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**Meet the Needs**

**of the Young Christians**

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INTRODUCTION.

The Research Project &

a Sketch of Palm Beach County

In order to understand what is being written in this transcript, it is of importance to have some knowledge about two main things. First of all, we will describe our research project and how we accomplished it. This is taken straight out of our Plan of Action, approved by our university and the organization we are doing this for (Youth for Christ, Palm Beach County, Florida).

Secondly, it is convenient to know what the characteristics of the place are where we are conducting it in. This is of importance, because it gives us an idea about the culture of this place and the culture influences our research. Therefore, we will explain the American culture, give some words to the history of Palm Beach County, display some facts about the place, explain the educational system, describe the different districts, and give a conclusion on how this effects our research project.

# I.1 Our Research Project

We are two students, studying Social Work in the Netherlands, at the university named ‘Christelijke Hogeschool Ede’. For our senior final project, we are required to conduct a research and write a transcript on a specific topic concerning our study. This meant that we were going to spend three months in the Netherlands or overseas, doing something for some organization of our choice, related to Social Work. After several attempts, we were welcomed in Palm Beach County, Florida, USA, by Youth for Christ. Living among the locals, we were able to spend our 87 days in the American culture, conducting our research. Below, we will give a concise description of what that research project is on.

## I.1.1 Main focus

*“How can we best advice YFC and the local churches in Palm Beach County on the needs[[1]](#footnote-1) of the converted young[[2]](#footnote-2)Christians who are in contact[[3]](#footnote-3) with Youth for Christ?”*

## I.1.2 Sub Questions

1. Who is Youth for Christ and how can you describe Palm Beach County?
2. What are the main characteristics of the youth within Palm Beach County?
3. How is the Christian faith acted out in Florida, culturally based?
4. What are the needs of the youth[[4]](#footnote-4), concerning their faith, personal development[[5]](#footnote-5) and social network[[6]](#footnote-6)?
5. How can YFC and the local churches[[7]](#footnote-7) contribute to these needs?
   1. What do they already offer the youth?
   2. What extra is necessary?

## I.1.3 Methods

This is a quality focused research project. That means that it will be based on verbal sources of information, rather than statistical proof. We will describe our work and research methods per sub question.

**Sub question 1**

* Literature research on YFC and Palm Beach County
* Interview with the Executive Director
* Questions in our interviews with others

**Sub question 2**

* Literature research on the youth in Palm Beach County (library, internet)
* Ask information by YFC (observation and interviews)
* Informal questioning with youth (phone calls)
* Questions in our interviews with churches

**Sub question 3**

* Literature research on (involved) churches, mission statements, and core values. (internet)
* Questions in our interviews with all three parties
* Conversational information with Christian locals (YFC, churches, acquaintances)
* Visiting different churches

**Sub question 4**

* Book: “Kerk voor een nieuwe generatie”, Sabine van der Heijden, 2012
* Contact with author of the book.
* Literature research on what others have already researched and written on this topic.
* 7 Structured interview with youth
* 4 structured interviews with YFC staff members
* 4 structured interviews with church members/leaders
* Informal questioning of the youth via phone calls or email contact

**Sub question 5**

* 4 Structured interviews with YFC staff members
* 4 Structured interviews with the local churches
* 7 Structured interviews with youth
* Our educational text books concerning this topic

An account for the number of interviews, in other words the criteria for the interviews, is elaborated on in I.1.6.

## I.1.4 Data Sources

* *Youth for Christ*: their experiences, their vision, their working methods, their strengths, their challenges, their desires, their partnerships.
* *The youth*: what subculture do they live in, what happens in their lives once they become Christian, what are their desires and how are they met, and what is still missing?
* *The churches*: what have they already tried when it comes to engaging teens, what is their vision on YFC and their work, their partnerships/ministries, in what way do they want to attract the teens, etc.?
* *Our American Hosts and other locals*: observation, experiencing their way of living and questioning
* *Our professional background information:* on adolescents, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, giving professional advice, etc.

## I.1.5 Coaching

During our preparation time and the three month period that we have been in West Palm Beach, working on this project, we have had two kinds of coaching.

1. From our university (CHE), we have had several talks with a professor while we were still in the Netherlands. He was assigned to coach us through this final project. When we were in Florida, we had email contact with that same coach. He gave us critical notes on the things we had already accomplished, helped us move in the right direction with the things we were still trying to accomplish and gave us our final grade in the end.
2. According to the information that our university has given us, the person who coached us in Florida has been responsible for the following things:
   1. Offering us your help, through giving us coaching time, working space, consult possibilities, and faculties that enhance our effort to realize our goals
   2. Coaching us on the content and the process of this project, helping us getting acquainted with the organization YFC
   3. The attendance at our final presentation, at the end of those three months, in which we tell YFC our results
   4. Giving us a professional 'grade', to give us and school an indication of the quality of our work

Our coach from the university is Erik Arendsen.

Our coach from the organization is Scott Sjoblom.

## I.1.6 Criteria for the Interviews

A cord of three strands is not easily torn apart. It is one of the strongest ropes. Based on that piece of logic, we decided to focus our research on three different groups. To get an answer to our main question, we wanted to be in close contact with three parties: the youth (kids with the ages 12 through 18), the Youth for Christ staff members, and the local churches. We decided on this because it is YFC’s main focus to work together with the local churches (see 1.1). Contact with other involved parties, like family members and/or teachers seemed to only muddy up the waters. Since our main focus is on the youth and how YFC and the local churches can work together to meet those needs, we are convinced that this makes a solid case.

**Youth**

As stated in our plan of action, we made a calculated decision on how to decide on our criteria as to whom we would interview. Since this is a quality based interview, and not a quantity based, we were searching for people who could form good representatives from the youth that YFC reaches on a regular basis. We decided on two criteria, besides the obvious one that they need to have become a Christian in the time that they have been in contact with YFC.

1. We wanted youth from each ministry site that YFC has, within reasonable bounds. That means that we talk to kids from the JAM clubs, Campus Life, Teen Moms, Girl Talk, and 1.21.
2. Within those ministries, we want youth from each gender, as far as that is possible. Teen moms and Girl Talk obviously only have young ladies and the 1.21 only has guys. JAM club and Campus Life can provide both girls and boys.

All in all, that means that we have 7 interviews with the youth: a boy and a girl from the JAM clubs, a boy and a girl from the Campus Life, one girl from Teen Moms, one girl from Girl Talk, and one boy from 1.21.

**Youth for Christ Staff Members**

For the interviews with the YFC staff members, we wanted to use two categories for liable information. It is dependable on gender and working years with youth (less than 4 years and more than 10 years). Therefore, four different staff members based on their:

1. Gender, because they might have a different view on this line of work.
2. Work experience: Their experience may make a difference in their approach.

**Local Churches**

For the interviews with the churches, we wanted to use two categories for liable information. It is dependable on the lifespan of the church (shorter than 3 and longer than 10) and on their involvement with YFC. Therefore: 4 different kinds of church members. Their lifespan is important, because how long they have been around puts a perspective on how they function. And their involvement impacts their approach, their answers to our interview questions and what advice we can formulate from that.

# I.1.7 Who Did We Interview

For this research project, we interviewed seven youth, four YFC staff members and four churches. The criteria for talking with those people are listed above (I.1.6). Below, we will briefly describe who the actual persons are, because one will find their names throughout this transcript.

**Youth**

1. Julia Pieris a 12 year old girl, involved with JAM club
2. Adakyn Edwin Vega a 14 year old boy, involved with JAM club
3. Cole Wagler a 16 year old boy, involved with Campus Life
4. Saija Wilson an 18 year old girl, involved with Campus Life
5. Loriana Jiruad a 17 year old girl, involved with Teen Moms
6. Esmaralda Rodriguez a 13 year old girl, involved with Girl Talk
7. Anonymous a 13 year old boy, involved with Guy Talk 1.21

**Youth for Christ Staff Members**

1. Kim Barrantes a 43 year old woman, involved with YFC for 11 years
2. Emily Day a 29 year old woman, involved with YFC for 3 years
3. Kent Green a 54 year old man, involved with YFC for 25 years
4. Mark Wiles a 31 year old man, involved with YFC for 4 years

**Local Churches**

1. Aaron Fillipone a pastor of the First Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, which has been in

existence for 110 years and is not actively involved with YFC.

1. Jim Sims a pastor of Grace Fellowship, which has been in existence for about 20

years and is actively involved with YFC.

1. Chris Tress the pastor of Bow Down Church, which started 2 years ago and is not

actively involved with YFC.

