor and a mission to share that favor with the lay faithful (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005a). It is hard to underestimate the degree to which the perceived difference between clergy and laity influences structures and behaviors among Catholics. O’Meara (2005), a theologian, describes the functional subtext of the un-nuanced form of this theological supposition: the hierarchy is a sacred “pyramid, with those below subject to those above…those above them are brighter, more gifted, and better educated. There is no illumination upward; no one on the ladder can or will learn from those below them” (2005, p. 73). Indeed, in discussing the working conditions experienced by lay ecclesial ministers, Murnion notes that “each pastor has enormous freedom regarding the ministries and structures of the parish,” going on to describe the near-total control they generally have in designing positions, hiring, running meetings, and any other aspect of work life in the parish ministry setting (1992, p. 55). Murnion (1992) notes with surprise, that, despite this reality, lay ministers more often than not report positive relationships with their pastors and have high levels of job satisfaction.
The near-total autonomy experienced by the priest-pastor has a direct impact on the evaluative practice of ministry. Research from across the field of Human Resource Management indicates that performance evaluations are directly related to staff improvement and productivity (Koys, 2010). DeLambo (2010) reported that 44% of all ministers received any kind of performance evaluation or programmatic appraisal. Evaluations help staff to set and achieve goals and develop skills and strengths necessary for continuous growth. The lack of evaluations from priest to lay minister is thought to be related to the same lack of evaluation extended from bishop to priest (DeLambo, 2010). From a structural standpoint, evaluation is simply not part of the dominant culture of parish ministry, and, where religious education happens in the parish, it is not being evaluated either (DeLambo, 2010).

The theological status of ordained ministers compared to lay ministers could also have a great effect on the people they work with and for. Murnion (1992) relates the common phenomenon of parish administrative assistants preferring to serve the pastor over the lay ministers, even when their job descriptions include clerical support for lay employees. Expectation-states theory informs this kind of phenomena. One type of status, especially one as important as ordination, will have a direct effect on the authority accorded them by other members (Forsyth, 2014). Hierarchy can have positive effects, including increasing stability, imitating positive behaviors, and empowering the one with higher status to fully express his talents and skills. It is entirely possible that a generous, motivating, supportive pastor would increase the performance of his team, possibly even more than a manager lacking ordained status.
On the other hand, those directly responsible for religious education, the lay ministers, would also be likely to experience negative consequences of status and hierarchy. Whether conscious or unconscious of their expectations, parishioners would be apt to assume that lay ministers have less knowledge, experience, and wisdom than priests. Lower status sometimes undercuts confidence and cognitive functioning. Consequently, individuals who are accorded low status can fail to perform to their true capabilities (Forsyth, 2014, p. 265). Meanwhile, high status can make a supervisor, like a priest-pastor, less empathetic and more likely to come down hard on an employee if she is not performing to his expectation (Forsyth, 2014). All of this could bolster a hesitancy to do something as difficult as evaluating the success of a catechetical program.

**Volunteers and catechetical leaders.** Catechetical leaders rely upon volunteers to carry out their responsibilities (Burgess, 1993). Not only is this necessary given the limited resources churches have to spend on labor, but working with people who willing to participate in the mission of the Church without being paid, is a distinct privilege (Burgess, 1993; Lee, 1993). Volunteers perform a majority of the work at many churches (Neff & Ratcliff, 1993). Church volunteers include choir members, readers at Mass, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (often known as Eucharistic ministers), ushers, collection-counters, pastoral council members, and, of course, teachers within parish programs of religious education. Catechetical leaders recruit, train, support, and form volunteers to teach Sunday school classes, facilitate small, faith-sharing groups, lead Bible Studies, and much more.
Given this reliance on volunteers to accomplish much of what they do, religious education professionals, including catechetical leaders, spend a great deal of time working with volunteers (Lee, 1993). Under a catechetical framework that focuses on adult discipleship, a catechetical leader, even one with responsibility for children’s catechesis, would emphasize the formation of her volunteers (Regan, 2002). A well-formed volunteer catechist, one who considers himself a disciple and actively follows Christ, will have, in addition to knowledge of religious doctrine, experience with prayer, authentic commitment to the community, and an example of moral living to convey to his students (Weddell, 2012). Catechetical leaders, then, have responsibility to ensure that their volunteers are well-trained as teachers of religious education (Neff & Ratcliff, 1993). Neff and Ratcliff (1993) stressed the importance of a clear process for assessment and evaluation of volunteers within a religious education program. Evaluation for effective teaching is important, but, to ensure effective *catechesis*, which must include the formation of the whole person, the professional should prioritize the discipleship of her volunteers as a program goal. Thus, even catechetical leaders with primary or exclusive responsibility for children’s catechesis, would prioritize catechesis of their adult volunteers (Regan, 2002).

**Evaluation and Assessment**

The goals of catechesis are broad and deep changes to an individual’s beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors. For this reason, among others, evaluation is not easy. Perhaps, even, the personal and relational quality of catechesis can explain the lack of research on systematic evaluation in the professional field. Evaluating a learner’s progress in the spiritual life or lack thereof, is, quite simply, difficult. Markuly (2002)
reports anecdotally that many professionals are hesitant toward or downright offended by the idea of evaluating the spiritual progress of their learners. As professionals, however, this difficulty does not negate the necessity of high quality evaluation.

Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1993) assert that evaluation is a natural part of life, even if evaluations are based upon “ill-formed and ad-hoc” criteria (p. 4). Although there is little research concerning evaluation within catechesis, it is highly likely that catechetical leaders are performing evaluation of one kind or another. Without a solid understanding of their goals and objectives coupled with a principled process, evaluation can be “unreliable, unfair, and uninformative” (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1993, p. 4). Given the far-reaching goals of catechesis for each individual and for the Church as a whole, assessment and evaluation of catechetical efforts are complex. Kurian and Lamport (2015) describe educational evaluation and assessment together as “learning, informing, and reforming activities, the goal of which is to improve the quality and accomplishment of specific student learning goals” (p. 85). While these authors use this definition in their Encyclopedia of Christian Education, it is a definition that agrees with broader educational definitions of assessment and evaluation (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1993).

Although the terms assessment and evaluation are often used synonymously, it is helpful to differentiate between the two (Jukowitz 2003). Kallelmeyn (2009) does not separate the terms, speaking always of assessment and evaluation, for her entire article on the demands of assessment and evaluation placed upon Catholic schools. Convey (2010) uses assessment to refer to a particular instrument for measuring student learning and to the general practice of measuring student learning within a
program. He uses the term *evaluation* to describe the act of looking at the outcomes of programs or institutional efforts at education. Jurkowitz (2003) finds that evaluation was the more common term 30 years ago, but that assessment has taken its place alongside the accountability movement in education. Despite this shift, “the literature provides little evidence to support widespread intentionality around this substitution” (Jurkowitz 2003, p. 54). Jurkowitz (2003) settled upon a definition of assessment that is “wider” and more applicable to the institution rather than the student (p. 55). Additionally, *assessment* lacks a judging quality and carries an empirical connotation, which is perhaps why it has replaced *evaluation* (Jurkowitz, 2003). Severe (2010) builds upon this distinction and focuses on the judgment of value (or lack thereof) implied in the word itself, allowing assessment to provide the data necessary for evaluation: “evaluation is a systematic undertaking of applying judgment to data gathered through assessment according to certain guiding principles and using carefully defined criteria” (p. 6). The proposed study will seek to learn about the judgments catechetical leaders make about the discipleship of the adult learners in their care, what assessments (if any) they base this evaluation upon and what attitudes influences their practice of evaluation.

Marzano and Heflebower (2012) cited multiple studies that found that assessment and evaluation can improve an educational program dramatically, even when applied to complex and difficult-to-measure variables, like critical thinking and relationship-building. Marzano and Heflebower focused on conative skills as a distinctly “21st century” necessity. Conative skills represent those things that allow people to integrate knowing and feeling and act appropriately in response (Marzano &
These skills include self-control and positive interpersonal interaction. Twenty years earlier, Groome (1991) introduced the concept of conative formation into catechetical scholarship. Referring back to the ancient etymological roots of this rarely-used term, Groome (1991) defined conation as “when the whole person is actively engaged to consciously know, desire, and do what is most humanizing and life-giving” (p. 9). It is essentially the ability a Christian possesses to be integrated in knowledge, emotional desire, and ability to act. Conation is the ultimate learning outcome for all Christian religious education for Groome (1991).

Even though Groome did not include assessment or evaluation in the method for catechesis he developed, Marzano and Heflebower (2012) may add to the conversation with their proposals for assessing conative skills.

In fact, according to one meta-analysis of studies on assessment of conative skills, programs that conducted formative assessment throughout the instructional process see better outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Essential to the acquisition of these “21st century skills” is feedback. Continual feedback allows students to know whether their practice of complex interpersonal skills (e.g. active listening, perspective-taking) is improving and to refine their practice accordingly. “Without assessments to accompany instruction, students receive little if any concrete feedback regarding their progress,” which is a “severe impediment” to learning the desired skills (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012, p. 34). Appropriate and effective formative assessments for conative skills included regular self-scoring of actions according to clearly-stated criteria and tracking these scores over time (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). Such progress-recording “was associated with a 31 percentile point gain in
achievement” in studies conducted by the authors (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012, pp. 34-35).

Assessment and evaluation of complex skills is not only possible but helpful in improving educational outcomes, even of the types possibly applicable to catechesis. Because assessment and evaluation are not common practices studied or recommended in catechetical literature, it is necessary to look at any related attitudes and practices, however they appear. The following section looks at the efforts to assess and quantify catechetical outcomes found for this proposal.

**Current Assessment in Catechesis and Christian Education**

There is little research directly referring to catechetical assessment. A recently published Encyclopedia of Christian Education contains a brief entry on assessment/evaluation, however, it focuses on traditional and broad definitions of educational assessment and makes no reference to specifically Christian sources for assessment (Kurian & Lamport, 2015). Indeed, many articles discussing evaluation in catechesis or religious education mention the lack of research and resources in this area (English, 2002; Kaster, 2008; Markuly, 2002; Severe, 2013). Many authors note that faith is so deeply personal that it might not be measured by external assessments and tests (Kaster, 2008; Markuly, 2002; Severe, 2013). Brancatelli (2003) noted that discipleship inherently resists empirical verification due to the very “paradoxical logic” central to following Christ and finding transformation in the Cross (p. 230).

This approach to assessment and evaluation, that it is difficult or impossible in catechesis, within the literature is common enough to be taken seriously, at least as a factor influencing attitudes within catechetical leadership. Markuly (2002) found that,
rather than rejecting evaluation and assessment, catechetical leaders should embrace the tension between the mysterious nature of faith and the need for evidence of effectiveness. Many catechetical leaders focus on the effort they put into catechizing, rather than think about their success or lack thereof (Markuly, 2002). Markuly (2002) cites the ubiquity of a quote from Mother Theresa among catechetical leaders: “We’re called to be faithful, not successful” (p. 61). He reports that this attitude is rooted in a conviction that, ultimately, it is God, not human intervention, who calls disciples into the world. Indeed, this attitude is consistent with catechetical theology going back to Jesus himself: “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send our workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:38). Hofinger (1976) cites multiple historical and theological sources emphasizing that, ultimately, successful evangelization is due to God’s initiative and the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the disciple.

Nonetheless, the Bishops call for use of modern and proven educational methods as part of being faithful to the call to evangelize and catechize (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005b). While ultimately God is in control of all things, catechetical leaders must “pursue success” as far as they can (Markuly, 2002, p. 61). Markuly (2002) cited educational research, claiming that, despite the awareness of God’s ultimate part in the process of catechesis, “gathering empirical evidence through testing instruments and other evaluation tools gives the researchers the ability to separate fact from opinion and therefore to eliminate generalizations, biases, misplaced assumptions, and faulty perceptions or logic” (p. 62). Markuly (2002) suggests that at the core of the hesitancy to evaluate among catechetical leaders is a “teacher-action focus” as opposed to a “student-
learning focus” (p. 63). The whole catechetical process should be focused upon what the student is or is not learning/becoming rather than what the educator is doing or trying to do (Markuly 2002). Using survey data from religious education programs, Markuly (2002) led conversations about who was in the programs and what they knew and did not know, or felt and did not feel. This research sought to embrace all kinds of empirical assessment but to do so with an appropriate subject, not as a way to check performance outcomes or as a reflection of a catechetical leader’s aptitude or character, but as way of changing the conversation about who was in the programs and what they needed before, during, and after (Markuly 2002). All that said, even if there was a reliable way to overcome theological and psychological resistance to formal assessment and evaluation among catechetical leaders, there would need to be useful tools for them to use.

The 1980s saw some development of some assessment tools, like the Catholic Faith Index (Boyack, Duggan, & Huesing, 1986) and the National Catholic Education Association’s (NCEA) Assessment of Children’s Religious Education (ACRE). Although the Catholic Faith Index was not referred to outside the original researchers’ writing, the NCEA ACRE is used in some places throughout the United States (Convey, 2010). ACRE is used with children throughout the country, but focuses mainly on knowledge of doctrine and Christian history, with a secondary focus on attitudes and behaviors (Glasnapp & Pedulla, 2001). The Interpretation Manual (2013) for the most recent edition (known today as Information for Growth: ACRE or IFG: ACRE) states that the questions are “based on the Catholic Church’s expectations for an organic, systematic, and comprehensive education in Christian
Discipleship” (p. 3). It is available in three distinct levels, suitable for different age groups (NCEA, 2013, p. 7). Level one is to be administered to elementary students, level two to middle school students, and level three to 11th or 12th graders. In all three levels, the structure is largely the same. The instrument is separated into two major parts, “Religious Knowledge” and “Personal Beliefs, Attitudes, Practices, and Perceptions” (NCEA, 2013, p. 7). The first part, Religious Knowledge, is made up of 50 to 67 questions, depending on the level. This part is divided into six Domains, which correspond to the Six Tasks of Catechesis found in the General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for Clergy, 1997): “Knowledge of the Faith, Liturgical Life, Moral Formation, Prayer, Communal Life, (and) Missionary Spirit” (NCEA, 2013, p. 8). The second part is shorter by about half in all three levels and is designed to tell the catechetical leader whether their programs are “actually reaching the heart and the hands, not just the head” (NCEA, 2013, p. 11). It asks for attitudes about God, opinions about realistic ethical dilemmas, and descriptions of behavior (e.g. whether they talk with their parents about religion or how often they attend Sunday Mass) (NCEA, 2013). The NCEA (2013) suggested that the ACRE assessment be used by parish and diocesan catechetical leaders to direct changes to teaching methods, curricula, program design, and resource allocation. The document emphasizes a few times that it should not be used to evaluate individuals’ spiritual progress, as “only God” can truly evaluate someone’s faith (p. 13). While this assessment is designed for children, there is version that has been adapted by the publisher for adults, known simply as Information for Growth (IFG) (NCEA 2013). There is much less material available on the IFG and there is no information and where it is used, unlike the
ACRE. It is, similarly to the ACRE, designed for assessing the knowledge of students in catechetical programs in order to influence program design and planning (NCEA, 2013). Although both assessments align themselves with the Vatican’s Six Tasks of Catechesis, they do so only under the category of religious knowledge. The NCEA document itself stresses that reports of religious knowledge cannot indicate the actual convictions of a student or whether he or she sincerely identifies as a disciple of Jesus. There was no research located on how these instruments were used and whether they promote more effective catechesis.

A 2002 article advocated for setting tasks for students to complete and assessing success according to whether they participated (Palladino & Schroeder, 2002). The article did not cite empirical research as to whether this type of assessment was valid or reliable.

A 2011 study sought to create a valid and reliable instrument for discipleship of adolescents (Kaster, 2011). The researcher interviewed 76 young adults aged 18-22 to learn about the habits, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that make up adolescent discipleship (Kaster, 2011). One major problem that led to the completion of the study was a “lack of definitional clarity in official Catholic Church documents about Christian discipleship” (Kaster, 2011, p. 65). Indeed, even throughout the current literature reviewed for this proposed study, this researcher has rarely found an operational definition for discipleship. Kaster (2011) also noted that, although the literature states that discipleship is the desired outcome of catechesis, “nowhere are explicit educational outcomes correlated with Christian discipleship” (p. 65). Although, the study focused on a definition for adolescent discipleship, it was the only
research that contained a clear definition for the purpose of assessing an individual’s discipleship status (Kaster, 2011). Citing the literature, this study operationally defined Christian discipleship as constitutive of six variables:

1. “A Christian disciple is a learner and interested in learning about Christ and his ways;
2. “A Christian disciple experiences a call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ;
3. “A Christian disciple has a personal relationship or friendship with Christ;
4. “A Christian disciple is committed to participate in Christ’s mission to build the Reign of God;
5. “A Christian disciple is committed to being part of a community of Christians dedicated to this mission; and
6. “A Christian disciple has a self identity as a Christian disciple”

(Kaster, 2011, p. 74).

These are the elements used in the Christian Discipleship Scale, which each participant in the study took in addition to being interviewed. This scale is composed of six items posed to each participant. Each item asks them to decide whether they agree, feel neutral toward, or disagree with a statement related to the variables cited above (e.g. “I am interested in continuing to learn about Christ and his ways”) (Kaster, 2011, pp. 74-75). The items were shown to correlate with each other using Cronbach’s alpha (.88), which suggested that they may be useful in determining discipleship (Kaster, 2011). Additionally, based on the survey and interview data collected for his
study, Kaster (2011) was able to correlate a Christian Discipleship Scale with several outward faith practices. Participants who scored higher on the Christian Discipleship Scale also reported higher frequencies of specific practices. These practices included “frequency of Mass participation, frequency of prayer, frequency of reading scripture, leadership in religious groups, and involvement in religious groups” (Kaster, 2011, p. 75).

Although the researcher does not make this connection, it is worth noting that these faith practices could be directly connected to five of the six Tasks of Catechesis from the Bishops (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, pp. 75-79):

1.) “Promoting knowledge of the faith,” – Frequency of reading scripture
2.) “Liturgical education” – Frequency of Mass attendance
3.) “Teaching to pray” – Frequency of prayer
4.) “Education for community life” – Involvement in religious groups
5.) “Missionary initiation,” – leading religious groups.

The last task, moral formation, does not have an analogue in these data.

Kaster (2011) recommends that further research using the Christian Discipleship Scale be conducted to determine its validity and reliability in measuring discipleship status. One issue not addressed by the researcher is whether or how the language of the variables in the scale was defined to participants. It is possible that the participants were not thinking, for example, of being “committed to trying to continue the mission of Christ” in the same or even compatible terms (Kaster, 2011, p. 74). If this is the case then, even if the scale is reliable, it might not be validly measuring the construct it claims to measure. That said, the correlations to external practices of faith
make it intriguing as a way to operationally define discipleship for the purpose of assessment.

Other researchers have attempted to quantify and assess the faith development or religiosity of learners in numerous different ways. One study documented the development and use of a survey of spirituality for college students at a Christian university in Oregon (Hancock, et. al., 2005). The authors suggest using it for formative assessment in order to see what students will need as educators plan for their future education. Lang (2015) created a quantitative program evaluation based upon participants’ changes in certain beliefs. There is no research suggesting that this instruments have been used in other settings.

Galleto (1996) used the sociological construct of religiosity to report on the “religious knowledge, beliefs, and practices” of Catholic school teachers of religion. Religiosity was described as encompassing: (a) knowledge of the doctrines of a religious tradition, (b) personal belief in those doctrines, and (c) behavior that is congruent with the moral teaching of that tradition (Galleto, 1996). The researcher created a survey and distributed it to Catholic school teachers of religion. This study employed advanced statistical methods to determine what factors influenced the religiosity of religion teachers. A major finding of this study was that many teachers of religion know Catholic doctrine and morality, but do not necessarily believe it personally or practice it (Galleto, 1996). The construct of religiosity employed by Galleto focused primarily on knowledge of Christian doctrine and morality, which represents only two of the six tasks of Catechesis.
Perhaps the most relevant study to the question of why and how current catechetical leaders do or do not perform assessment is a study of non-Catholic, Christian Youth Ministers in Illinois (Severe, 2013). This study asked 15 youth ministers for their attitudes toward evaluation in their work. The data showed that participants valued evaluation but did not engage in formal evaluation of their own programs. Instead, they relied on informal observations. The data also showed that participants did not think the effects of their ministry practice were even knowable. An interesting finding of this study was the way evaluation and criticism from pastors and church elders generally discouraged youth ministers from tracking anything but participation numbers and financial resources used. The author concludes that Christian educators need more peer support for accountability and encouragement as well as training in tools for evaluating spirituality. It was further recommended that similar qualitative studies on attitudes toward evaluation among other minister populations should be performed (Severe, 2013).

**Summary**

The literature reveals limited research into evaluative practices in catechesis. However, there is a great deal of literature describing catechetical outcomes, with adult *discipleship* increasingly dominating the conversation. Catechetical leaders are responsible for a wide variety of programs and tasks, all under the mission of evangelizing their learners and participating in the Church’s mission to evangelize the world. Ultimately, the Church holds that they are tasked with putting people into communion with Christ, with helping them to follow Jesus as his disciples. A disciple is one that *knows, believes, and lives out the Good News of Jesus Christ as proclaimed*
by the Church. Their catechetical work serves evangelization insofar as it establishes and empowers adult disciples. Although some studies have tried to assess and evaluate catechetical outcomes, only one has focused on discipleship as the objective of catechesis. As such, it would be helpful to discover more about the general attitudes toward practices of evaluation among catechetical leaders and specifically regarding the discipleship status of their adult learners. The following chapter describes the methods of that proposed study.
Chapter Three: Methods

Research Questions

The Catholic Church’s approach to catechesis has sought to adapt to the changing needs of the communities in which the Church exists (Congregation for the Clergy, 2005; Francis, 2013; Paul VI, 1962). However, there is ample evidence that many adult Catholics in the US have not entered into the personal, transformative relationship with God in Jesus Christ that is suggested as the goal for catechesis, which increases the chance of their losing their faith and faith practice altogether (Manglos-Weber & Smith, 2014; Weddell, 2012). As lay catechetical leaders are directly responsible for the catechetical outcomes in their parishes (DeLambo, 2010), it is important to learn more about their methods for evaluating the effectiveness of their programs (Markuly, 2002). In order to begin to establish good evaluative practices in the profession, this study sought to reveal the attitudes toward and practices of evaluation among catechetical leaders within two dioceses in the Pacific Northwest.
This mixed methods study explored catechetical leaders’ attitudes toward and practices of evaluation of adult volunteers’ discipleship. The aim of this study was to gain insights that could lead to suggestions of best practices for the profession of catechetical leadership.

The research questions were:

I. What are the attitudes of catechetical leaders toward evaluation of adult volunteers’ discipleship status?

II. What methods, formal and informal, do catechetical leaders report to use in evaluating discipleship?

III. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward evaluation among catechetical leaders and their reported practice of evaluation for discipleship?

**Rationale for Methodology**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to address the evaluative practices of catechetical leaders regarding adult discipleship. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used, and it involved collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative data with in-depth qualitative data. In the first, quantitative phase of the study, survey data was collected from catechetical leaders in two dioceses in the Pacific Northwest to discover the relationship between attitudes toward and practices of evaluation for adult discipleship. The second, qualitative phase was conducted as a follow up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results.
Johnson, Onquegbuzie, and Turner (2007) defined mixed methods as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (i.e., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (p. 123). Describing mixed methods design as valuing “multiple ways of seeing,” Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated that “the use of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (pp. 4-5). Quantitative studies can address a few variables among a large number of people, while qualitative studies can provide deep insight into the perspectives of just a few participants. In some situations, quantitative data can be explained with some qualitative research as a follow-up. For example, survey data can provide general descriptions of a phenomenon while follow-up interviews can offer insight into the reasons why the phenomenon exists.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) asserted that all research methods have philosophical underpinnings and that “inquirers should be aware of the assumptions they make about gaining knowledge during their study” (p. 38). For mixed methods research, multiple appropriate philosophical stances exist, although a pragmatic approach appears to be the most cited, allowing researchers to focus on doing simply “what works” to answer their question. Philosophical foundations for mixed methods research can also be “dialectical” in their makeup, holding in tension potentially conflicting or contrasting ways of knowing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 45).
The field of catechesis itself requires such respect for seemingly dialectical philosophical foundations. Markuly (2002) noted that catechetical leaders very often avoid systematic evaluation and assessment in order to maintain a focus on “being faithful” to their spiritual calling rather than attempting to measure success through rational means (p. 62). This hesitation to embrace contemporary empirical tools for understanding effectiveness may be rooted in well-intentioned spirituality but does not stem from a complete understanding of the Catholic approach to knowledge and epistemology.

John Paul II (1998) recalled Christianity’s dependence on both faith and reason for knowing truth and recommended that Catholics do whatever they can to preserve their mutually reinforcing relationship. While some knowledge of God may have been revealed supernaturally, God works always through human life and human history, even to the point of becoming human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. From the Christian perspective, God’s revelation, mysterious as it may be, is not off-limits to the probing of human reason. In fact, all theological understanding is a marriage of the seemingly incompatible values of faith and reason. By extension, then, religious learning, spiritual transformation, and catechesis must also depend on both faith in God’s will and in ordinary human methods of educating. The US Bishops (2005b) have said as much by directing catechetical leaders to make use of all pedagogical tools available which are not in opposition to the spirit of catechesis itself.

Given this relationship between faith and reason in the most fundamental of Catholic doctrine, it seems that a philosophical foundation for mixed methods inquiry
should also honor the dialectic experienced in catechetical work: Faith is a relationship with the divine and deeply personal, catechetical leaders nonetheless endeavor to facilitate, deepen, and expand this relationship for their learners. The initial phase of research was a widely distributed survey, which rested on the assumption that scientific tools can assess something as ephemeral as attitudes toward evaluation. On the other hand, the second phase featured a focus group for the purpose of explaining the results and honoring the fact that catechetical leaders themselves are not a uniform group and will have additional insight to bring to the research questions through deeper, qualitative inquiry.

**Setting**

Participants for this study were drawn from two Catholic dioceses in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, one was an archdiocese and the other a diocese. A diocese or archdiocese is the geographic territory overseen by a bishop or archbishop, named for a major city within the territory (churchyear.net, 2016). The respective bishops of each diocese are given responsibility for all Catholics within the geographic region (churchyear.net, 2016). Dioceses are broken down further into parishes. An individual priest, chosen by the local bishop, is the pastor of each parish and holds responsibility for all Catholics who reside within the geographical boundaries of his parish (churchyear.net, 2016).

According to the website of the Archdiocese, it is home to 3,448,267 people, 431,267 (12%) of whom are Catholic. It is divided into over 100 parishes. The territory is a total of nearly 30,000 square miles. The other diocese has a much smaller
population about half a million people total, 7% of whom are Catholic (uscce.org, 2012). The geographic area of this diocese, however, is much larger at approximately 70,000 square miles. This diocese contains just over 60 parishes. Together, the two dioceses contained 187 parishes.

The Northwest of the United States was the setting for this study for two reasons: convenience for the researcher and a diverse demographic composition. The researcher resides in the Northwest and has professional connections to individuals in Archdiocesan administrative offices who were instrumental for distributing the survey to professional catechetical leaders throughout the state. The region comprising the two dioceses is home to a comparatively small proportion of Catholics, with 12% of the of the total population identifying as Catholic compared to 21% of the US population (Pew Research Center, 2014a). On the other hand, there is a slightly higher percentage of religiously “unaffiliated persons” in the area (31%), compared to 23% of the overall US population (Pew Research Center, 2014b). In terms of racial and ethnic identification, the region is less diverse than the US as a whole, with 88% of the population being white, compared to 77% of the US population (US Census Bureau, 2016, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts). The population has grown more rapidly (7% increase since 2010) in recent years than that of the rest of the US (5% increase since 2010) (US Census Bureau, 2016).

A major factor influencing the way a parish is staffed and catechetical programs are conducted is the population density of the parish and the wealth of the parishioners (Murnion, 1991). This state, overall, is diverse in both socio-economic
status and population density (US Census Bureau, 2016). The statistics of the two dioceses illustrate this diversity well. The Archdiocese, to the West, is half the geographic size of the Diocese but contains three million more people than the Diocese. Within the Archdiocese there is ten times the number of Catholics as the Diocese. However, there is only twice the number of parishes in the Archdiocese. Of the ten most populous cities in the state, nine are within the borders of the Archdiocese (US Census Bureau, 2016). This state is home to some of the smallest, poorest, least densely populated parishes in the country along with some very large, well-off parishes. As a result, catechetical leaders are working in disparate settings, some with large amounts of resources and others with very few resources. This diversity of conditions provided a wide array experiences from which participants drew upon from as they responded to the survey.

**Instruments**

The study required a survey instrument to learn about the attitudes and practices of professional catechetical leaders toward evaluation. A search was conducted within the literature to locate an appropriate instrument to answer the research questions. However, surveys to learn more about the attitudes of educators toward assessment and/or evaluation are uncommon and there were no surveys found for that topic within the realm of religious education or catechesis. Therefore, with reference to other similar studies, a survey instrument was created. The quantitative phase of this study was facilitated by a survey instrument, created for the study. The
qualitative phase consisted of two focus groups with participants drawn from the first phase.