1. Jeremy McKeen the lead pastor of Truth Point Church, which has been in existence for 2,5

years and is actively involved with YFC

**Informal Interviews**

1. Chris a middle school aged boy, involved with JAM club - phone call
2. Jessica a middle school aged girl, involved with JAM club - e-mail
3. David Killian a young, male YFC staff member
4. Scott Sjoblom our coach, also a YFC staff member for the past 10 years
5. Julius Sennes youth pastor of First Nazarene Church of Lake Worth.

# I.2 American Culture (Claes & Gerritsen, 2007)

Below will be described how our Dutch culture compares with the American culture. We split it up in different subject, as issued in “Culturele Waarden en Communicatie”, by M. Claes and M. Gerritsen. We want to make this distinction, because cultural sensitivity is required if one wants to analyze results and formulate fitting advice. And we chose for this method of description, because the points that this method describes are very concrete and useful for us. Also, the differences in communication (verbal and non verbal) are specifically helpful in our situation. We think that these aspects are important to know for our research, because when we do our research project in America, we would have to communicate with the people there in many different situations. Understanding one another is of the essence.

## I.2.1 Hierarchy

In the United States there is more hierarchy than in the Netherlands. In America there can be a big difference between people who are poor and those who are rich. That is more accepted than in the Netherlands. You can see an important difference in communication: the Dutch people are more direct than American people. To be civil and polite is really important in America.

## I.2.2 Individualism versus Collectivism

Both cultures are individualistic, the Americans even more so. Values are: equality of opportunity, independence, initiative and self-reliance. A cause for individualism in America could be the hugeness the country. They aren’t (strongly) depended on other countries.

## I.2.3 Masculinity versus Feminity

The Dutch culture is (like the Swedish) a really feministic culture. That means that values like welfare, union, and separation between work and private situations stand in high regard. But the American culture is masculine. Values like: competitive, assertiveness, ‘the winner takes all’ etc. are bigger here. In a discussion, the Americans are more ‘to the point’ than Dutch people.

## I.2.4 Avoid Uncertainties

At this point, there isn’t a big difference between the Dutch and the American people. The American undertaking climate is higher than in Holland, as would be evident in their boost of initiatives. However, Holland is more undertaking in business deals.

In America you are a hero if you try something that nobody has tried before.(Lok, 2010)

## I.2.5 Long Term Focus versus Short Term Focus

America has a high level of short term focus. That means that they value success, entertainment, pleasure and following the trends. Short and intense concentration is delivered while in duty or for quick results. People compare themselves frequently to others, for example their neighbours. When they invest, it would be culturally agreeable that they consider the profit for a year ahead instead of for ten years. (Nunez, 2007)

## I.2.6 Communication

* *Explicit use of language*: direct communication
* *Structural indicators*: everything has its place
* *Not a word too many*: Americans are famous for their extensive explanations and their enthusiastic responses. In Holland it would seem exaggerated. They ask many questions and formulate their opinion about any and all topics.
* *Non-verbal communication*: mainly female facial expressions are larger here than in Holland. There is good eye-contact, even in large groups. People laugh and/or smile quickly.
* *‘In a nutshell’ as opening*: Americans are to the point, without being rude.
* *Questioning*: clear and specific.
* *Giving of information*: when asked.

# I.3 History of Palm Beach County

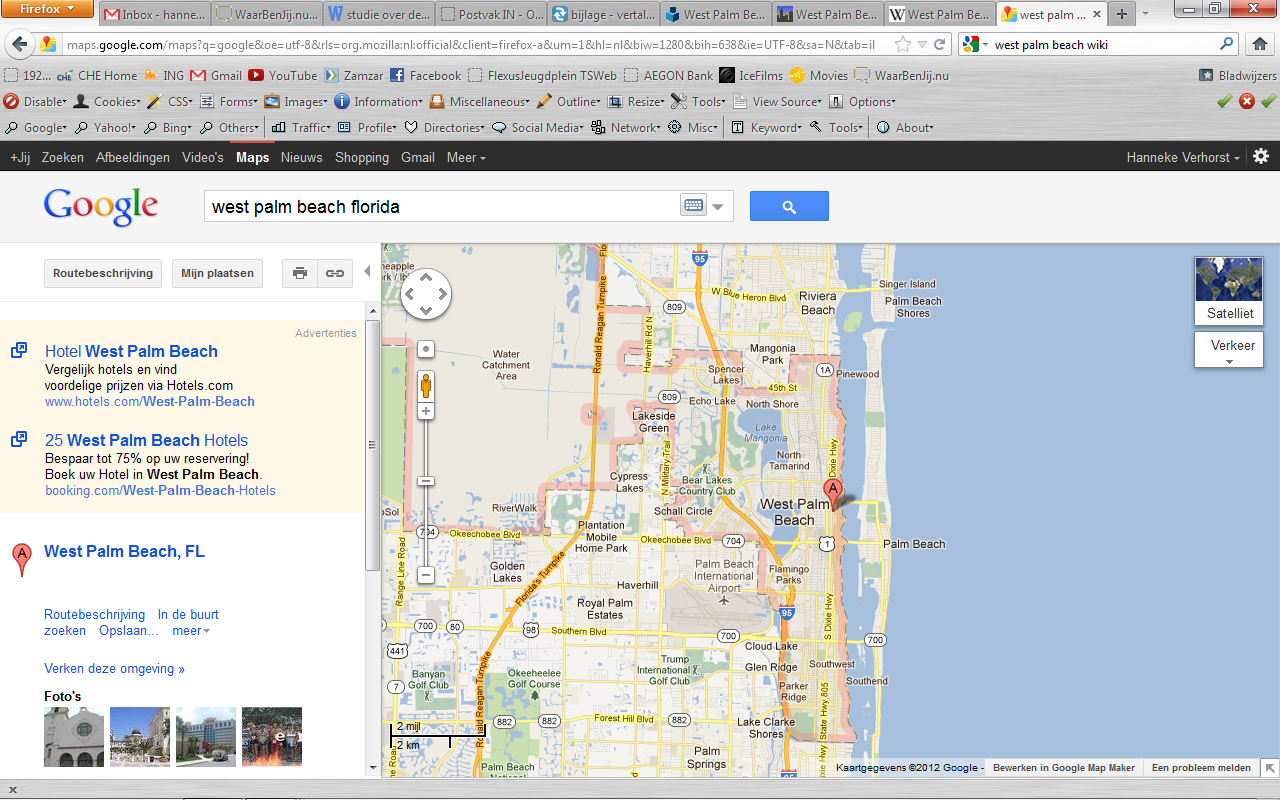
The history of a place has significant impact on how the people live in that area. The history of Palm Beach County is well known among its residents and can still be noticed by the way the county is divided up into different sections.

Henry Morrison Flagler was the man who founded Palm Beach County in 1893. He had a dual plan for this area: he turned Palm Beach into a resort and he build a commercial city across the lake for his workers. This ‘worker city’ would become beautiful West Palm Beach. (History of West Palm Beach) The originally spelling of Palm Beach County was ‘Westpalmbeach’. From 1920 to 1927 the city’s population was growing and growing and everything grew including schools, farms, hotels, and theatres. Flagler had also made a railway from North to South Florida, with a station in Palm Beach County. Then he went on to make the final stop in Miami. (West Palm Beach, Florida, 2012) All his workers lived along that railway, which were mostly black people. To this day, the areas closest tothe railway have a high black population and are considered the ‘rough’ area of the county.

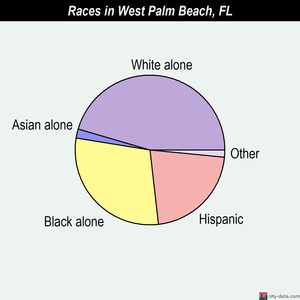
After 1945, a lot of veterans moved to the city and so the city exploded into a new era of progress. (History of West Palm Beach)Between 1950 and 1960 Palm Beach County was the fourth fastest growing area in the United States. Since the 1960s, criminality became a serious issue and by early 1990s homes were forsaken in the downtown area. That same region was then renovated and made into a blooming shopping area. The Clematis Street, a well-known shopping street of Palm Beach County, is an example of that overturn.(West Palm Beach, Florida, 2012)

# I.4 Facts about Palm Beach County

West Palm Beach has a population of 0,99 million people, with a density of 1805 people per square mile. It is the third most populous city in Florida. This part of South Florida has a subtropical climate, the temperatures swaying between 27 degrees Fahrenheit in January and 90.1 degrees Fahrenheit in the July/August. The winter is characterized by droughts and the summers are usually humid and rainy. (West Palm Beach, Florida, 2012)

Sports are a big deal. Golf, croquet, polo and the likes are sophisticated sports, practiced by many in this county. In fact, in May 2009 Palm Beach County hosted the World Championship for croquet and this city has 7 polo fields of world-renown quality for the 40 weeks a year that polo and equestrian competitions are held.(West Palm Beach, Florida, 2012)

This city is has a diversity that will scatter a unaccustomed mind. Palm Beach, which is the island to the east of Palm Beach County, is one of the wealthiest places in all of the USA. In West Palm Beach, there are also many wealthy people. Sadly, the more one travels west, the poorer the community gets. The average income for a household in 2009 was $43,724. However, 20.5% of the population lived below the poverty line. 10.1% of the total population was registered to be unemployed in 2011. (West Palm Beach, Florida, 2011)



However, Palm Beach County is not only known for its diversity in wealth, but also in ethnicities. See statistics below on the right.