**Survey Design.** The survey was anonymous unless participants indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up focus group. Using skip logic, only willing participants were asked to provide contact information. In these cases, survey data collected was confidential. The survey consisted of three sections: a) attitudes toward evaluation of discipleship, b) practices of assessment and evaluation, and c) demographic and parish information. In order to encourage candid responses from participants, the demographic information was collected at the end of the survey. It was distributed online through email and a Facebook group for regional catechetical leaders, and through promotion at a regional catechetical conference. Appendix A provides the survey as taken by participants.

**Survey section one: Attitudes toward evaluation of discipleship.** The first section of the survey focused on attitudes toward evaluation. This corresponds to the first research question. This section of the survey focused on the participants’ opinions regarding evaluation of discipleship among adults. The survey asked whether and to what extent participants believe catechetical evaluation is possible and helpful. Operational definitions of the variables *attitudes, evaluation,* and *discipleship* are below.

Huberman, Miles, & Saldaña (2014) defined an attitude as “the way we think and feel about ourselves, another person, thing or idea” (p. 75). Attitudes can convey the positive or negative feelings a person has toward an object or issue (Eaton &
Visser, 2008). For the purposes of survey research, attitudes can be predictive of behavior and best measured via a “bipolar rating scale” (Eaton & Visser, 2008, pp. 39-40). The survey asked participants how positively or negatively they felt about the concept of discipleship evaluation.

Severe (2013) defined evaluation as “a systematic undertaking of applying judgment to data gathered through assessment according to certain guiding principles and using carefully defined criteria” (p. 6). Severe (2013) found that evaluation among his participants was ubiquitous and pervasive in their work, even if they didn’t articulate in the terms of evaluation or assessment. Markuly (2002) noted that, among catechetical leaders, “using empirical data to guide instructional decision making is guaranteed to meet initial resistance” and that tests and language from the world of educational assessment is held in suspicion (p. 68). The researcher’s consistent experience in the field of catechetical leadership agreed with this portion of the literature. Evaluation and assessment appeared to be loaded terms which can cause catechetical leaders to disengage from a conversation until they have had the usefulness of evaluative practices and data demonstrated concretely (Markuly, 2002; Severe, 2013). For this reason, the survey avoided use of the terms evaluation and assessment. Instead, the survey employed the term discernment, which is used in the New Testament to convey a kind of judgement of another Christian’s character (Severe, 2013).

Based on the literature, a disciple is defined as one who knows, believes, and lives out the Good News of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the Church. If discipleship
is the goal of catechetical leadership, then catechetical leaders can look for behaviors that correspond to the Church’s six tasks of catechesis, with a particular focus on the Good News of Jesus Christ as the object of discipleship (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005b). The six tasks of catechesis, in this light are rendered as:

1. Knowledge of Jesus Christ and his message (“Knowledge of the Faith”);  
2. Frequent participation in the celebration of the Eucharist (“Liturgical Education”);  
3. Living a life in conformity with the teachings of Jesus (“Moral Formation”);  
4. Regular practice of prayer (“Teaching to Pray”);  
5. Active membership in the Christian community (“Education for Community Life”); and  
6. A professed or demonstrated desire to discuss Jesus and his teachings with other people (“Missionary Initiation”) (Congregation for Clergy, 1997, pp. 75-79).

In order to learn more about the dynamic between lay catechetical leaders and their priest-pastors, one question was included within the attitudes section inquiring about the relationship between participant and pastor. It asked about the overall quality of the working relationship between the participant and his or her pastor.

Section two: Practice of assessment and evaluation. The second section addressed the question of whether and how often catechetical leaders practice
assessment and evaluation. These questions intentionally mirrored the first set. Rather than asking whether participants agree or disagree with a statement, these questions asked participants to provide the frequency with which they do these evaluative practices.

In addition to these questions, the survey sought to learn about the kinds of assessments that contribute to evaluation of discipleship.

**Section three: Demographic information.** The final section of the survey gathered demographic information and information about the respondent’s parish of employment. Christian, Dillman, and Smyth (2009) stated that personal information is best saved for the end of a survey, in order to encourage candid responses to previous questions. For this reason, the demographic information was asked for at the end of the survey. Participants were asked to provide: their gender, job title, areas of job responsibility, years of experience, educational background, professional training, whether they identified as Hispanic, parish size, parish setting (rural, suburban, or urban), and whether they have sufficient resources for their work. Finally, they were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group. If so, they were asked to provide their name and email address.

**Validity.** To ensure validity, the survey was sent to two panels for feedback and improvements. First, the survey was sent to a panel of 12 experts in the field of catechetical leadership to inquire for content validity. These experts were alumni of a graduate program in catechesis who have also had at least five years of experience as
professional catechetical leaders. Based on their recommendations, the introductory page was adjusted to be shorter and to feature bullet points for clarity.

After this initial test for content validity, the survey was tested for face validity among 16 students in an educational doctorate program at a university in the Pacific Northwest. Based upon the recommendations of the face validity panel, some typos were changed, excess spacing was eliminated and sections were separated into pages, rather than as a long single-page survey.

**Focus Group.** The qualitative phase of the study occurred in early December. Twenty survey participants opted in to potentially participate in the focus groups. All twenty were invited to provide their available times for an hour-long web-based focus group. Ten of those twenty provided times. Two focus groups were scheduled based on the availability indicated by the respondents. Five respondents were invited to participate in each focus group. Informed consent forms, found in Appendix C, were sent to potential participants via email, signed by participants, and received before the focus groups took place.

Focus group protocol, including questions, can be found in Appendix D. The questions posed to the focus groups centered on getting detail about attitudes toward evaluation for discipleship of adult volunteers, outcomes related to catechesis and discipleship they would look for, and methods of gathering information about discipleship of adult volunteers. In order to explore attitudes of the participants, they were asked to respond to two different hypothetical scenarios and asked to discuss their thoughts about use of terminology in their professional work. They were also
asked what they believed to be the most essential outcome for catechesis of adult volunteers and what indicators they look for in adult volunteers to see that they are achieving those outcomes.

Data Analysis

Analysis of survey data. After surveys were completed, data was uploaded into SPSS for analysis. Data from remaining cases were downloaded from Qualtrics, imported into Excel and formatted for import into SPSS. Descriptive statistics for each survey item were calculated, including frequencies for each response and means, medians, and modes for Likert-scale items and interval data like years of experience.

To check for reliability of the survey instrument, Cronbach’s alpha (α) was calculated twice: first for items asking about attitudes toward evaluation for discipleship (items 2 through 8) and second for items asking about practices of evaluation (items 11 through 17). Cronbach’s α is an average of reliability coefficients for each item. A reliability coefficient is calculated by correlating the response to each question with the responses to every other question. It is recommended to check for internal consistency of a researcher-designed instrument (Gilem & Gilem, 2003). An α of 0.7 or greater is considered to indicate an acceptable reliability for statistical analysis and an α of 0.8 or greater is considered good reliability (Gilem & Gilem, 2003).

Scales generated from respective variables were, the attitudes scale and the practices scale, were correlated with each other using Spearman’s rho, which can
determine correlation for ordinal data, such as the type generated in Likert-scale questions.

**Analysis of qualitative data.** Audio from the focus group was digitally recorded and transcribed into Microsoft Word. Focus group transcriptions were pasted into Microsoft Excel, where each sentence spoken by a participant was isolated into its own cell and coded. Participant initials were kept associated with each line of data to maintain coherence of thought in each response. Each line was coded with a descriptive code, or a code that described in one or two words what was being expressed. Lines were then coded using construct codes pertaining to the research questions. Relevant thoughts were coded as referring to attitudes (RQ1), practices (RQ2), and/or the relationship between attitudes and practices (RQ3). Within this process of coding, many lines were cross-coded, as appropriate. Lines coded as attitudes were given an additional values code to say whether they reflected a positive, negative, or ambivalent attitude toward evaluation of discipleship. After each round of coding, analytic memos were generated to record the thought-processes of the researcher and for later reference as themes and patterns were determined. Lines and codes were sorted into themes and patterns of themes. Themes and patterns were recorded and analyzed for meaning that might add insight into the results of the quantitative phase.

**Participants and Sampling**

The research questions asked for attitudes and practices among catechetical leaders. Catechetical leaders are considered any professional, lay, non-religious (i.e.
not vowed brothers or sisters) Catholic parish staff members with responsibility for forming and supervising volunteers: unpaid adults who might have responsibility for teaching or facilitating catechetical groups, classes, or sessions. This includes volunteers were have responsibility for children’s catechesis.

Participants were taken from multiple sources. One source was email lists of catechetical leaders in the state. One list was provided by a staff person in the Archdiocese. This list contained known email addresses for 188 individuals who had responsibility for administering faith formation programs in their parishes. The researcher made contact with a member of diocesan staff at the small diocese, but was not given an email list. Twenty-four emails were collected through the parish websites of individual parishes and parish clusters in this smaller diocese. A second source were catechetical professional groups found on Facebook, which are informal professional associations and are actively used catechetical leaders in one of the dioceses to network and share resources. The members of this group were included in the list of emails provided by the Archdiocese, however this was another way to expose them to the survey, with the hope of increasing response rate. The facebook group did not include all individuals from the archdioceses who were emailed.

A final source for participants was a regional catechetical conference, held in October of 2017. Hundreds of parish catechetical leaders from around the Pacific Northwest (primarily from the Archdiocese but some from the Diocese as well) attended for networking and professional development. The researcher provided the conference organizers with flyers inviting eligible attendees to participate in the
survey. The conference organizers distributed these flyers to all attendees as they ate lunch. As stated above, there were 187 Catholic parishes between the two dioceses. Some parishes had no eligible staff to draw from and others had two or more eligible staff members.

Focus group participants. Twenty participants in the survey indicated that they were open to participating in a focus group and provided contact information. They provided dates and times during which they could call into an online focus group via a web-conferencing application. The researcher grouped them by times available and came up with two times to conduct the focus groups. Five respondents were invited to participate in one focus group and five were invited to participate in the second. The focus groups were both conducted in the first week of December, 2017.

Ethical Considerations

This study gathered somewhat sensitive information on attitudes and practices of practicing catechetical professionals. As such, there was potential risk to all participants. A number of strategies for protecting participants from harm was employed. No participants were required to take this survey and all participants in both survey and focus groups did so willingly. They received informed consent notifications detailing the purpose and nature of the study to make informed decisions about their participation. Before proceeding to the survey, they were told that survey completion indicated acknowledgement of that information. Each focus group participant read and signed a statement of informed consent. The survey data was collected anonymously with no identifying information accompanying results, except
in those cases where participants voluntarily agreed to provide contact information as potential participants in focus groups. In those cases, data was confidential. Focus group recordings, transcriptions, and all other data sets were and remain kept securely in a file only the researcher can access with a password. Identifying information for focus group participants was not included in this dissertation.

**Role of the Researcher**

It is important to be aware of any relevant background information concerning the researcher which could influence or bias the methods and results of a study. I will offer some background information and thoughts in an effort at full disclosure. I am a practicing Catholic who identifies as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is relevant as the study focused on discipleship language as the desired result of catechetical work. I do believe that effective catechesis might not result in an identity as a **disciple** (it could be other language with similar affective and behavioral consequences), but that this language has become and remains an effective means of communicating the desired outcome of catechesis. Other language is possible, but is not dominant in the most current literature.

I am also a professional lay catechetical leader with nine years of experience, four of them in parish catechetical leadership. I entered this field directly after graduating college and it is my life’s work. Given that my identity is tied up with the success of the work, it is possible that I am biased toward desiring measurement of that success or lack thereof. However, I have witnessed and believe in the possibility of highly effective catechetical work without the use of tools of evaluation. As a non-
ordained professional in the Catholic Church, I have directly experienced the effects of status accorded to ordained and lay persons. This experience has been both positive and negative. It also influences my desire to include the priest/lay dynamic as a minor line of inquiry in the study. I remained very open to the possibility that there would be no discernible influence of the priest’s role in the lay professional’s work.

**Summary**

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design in order to explore the research questions. This research design incorporated both a quantitative phase of inquiry and a qualitative phase to explain the quantitative data. The quantitative phase included a survey of catechetical leaders in a state in the Pacific Northwest to learn more about attitudes and practices of evaluation in their catechetical work with adults. Data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, cronbach’s alpha, and Spearman’s rho correlations. Two focus groups provided qualitative data to explain the quantitative results. The results of the focus groups were analyzed for patterns and themes and interpreted alongside to the quantitative results. The results of the two phases of inquiry are described and discussed in chapters four and five.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports data collected in the study as they pertain to the research questions stated below.

The research questions were:

I. What are the attitudes of catechetical leaders toward evaluation of adult volunteers’ discipleship status?

II. What methods, formal and informal, do catechetical leaders report to use in evaluating discipleship?

III. Is there a relationship between attitudes toward evaluation among catechetical leaders and their reported practice of evaluation for discipleship?

This chapter is structured according to the research questions, beginning with descriptive data on the participants of the study and their settings and moving into any data that offer insight into the research questions. Quantitative data is reported first and explanatory qualitative data collected through the focus groups follows.
Survey participation. The participants in phase one of the study, the quantitative phase, were individual professional catechetical leaders in the Pacific Northwest. They were contacted via email addresses collected through (arch)diocesan offices or pulled directly from parish websites. Two hundred twelve email addresses belonging to potential participants were gathered and invitations to participate were sent, along with two reminders following the initial invitation. Of the 212 email addresses, five were returned as invalid email addresses. An additional two belonged to ordained clerics, one a priest and one a deacon. This left 205 eligible participants to receive emails inviting them to participate in the study. Seventy-eight survey responses were initiated, which is a response rate of 38%. Seventeen respondents did not complete any of the three sections, so their responses were excluded. Of initiated survey responses, 61 respondents completed all or most of the three sections, which is a completed response rate of 29.8%.

Survey participant characteristics. Participants were asked to provide non-identifying demographic information, which included gender identification, level of educational attainment, number of years spent as a professional catechetical leader, and identification as Hispanic or not. Table 1 displays this information. Of note is the small number of male respondents, with only eight of 61 (13.1%) identified as male, compared to 53 (86.9%) identified as female. A similarly small number of respondents identified themselves as Hispanic, with nine out of the 61 (14.8%) indicating this. The majority of respondents (33 or 54.1%) had a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Of these, most (18 or 29.5%) had a Masters’ degree as their highest level of education. There
was a wide range of professional experience reported, with one respondent indicating less than one year of service completed and another indicating 40 years completed.
### Table 1

*Characteristics of Participating Lay Catechetical Leaders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>% of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong> <em>(N = 61)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic, Y or N</strong> <em>(N = 61)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Catechetical Leadership</strong> <em>(N = 53)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Level of Education</strong> <em>(N = 61)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS or equivalent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Focus Group Participants.** Three participants attended the first focus group. Two were from the Archdiocese and one was from the Diocese. Four participants attended the second focus group. Three were from the Archdiocese and one was from the Diocese. Of the seven total focus group participants, six were women and one was a man. Six identified as non-Hispanic and one identified as Hispanic.