*White alone - 44.2%*

*Black alone - 30.1%*

*Hispanic - 23.2%*

*Asian alone - 2.0%*

*Two or more races - 1.0%*

*Other race alone - 0.4%*

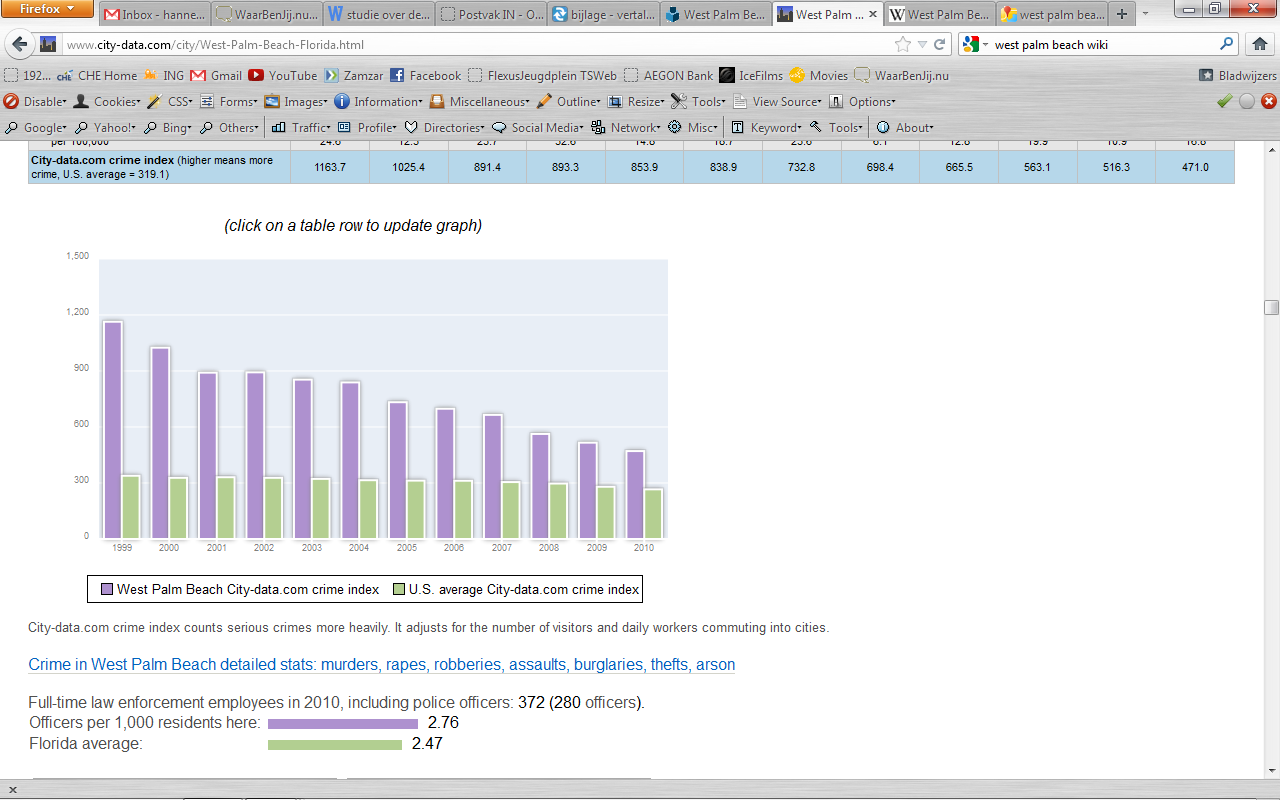
*American alone - 0.1%*

*Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone - 0.05%*

(West Palm Beach, Florida, 2011)

This diversity in ethnicity has a big impact on the community. Most schools find it a challenge to communicate with the children, but mostly the parents, because of the fact that their mother tongue is more often than not something other than English. But besides creative communication methods, Palm Beach County also feels the impact of different cultural values on its community. Some cultures mix in quite well, others cling together and are felt to be very different from the ‘white American culture’. The Haitian community is a good example of a culture that can clash with the western culture. This can be the cause of racial separation and/or miscommunication.

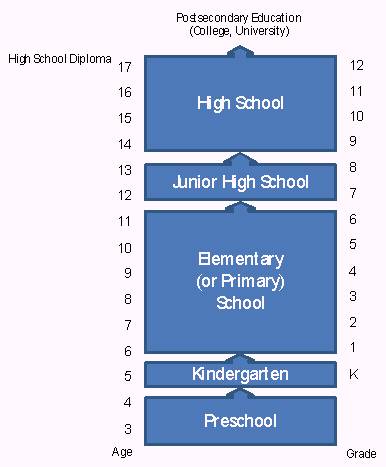
Another impact on this county is the fact that many retired people from up north come to spend their last years in south Florida. True Floridians have told us: those people are not as friendly, have a more ‘cold’ culture compared to the laidback, warm and welcoming culture they originally had here.



The crime rates are decreasing, but are still higher than the average crime rates of North America (see statistical table on the left). Some neighborhoods are quiet and one can see the organized housing and sophistication. In other neighborhoods the nights are pierced with gunshots as a commonality. The locals express their concern about the population near the railway and in the inner city, since most crime seems to originate in those areas. Once again, one cannot define Palm Beach County in a simple phrase more accurate than: ‘scattered with extremes.’

# I.5 Educational System

Palm Beach County has a lot of schools. They have 33 Middle Schools and 23 High Schools, and 107 Elementary schools. (The School District of Palm Beach County, 2011)



We want to describe the school system in this area/country, because our research project will have a lot to do with them. The image on the right is a display of how the schools in America proceed one another. (Lindler, 2008) Junior High School is most commonly known as “Middle School”.

The schools in Palm Beach County differ immensely in comparison to each other. Some schools have a big diversity in nationalities, others are mostly black or white.

“Top languages spoken by students in the Palm Beach County School District:

1. English 125,679

2. Spanish 31,273

3. Haitian Creole 13,785

4. Portuguese 1,503

5. Vietnamese 571” (Schultz, 2011)

As can be seen above, most schools experience the challenge of many different languages, due to their ethnic diversities.

There are schools where a ‘three meals per day’ program is in use. This means that the kids on that school, with the right indication, get breakfast, lunch, a snack and dinner during school hours, which is supplied by the government. Other schools, like private schools, are known for their wealth and status. They would still have a cafeteria, but will have to buy their own food with their own money.

Every school has their own quality indication. A school with the letter A is recognized as a high quality school with a good education system, financial regulations, etc. Those schools are usually located in the more affluent neighborhoods. Schools with a quality indication of a D or F are known to provide less quality in their offered education and could be less wealthy. In some schools, if a child is in a C school, they have to have straight C’s or higher in order to graduate. Other schools could let any kid pass, just so that their reputation stays protected. It is safe to say that some parts of the Palm Beach community discuss the idea that the school system for the youth could go up on quality.

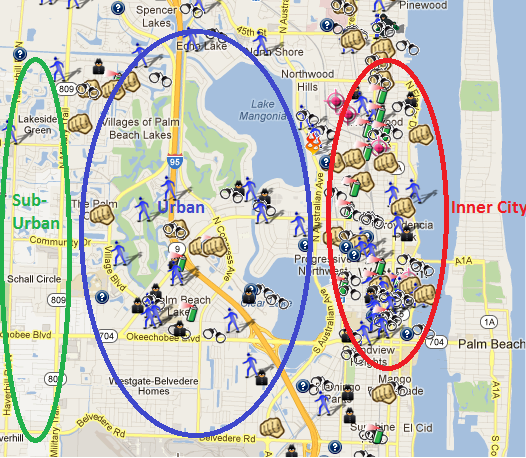
The youth born in a specific area is forced to go to the school located there. Parents will have to move if they want their kid to go to a different school.

School busses are the main transportation for the kids. Those busses go to the elementary schools first at 7:30 am, pass the high schools next at 8:30 am and the middle schools start at 9:20 am. This means that the youth between the ages of 12 and 14 have a period of time in which their parents are already at work and they wait till school starts. The high school students are done at an earlier time then their parents get home from work, and therefore have the same situation as the middle school students before school: they wait. Therefore, Youth for Christ has a middle school event before school hours and a high school event after school hours, to fill their time in order that the youth does not get themselves in uncomfortable situations.

We spend this much time on explaining the educational system of Palm Beach County, because Youth for Christ spends most of their times on those campuses and is depended on their good graces. More about this in chapter 1.

# I.6 Regions of Palm Beach County

We want to say something about the different regions in Palm Beach County. We do this, so that our interviews and results may be understood with this background in mind. There are a lot of different districts in Palm Beach County, and they all have different characteristics. We can describe all the different districts and talk about their history and their characteristics, but we think it is better to tell more about the districts in a broader sense. We will talk in a generalized fashion, because after this description we will not come back to it in the rest of our transcript. Therefore we want to use regions instead of districts. Those regions are: inner city, urban and suburban. This description fits better in our transcript. Details are not important in this area, because we don’t give advice to one district of Palm Beach County, we give advice to the whole region.



As we said, we are going to explain the different regions of the inner city, the urban region and the suburban region. This is about how a city has taken form over the years. As an example, we want to use the map of West Palm Beach, the largest city in Palm Beach County and the place where we lived for three months. One can see this map in the figure to the left. In this figure, you see different circles, which show the different areas of the city: the red one is the inner city, the blue one is the urban region and the green one is the suburban region. Looking closer, one can also see different symbols in this same image. These symbols shows the different kinds of crimes in West Palm Beach. We are of the opinion that the type of crime is not as important to show as where the crime is located. Therefore we will not go in to detail about the different kinds. As we stated in I.4, there is a lot of crime in Pam Beach County. In this figure, you see how it is spread out in the different areas.

## I.6.1 The Inner City

The definition of the term ‘inner city’: “The usually older, central part of a city, especially when characterized by crowded neighborhoods in which low-income, often minority groups predominate.” (Mifflin, Inner City, 2009)

This definition immediately gives us some characteristics of the inner city. First off, it is the most central part of a city. In many cases, this means that the population density is the highest in this region. People live near each other, in small houses or apartments. Secondly, another character of the inner city is that there are poorer people and many ethnicities. This can cause a lot of friction and desperation. In the figure on the previous page, you see in the map of West Palm Beach the different regions. Looking at the circle indicating the Inner City region, one can see a lot of symbols. This means that there is a lot of crime present. This image only displays West Palm Beach. But places like Lake Worth and Delray Beach, which are also part of Palm Beach County, have the same occurrence: there is a lot of crime in the inner city.

Through contact with YFC staff members and informal conversations, we heard that there is more poverty with the people who live in the inner city. As can be seen in the figure on the previous page, one can spot that the inner city is near the inner coastal and that is where the railway is. In I.3 we talked about the history of Palm Beach County, and said that the people who live around the railway are often poor. This area around the railway is often called the inner city region in Palm Beach County.

## I.6.2 The Urban Area

The definition of ‘urban’ is rather interesting: “Urban refers to a city; urbane means polished and smooth, as in a person's demeanor.” (Urban, 2012) Stating that it is polished and smooth is a good comparison to what the inner city is.

The area to the west of the inner city is called the urban area. Normally, the population density is less in the urban region than in the inner city. The environment is better in the urban area, because people have more privacy and bigger houses. There is less crime in this area, as you can see in the figure on the previous page. This more pleasant environment is probably a result the fact that the people who live there are wealthier. But still, there is some poverty and crime.

## I.6.3 The Suburban Area

The suburban area of West Palm Beach is the area with the green circle on the map that you can see above. A suburb is “a residential district situated on the outskirts of a city or town.” (Suburb, 2009) The suburban area is an area not close to the city, it is more country style. In Florida, there are a lot of farmers in the suburban area. Usually, the suburban areas are located at the west side of Florida. Because the inner cities are near the inner coastal, where the railroad is, they are located at the east side of Florida.

As you can see in the figure on the previous page, there is less crime in the suburban area. This could be because people do not live as close to one another, since another characteristic of this area is that people have more space/room by their houses. The fact that they have more room does not automatically mean that they have more money. The population density is slim. If you want to go to the city or go shopping, you have to drive for maybe 30 minutes or more. Children who are going to school have to travel a lot. The people who live in the suburban area sometimes have the nickname ‘redneck’: “a disparaging term for a member of the white rural laboring class, especially in the southern United States.” (Mifflin, Redneck, 2009)

# I.7 Conclusion

First of all, one can say that Palm Beach County is not specifically American cultured, because there are many other ethnicities living in this area. Those ethnicities have impact on the overall culture in Palm Beach County. However, all the youth for Christ staff members are of the white American nationality. We will therefore present our advice in a manner that is fitting within this American culture, keeping in mind that our advice itself is multi-culturally colored.

The history of Palm Beach County has its influence on the way people live here. When this city was founded, it immediately divided the rich from the poor. It is still like this today. This economic inequality often results in social cohesion. “In more equal societies, people are much more likely to trust each other, measures of social capital suggest greater community involvement, and homicide rates are consistently lower.” We can turn this around and state that a place with economic inequality, like Palm Beach County, can be a place where the local people do not trust each other much, are not very involved in their community and there is a higher crime rate. This may influence the way we may interpret interviews in different regions.

The crime rate in this area has impact on the way we plan to act out our research. In communication with our coach, we might come to the conclusion that we need some guidance or some supervision in the neighborhoods where the crime is daily. Apart from this, we do not want to make any distinctions.

# I.8 What is Next

This chapter was an introduction, in order to put the coming chapters into perspective. The next chapter will describe what this organization, Youth for Christ, is and how that effects our research project. In combination with this introduction, chapter 1 answers our first sub question. Chapter two is about the second sub question, namely giving a description of the youth in this county. Chapter three is focused around the third sub question: the Christian faith in Florida. We will add a description of the partnership between YFC and the churches, because we have found that the youth have great benefit by going to church with all three areas we are researching. The fourth chapter will give the reader information on our interviews and what the needs of the youth are, according to the youth, the YFC staff members and the pastors we have spoken to. Chapter 5 will be committed to answering the question: what has been said about YFC’s and the local churches’ contribution to meet the needs of the youth described in chapter 4. And lastly, in chapter 6, we will formulate advice and describe our own ideas of improvement for Youth for Christ to do something with. This will be backed up with literature and professionalism, making a link with our social work/counseling study.

CHAPTER 1.

Who is Youth for Christ

Youth for Christ is a worldwide organization, known for their heart for the young generation. It shares the gospel with the youth in over 100 countries and reaches them through exciting events so that they can be given opportunities to become a true follower of Jesus Christ. (About Youth for Christ, 2012)

The following information given on this organization is collected by observation, internet, and experience. We also talked with the executive director and our coach, in order to understand and interpret the information correctly. This entire chapter is based on the Youth for Christ specifically in Palm Beach County.

# 1.1 Mission

“Youth for Christ pursues unreached teenagers throughout Palm Beach County with the life changing message of Jesus Christ, working together with the local church and other likeminded partners to raise up lifelong followers of Jesus.”

# 1.2 How the Organization of YFC Palm Beach County Works

In this section of our transcript, we will want to paint a picture of how this organization works. For this, we picked a few topics that we talked with people about, in order to get a well rounded idea. First, we will describe how the financial aspects are settled. Then the tasks of the staff members will be described and lastly there is a section to list some qualities/character traits that the staff members are required to have. This is of importance to know, because it explains the culture of the organization and it gives us an idea on how to relate to them best.

## 1.2.1 Financially

After our interview with the executive director, Bill Hochstettler, we want to give a description about the regulations on the finances/salaries for the staff members working with Youth for Christ. The regulations on salaries can be compared to a missionary. Because “*all the staff members are responsible for raising their own money. YFC gives one third of their salary; they raise the rest by their own support.” (B. Hochstettler)*

*“If they are behind in their fund raising, we advise them to spend 14 hours per week with donors. And most people are behind. But if you are on track or ahead, we advise 5 hours per week. ... I personally spend 80% of that time with my top 20% of donors, and I make sure that I can see all my donors once a month.” (S. Sjoblom)*

Most of the support comes from churches and some from family or friends:

“*There is a limit in what they can raise. Each year they set a budget. The money that is raised comes first into the office. We agree upon a salary, depending on how much they raise. Each year can therefore differ.” (B. Hochstettler).*

During team meetings there is time to see how much money you have raised, for yourself and for the other staff members. There is time to ask questions about it and see how much every staff member has raised in the last month.

## 1.2.2 Tasks

There are different tasks to be filled within YFC, Palm Beach County. All of the hired staff works between 45 to 50 hours per week.

Overall, they spend that time with three different target groups: kids, adult leaders and donors.