**Parish Information.** The participants also provided information on the parishes in which they work. They were asked about the setting of the parish, the size of the parish, and whether they felt the material resources of the parish were adequate for their work. Table 2, below, displays this information. The parishes represented urban, suburban, and rural settings in nearly equal numbers. Roughly one third of participants worked in small (fewer than 500 families), medium (501-1000 families), and large (1001-2000 families) and large parishes, with a small number (4) coming from very large (2001+ families) parishes. However, there were few very large (more than 2001 families) parishes with staff who participated. A very large majority (83.3%) of respondents reported feeling that their parish gave them access to adequate materials for accomplishing their work.
Table 2

Parish Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Setting (N = 60)</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>% of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Families in Parish (N = 58)</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>% of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500 or fewer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-2000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Resources (N = 60)</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>% of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate Material Resources</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Material Resources</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes Toward Evaluation Among Participants

Quantitative Attitudes Data. The survey presented nine statements about evaluation to the participants. Each statement reflected a positive attitude toward an aspect of evaluation of catechetical volunteers’ discipleship status. The participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Based on the literature, the word “discernment” was chosen to convey the meaning of evaluation, that is, gathering information and judging based on that information. The results suggest that participants have a generally positive attitude.
toward evaluation. Table 3 shows that the majority (90.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible to discern whether an adult volunteer “knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ,” i.e. a disciple. Nearly one in ten (9.8%) did not agree that it was possible to make this determination, but none of them strongly disagreed. As will be seen below, the degree to which participants strongly agreed (37.7%) with this summarizing statement is much lower than other statements.

Table 3

*Participant Attitudes Toward Evaluation of Discipleship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is possible to discern whether an adult volunteer knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ. (n = 61)</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 displays the extent to which participants agreed with statements related to evaluating discrete traits associated with being a disciple. Once again, the results suggest that participants do find it helpful to look for these traits in the course of forming adult volunteers. In fact, with five of the six traits that constitute discipleship-centered catechesis, a majority of participants strongly agreed in their helpfulness. Least controversial is the statement regarding knowledge of Jesus Christ and his
message, with no one disagreeing that it helps to discern this in a volunteer and 67.2% agreeing strongly. Unlike the other traits, participants were more likely to agree (52.5%) than strongly agree (39.5%) that regularly practice of prayer is a helpful trait to discern in a volunteer.
Table 4

**Attitudes Toward Evaluation of Discipleship Traits in Adult Volunteers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Jesus Christ and his message ((n = 61))</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Eucharist ((n = 61))</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives in conformity with teachings of Christ ((n = 61))</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices regular prayer ((n = 61))</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in Christian community ((n = 60))</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to discuss Jesus and his teachings ((n = 61))</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 displays attitudes toward two items that the literature suggested may influence attitudes toward evaluation. Participants (100%) agreed or strongly agreed.
that it is helpful to create formation goals and expectations, an act that Severe (2013) included in the definition of evaluation itself. Severe (2013) also suggested that the working relationship between catechetical leader and employer-pastor could influence attitudes and practices of evaluation. For this reason, the survey included an item regarding the relationship between participant and priest-pastor. This was the single most controversial statement in this section, with 11.5% (7) disagreeing that their pastor is a “trusted collaborator.”

Table 5

*Attitudes Toward Influencing Factors in Evaluation of Discipleship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When forming adult catechetical volunteers, it is helpful to create clear formation goals and expectations(^a)</td>
<td>Percent 83.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number 51</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pastor of my parish is a trusted collaborator in my work as a lay catechetical leader(^a)</td>
<td>Percent 55.7</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number 34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(n = 61\)
Participants seemed to prefer evaluation of the six constitutive traits of
discipleship (knowledge, Eucharist, living, prayer, community, mission-orientation) to
a global evaluation of someone as “one who knows, believes, and live the Good News
of Jesus Christ and his teachings.” Table 6 displays the means scores for each of the
items and an average mean score of the six traits that constitute discipleship. A paired
samples t-test was used to determine whether the means differed significantly from the
overall discipleship score. There was a significant difference between the mean score
for positivity toward evaluation of overall discipleship and the mean score of five of
the six constitutive discipleship traits. For each item, the response “strongly agree”
equals 4 and “strongly disagree” equals 1. Evaluation of whether a volunteer is a
disciple had a mean score of 3.28, where the overall average of the six traits was 3.59.
For regular practice of prayer, the only trait not to differ significantly with the overall
discipleship score, the mean was 3.30.
Table 6

Mean Attitude Scores for Evaluation of Discipleship Traits Compared with Evaluation of Overall Discipleship (Strongly agree = 4, strongly disagree = 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude toward Evaluation of:</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>M difference</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Discipleship</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Chirst</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Participation</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>0.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Living</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Practice</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Community</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Christ</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of 6 Traits</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*significant at p < .01

Qualitative Data. Focus groups composed of survey respondents were conducted to learn more about the attitudes and practices of catechetical leaders shared in the survey. Tables 8, 9, and 10 display the themes of attitudes within categories of positive, negative, and ambivalent attitudes toward evaluation of volunteers. First the focus group participant statements were coded reflecting (a) attitudes toward evaluation, (b) practices of evaluation, or (c) the relationship between their attitudes and practices. Next the attitudes data were sorted into groups as positive, negative, or ambivalent. An attitude was positive if it expressed a thought or feeling that seemed to
favor evaluation or assessment, whether explicitly or implicitly. An attitude was negative if it expressed a thought or feeling that rejected evaluation, whether explicitly or implicitly. Finally and attitude was ambivalent if it expressed a thought or feeling that seemed simultaneously to favor and reject evaluation or assessment.

Tables 8, 9, and 10 display the themes within each of the three groups, the number of instances each theme appeared in the data, and an exemplar quote from the transcript. Of 155 attitude lines, 73 were marked positive, 43 could be considered ambivalent, and 39 convey a negative thought or feeling regarding evaluation or assessment or both. This breakdown seems to reflect the results of the survey, namely that attitudes toward assessment among catechetical leaders are generally positive.

Positive attitude themes. Within the positive group of attitudes, four themes were identified: determining discipleship, a desire for professional improvement, looking for specific discipleship traits, and attention to the effect a volunteer has on their students. Table 7 displays these themes, along with the number of times they appeared in the focus groups and a representative quote from a participant.

Twenty-eight times, a focus group participant expressed a desire to know about or determine the discipleship status of the volunteers or other parishioners in their care. For example, one participant in the first focus group stated that, “I look for the people who have a personal relationship with Jesus because if you don't have it and you're not living it, although you need to be able to teach with words occasionally, it’s mostly by just the way you practice your faith.” A participant from the second focus group expressed that the primary objective of her work is to “lead the person into a deeper relationship with Christ.” Between the two focus groups and the seven
participants of those focus groups, all agreed that the goal of all catechesis is to enable or deepen a “relationship with Jesus Christ,” a phrased used often and interchangeably with “discipleship.” This was something they felt they should “look for,” “discern,” or “know about” in their volunteers.

Focus group participants also expressed a desire to improve or to know whether they are doing high-quality work as professional catechetical leaders. This theme was named desire for improvement and it appeared 24 times. One participant from the second focus group stated plainly that she would “like to see something that gives us a sense of whether we’re doing a good job.” Another from the same group said “we need to continue to evaluate a program to see if it’s meeting the needs of the parish.” Within this theme, three instances related to a desire for feedback specifically from the pastor were identified. In the second focus group a participant reflected that if her pastor requested a written evaluation of her volunteers “they (the volunteers) would appreciate that, because the pastor would know where they’re at and where you’re (the catechetical leader) at.” In the first focus group, a participant responded similarly to the idea of her pastor asking for a written report on her volunteers saying, “I would like to see this happen actually, as it would be helpful for all and it’s something currently don’t do.”

In 14 instances from the focus groups, participants expressed that they look for or seek specific qualities to tell them whether a volunteer is well-formed. In these cases, the qualities aligned well with one or more of the six discipleship traits used to create survey questions. In eight of these instances, participants reflect something akin to the mission trait of discipleship, an organic “desire to discuss Jesus and his
teaching.” A participant from the second group stated that “hearing how they talk about their faith” could “give an indication” of successful catechesis. A participant from the first group said she would look for a volunteer “who can relay it (their faith) to children and talk about why it makes a difference in their life that they are Catholic and they do have a relationship with Jesus.” Another participant mentioned that he would look for volunteers who are at Mass regularly as those who would be “really good for RCIA,” a quality similar to the discipleship trait of participation in Eucharist.

In six instances, a participant conveyed a desire to look for the way volunteers affect students. One said, reflecting on how they know whether a volunteer is a disciple, “I would look at their attendance sheets” (i.e., how many students attended). Responding to the same question, another participant said simply, “it’s a gut feeling: how are their learners responding to them?”
Table 7

*Positive Themes Within Attitudes Toward Evaluation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Type</th>
<th>Theme within Type</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Determining discipleship</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>&quot;You can know about Jesus but if you don't know Jesus you haven't accomplished anything.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desire for improvement</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>&quot;I'd like to see something that gives us a sense of whether we're doing a good job.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking for discipleship traits</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>&quot;If they're coming to you with ideas or they have a passion for something in the Bible, that is a good indication their faith is building.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect on students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;We can look for what kind of discussion is coming from their class afterward, from children and adults.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative attitude themes.** Of the themes within attitudes expressed in the focus groups, those identified as negative were least prevalent, with 39 total instances. Within negative attitudes, three themes were identified: discipleship is too personal to evaluate effectively, catechetical leaders fear being or appearing to be judgmental, and volunteers are too busy to engage in evaluative practices. Table 8 displays these themes with instance counts and a representative quote from a focus group participant.
The first of these themes, expressed by the idea that *discipleship is too personal*, appeared 25 times. This applies both to volunteers being evaluated and those doing the potential evaluation. One member of the second focus group stated that catechetical evaluation is difficult because “everyone is coming to us from a different place at a different stage in their journey, and this true of our catechists as well. So evaluating is really difficult with so many different levels and experiences.” Another participant, this time from the first focus group, said “I think that we can assess and evaluate all we want but it's really tough to find out what's in their heart and soul.” Another said, regarding catechetical leaders who might perform evaluation that discipleship “looks very different to different people.”

Nine instances of participants expressing fear of being or appearing to be judgmental appeared within the attitude data. In the second focus group, a participant said “it’s not really for us to judge (a catechist’s discipleship), but to help them engage in their own discernment.” A second responded in agreement, saying, “yeah, I would also say I want our catechists to have fun. That is our goal, for them to have fun teaching.”

In five instances, two participants in separate focus groups expressed reservations about evaluation out of concern for adding more to the already-busy schedules of their volunteers. From the first focus group, a participant stated that “We’ve had a real issue with getting volunteers… because they are wary of the commitment.” Another suggested that asking volunteers to be evaluated would amount to asking them to “come in on your day off and let’s do some more.”
**Table 8**

**Negative Themes Within Attitudes Toward Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Type</th>
<th>Theme within Type</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Discipleship too personal</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>&quot;Everyone is coming from a different place in a different stage in their journey.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fear judgmentalism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>&quot;It's so judgmental to use that term: assess or evaluate.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers are too busy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;I can't tell them, 'come on your day off and let's do some more.'&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ambivalent attitude themes.** On some level, all of the attitudes expressed in the focus groups might be described as ambivalent toward evaluation, as no single individual of the seven participants consistently expressed only or even primarily positive or negative attitudes. However, even in this context, some 43 of the statements seemed to refer at once to both the positive potential of evaluation and the circumstances that make evaluation difficult or impractical. Table 9 displays the ambivalent attitude themes with instance counts and a representative quote for each.

Nineteen instances were recorded that conveyed a respect for evaluation but a concession that catechesis as an educational endeavor was simply too complex to lend itself well to evaluation. One participant stated simply that “there’s always some benefit and some limitations, so we have to keep that in mind.”
A second theme reflecting ambivalence to evaluation emphasized that
discipleship must focus on affective outcomes at least as much as an ability to express
knowledge. One participant stated that evaluation’s accuracy is limited “because some
people might have a lot of knowledge of the faith but might not have a strong desire to
live their faith.” Another reflected, regarding a potential volunteer’s relationship with
Christ, “It's not something I think you can give them a test on, but more by observing
how they behave.”

In the first focus group, one participant repeatedly returned to the financial
difficulties faced in her parish. All eight instances reflecting that a participant might
need more resources came from this participant. Regarding use of outside resources
for training of volunteers, including evaluation, this participant said “I agree- that's a
great idea, but we were not eligible for the discount and we couldn't afford it this
year.” At another point in the focus group, she notes that in her geographic area
“resources are not tremendous.”

In each focus group, one participant reflected on the challenges of changing
demographic diversity. Regarding a hypothetical diocesan-wide evaluation of
catechesis, a participant stated “I also think you have to look at, if you're going to do it
across the board at every Parish, every Parish has a different set up, has a different
scenario, a different way they can implement their program based on all of needs for
their parishes and their families.”
## Ambivalent Themes Within Attitudes Toward Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Type</th>
<th>Theme within Type</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Catechesis is generally complex</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>&quot;Evaluation, assessment, discernment- they all only get part of the picture.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Must assess affective qualities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>&quot;Some people might have a lot of knowledge of the faith, but might not have a strong desire to live the faith.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs more resources</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>&quot;I agree, it's a great idea, but we couldn't afford something like that this year.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demographic diversity poses challenge</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;85% of the children in our religious ed program are Hispanic and many of them are coming to do their first communion in 4th, 5th, 6th grade and up and have had no catechesis at home.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Practices of Evaluation Among Participants

**Quantitative Practices Data.** The second section of the survey sought to learn about the practices of evaluation among professional catechetical leaders. The items in this section mirrored the items in the first section, attitudes. Rather than asking for agreement with a statement, the practices section asked for the frequency with which a participant performs certain evaluative actions. The data suggest that most catechetical
leaders in the state do some sort of evaluation regarding the discipleship of their adult volunteers. Table 10 displays the reported frequencies that participants looked for overall discipleship in their volunteers. Over 80% reported discerning “whether an adult volunteer knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ” more than half the time, which includes 54.1% who indicated they do so “almost always.” Only two participants (3.3%) reported that they “almost never” evaluate for an overall sense of discipleship.

Table 10

*Participant Practices of Evaluation for Overall Discipleship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>&gt; Half the Time</th>
<th>&lt; Half the Time</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I discern whether an adult volunteer knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ. (n = 61)</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 displays the reported frequencies of evaluation for the six discipleship traits. In most cases, the majority responded that they practice evaluation for these specific traits more than half the time. There was greater variation in responses both between traits and within individual traits. Over 60% of participants reported “almost always” discerning whether a volunteer is active in the Christian community. With
24.6% responding that they do this more than half the time, a large majority (86.9%) look for volunteers to be active in Christian community. Participants look for a regular practice of prayer less often, with 11.5% of participants doing so “almost always” and 14.8% doing so “almost never.” Prayer was the only trait that showed a majority of participants doing a practice less than half the time or “almost never” (50.9%).
Table 11

Participant Practices of Evaluation for Discipleship Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>&gt; Half the Time</th>
<th>&lt; Half the Time</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Jesus Christ and his message ($n = 61$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Eucharist ($n = 61$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives in conformity with teachings of Christ ($n = 61$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices regular prayer ($n = 61$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in Christian community ($n = 60$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to discuss Jesus and his teachings ($n = 61$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were also asked how frequently they engage in practices that indirectly relate to evaluation: creation of formation goals and expectations and the frequency with which they are given formal performance evaluations by their priest-pastors. Table 12 shows that most created formation goals most of the time, with 39.3% reporting that they did so “almost always” and 41% marking more than half the time. Table 12 also displays frequency of formal work performance evaluation. Severe (2013) found that youth ministry professionals in Illinois might be more likely to practice evaluation if they were evaluated by their pastors. Over a third of participants, 39.4%, reported formal performance evaluation occurring at least once a year. This leaves a majority of participants (54.1%) indicating that they receive no regular performance review or evaluation from their pastors. Data from the practices section of the survey revealed that just about half of the participants received no regular performance reviews from their priest-pastors (54.1%, N = 57), who would be their supervisors.
Table 12

*Reported Frequency of Practices Related to Evaluation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>&gt; Half the Time</th>
<th>&lt; Half the Time</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When forming adult catechetical volunteers, I create clear formation goals and expectations ($N = 61$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2+ Times/Year</th>
<th>1 Time/Year</th>
<th>In the past, not regularly</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pastor of my parish of employment provides formal review and evaluation of my work performance. ($N = 57$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were also asked to report how much time they spent forming adult volunteers. Zero participants reported that they form volunteers less than one hour per year. The largest group (36.1%) reported training volunteers one to three hours per
month, the next largest (21.3%) did so one to three hours every three months. Table 13, below, displays the responses to this item.

Table 13

*Time Spent Forming Volunteers (N = 60)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time reported</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1+ hr/week</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hr/month</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hr/3 months</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hr/6 months</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hr/year</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 hr/year</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows responses to the question, “What information do you use to determine whether an adult volunteer is a disciple of Jesus?” Participants were invited to select as many of the options as they desired, with the exception of “I do not make judgments about whether adult volunteers are disciples of Jesus,” which, if selected, precluded other responses from being selected. A large majority (85.2%) of participants indicated that they use informal conversations to determine whether volunteers are disciples of Jesus. Other popular selections were observation of personal behavior (73.8%) and observation while performing duties (78.7%). Much fewer reported using formal interviews or discussions with volunteers to make such determination (34.4%) and a small number reported using written inquiries or
assessments (6.6%). Seven participants (11.5%) provided their own responses through the “other” selection. These responses ranged from “personal prayer” and skepticism of judgments about “what is in their heart,” to use of diocesan-provided certification and signed statements of belief.

Table 14

*Information Used to Determine Discipleship of Volunteers (n = 61)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Used to Determine Discipleship</th>
<th>% of Participants Selecting</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>% of Responses Recorded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Conversations</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Interviews/Discussions</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of personal behavior</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation while performing duties</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No assessment used</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants indicated the frequencies that they practice some kind of evaluation for discipleship and for specific traits associated with discipleship. As Table 15 shows, the mean scores for these items were calculated. A score of four indicated that a participant “almost always” discerned, or evaluated for, that trait and a score of one indicated that the participant “almost never” evaluated for that trait. As with attitude scores, means for the practice of evaluating the six discipleship traits were compared to the mean score for evaluating discipleship as an overall
characteristic. Additionally, an average of the scores for six traits was calculated and compared to the mean of the overall discipleship scores. The mean for the frequency with which participants evaluate for discipleship overall was 3.34, a relatively high score, indicating that, as a group, participants look for discipleship in the adult volunteers more than half the time. With the exception of one of the six traits, participation in Christian community, the mean scores for the traits were all lower and three of them were found to differ with statistical significance (knowledge of Christ, Christian living, and regular practice of prayer). For each participant, an average score for frequency of evaluation of the six traits was calculated. The mean of this value (2.98) was also found to be significantly lower than the mean of evaluation for overall discipleship. This indicates that, in practice, participants evaluated for discipleship on a global level more often than they evaluated for specific traits of a Christian disciple.
Table 15

*Mean Practice Scores for Evaluation of Discipleship Traits Compared with Evaluation of Overall Discipleship* (Almost always = 4, almost never = 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Evaluation for:</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$M$ difference</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Discipleship</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Christ</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Participation</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Living</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Practice</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Community</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Christ</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of 6 Traits</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*significant at $p < .01$

Figure 2 displays a graph of participant selections for methods used to gather information to make judgments about discipleship of their volunteers. The most popular answer was via informal conversation (selected by 85.2%, $n = 52$) with the least popular being via written inquiries or assessment (selected by 6.6%, $n = 4$). Nearly 5% indicated that they do not make such judgments at all ($n = 3$). It is clear that informal conversation is far more popular than either of the two formal methods of assessment. However, observation of personal behavior and observation of duties performed could be either formal or informal practices. Given this, the quantitative
data alone do not suggest a preference for either informal or formal evaluative practices.

Figure 2. Methods of Assessment for Discipleship. Participants selected as many of the options as they felt appropriate, unless they selected “I do not make judgments about whether adult volunteers are disciples of Jesus,” in which case they were prevented from making other selections.

**Qualitative Practices Data.** The researcher coded the focus group transcripts, looking for lines reflecting attitudes toward evaluation, practices of evaluation, and the relationship attitudes had on practices of evaluation. 127 pieces of data were coded as
reflecting practices of or relating to evaluation. Those lines were looked at again for themes. Quickly, it became clear that many lines pointed to either a formal or informal type of evaluation. Table 16 displays the number of lines reflecting a practice of informal or formal evaluation. Additionally, lines of text were coded as reflected either direct evaluation of volunteers or evaluation of students. Table 17 displays this data. Many lines reflected evaluating for discipleship in an overall sense versus evaluating for specific discipleship traits. These are displayed with counts and examples in Table 18. Finally, two additional minor themes emerged: the use of personal prayer as part of the evaluation process and the deference to clergy in making judgments about volunteers, students, or programs. This is displayed in Table 19.

Informal and formal evaluative practices. As participants spoke about practices of evaluation, they often referred to passive, unintentional, or incidental practices that led to their gathering information for the purpose of evaluating. One participant described evaluation as dependent on a “gut feeling” twice in her focus group. Another participant relied upon an individual volunteer’s choice to step forward in the first place as an indicator of discipleship: “The act of them stepping forward is the desire to follow Jesus and that is discipleship.” Regarding communicating with her pastor about volunteers’ progress, one participant stated bluntly that “I think we do that but not formally.” There were 67 references to informal evaluation between the two focus groups.

Less common were references to formal evaluation of any kind. One participant referred a few times to the data gathered from an annual survey of catechists and how that helps her to make judgments about her programs. Multiple
participants mentioned formal face-to-face interviews with both volunteers and students to learn about their progress as disciples and the success of their programs: “We asked them some basic questions, to get a feeling of whether the child has some idea of what is going on in the life of the Church and the Sacraments.” In one parish, the catechetical leader asks volunteers to sign a mandatory statement of belief, indicating that they believe the teachings of the Church. There were 35 references to formal evaluative practice among the focus group participants.

Table 16

*Informal and Formal Evaluation Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices Theme</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Evaluation</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>&quot;I think it's a little bit of a gut feeling… are things going well or are things in need of improving?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>&quot;we have a survey that the catechists fill out at the end of the year… we ask some questions along the lines of whether they feel like their faith has grown through the process.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Focus on volunteers and students.* Although all questions asked in the focus groups explicitly focused on evaluation of adult volunteers (see Appendix D, *Focus Group Protocol*), participants frequently referenced the students with whom the volunteers work as a way to indirectly evaluate volunteers. In response to the question
of how they evaluate their volunteers’ discipleship, one participant stated that she “speaks to the parents, asking them what they think their students are learning, and periodically check in with the students and ask them how they are doing.” Another participant indicated that a volunteer’s status as a disciple might translate into higher student retention after First Communion: “If you look at the numbers in 3rd, 4th, 5th grade, it’s a good indicator.” There were 52 references to reference to students within the focus groups.

Participants did discuss volunteer evaluation, with 46 instances pulled from the data. One participant stated simply, “we have a survey that catechists fill out at the end of the year.” Another stated that he evaluated his RCIA Team Members through recording their attendance in a training program: “We would give the pastor verifiable, objective evidence that we have a training program and we have completed that program.” Another described getting a sense of a volunteer’s level of faith formation by “just hearing the way they talk about their faith.” Table 17 displays these two themes and an additional supporting quote.
Table 17

*Practices Themes: Evaluation of Volunteers and Evaluation of Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices Theme</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Students</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>&quot;We get together and talk about things and whether we are effective with the children.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Volunteers</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>&quot;Most of the catechists - I think we tried to see if they have a relationship with Jesus and especially if they have a prayer life.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Evaluation for overall discipleship vs for discipleship traits._ Focus group participants discussed looking for signs of discipleship as both an intuitive act, focused on an overall picture of a person, and as something that could be facilitated by looking for specific traits. Table 18, below, displays the themes of overall discipleship and specific traits and their instances. More often, a participant discussed looking for discipleship as an overall quality in their volunteers or students, with 23 instances observed in the data. “Most the families and catechists… I think we tried to see if they have a relationship with Jesus,” one participant stated. Another focused on the fact that only a small portion of an individual’s character is discernable, “It’s hard because you see some parts, but you don’t see a lot of the private personal, maybe some comes out in the way that people talk, but the only (indicator) that comes to mind right now is just knowing that there’s some observable sense of whether they’re making their faith
a priority.” Within this theme, two participants in two different focus groups mentioned looking for volunteers who are already disciples. One participant in the second focus group reported making the assumption that anyone who agrees to volunteer must be a disciple: “If they are stepping forward to teach as a follower of Jesus then yes, they are a disciple.” Not all participants agreed with this assumption, referring to parents who step forward to volunteer out of obligation and not authentic desire.

Participants also made references to practices of assessing for specific traits associated with discipleship, with 16 instances observed. Specific traits that the participants looked for, all of them informally, included knowledge of doctrine or dogma, prayer life, capacity for discussion of the faith, treatment of others, and participation in the Eucharist. “I think just hearing the way that they talk about their faith, that gives an indication,” said one participant. Another said “It can be very difficult to gauge because it’s more observation- how we see them in Parish life, how they treat other people.”
Table 18

Themes of Assessing for Overall Discipleship and for Discipleship Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices Theme</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for Overall Discipleship</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>&quot;We have to make sure they're coming across as a joyful disciple.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for Specific Traits</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>&quot;For example, with the Rite of Acceptance we just had yesterday, they have to show an intention to increase their knowledge and their prayer.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Themes of Practice. Two other themes of practices emerged unrelated to others. Participants referred to prayer and personal spirituality being part of their evaluation and/or discernment eight times and referred to reliance on clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons) for guidance in evaluation five times. Table 19, below, displays these themes with one exemplar quote for each. One participant mentioned that anytime she performs evaluation of a program she’s “trying to get the Holy Spirit’s guidance in that, even for the whole program.” Thinking about whether volunteers are disciples, one participant mentioned the importance of the pastor’s language in her practice of evaluation: “Father has been very good about speaking of the relationship with Jesus.”
Table 19

Themes of Prayer as Evaluative Practice and Reliance on Clergy for Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices Theme</th>
<th># of Instances</th>
<th>Supporting Respondent Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer/spirituality as part of evaluative practice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>&quot;When you are evaluating a program, you are still discerning it, you are taking it to prayer.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We’re just laymen and when we talk about doctrine… we don't necessarily know what to talk about, so (the diocese) gives us objectives and we use the heck out of it.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rely on clergy for guidance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationship Between Attitudes and Practices

Quantitative Data. As described in Methods, survey items directly related to determining a respondent’s attitudes and practices of discipleship evaluation were tested for reliability and dimensionality using Cronbach’s alpha. According Gilem & Gilem (2003), a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.7 or higher is considered to be acceptable and suggests that items, together, may form a summated scale. Items asking about attitudes toward evaluation of discipleship (numbers 2 through 8) displayed a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.781. Items asking about practices of evaluation of discipleship (numbers 11 through 17) displayed a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.87. The scores for the seven attitude items and the seven practices items were added together to provide an overall attitudes scale and a practices scale.
Gilem and Gilem (2003) also stated that using summated scales composed of Likert-type survey items for quantitative data analysis is preferable to using single-item analysis only, as it improves reliability of statistical analysis. For this reason, the relationship between attitudes toward evaluation and practices of evaluation was explored by calculating the correlation coefficient for the *attitudes scale* and the *practices scale*. Table 20, below, displays the mean, standard deviation of both the *attitudes scale* and the *practices scale*.

Table 20

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for Attitude Scale and Practices Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes$^a$</td>
<td>21.27</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices$^a$</td>
<td>21.42</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a n = 60$

When using Cronbach’s $\alpha$, it is helpful to know what the $\alpha$ value would be if one of the survey items were not included. This indicates whether the variable contributes to the reliability of the overall latent variable (Gilem & Gilem, 2003). For example, the $\alpha$ for attitudes scale is 0.78, the Cronbach’s $\alpha$ analysis indicates that if the question asking about prayer practices were deleted, the $\alpha$ value would be 0.70, a slightly weaker overall correlation. This suggests that the variable of looking for regular practice of prayer adds to the overall reliability of the variable of overall attitudes toward evaluation. Table 21 displays $\alpha$ values for both the attitudes and
practices items, scale means for attitudes and practices, and scale means and $\alpha$ values if an item were not included in the correlation analysis.