The work that YFC does can be compared to a three leg stool. Every leg is a different kind of work:

* Work with the youth
* Work with the adult leaders
* Contact with donors

**Youth**

They spend equal amounts of time on every leg of the stool per week. One third of their time goes into spending working with the kids and the youth in several ministry groups, like Girl Talk and JAMclubs. Some of the staff members also have contact with the parents of those kids. One reason for that can be to explain what they are doing at the schools/events, or to motivate them about YFCamp.

**Adult Leaders**

Another third of their time is put into contact with adult leaders/volunteers who work with YFC. They recruit and train them and help interns raise support. Some of the staff members supervise and oversee the adult leaders of groups and coordinate a lot of things for or with them.

**Donors**

They also spend a chunk of their time with their supports or donors. That time can consist of going out for lunch, playing golf, or talking to them on the phone. That is important for the next reason: *“To build relationships and help them to use their gift of giving.” (S. Sjoblom).* The staff members have the responsibility to raise their own money.

*“Nine out of the ten times we spend time together, we do not talk about money. I certainly don’t ask for anything.” (S. Sjoblom).* For him, it is about real relationships.

While being in contact with donors/supporters, it is important to do the following three things:

1. Thank them
2. Give them an update
3. Encourage them

**Rapports**

*“Weekly reports to their supervisor”* are required of all staff members. “*The supervisor reviews it before they have a talk about how they spend their time and who he sees, etc.” (B. Hochstettler)*

There is one executive director by YFC Palm Beach County, who is in charge of his staff, is involved with the board members and works on the fund raising.

## 1.2.3 Staff Members Qualities

In our interview with Bill we asked what kind of qualities the staff members should possess, should they want to be part of the team. He answered that question with the following words:

* Commitment to the Lord
* Respect for the Scripture
* Willingness to self start (motivation, initiative)
* Are mission directors instead of missionaries.

Those qualities are of importance for the staff members to do their work with YFC.

Personally, we noticed that the staff members also have a flexibility and low-level-entry-approach about them that can attract the youth and volunteers. A quote from a JAM club girl and a senior pastor shows how the YFC staff members make contact with different kinds of people. They can be young or old, it doesn’t matter, the staff members are good in make contact and build a relationship in a variety of ways.

*“I bumped into a Scott in the school hallways, we started talking and I got invited to JAM club.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“They have a willingness to have anyone who wants to help. ... YFC does not feel the temptation to lay their own standard onto their volunteers. Great entry level ministry.” (J. McKeen)*

# 1.3 What They Do

Youth for Christ is involved in a lot of different areas of teenagers lives. Below will be listed what their vision is, concerning the three main areas, derived from their mission stated above. They hope these visions will be a reality by the year of 2020. Secondly, it will be named and described the different events YFC offers the youth in Palm Beach County. And lastly we give words to other possible opportunities they present to the teens.

## 1.3.1 Vision

“We will reach out to every segment of youth culture in Palm Beach County in integrity, clarity and consistency. While being grounded in Scripture and following Christ’s example of love, compassion and conviction, we will be creative, dynamic and adaptable in order to reach teens in ways that are relevant to them.”

## 1.3.2 Ministries (Our Ministries, 2011)

In this section, there will be a description of the history and mission of each of the ministry events that YFC offers the youth. But first, there is an overview of all the schools reached with the YFC ministries. Every week, more than 2000 students are in contact with YFC.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Middle Schools | High Schools |
| Bear Lakes\* | [Jupiter High School](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/ministry_profile/jupiter_high_schoolCL/) |
| **Belle Glade** | [Palm Beach Central High School](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/ministry_profile/palm_beach_central_high_schoolCL/)\* |
| [Boca Middle](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/boca_middle_school/) | [Royal Palm Beach High School](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/ministry_profile/royal_palm_beach_high_schoolCL/) |
| [Christa McAuliffe](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/christa_mcauliffe_middle_school/) | [Wellington High School](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/ministry_profile/wellington_high_schoolCL/)\* |
| [Conniston](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/conniston_middle_school/) |  |
| [Crestwood](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/crestwood_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Emerald Cove](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/emerald_cove_middle_school/) |  |
| [Independance](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/independence_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Jupiter](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/jupiter_middle_school/) |  |
| Lake Shore |  |
| [Lake Worth Middle](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/lake_worth_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Lantana](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/lantana_middle_school/) |  |
| [Odyssey](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/odyssey_middle_school/) |  |
| [Okeeheelee](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/okeeheelee_middle_school/) |  |
| [Osceola Creek](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/osceola_creek_middle_school/) |  |
| [Palm Springs](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/palm_springs_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Polo Park](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/polo_park_middle_school/) |  |
| [Roosevelt](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/roosevelt_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Tradewinds](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/tradewinds_middle_school/) |  |
| [Watson B. Duncan](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/watson_b_duncan_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Wellington Landings](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/wellington_landings_middle_school/) |  |
| [Western Pines](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/western_pines_middle_school/)\* |  |
| [Woodlands](http://palmbeach.yfc.net/ministries/campus_life_jam/woodlands_middle_school/) |  |

*\* The schools we have visited*

**JAM Clubs**

JAM clubs are being held in the morning hours, before school starts. It is held in a gym or class room, since the activities require some physical movement. It has been the longest lasting outreach ministry of YFC in Palm Beach County and reached 23 middle schools. The team of staff and volunteers has been sharing the gospel with the community’s middle school students for over 25 years. “Since 1965, Campus Life’s ultimate mission is to mobilize Christian adults and teens so that every middle school student experiences the kind of significant Christ-revealing relationship that helps them become a lifelong follower of Jesus Christ.”

**Campus Life**

Campus Life is an after school program for high school kids. This outreach ministry has been set up in 1965, and its ultimate mission is “to mobilize Christian adults and teens so that every high school student experiences the kind of significant Christ-revealing relationship that helps them become a lifelong follower of Jesus Christ.” Campus Life has been ‘gone’ for 10 years and has recently reemerged in Palm Beach County. Four of the many high schools are being reached over the past three years and they strive for many more.

“Campus Life ministry combines healthy relationships with creative programs to help young people make good choices, establish a solid foundation for life, and positively impact their schools. Like every ministry of YFC, Campus Life seeks to engage these young people wherever they are found as lifelong followers of Jesus Christ. Campus Life encourages a balanced life – mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.”

**Girl Talk**

“Girl Talk is a small group ministry for girls designed to connect them to an adult female leader who will help them develop a loving, trusting, committed relationship with each other and Christ.” It is a program that runs either before or after school hours. Both middle schools as high schools are involved. 13 schools in total are being reached with this deepening ministry.

**Guy Talk 1.21**

“1.21 is a weekly small group strategy to mentor boys in all areas of life: physically, socially, mentally and spiritually. Because the spiritual area of life is often neglected, 121 is committed to sharing the life changing message of Jesus.” This ministry is guided by screened and trained adult male leaders. These groups meet every week “to develop relationships that promote healthy, growing young men who will become the leaders of tomorrow.” 9 **schools are being reached.**

**Teen Moms**

“Teen Moms reaches expectant and parenting teens and their children through intentional relationships with trained adults and community partnerships, empowering the teens to make good choices and encouraging them to further their education and move toward independent living and become life-long followers of Jesus Christ.”

The districts reached with this ministry are:

* [**Central West Palm Beach**](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/teen_moms/central_west_palm_beach/)
* [**Greenacres**](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/teen_moms/teen_moms_greenacres/)
* [**Lake Worth**](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/teen_moms/lake_worth/)
* [**North County**](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/teen_moms/north_county/)
* Palm Beach Lakes
* [**Rivera Beach**](http://www.yfcteens.com/ministries/teen_moms/rivera_beach/)

## 1.3.2 Events

Youth for Christ sits down every Monday morning to discuss the progress of all the ministries and events, have a devotional time and end their time with prayer. Below, the two main events that YFC plans annually are described.

**YFCamp (YFCamp, 2011)**

YFC has seen thousands of young people’s lives transformed since 2004, during amazing weeks at camp. That's why they say, “this is "WHERE EVERYTHING CHANGES".” YFC has the desire to create an environment at the YFCamp that invites God to changes the lives of young people. They want to do this “through shared experiences, outdoor challenges, and times of solitude that draw students to the heart of God within the context of authentic relationships and memorable learning experiences.” The youth have to raise the money for this event themselves, and are helped with YFC-planned fundraising opportunities.

**Golf Classic** (Golf Classic, 2011)

Golfers in Palm Beach County have supported the Golf Classic Event for the last 30 years. It is a time “to have a great day on the course and raise the money necessary to support the work of our ministry.” Over time, the Youth for Christ Golf Classic has become one of the premier tournaments of the year. A famous golfer, Bernhard Langer, often joins this event and can be credited for a large part of generous support. Dr. Pepper was one of their major sponsor again this year, “as well as 20 other friend and business sponsors from our community.” At the event, there will obviously be plenty of time to golf. But there will also be a well served dinner, a silent and live auction and opportunities to get to know your neighbors better. In total, “over $100,000 was raised for teenage outreaches in Palm Beach County.”

# 1.4 How They Do It

We retrieved this information during a team meeting and it is correctly copied into the three paragraphs below.

## 1.4.1 Empowering Others

They will recruit, equip and train adult leaders to take the lead in ministry outreach. They will actively develop youth leaders in clubs so they can reach more teens. They will seek out opportunities to empower others throughout the community, including the public school system to build an army of evangelists.

## 1.4.2 Forming Partnerships

They will be a catalyst in forming sustainable, meaningful partnerships with churches and other likeminded groups in order to more effectively evangelize and disciple teenagers. They will partner with churches so they will invest in new Christian teens in their community.

## 1.4.3 Strong Clubs/Outreach

They will have exciting clubs, trips, and events that teens want to participate in. Their approach will include a whole-person perspective resulting in deeper relationships with teens. They will also have a safe, viable online ministry. YFC will be known as a place that all teens can turn to.

# 1.5 Conclusion

At the end of this chapter, we want to conclude several things from this information that may have impact on our research project.

First of all, the quantity of youth reached by YFC is more than we anticipated. This meant that we had to adjust our plan of action and change our interview criteria. Now that we know this and the necessary adjustments have been made, it has two results:

1. we have a lot of possibilities to find youth who converted while being in contact with YFC, so planning interviews with 7 of them is realistic.
2. we need to find a creative way to get in contact with them. Just calling them up is not an option, since the youth culture is not fit for that (see chapter 2). So we will spend a lot more time visiting the ministry sites with different staff members, in order to create contact with the youth and hope that one time meeting them is enough to set up a date for an interview.

Secondly, the different kinds of ministries that YFC has, has impact on our research project since it became a criteria after we arrived. We had to adjust our plan of action again, because we want to include every ministry. That would give us a broad spectrum on the youth, as this is a quality based research. This, so that our advice will be a general one, and not specifically focused on one group.

Lastly, the mission statement of YFC influences us in two ways. First of all, they are focused on the unbelieving; they are an evangelizing organization. This means that once the youth makes that final decision, YFC has fewer opportunities to offer them. Discipling and mentoring teens is not necessarily part of their job description. They understand the need, however, and therefore want to hand this task over to the churches. That lets us arrive at our second point: churches. YFC wants good partnerships with the local churches and try hard to get churches involved. When we conducted the interviews, this kept coming up. More about the churches in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2.

Main Characteristics of the Youth

of Palm Beach County

The youth of Palm Beach County are our main focus. Because of this, it is of great importance that we know about their youth culture, so that we can place their answers, their behavior and their needs in the correct perspective. Below, we will describe many aspects of their lives, their mentality, and our own observations. We will wrap up this chapter with a conclusion.

From this chapter forth, we will be using many quotes. All the names are the actual names of the people we talked to, unless they told us they wanted to stay anonymous. One can look up the names and a short description of the person in chapter 4.1.

# 2.1 Description

This information on the youth in Palm Beach County is based on different sources. To legitimize our writing below, here is brief background information on where we derived the information from.

We first want to say something about the many ethnic backgrounds of the youth, information that comes from literature research on internet and from our observations when we visited ministry events on schools.

The information about the family background of the youth comes mostly from the interviews with YFC staff members, the youth and the pastors.

We also tell something about materialism and status and what kind of influence that has on the youth. We got that information from interviews with YFC staff members, who have a lot of contact with the youth and who know a lot about the youth culture, because they spend a lot of time with the them.

The information about how the youth usually spend their free time comes from the interviews and conversations with the youth. In those interviews we asked them how they get along with their friends and what they do with them (See attachment A.2.1, question 4).

Lastly, we did research on the characteristics of youth in general and about Christian youth. We asked the YFC staff members about the youth in general in Palm Beach County, because they spend a lot of time with youth who don’t believe in Jesus. (See attachment A.2.2, question 11). The information about the youth who are Christian comes from the interviews with the pastors. This is because in most cases, they spend time with the youth from their church during youth group or other ministries.

## 2.1.1 Many Ethnic Backgrounds

You can find many ethnic backgrounds in Palm Beach County, as described in our introduction. We have given an overview of the nationalities in Palm Beach County. A lot of kids have parents who come from Haiti, Aruba, South America, are African American, or partially European. We noticed that the people here, in general, like to trace their ancestors back to the patriotic days.

We have visited seven middle schools and two high schools. All of them were different. There are schools where you see mostly black teens, and other schools where you see almost all white people. At other times, one can notice an equal mix of different ethnicities. Therefore, it is hard, if not impossible, to categorize these schools and give a clear definition. Our observations on the schools can be found in an attachment to this transcript.

However, we made one clear observation. The youth with a darker skin colour are often less well off. It is very well possible that the majority of those kids need the ‘three meals a day and a snack’ deal that the schools offer. As we mentioned before, there are a lot of ethnic backgrounds in Palm Beach County. Ethnic differentiation goes almost always together with ethnic stratifications, because the different ethnic groups often do not have the same privileges and/or power. We saw that this also a true case in Palm Beach County.

## 2.1.2 Family Background

Youth for Christ makes it a mission to reach the unreached. Jesus Himself said that He had not come for the rich, but for the poor, to heal those who need healing, to bring righteousness to the sinners. (Mark 2:17) YFC meets with kids whose family situations can be either great or devastating. Broken homes, bad relationships, multi-family homes, teen pregnancies; none of these are uncommon. Thankfully, there are also teens that YFC reaches who have a strong support at home to fall back onto when times get rough or when they are on the verge of making a decision to follow Jesus Christ. However, the majority of teenagers who are involved with YFC are less well off.

Depending on the ethnicity, teens have few or many siblings, ranging between 1 to 4 children. 2,53 persons per household is the average for Florida. (Florida, 2012)

In the interviews with the youth and the YFC staff members, we asked questions about relationships with parents and siblings. We found that a lot of the time the youth do not have a very close relationship with their siblings. The same counts for the relationship with their parents. *“A lot of people come from broken homes (parents who are divorced).” (K. Barrantes)*

A YFC staff member told us that especially the relationship with the dads/fathers are often bad (*S. Sjoblom),* but we found out that most of the youth that we have interviewed have better relationships with their dad than with their mother. We base that conclusion on the following fact:

We have interviewed 7 kids, and 5 of them come from broken homes: they have parents who are divorced. Some live with their father, some with their mother. But 3 of those 5 kids with divorced parents live with their dad. Reasons for this where that their mother ran off with another man or they have never met their mother. They often told us that their relationship with their dad is better then with their mother. Like a High School girl said:

*“My parents divorced when I was three. My relationship with my mom was bad, but it is getting better. But my dad is a compassionate man.” (S. Wilson)*

But interestingly enough, the youth who have Christian parents, have a good relationship with them. That lets us see that it can be good for a kid to have Christian parents, since good relationships build up character. Below a quote from a JAM club girl whose parents are not divorced, and another kid from a girl talk whose parents are divorced.

*“I have a mom and a dad. I talk with them a lot, because they are also Christians.” (J. Pieris)*

*“I have a really great relationship with my mom, she is a Christian. I haven’t talked to my father since I was 6.” (E. Rodriguez)*

We also mentioned that the youth with a darker skin, who came from another country like Haiti or Cuba, live in a home with more family members. Sometimes they live with their grandparents in the same house or with other family members, like a teenmom who comes from Haiti told us:

*“I never met my mom and my dad is mentally ill. I live with my dad, my boyfriend and my two sons in this house.” (L. Jiruad)*

## 2.1.3 Materialism and Status

Materialism and status are important. As one can read in the introduction, Palm Beach County is affluent. Big single family homes, multiple cars, smart phones, golf and polo and jewellery are the common thing of the day. However, we have observed a big contrast between the rich and the poor, living next to each other. And interestingly enough, *“people with low income still wear 120 dollar shoes and/or have an iPhone.” (K. Green)*. They seem to always new things; this gives them a sense of belonging, because the rich people bought also always new things. The people with a low income try to buy the same things as the people with a higher income.

The fact that the people with lower income still wear expensive clothes and buy things that are really expensive, is a characteristic of their culture. Most of the time people with a lower income in Palm Beach County have a lower socioeconomic status. So we can say that it is of importance for them to have the same things as the rich people, because that gives them more status. With this also comes a sense of entitlement. The people who are less well off can envy the rich and can start demanding help and support. When they don’t receive it like they think they should, that can cause for some attitude and behavioural situations.