Table 21

*Reliability Statistics for Attitudes Items and Practices Items.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean</th>
<th>Cronbach's $\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Mean</td>
<td>24.82</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices Items</td>
<td>21.42</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Item Statistics $(N = 60)$</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Cronbach's $\alpha$ if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Discipleship</td>
<td>21.55</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>21.15</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Participation</td>
<td>21.13</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Living</td>
<td>21.27</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Practice</td>
<td>21.52</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Participation</td>
<td>21.15</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Discuss Christ</td>
<td>21.13</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices Item Statistics $(N = 60)$</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Cronbach's $\alpha$ if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Discipleship</td>
<td>18.05</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>18.67</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Participation</td>
<td>18.23</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Living</td>
<td>18.52</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Practice</td>
<td>18.93</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Participation</td>
<td>17.92</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Discuss Christ</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because these scales come from Likert items, they cannot be considered interval or ratio data. For ordinal data, it is necessary to use Spearman’s rho ($\rho$) to calculate a correlation coefficient (Airasian, Gay, & Mills, 2012). As seen in table 22, with a correlation coefficient of $\rho = 0.47$, the data suggest there was a weak positive relationship between attitudes toward evaluation and practices of evaluation. Although significant at $p < .001$, the correlation coefficient is weak enough to be considered inconsequential.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation of Attitudes and Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and Practices$^a$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a n = 60$

**Qualitative Data.** Transcripts from the focus groups were separated into statements or lines that could be identified as relating to *attitudes, practices, and/or relationship between attitudes and practices*. Lines were often cross-coded, so some reflect ideas concerning one, two, or all three of those theme categories. Seventy-nine lines were identified as pertaining to the relationship between attitudes and practices. When these 79 lines of discussion were coded again, attitudes leading to three broad practice patterns emerged: a desire to avoid formal evaluative practices, an embrace of informal evaluative practice, and a willingness to evaluate connected to non-specific practice of evaluation.
Table 23 displays code themes reflecting an avoidance of formal evaluation along with possible motivations for such avoidance. There were 35 total instances observed. Within this theme category, there were five more specific themes: the challenge of diversity, a fear of being judgmental, a belief that discipleship is too personal, an assumption that volunteers are already disciples, and a desire not to burden volunteers with additional tasks.

Twelve instances reflected that a diversity of starting points, be it economic, spiritual, social, cultural, ethnic diversity, makes formal evaluation, like testing, challenging to the point of being unhelpful. One participant stated that “you won’t fully know the layers (of catechetical outcomes) because you are planting a seed, especially when you are working with children and families who all come to you with different needs at different places of their journeys.” Another rejected the idea of standardized catechetical testing based on different scheduling practices between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities within her parish: “Even just in our own parish between the Latino ministry and the Anglo ministry there are a lot of different things that go on, which means we can’t in the English community necessarily have as many classes.” Throughout both focus groups, the many kinds of diversity children, families, and volunteers bring with them make formal, program-wide evaluation more challenging than helpful.

Five instances showed a belief that formal evaluation, and specifically testing, could be unfair and judgmental. One participant reflected that he avoids overt evaluative practice of students because “we don’t want to throw them on defense.” Another stated she is working with the perceptions of evaluation that other bring: “I
think families tend to think that evaluation and assessment – and our pastors, I think – that it’s so statistical and black-and-white.”

In a couple of separate exchanges within the focus groups, participants revealed that they either assume their volunteers are disciples or that they ensure that their volunteers are “well-formed,” thus making formal evaluation unnecessary: “Fortunately our catechists are very well-formed people themselves, and I continue to do some training, but rarely will I do something formal, mostly it’s just talking about how it is going with all the students.”

Some participants expressed a desire to avoid burdening their volunteers with extra things to do, including subjecting them to formal evaluation. One conveyed how essential the generosity of the volunteers is to her work, saying in regards to checking on the discipleship of her catechists, “Now that we’ve discussed it on a deeper level it got me thinking, you know, I am just so grateful for my volunteers because our program is totally volunteer-led and volunteer-based.”
### Table 23

**Themes of Relationship Between Attitudes and Practices Reflecting an Avoidance of Formal Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Theme</th>
<th>Instances</th>
<th>Examplar Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoids Formal</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>That's the thing about trying to measure Faith formation in anyway, it's such a challenge because everybody comes to us in a different place for children the parents the siblings the catechists, including your pastor and your staff, everybody's coming at a different place in their journey and a different place in their faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Diversity of Starting Points</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>It's really not to us to judge but to challenge the individual to do their own discernment to do their own evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing too judgmental</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>If they are stepping forward to teach as a follower of Jesus then yes they are disciple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers are already disciples</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I think there's a kind of a built in assumption that we hate to ask people to give up another day of their week or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't want to burden Volunteers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although similar to avoiding formal evaluation, there was a category of themes that reflected participants’ positive desire to embrace informal methods of discernment and evaluation. There 34 were instances of codes within this category of themes, with
four themes making up the category. Table 24 displays those themes along with an example quotation from a participant.

In ten instances, participants mentioned that they find it helpful to assess and evaluate through observation and/or conversation while working with volunteers and students. One said, “I think sometimes just hearing the way that they talk about their faith, that gives an indication.” Another said, “We evaluate not through testing but through conversation… to find out what they’re learning as well as whether they are getting a life in Christ.”

In nine other instances, participants reflected that they lacked resources and time to create formal means for assessment and evaluation. One reflected that she wished she could be more generally attentive to her volunteers, saying “I don’t think I do enough with them but we have some sessions where we get together and talk about things and whether we are effective with the children.” Another mentioned that she could not use materials for training and evaluation because in her region their “resources are not tremendous.”

In four instances, participants indicated that program outcomes, like student attendance, might reflect their volunteers’ discipleship status to some extent. One said, referring to how she knows whether her catechists are disciples, “I would look at attendance in their classes,” later in the conversation she reemphasized this idea, “again it’s kind of a gut feeling, how are their learners responding to them?”

Some participants expressed a kind of trust in the process of catechesis and parish life that leads to a preference for informal evaluation over a longer period of time. This included simply informing the pastor whether volunteers attended trainings
or participated in certain programs, “There are so many different options for the catechist in how they are growing. I could let the pastor know I held a class here and this many people attended and this many people when to the catechetical conference and this many people are doing a particular program, but to really know where each of them are, I think it would be very difficult to write down.”

Table 24

Themes of Relationship Between Attitudes and Practices Reflecting an Embrace of Informal Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Theme</th>
<th>Instances</th>
<th>Examplar Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embraces Informal</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>It's not something I think you can give them a test on, but more by observing how they behave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation and conversation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Well probably first, to be honest, I probably would laugh, because I think I always would like to do more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time for formal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>So if you look at the numbers of in between years 3rd 4th 5th 6th grade, it's a good indicator of your program and the fruits of the spirit of the earlier part of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student responses helpful</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A lot of times when they step forward, even if it's just a step forward to be an extra set of hands, that's the beginning of their discipleship journey. Then all the sudden they're learning in a classroom and they have the desire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A final theme of a general willingness and non-specific practice of evaluation emerged, comprising ten instances from the focus groups. Table 25 displays this, along with one example quote. One participant mentioned that she asks questions of herself throughout the program in order to decide whether it’s an effective program, but did not specify methods or practices, saying “How is the program going? Are we achieving our objective or do we need to make some adjustments? And the adjustments are continually going on. The program is never finished with evaluation.”

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Theme</th>
<th>Instances</th>
<th>Examplar Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willing to evaluate, but nonspecific</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(Assessment and Evaluation) don't scare me. I'm not afraid of them because to me assessment and evaluation doesn't necessarily mean a paper and pencil type exercise. It's something an experienced team member or a person in ministry would be doing all the time anyway.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The data showed that survey participants held generally positive attitudes toward evaluation of volunteers for discipleship, with a mean attitudes score of 3.59 (1 = less positive, 4 = more positive) (n = 60). Over ninety percent of participants agreed that it is possible to discern whether adult volunteers are disciples. Survey participants also indicated that they perform evaluation and assessment of their adult volunteers with some frequency, with a majority (54.1%) saying that they almost always discern
for discipleship. Participants indicated that the frequency with which they practice evaluation for discipleship traits varied depending on the trait (cf. Table 11), with five out of the six traits reportedly being evaluated more than half the time. There was a spearman’s rho correlation coefficient of .47 ($p < .001$) strength between attitudes toward and practices of evaluation for discipleship.

Focus groups featuring seven of the survey participants provided qualitative data to help explain the responses to the surveys. A sort-and-scissors analysis of the transcripts of the focus groups revealed some patterns and themes around attitudes toward evaluation, practices of evaluation, and the relationship between the two. Participants held both positive and negative attitudes toward evaluation in their work as catechetical leaders, with a general slant toward being in favor of evaluation. Themes within positive attitudes of evaluation included a genuine concern for discipleship, a desire for improving their work as catechetical leaders, and hoping to improve outcomes for students. Within negative and ambivalent attitudes toward evaluation, participants reported feeling discipleship is too personal to fully evaluate and that the process of catechesis is simply too complex for robust evaluation. Focus groups also revealed a preference for informal and incidental practices (like observation of personal behavior and interpersonal conversation) of evaluation. Participants had numerous attitudes which appeared to influence preferences for practicing informal evaluation over formal evaluation, some of them included feeling formal tests could appear judgmental, not wanting to add to volunteers’ list of responsibilities, feeling observation and conversation to be helpful enough, and seeing the diversity of their students’ and volunteers’ background as a challenge.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore Catechetical Leaders’ attitudes toward and practices of evaluation of discipleship status among adult volunteers. The aim of this project was to gain insights that could lead to suggestions of best practices for the profession of catechetical leadership. Making use of an explanatory mixed methods design, this study utilized a researcher-created survey instrument to gather information on attitudes and practices of the population, which was followed by two focus groups, whose members were drawn from survey participants.

The survey found that participant attitudes toward evaluation for discipleship of adult volunteers were generally positive, with 90.2% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is helpful to evaluate for discipleship. The survey also found that 86.3% of participants reported to practice some form of discipleship evaluation more than half the time. Finally, a correlation coefficient of ($\rho = 0.47$ ($p < .001$)) was found for scores on items relating to attitudes and items relating to practices. Qualitative data gathered from focus groups revealed some ambivalence toward evaluation among participants, especially when they consider the personal nature of
discipleship in conjunction with the need for feedback to do their work well and serve
the needs of the Church. In practical terms, this ambivalence seemed to translate itself
into primarily informal and unintentional practices of evaluation.

This chapter presents in-depth discussion of some of the results of the study. Additionally, this chapter will feature reminders of some of the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research. Finally, the researcher will offer suggestions for improving practices in catechetical leadership based on the research.

**Attitudes Toward Evaluation Among Catechetical Leaders**

As reported in Chapter 4, participants in the survey held generally positive attitudes toward evaluation, or, for the purposes of the survey, “discernment.” Given that Markuly (2002) and Severe (2013) found that religious education professionals leaned toward negative views of religious evaluation, the extent to which participants in this study expressed positive views of evaluation was not expected. Participants believed that it was possible to discern for overall discipleship (to know, believe, and live the Good News of Jesus Christ) and that it is helpful to discern for specific traits associated with discipleship, as suggested by the literature (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005b). Participants also reported feeling positive about variables related to evaluation, namely setting clear goals for the religious and educational formation ($M = 3.84; 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree$) of their volunteers and having a good relationship with their pastor-employer ($M = 3.44$). Interestingly, participants appeared to feel, on average, more positively about discerning for discrete discipleship traits ($M = 3.59$) than for discipleship as an overall personal characteristic ($M = 3.28$). Of course, even though most responses were positive, not all were. With
nearly 10% of participants disagreeing that it was even possible to discern whether an adult volunteer was a disciple, the results suggest some ambivalence about the topic of evaluation for discipleship.

Focus Groups helped to reveal the content of these multi-faceted attitudes. As reported in Chapter 4 participants held attitudes which implied a positive stance toward evaluation: they expressed concern for the discipleship of both volunteers and students, they displayed a clear desire to do well in their work as professionals, and they saw the value in looking for specific indicators of discipleship in those they work with. At the same time, they recognized the challenges inherent to evaluating deeply held beliefs and convictions, and expressed attitudes that implied a hesitancy or fear of evaluation of discipleship.

Negative attitudes included a belief that discipleship is too personal for evaluation by another individual, a fear of being or being seen as judgmental as evaluators, and a simple recognition that their volunteers are quite busy and evaluative practice takes time and effort that volunteers might not have to give.

Finally, participants also expressed attitudes that implied both an appreciation for and a hesitancy to embrace evaluation. As they understood the terms evaluation, assessment, and discernment, any means of gaining knowledge about an individual’s discipleship status could only provide a partial picture of the reality of their faith. They recognized that some tests could assess the doctrinal knowledge of their students or volunteers, but doubted whether evaluation could inform them of the most important part of their work- bring others into personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
extent, they talked about the resources – time, financial, and logistical – they would need to employ worthwhile evaluative practices.

The picture these data on attitudes paint is of a group of catechetical leaders who were earnest and thoughtful, well-informed of the Church’s general objectives for Catechesis (knowledge of, belief in, and relationship with Jesus Christ), and open to considering anything that would help them do their work more effectively. They were also skeptical of, but not closed to, the idea that an external tool could accurately reflect the inner heart of a Christian disciple. Within all this, they also faced practical concerns like finding and retaining sufficient numbers of volunteer catechists, a lack of material resources, and an increasingly diverse parish population that appeared to make standardized tools for evaluation impractical. The complexity of these attitudes leads to a clearer understanding of the evaluative practices participants described.

**Practices of Evaluation Among Catechetical Leaders**

**Informal and formal practices.** The second research question of this study asked what methods catechetical leaders report to use in evaluation for discipleship. In short, participating catechetical leaders reported reliance in informal means of gathering information for evaluation. Survey data revealed that participants practice evaluation for the overall characteristic of discipleship, on average, more than half the time ($M = 3.34$: $1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) and that they practiced evaluation for discrete discipleship traits about half the time ($M = 2.98$). Responses to an item asking for methods of assessment practiced revealed a preference informal conversations and observation.
The quantitative data collected from the focus groups affirmed that participating catechetical leaders preferred informal evaluation to formal methods. Focus group participants discussed use of informal assessment or evaluation 67 times compared to formal assessment 35 times. In the words of participants from the focus groups, information gathering might amount to “a little bit of a gut feeling” or “kind of talking to them and seeing what their relationship with God and Jesus is like.” The participant responses in the focus groups appeared to agree with Servede’s (2013) finding that, among youth ministers in Illinois, evaluation is “pervasive and primarily implicit and informal” and that “informal modes of evaluation were the almost exclusive practices of youth ministers in the study” (pp. 293-294). Although in some studies, informal assessment is information gained through any instrument that has not been scientifically validated (Cantor & Schaar, 2005; Bowen & Luckner, 2006), Servede (2013) used the term informal to refer to assessment that is “under the radar” and “quick and in my head” (pp. 293-294).

Servede (2013) noted that observation was the primary means of evaluation among his population and that it was exclusively informal. The participants in the focus groups for this study also made references to observation of volunteer behavior in the general community as a way to gather information about discipleship. They also discussed observation of student reactions to volunteers for similar purposes. At no point did a focus group participant refer to formal or intentional observation for assessment, like visiting a classroom and taking notes. For this reason, the qualitative data suggest that survey participants selecting observation as methods for assessment practiced informal observation.
One focus group participant of the seven, however, did refer to regular written surveys administered to adult volunteers each year. This participant found these surveys to be helpful in improving programming, but did not use them to evaluate discipleship of the volunteers. Another participant reported a single instance of administering a formal interview to children as a kind of intake assessment and that the informal from that assessment had never been used or followed up on. Two other participants referred to formally interviewing children in confirmation preparation programs to see whether they are ready to receive sacraments. But, once again, there is no reference to formal methods of evaluation of adult volunteers, to learn whether they are themselves disciples.