## 2.1.4 Spending Free Time

Youth who come from Palm Beach County have a lot of opportunities. Florida is nicknamed the Sunshine State, and that has influence on the amount of opportunities that the kids can choose from. Sport is a big deal in Florida and there are a lot of youth who play a sport. This is not only because of the convenient weather, but the youth are also involved with a sport because it is part of the culture and because in that way their parents can work longer. The schedules of the youth are usually very busy. “*They are made into small sport stars.” (K.Green)*

The schools in Palm Beach County offer the youth many after school programs. This allows for the parents to work longer and the youth can stay out of boredom/trouble. Music, sports, games; those are some of the activities the kids can choose from.

Besides all this, the youth can hang out with friends at shopping malls, clubs and the beach depending on their own mobility. A beautiful quote from one of the kids, about how she gets along with her friends:

*“What we do depends on which kind of friend it is. Being myself is the key.” (J. Pieris)*

## 2.1.5 Characteristics of the Youth in General

We want to describe the main characteristics of the youth, but since there are a lot of youth in Palm Beach County those characteristics will be generalized. The information below comes from the conversations that we had with the YFC staff members, because we asked them about this topic. We also got some information from a senior pastor who works a lot with children in the inner-city.

It is clear that the YFC staff members and the pastor are not very positive about the youth in general. Characteristics that they associate with the youth are: selfish, ignorant, naïve, disrespectful, angry, open-minded but not informed, they don’t know about Jesus.

Another fact that we not only heard from the interviews but also in contact with others (informal contact) and during observations, is the term ‘entitlement’ (see 2.1.3).To make clear how they use this word, some quotes from YFC staff members who talked about this:

“There is a certain ‘entitlement’ about the kids, which makes them rude or have an attitude, like they are saying: I deserve respect, give it to me.” (E. Day)

“A mentality of ‘it is all about me’.’’ (K. Green)

As we said, we heard this word a lot in conversations with people about the youth in general. This can be a youth culture aspect of the adolescents in Palm Beach County.

But the YFC staff members also mentioned what the needs of the youth are in this area. We want to indicate this through the means of two quotes:

“They are hungry for something real and are hungry for acceptance. A lot of the youth don’t know who Jesus is.” (K. Barrantes)

‘’They are searching for a feeling of belonging. There is too much status for them to filter out the truth from the deceit. They look for safety in what they have heard before. The need love with no strings attached.’’ (M. Wiles)

A conclusion from those two quotes is that the youth need acceptance and safety.

This says something about the culture in Palm Beach County. As we mentioned before, this region is very rich. Young people can feel a big pressure to become just as rich as the people besides them, because that gives them status. They can feel a pressure from society to meet the expectations laid on them. This tells us that the culture is performance-oriented.

The YFC staff members said that they need safety and acceptance, in Chapter 4 we describe more extensively what the needs of the youth are in three different areas. These two points will be addressed again there.

One YFC staff member mentioned that “i*t is hard to make appointments with the youth” (E. Day).* They don’t always answer your phone calls, messages or emails, especially, when you call them with an unknown phone number. This can be a customary sign for teens that they need safety and acceptance, because if you call them with an unknown number they don’t feel safe, because they don’t know who is calling them and will therefore not pick up.

Lastly, here is one quote from a senior pastor who gave a short summary on the youth in general. He said that there are 2 kinds of youth:

*“The youth are 50-50 nice and bad. Bad means: using drugs, not behaving, not honoring parents. Nice means: honoring to parents, getting good grades, do all their work in school.” (C. Tress)*

This pastor works in the inner-city (see I.1.6) and has a lot of contact with the youth from that part of Palm Beach County. Therefore we thought that it is good to place this quote from him in this transcript, because it gives a more complete image of the youth.

## 2.1.6 Characteristics of the Christian Youth

We asked the pastors and youth pastors how they would describe the youth of their church. They all said different things about this. However, two main characteristics were mentioned by several pastors. Because of this overlap, we will get into them in this section.

1. Christian youth get excited about the Lord on Christian events, like camp, bible weeks, ministry events, etc. As confirmation, one quote: *“Some are serious about the Lord. Overall, they get excited about the Lord on camp or a mission trip and after that they stick.”(J. Sims).*

We asked him why this happens. Some reasons he gave were that they are in a group (peer pressure), they have a lot of fun together and are in a good mood. Everything looks good and OK at that moment, and they praise the Lord for that. They have made friends and that could make it easier for them to join the church.

1. Christian youth are at an age in which they can be excited about the Lord and enthusiastically motivated to grow in their faith. But they are also at an age in which they are building their identity and start to feel a lot of confusion (more about the personal development of the youth in this age can be found in Chapter 4). Because of this, they are changing a lot; they are growing and become a young adult. As a conclusion, one can state that the youth are excited and enthusiastic, but they are also changing and have a lot of confusion. This goes together with each other. As a demonstration, we want to use two quotes, in order to make this clearer and give a confirmation on this topic.

*“They are confused about their identity, what God has for them, the Bible and what a Christian life should look like.” (J. McKeen)*

*“Their character: spiritually hungry and have a desire to come closer to God. They are also stubborn and always changing.” (A. Filippone)*

## 2.1.7 Our Observations

In our contact with the youth, we have observed several things. We believe this is of importance to mention, because this can give a more complete image of the youth in Palm Beach County. As human being, it is impossible to label our observations as a 100% objective, but we did come with a new and open view on Palm Beach County. The observations that we made can be the same or can be different from those that YFC has. Therefore, one can compare our observations with theirs and see if there are a lot of agreements or not. This might open eyes or confirm the own observations.

Our first and foremost observation is that the youth who have said they would like to talk to us, can be hard to reach after that moment. They do not pick up their phone if they see an unknown number. Besides this, we notice that when we meet them face to face, they are fine. But once we are gone, they draw back and hesitate to have contact with us. In our conversation with our coach, we have learned that they might need extra clarity about what will be going on and are afraid of the unknown.

A second observation is that the youth are very busy. As we have mentioned, sports is a big deal and many kids are deeply involved with that. We have also noticed that parents have a lot to say about how the kids spend their time. For instance, a boy would have to check with his mom if we can talk with him in the week to come.

Once we have opened up a conversation with one of the youth and give them room for questions or statements, they seem to have a lot of questions. They feel free to express themselves, once you have already talked about several other things. Questions on the Bible, Dutch culture, etc. are what we have come across.

It is safe to say that we have noticed a wide variety of cultures. However, no matter what the culture may be that they stem from; they all seem to want to fit in. Smart phones, clothing, sports; those are all ways to give them a sense of belonging. In our observation, this is definitely a character trait of the youth culture in Palm Beach County. In most of the cases, one is only accepted if one has all this stuff.

We also want to mention that we believe that the young youth are still very impressionable. We noticed this while answering some of their questions. They would believe what we, YFC or the Churches would tell them. This is of importance to know, because one should be very aware and careful with filling their minds.

An interesting and unexpected observation is that the youth that we have been in contact with have a poor relationship with their mothers. The hypothesis that the relationship with the fathers was bad (see quote S. Sjoblom under 2.1.2.). Many parents are indeed divorced.

Concerning their friends, all the youth that we have been talking to are quick to tell us that they have friends. All of them have Christian and un-Christian friends. Their relationships with the Christian friends are generally speaking more uplifting and can be deeper, while the friendships with the non-believers can likewise be good.

# 2.2 Conclusion

Youth cannot be solely described by their ethnicity, their family background or their habits. Every young person has his or her own unique character and we want to emphasis that we are not trying to place the youth of Palm Beach in a specific box. However, for our research’s sake, we need some sort of explanation for their behavior, thoughts and feelings. This is necessary, because we are researching their needs and those needs can only be interpreted if there is some sort of understanding of their youth culture. To generalize is not wrong, if one keeps in mind that generalizations cannot become the standard to judge by.

The impact of this description is that the schools, and also YFC and the Churches, have a challenge to connect with the youth on a heart to heart level. There is so much diversity, that there is not one way to deal and connect with these kids. This requires patience, empathy and being slow to judge. It is necessary to spend a lot of time with them, in order to understand the way they think, feel and behave. Authentic relationships are of the essence and we keep hearing about it. This impacts our research project in two ways:

1. We cannot give a clear description about how the youth are because they are too diverse, although we have tried to give a basic generalization;
2. Our advice will have to be stated in general terms.

CHAPTER 3.

Churches, Christian Faith,

and Partnership

In this chapter, it will be illustrated who the local churches are, including their mission statements and the Youth for Christ staff members associated with them. Secondly, we will try to give a view on how the Christian faith is acted out in this region of America, culturally based. This will help us put this chapter in perspective. Thirdly, it will be zoomed in on the partnership between those churches and YFC as an organization. This, in order to paint a picture of what people have to say about how well they already work together in the benefit of the youth. Lastly, there will be a conclusion as to how this relates to our research project.