The focus on students among the participants related closely to another set of themes within the practices data from the focus groups. Participants were more likely to discuss looking at catechetical outcomes of students as a means to judge the catechetical outcomes of adult volunteers. Although focus group questions were targeted to learn about adult volunteers, participants referred to students, even when discussing evaluation of volunteers. For example, multiple participants stated that they would gather information about the discipleship of their volunteers based on how the students in the volunteers’ care were responding to them. This suggests that, even when asked directly about the discipleship of their volunteers, participants turn quickly to thinking about their students. In some cases, participants simply assumed that any volunteer was already well-formed in discipleship.

**Evaluating for Discipleship traits and overall discipleship.** As reported above, survey participants were more likely to hold positive *attitudes* toward
discerning more discrete discipleship traits (knowledge, participation in Eucharist, living in accordance with Christ’s teachings, regular practice of prayer, participation in the community, and discussion of Jesus) than they were discernment of overall discipleship as a characteristic (a person who knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ). The mean for attitudes toward evaluation of the six traits was 3.59 (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) while the mean for attitudes toward evaluation of overall discipleship was 3.28. This difference within attitudes was effectively reversed when it came to practicing evaluation. The frequency of practicing evaluation for the six traits was reported to be about half the time (\( M = 2.98 \)) compared to a frequency of more than half the time for evaluation of overall discipleship as a characteristic (\( M = 3.34 \)). The data did not directly suggest a reason for this difference. However, one possible explanation could be the informal nature of evaluation, i.e. it is not planned or consistently applied. Another explanation, which will be further explored in the next section of this chapter, on the relationship between attitudes and practices of evaluation, could be that evaluating for an overall characteristic is more quickly accomplished than spending time on discrete traits, which make it a better option for catechetical leaders who are pressed for time, even if they theoretically feel discernment of discrete traits is more helpful.

**Relationship Between Attitudes Toward and Practices of Evaluation**

Regardless of which attitudes and practices variable was used, there was a statistically significant correlation between attitudes expressed and practices reported on the survey, albeit a weak one. A speaman’s rho correlation coefficient of \( \rho = 0.47 \) (\( \rho < .001 \)) was found for the relationship between the *attitudes scale* and the *practices*
scale, a summated scale of scores for questions pertaining to corresponding questions in the attitudes section and practices section. A previous study that found a relationship between attitudes and practices of alternative assessment among primary grade teachers (Culbertson & Yan, 2003). This study found that primary grade literacy teachers had more positive attitudes toward assessment and were more likely to practice assessment when they were supported by supervisors, had greater access to material resources, and more time for professional development (Culbertson & Yan, 2003).

The survey data in the present study on catechetical evaluation did not suggest relationships between variables and attitudes or practices, although the literature suggested there could be (Severe, 2013; Markuly, 2010; Culbertson & Yan, 2003). Qualitative data from the focus groups, however, offered insight into the reasons behind the relationships between attitudes toward and practices of evaluation among catechetical leaders.

Analysis of qualitative data tagged as pertaining to the relationship between attitudes and practices of evaluation yielded patterns and themes similar to those that emerged from data pertaining separately to attitudes or practices. The largest pattern within the relationships data reflected a practice of avoiding formal assessment methods. Themes within this category revealed challenges faced by catechetical leaders: difficulty working with diverse backgrounds (ethnic and spiritual), fear of adding burdensome tasks to their precious few volunteers, and a belief that formal tests of discipleship could be judgmental.
The focus groups revealed that participants tended to embrace informal evaluation. Themes included: finding practices like observation to be helpful, they trust in the long-term process of catechesis, rather than looking for shorter-term, measurable gains, and that they focus on student responses to volunteers rather than volunteers themselves. Participants also expressed a general willingness to evaluate or assess attached to a non-specific reference to practicing evaluation.

Although it did not amount to a theme, it was interesting that participants in each of the two focus group expressed a desire for more oversight from their priest-pastors and dioceses. Participants from one diocese inquired about diocesan resources mentioned by a participant from the other diocese, noting that they don’t have guidance on specific outcomes to look for in volunteers or students. In both focus groups, participants expressed an eagerness for their pastor to inquire about the formation of their volunteers. Data from the practices section of the survey did reveal that just about half of the participants received no regular performance reviews from their priest-pastors (54.1%, $N = 57$), who would be their supervisors.

The focus groups showed that participants in this study were likely practicing informal, observational evaluation while they performed other work. Participants reflected that they often do not receive regular evaluation themselves from their pastors. Many also directly expressed a desire for additional guidance from their dioceses to know what outcomes to look for in students. This all took place in the challenging atmosphere of diversifying parishes. Their attempts at practicing even a little informal evaluation without greater institutional support seems commendable. The desire to promote provide effective programming for students, families, and
volunteers was clear, even from the way participants from one diocese asked to learn more about materials provided in the other diocese. However, informal, on-the-fly evaluation based primarily (or solely) on observation is not particularly valid or reliable.

Severe (2013) saw a similar phenomenon when he asked non-Catholic Youth Ministers about their evaluative practices. In that study, participants could not make decisive changes to improve outcomes because they did not gather external data to challenge their assumptions. Certainly they evaluated their work, and often harshly, but they did so without concrete data that could help them see things in a new way and discover new solutions. Although the present study cannot draw the same conclusions about the way catechetical leaders make changes to programming based on their informal evaluation, the possibility remains that more helpful methods of assessment and evaluation exist.

Participants focused on students, even when talking about their volunteers’ training and formation. This is, of course, natural when the mission of a program is to catechize particular students (often children), utilizing adult volunteers to achieve that mission. However, the literature makes it clear that catechesis is accomplished by disciples (Regan, 2002; Weddell, 2012). Additional attention paid to the catechetical formation of volunteers could strengthen student outcomes, ensuring that volunteers aren’t just teaching doctrine and knowledge, but transmitting a faith they hold deeply and personally.
Limitations

There were numerous limitations to this study. First, it was not random. Only willing participants who were able to use the online survey were involved. This could bias the results to the type of catechetical leader who is willing to take such a survey, if there is such a type. The demographic data of eligible participants who did not take the survey were unavailable. Therefore, it is possible that there was a variable or set of variables that made a catechetical leader less likely to take the survey.

Although the state providing the setting offered diversity in terms of parish size and setting, there was limited racial and ethnic diversity in the state, especially compared to other parts of the US. The Catholic Church in the US is nearly 50% Hispanic or Latino (Diaz, 2017). The researcher was unable to locate demographic breakdowns for the Catholic population in the region of the two dioceses, but, given the higher proportion of non-Hispanic whites in the area, it is likely that Catholic population similarly underrepresents some significant groups (US Census Bureau, 2016). In terms of instrumentation, a survey provides a limited look at a narrow set of responses. The focus group data explains and expands upon those responses, but as it did not solicit feedback from all participants, it did capture the many possible explanations for responses.

The survey was distributed within a region in the Pacific Northwest. Although attempts were made to research all eligible professional catechetical leaders in the area, fewer than half participated. Given that there was no way to collect demographic data from those who did not participate, it is possible that the sample population have
different characteristics when compared to the whole population. Of the 61 survey participants, only ten volunteered to take part in the focus groups and, of those ten, only seven were able to participate when the time came. The limited sample size of both survey and focus groups make generalizability of this study to any place outside of the region it was conducted in impossible. Further, having only seven focus group participants means that the explanation of the survey data might not apply to all or even most of the other survey participants.

In addition to having a small sample size, the lack of Spanish-language proficiency of the researcher prevented the survey from getting to Spanish-speaking catechetical leaders. Spanish speakers are a significant proportion of the Catholic population in the region. Many parishes have a professional catechetical leader assigned to work with this group. If such a person lacks English language ability, he or she would not have been able to participate. The cultural and religious differences in this group could have influenced survey and focus group results drastically. As such, findings from this study must be considered with this in mind.

Another limitation involves the constructs used in the survey. Discipleship and its constitutive traits have not been empirically defined and expressed in the literature. Questions about evaluation or discernment of those constructs may not reflect a consistent reality for survey respondents. It is possible that practice of evaluation of discipleship meant something very different to the 61 survey participants. A valid construct of discipleship, used in both the survey and the focus group protocol, would provide more certainty in drawing conclusions from this data.

**Recommendations for Future Research**
The small sample size of this study contributed to the lack of generalizability for its results and to limited use of inferential statistics. Future studies, with a larger sample size, could ask questions about whether and how catechetical leaders’ training, experience, gender, ethnicity, region and other attributes contribute to their attitudes toward and practices of evaluation. In particular, a survey targeting or at least including Spanish-speaking catechetical leaders could offer additional insight. Larger group sizes would make any differences between subgroups more likely to appear in statistical analysis. More data from around the United States would provide data for the development of tools helpful to many more leaders.

Qualitative data pointed to the willingness of catechetical leaders to perform evaluation and it suggested that participants primarily perform evaluation informally. It did not paint a clear picture of the kinds of tools and training that would be easy to implement and, most importantly, useful to catechetical leaders. Further, targeted qualitative research could look for particular methods of assessment and evaluation that meet certain criteria for usefulness to the profession. This qualitative data could even be partnered with experimental research putting assessment and evaluation methods to practice in parish settings.

Catechesis does not happen only in the parish setting. Catholic schools, elementary, secondary, and college-level, employ well-trained professionals to catechize hundreds of thousands of Catholic children and young adults throughout the United States. What do these catechists and catechetical leaders do to evaluate their students? Are they disciples themselves? A study targeting Catholic school theology teachers, higher education theology instructors, and campus ministers in all school
settings, could shed light on evaluative practice in professions that already have very
different expectations and support structures.

Finally, the literature makes clear that reliably defining discipleship and its
constitutive traits is difficult to do. A large-scale empirical study of Catholic
discipleship could begin to clarify the traits and characteristics common to all
disciples, and the experiences that have helped them to become disciples. Future tools
for evaluation could be based on these data and could be considered valid and reliable.
Additionally, validated constructs of discipleship could be compared with the
catechetical theory proposed by papal and episcopal documents. Which of the six tasks
is most important for developing intentional disciples? Are there additional, implicit
discipleship characteristics not reflected in theological writing? A long-term mixed
methods study focusing on the desired outcomes of the catechetical process could
begin to address some of these questions.

**Recommendations for Professional Practice**

With the limitations of the study in mind, the data from this study warrant five
tentative recommendations for improving practices in the profession of catechetical
leadership. They are:

1.) Training on active, intentional evaluation or “discernment” of discipleship in
    formation of catechetical leaders;

2.) Creation and promotion of simple, easy-to-use tools for intentional evaluation
    of discipleship for catechetical leaders to use;

3.) Increased use of regular performance evaluation of professional catechetical
    leaders by their supervisors;
4.) Development of time and spaces, likely through internet forums and communications, for catechetical leaders to dialogue with each other across diocesan boundaries about best practices and helpful resources;

5.) Renewed emphasis on the discipleship formation of adult volunteers.

**Discernment training.** Focus group participants, when asked directly about their reactions to the terms “evaluation,” “assessment,” and “discernment,” largely agreed that “discernment” captured the work they see themselves doing regarding the judgment of volunteers as disciples. Multiple participants across focus groups reflected that evaluation of others’ faith journey requires a spiritual practice that is not communicated through the more clinical terms like evaluation and assessment, and especially not through terms like “tests.” As the data showed, survey participants felt positively about discerning for discipleship traits and that their attitudes were moderately correlated to their practices of discernment or evaluation. Those responsible for forming professional catechetical leaders should find ways to promote the professional practice of discernment while leaders are being trained and formed. Such formators would include instructors in masters programs for pastoral ministry, theology, and religious education; diocesan personnel responsible for catechetical training programs and certificates; and even seminarians training for priesthood, who will one day have responsibility for the supervision and support of parish catechetical leaders. It seems important to draw explicitly the connection between evaluation and discernment for catechetical leaders, emphasizing the personal, spiritual component that accompanies their work. If attitudes about discernment for discipleship among volunteers can be improved even further, practice of evaluation may also improve.
**Tools for discipleship discernment.** Catechetical leaders must be able to gain some information about the discipleship of their volunteers through an external, semi-formal means so they can make informed decisions about how to train and develop their volunteers going forward. Catechetical leaders are pressed for time and resources. If they are to practice discernment of discipleship as a form of formative assessment and program evaluation, they will require ready-made, easy to use tools to help. They should not to be tests administered to volunteers or students. Short rubrics, observation guides, interview and small group protocols, and rating scales could be designed for them to use regularly. These shorter tools would be useful for tweaks and changes to programming along the way. Longer program- and parish-wide discernment tools could be developed to evaluate the discipleship status of the general population being served. These tools could be used annually to set mission and priorities on a programmatic level. Whatever they look like, it is clear that catechetical leaders will need support from their pastors dioceses in implementation, given that they are already pressed for time and energy.

**Performance evaluation.** Performance evaluation by a supervisor can set a tone of professional learning and improvement throughout an organization (Koys, 2010). Fewer than half of participants in this study reported receiving regular performance evaluation from their priest-pastors. A full 21.3% of participants reported having never received a performance evaluation as part of their jobs ($n = 13$). Data from this study suggest that catechetical leaders who receive performance evaluation also feel more supported by their pastors. In 2010, DeLambo found that only 44% of lay catechetical leaders received regular performance evaluations. The present study
found similar numbers (39.4%), indicating that the region studied has not seen much change from the national average of over seven years ago. An increase in feelings of partnership between priest and lay catechetical leader would be positive for parish work in and of itself. Additionally, high quality, constructive practices of professional performance evaluation from pastor to catechetical leader could set a tone that is more favorable toward evaluation of adult volunteers.

**Sharing wisdom and resources across diocesan lines.** Time and resources for catechetical leaders are limited. However, different dioceses have different resources to share with each other. That was clear from the genuine interest focus group participants expressed in other dioceses’ practices and resources. In order to facilitate sharing of wisdom and resources across diocesan lines, online networks and remote meetings could be offered by diocesan personnel or catechetical publishers. If catechetical leaders were given time by their pastors to participate in these kinds of activities, they could find help with problems other professionals and locations have already addressed, rather than using precious time to reinvent the wheel.

**Emphasis on catechesis of volunteers.** The literature suggests that adult catechesis is central to the health of the Catholic Church and that years of catechetical practice have emphasized children’s catechesis instead (Regan, 2002; Weddell, 2012). Promoting and developing discipleship among volunteers, who often directly teach the students served by parish programs, is similarly essential to the mission of the church. Focus group participants suggested that they are not in the habit of emphasizing the catechesis of their volunteers. Some of them look for those who are already well-formed to volunteer and others just assume that the act of volunteering constitutes
healthy discipleship. Catechetical leaders should shift their attention somewhat to ensure that their volunteers are fruitfully following Christ as intentional disciples and that they have what they need to improve in their discipleship. One focus group participant stated that she sees each volunteer, regardless of discipleship status, as “an opportunity.” Catechetical leaders need tools and suggestions for how to make the most of this kind of opportunity for adult catechesis. This kind of emphasis on volunteer catechesis can and should be communicated at all levels of formation and training of catechetical leaders. Dioceses can incorporate it into their professional development offerings, publishers can create and sell materials to address this need, and training programs can make clear that catechetical leaders will spend a lot of time forming volunteers as catechist-disciples.

Conclusion

Lay catechetical leaders have, in many ways, been tasked with ensuring the future of the Catholic Church in the United States. In the scheme of a 2000 year-old church, lay catechetical leadership is a brand new model for transmitting the faith to the next generation. As the Church works translate its message and its mission into the language of 21st Century American culture, catechetical leaders work quietly to establish new disciples of Jesus and encourage their fellow Catholics to deepen their discipleship. The crisis of Catholic identification occurring in the US now requires a close look at the assumptions, attitudes, and practices present within this profession.

Professional evaluation, program evaluation, self-evaluation, formal and informal evaluation, and all possible kinds of evaluation can and should be used to ensure that those who present themselves to the Church for catechesis receive
effective, life-giving, liberating instruction in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Data from this study suggest that catechetical leaders want to improve their effectiveness and have some willingness to try low-risk, easy-to-implement methods of assessment and evaluation for discipleship. Data also suggest that catechetical leaders can face a lack of material support from the Church hierarchy, in the form of both financial resources and professional accountability. On top that, perceptions of evaluation and assessment being synonymous with testing and personal judgment may impede catechetical leaders’ willingness to embrace the very methods of evaluation they could use to improve their outcomes. Finally, catechetical leaders have responsibility for students whom they may rarely interact with personally, making their informal and incidental practices of evaluation limited in effectiveness.

Although they have the professional training in catechesis, they rely on volunteers to interface with students and families. Churches will continue to rely upon volunteer catechists to work directly with students. Some may even argue that such reliance on the generosity of volunteers is an imitation of Jesus’s own method of catechesis (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005b; cf. Luke 9:12-17). Catechetical leaders must shift their focus to establishing and deepening the discipleship of their volunteers while giving volunteers the skills to pass their faith to students.

Training programs, dioceses, Catholic Universities, and catechetical publishers should work together with catechetical leaders to create a culture of intentional evaluation, assessment, and discernment. They will need to work on both attitudes and practices, learning to see evaluation and assessment as more than tests and rubrics
and to utilize creative tools to reveal blind spots they never knew they had. The potential for rich improvement is present in the hearts of these lay professionals and the generosity of their volunteers. It is up to those of us who depend on them to offer encouragement to change attitudes and find new practices.
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n_of_the_faith


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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Attitudes and Practices of Lay Catechetical Leaders

Discerning Disciples:
Attitudes and Practices of Lay Catechetical Leaders
Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to participate in a study on the attitudes and practices of professional lay catechetical leaders.

This survey will ask about:
- The degree to which you agree with certain statements
- The frequency with which you do certain actions in your work
- The size and setting of your parish of employment
- Non-identifying demographic information from you.

This survey is:
- For paid lay catechetical leaders, employed by a Catholic parish with responsibility for formation of adult volunteers
- Completely voluntary
- Organized into three sections
- Designed to take 10-15 minutes
- Anonymous- your answers will not be tied to identifying information, unless:
  - You are willing to participate in a follow-up focus group later in the year.
  - If so, you will be asked for your name and contact information at the end of the survey.

In this case, your answers will be strictly confidential.

You may exit the survey and end your participation in this study at any time. If you have questions or want to speak with the researcher, please contact Anthony Paz at paz@up.edu.

If you agree to participate in the study, please complete the following survey. Survey completion implies consent to participate in the research. Please feel free to download and print a copy of this participant information sheet prior to beginning the survey.

Please click the forward icon below to advance to the next page.
Section I: Attitudes

For the following items, please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

When forming adult catechetical volunteers (e.g., catechists, RCIA team members, small group leaders), it is helpful to create clear formation goals and expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is possible to discern whether an adult volunteer knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is helpful to discern whether an adult volunteer works to develop his or her knowledge of Jesus Christ and his message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is helpful to discern the extent to which an adult volunteer participates in the celebration of the Eucharist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is helpful to discern the extent to which an adult volunteer lives in conformity with the teachings of Jesus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is helpful to discern the extent to which an adult volunteer engages in a regular practice of personal prayer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is helpful to discern whether an adult volunteer is an active member of a Christian community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is helpful to discern the extent to which an adult volunteer demonstrates a desire to discuss Jesus and his teachings with other people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The pastor of my parish of employment is a trusted collaborator in my work as a lay catechetical leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please click the forward button below to advance to the next page.
Section II: Practices

For the following items, please indicate the frequency with which you do the provided actions at any point in the formation of adult volunteers.

When forming adult catechetical volunteers (e.g., catechists, RCIA team members, small group leaders), I create clear formation goals and expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I discern whether an adult volunteer is a knows, believes, and lives the Good News of Jesus Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I discern whether an adult volunteer has improved in his or her knowledge of Jesus Christ and his message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I discern the extent to which an adult volunteer participates in the celebration of the Eucharist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I discern the extent to which an adult volunteer lives in conformity with the teachings of Jesus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
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</table>

I discern the extent to which an adult volunteer engages in a regular practice of personal prayer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I discern whether an adult volunteer is an active member of a Christian community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
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</table>

I discern the extent to which an adult volunteer demonstrates a desire to discuss Jesus and his teachings with other people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Less than half the time</th>
<th>More than half the time</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The pastor of my parish of employment provides formal review and evaluation of my work performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>In the past, but not regularly</th>
<th>Once a year</th>
<th>Two or more times a year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much time do you estimate that you spend forming adult volunteers for catechetical ministry?

☐ 1 hour or more per week
☐ 1-3 hours per month
☐ 1-3 hours every 3 months
☐ 1-3 hours every 6 months
☐ 1-3 hours a year
☐ Less than 1 hour each year

What information do you use to determine whether an adult volunteer is a disciple of Jesus? Please select all that apply.

☐ Informal conversations
☐ Formal interviews/discussions
☐ Observation of personal speech and behavior
☐ Observation while performing volunteer responsibilities
☐ Written assessments or inquiries
☐ Other: ______________________
☐ I do not make judgments about whether adult volunteers are disciples of Jesus.

Please click the forward button below to advance to the next page.

Section III: Demographic and Parish Information

Click to write the question text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>First Language Spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you Hispanic or Latino/a?

☐ Yes
☐ No
What are your areas of responsibility at work? Please select all that apply:

- Business management
- Social outreach ministries
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, adapted for children
- Middle school youth ministry
- Young adult ministry
- Pastoral Counseling
- Ministry to the sick and homebound
- 1st Reconciliation and 1st Eucharist preparation
- High School youth ministry
- Program of children’s religious education (e.g. Sunday School, CCD)
- Bible studies
- Small groups for adults
- Adult Confirmation Preparation
- Teaching religion or theology in the parish school
- Children’s or youth Confirmation preparation
- Training of liturgical ministers
- Supervision of other staff
- Pastoral Council
- Catechist formation and training
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- Other duties (please list)

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree in college (2-year)
- Bachelor’s degree in college (4-year)
- Master’s degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (JD, MD)

Major as an Undergraduate:

Area of Study for Master’s Degree:
Area of Study for Doctoral Degree:


Professional Degree Attained:


What type(s) of training for catechetical work have you participated in? Please select any that apply.

☐ College or University classes
☐ (Arch)Diocesan-sponsored classes
☐ (Arch)Diocesan-sponsored certificate program
☐ Regional Conference(s)
☐ National Conference(s)
☐ Professional Organization(s)
☐ Self-directed reading
☐ On-the-job training
☐ Other:


Years of professional parish ministry experience:


The following items are in reference to your parish of employment.

Parish setting:

☐ Urban
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural
Parish size:

- 500 families or fewer
- 501-1000 families
- 1001-2000 families
- 2001 or more families

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

My parish of employment has adequate material resources for my work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please click the forward button below to advance to the next page.

Would you be willing to participate in a call-in focus group to help the researcher learn more about your thoughts around working with adult volunteers?

- Yes
- No

Thank you! Please provide your name and contact information below. Your answers to all survey items will remain confidential.

First Name
Last Name
Email Address
Phone Number

Please click the forward button to submit your responses to this survey.
Appendix B

Emails and Flyer for Promotion of Survey to Potential Participants

Date: 10/3/2017

Subject: How do you discern in your work? A quick survey for a doctoral dissertation

Dear Faith Formation Professional,

My name is Anthony Paz and I am conducting a study on the attitudes and practices of lay parish professionals as part of my doctoral dissertation at the University of Portland. My research seeks to learn about the ways professional catechetical leaders engage and form adult volunteers. To this end, I have a short survey that I hope you will take. It should not take more than 10 minutes of your time.

As a former parish catechetical leader and a college campus minister, I know that committed and faithful volunteer leaders are essential partners in our work. Ultimately, these adult volunteers are key to the health and future of the Catholic Church in the US and to the effective proclamation of the Gospel. Your participation in this survey will contribute to the development of new suggestions for forming the volunteers we work with.

This survey is completely confidential and voluntary. It poses no risk to participants. Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at 503-943-7863 or paz@up.edu.

To learn a little bit more about this survey and proceed to take it, please click this link or copy and paste it into your web browser:
https://uportland.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7UKLV1CqKhYB5TT.

Sincerely,

Anthony Dallas Paz
Doctoral Candidate
University of Portland
Dear Faith Formation Professional,

This is just a quick reminder to add your voice to a doctoral study on lay ecclesial ministers. If you have already taken it, thank you! If not, it should not take more than 5 minutes of your time.

The survey will close on Oct. 16th. This survey is completely confidential and voluntary. It poses no risk to participants. Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at 503-943-7863 or paz@up.edu.

To learn a little bit more about this survey and proceed to take it, please click this link or copy and paste it into your web browser: https://uportland.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7UKLV1CqKhYB5TT.

Sincerely,

Anthony Dallas Paz
Doctoral Candidate, Education
University of Portland
Dear Catechetical Leader,

Greetings! I am making one final request for professional lay ministers to contribute to my doctoral study on attitudes and practices among catechetical leaders. If you have already participated, I am deeply thankful! If not, please take 5 minutes to fill out a quick survey.

The survey will close today, Oct. 16th. This survey is completely confidential and voluntary. It poses no risk to participants. Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at 503-943-7863 or paz@up.edu.

To learn a little bit more about this survey and proceed to take it, please click this link or copy and paste it into your web browser: https://uportland.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7UKLV1CqKhYB5TT.

Sincerely,

Anthony Dallas Paz
Doctoral Candidate, Education
University of Portland
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

Discerning Disciples: Attitudes and Practices of Catechetical Leaders
Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Anthony Dallas Paz, from the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND Educational Doctorate Program. I hope to learn more about the attitudes and practices of lay catechetical leaders regarding their work with adult volunteers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you participated in a survey on the same subject and indicated that you were open to participating in a follow-up focus group.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to voice or video conference into an online focus group. This focus group will last no more than 1 hour. The audio from the focus group will be recorded and transcribed.

You may be asked to discuss your personal experiences, behaviors, and relationships at your place of employment. I hope that the data you provide can lead to a clearer understanding of best practices for the profession of catechetical leadership and improve the way lay ministers promote discipleship in their parishes. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by changing names of participants and parishes in the transcription.
Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the University of Portland. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Anthony Paz at 503-943-7863 or paz@up.edu. You may also contact Dr. Kimberly Ilosvay, Ed.D., faculty advisor, at ilosvay@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Signature:___________________________

Date:_____________________________
Appendix D

Focus Group Protocol

Attitudes and Practices of Catechetical Leaders

Introduction Text

Thank you for calling in to this focus group as a follow up to the survey you participated in earlier this year. My name is Anthony Paz and I am the principal researcher for this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives and practices of professional lay catechetical leaders, especially regarding their work with adult volunteers. You will be asked questions designed to offer insight into some of the data collected through the survey. Please simply share your honest opinions. Your sincere feedback will help to make sense of the findings of the survey. After the conclusion of the focus group, the information we discussed will be categorized into themes and topics and analyzed. It will then be incorporated into the findings of my dissertation. Your personal information will not be connected to any results from this focus group or to any results from the survey.

I have emailed you a consent form which you can sign electronically. By signing this form, you are agreeing to participate in this focus group. It is important to me that you are at ease with sharing in this setting. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason signing this form, you are free exit the application. Please take a moment to read the form and sign it. Please save it and return it to me via email.

Before we begin, I would like to go over a few ground rules for the focus group. These are in place to ensure that all of you feel comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions.

Ground Rules:

1. Confidentiality – Please respect the confidentiality of your peers. The researcher will not connect any identifying information with anything you share.
2. *One Speaker at a Time* – Only one person should speak at a time in order to make sure that we can all hear what everyone is saying.

3. *Introduce Yourself Each Time You Speak* – This will help so much with transcription and following individual thought processes. I will not include names or identifying information in the final document.

4. *Use Respectful Language* – In order to facilitate an open discussion, please avoid any statements or words that may be offensive to other members of the group.

5. *Open Discussion* – This is a time for everyone to feel free to express their opinions and viewpoints. You will not be asked to reach consensus on the topics discussed. There will be no right or wrong answers.

6. *Participation is Important* – It is important that everyone’s voice is shared and heard in order to make this the most productive focus group possible. Please speak up if you have something to add to the conversation!

**Questions**

1. Imagine that your pastor has asked for a written evaluation of the effectiveness of your catechist formation efforts. How would you react? How would you gather information for him?

2. Imagine that your Diocese or Archdiocese has requested that all parish programs of religious education administer a standardized assessment of catechetical formation for catechists and volunteers. How would this make you feel?

3. What, in your opinion, is the most essential outcome for catechesis?
   a. Is it ever possible to know whether you as a professional have facilitated this outcome for your students?

4. When you train adult volunteers, what are some examples of goals or objectives that you have for their formation?

5. Do you believe it is possible for you to know whether a volunteer is a disciple? Why or why not?

6. Do you discern whether an adult volunteer has progressed in discipleship through their formation? How do you evaluate whether that has happened?

7. How do you learn whether a program has been effective at accomplishing its goals?