# 3.1 The Local Churches

In total, Palm Beach County has 290 registered churches, either protestant or catholic. (Find A Church In, 2012) From those churches, there are several involved with Youth for Christ. Below a quote from the YFC executive director, about how visible and involved churches are with YFC. This number and percentage is an estimate and not about the registered churches, but about all the churches in Palm Beach County, which is obviously more than the registered churches.

*“About 10 percent of the churches in Palm Beach County know about us. Half of those partner up with us (equals 5 percent).” (B. Hochstettler)*

Below, we display a list of those involved churches with their mission statement and on the right the YFC-staff member associated with this church. That involvement can result in financial support, in practical involvement or both. The table of information is displayed, so that one can sense what kinds of churches are supporting YFC. Also, it is important to know that every staff member is required to have his or her own connections with churches in order to lay a solid foundation for their work with YFC.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Mission Statement** | **YFC-staff association** |
| ***Truth Point Church\**** | Website: “We exist to join God in pointing people to the truth of the gospel." (Mission & Beliefs, 2012)  Pastor: “pointing people to the truth of the gospel” | Scott Sjoblom |
| ***Lake Osborne***  ***Presbyterian Church*** | “We desire to see the Gospel transform us both individually and as a church so that through us our city might be transformed by word and deed.” (Lake Osborne Presbyterian Church, 2010) | Scott Sjoblom |
| ***Memorial Presbyterian***  ***Church*** | “To know Christ and to Make Him Known. We strive to fulfill our Lord’s Great Commandment " to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves" (Mark 12:28-31)” (Home) | Scott Sjoblom |
| ***First Baptist Church***  ***West Palm Beach\**** | Website: “In a culture where it’s difficult to develop relationships, our desire is to create an environment where people can get connected through worship, engage in a small group Bible study, and find a fulfilling place to serve.” (Welcome!)  Pastor: “reach people for Christ and disciple them” | Scott Sjoblom |
| ***Grace Fellowship\**** | Website: “Our Mission is to make disciples here and around the world! Our desire is to equip each one to reach and then to teach others how to grow into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.” (Who We Are, 2012)  Pastor: ““make disciples of all nations.” | Mark Wiles |
| ***Neighborhood***  ***Worship Center*** | ~no website~ | Mark Wiles |
| ***Christ Fellowship\**** | “ Beliefs lead to values, and values are demonstrated through action. We want to help strengthen your belief in Christ so that your values are in line with what the Word of God teaches.” (New Here, 2012) | Bill & Jeannie |
| ***Good Shepherd United Methodist Church*** | “Good Shepherd exists to be the expression of God’s LOVE to the world” (The Mission, 2011) | Kim Barrantes |
| ***First Baptist Church***  ***Greenacres*** | “The Mission of FBC Greenacres is simple: To exalt Christ and glorify God through the living out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” (Newcomers Welcome, 2008) | Kim Barrantes |
| ***First Baptist Church***  ***Royal Palm Beach*** | "To glorify God by leading others to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ." (About FBC, 2012) | Emily Day |
| ***Community of Hope*** | “Community of Hope’s Mission’s Team strives to bring opportunity for serving in the area of Mission and Outreach to COH small groups, as well as our individual members and attendees. We model our approach to missions after Act 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."  (Ministries) | Emily Day |
| ***Bow Down Church\**** | Website: “*Bow Down* is a Christ-centered, disciple making church that places a high value on teaching the Bible, building deep relationships, and being on mission with the world around us.” (About Us)  Pastor: “To glorified God by making disciples that have rearranged their lives around the person and practicing Jesus, in order to become like Him and to make disciple that live in the reality of the Kingdom of God.” | David Killian |
| ***Calvary Church*** | “…we'd like to have the kind of contagious Christianity that can influence, encourage, and transform our entire community, one life at a time.” (Welcome to Calvary Church, 2011) | Aaron Cochran |
| ***LifeSong Community Church*** | “LifeSong Community Church reaches out to all, shares the hope found in Jesus Christ, and lives life’s song to the glory of God.” (Our Mission, 2012) | Aaron Cochran  & Meg Sterrett |
| ***Journey Church*** | “God wants every individual and family to find a restored love, hope and passion for life through a personal journey with Him… Journey Church is about sharing His love with one person at a time until everyone knows that God loves them.” (Vision) | Aaron Cochran |
| ***Palms West Alliance***  ***Church*** | “Our Mission is to be a church of refuge for our community, where followers of Jesus are made.” (Home, 2012) | Leland Herring |
| ***Florida Gardens***  ***Baptist Church*** | “Each one reach one.” (Missions) | Leland Herring |
| ***Boynton Beach***  ***Community Church*** | “We desire to become fully surrendered followers of Christ who carry out His mission by: developing relationships with people where we live, work and play, connecting God’s Word and God’s people, welcoming others into God’s family and into membership in the local church, and equipping ourselves and others through practical discipleship in small groups.” (Who We Are) | Jimmy Grosz |
| ***Church of All Nations*** | “**Home Missions at Church of All Nations is all about reaching the South Florida community and the United States with the gospel Of Jesus Christ. Whether it is feeding and clothing the needy, Christian activism, or a host of the many ministries highlighted, Church of All Nations Home Missions is poised to make a difference.**  **From Genesis through Revelation, Scripture presents the heartbeat of God—world missions. As believers, Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations. Boca Church of all Nations Missions Ministry is doing just that by equipping, encouraging, and serving our missionaries and the ones they reach for Christ. The mission statement for Jesus Ministry can be found in Luke 4:18.”** (Missions, 2011) | Jimmy Grosz |
| ***West Pines***  ***Baptist Church*** | “Where loving God and loving people is our ever-growing heartbeat.” (Home, 2012) | Jimmy Grosz |
| ***Cross Community***  ***Church*** | “Changing lives by connecting people with Jesus Christ.” (Who We Are, 2012) | Meg Sterrett |

\*The churches we have interviewed or visited

# 3.2 Living It Out

In the time that we were in West Palm Beach, we spoke with many different of people. We talked with our host family, YFC staff members, friends from bible study group, pastors, youth workers, interns, volunteers, etc. We did this in order to hear about how the Christian faith is acted out in Florida. Below we try to give an overview on how this takes shape in Florida.

Christians in Florida are not persecuted. One has the freedom to be a Christian and to go to a church. In our observations and conversations, we have noticed that there are roughly two kinds of Christians. One can be described as involved, passionate and dedicated. The other group seem to have become lazy.

In Florida there are some mega churches, for example Christ Fellowship and Grace Fellowship. Numerous people told us that it is easy to join them, because you have less responsibility and accountability. For this reason, not everybody speaks positively about the mega churches. On the other hand, because of their many staff members, facilities, etc., these large churches are able to offer great amounts of events/support/ministries, etc. This can greatly benefit a young believer.

It might be trendy to be a Christian in Florida. Faith in certain groups can be acted out because that is socially acceptable; the social thing to do. There are a lot of people who calls themselves a Christian and/or wear a cross as around their neck, but sometimes the practicing of their faith is missing. We have heard this said by a staff member and a youth and we have observed it ourselves, for example on a middle school.For illustration, the next quote: *“Most common is: cross necklaces and good attitudes in general.”(a JAM club boy)*

We saw a lot of fellowship before and/or after church in South Florida. People go out to eat before or after church, or during the week, in order to stay in uplifting contact with their fellow believers. It seems like everybody is involved in a small bible study group, has a task in their congregation or disciples a fellow Christian one on one.

As a conclusion, we want to state that Christian Faith is most visible through actions. To give examples of different kind of actions that they do, we want to use some quotes:

*“Inviting someone over to dinner is an American Christian thing to do.” (D. Killigan)*

*“Going to church, giving offering, and through mission projects.” (A. Fillipone)*

*“Staying visible in the community by having events.” (J. Sims & C. Tress)*

*“They don't curse, they are nicer, and I personally think that they have a better/cleaner sense of humor...” (a JAM club girl)*

*“I never go on a vacation, unless it is a ministry trip. Otherwise I feel selfish.” (Anonymous)*

They all speak about actions in different ways. During our interviews we have never heard about personal prayer time, reading the Bible regularly, fasting, etc., except from our informal contacts.

# 3.3 Partnership between Youth for Christ and the Local Churches

With ‘partnership’ we mean anything ranging between financial support to personal involvement in the ministries that YFC have. Our coach described it as *“the act of mobilizing lots of people and organizations for the work in Gods Kingdom.”* We zoomed in on the partnership between YFC and the local churches, because it is stated in the YFC’s mission statement that they want to work together with local churches to achieve their goal, which is: pursuing unreached teenagers with the life changing message of Jesus Christ on order to make them lifelong disciples of Him (see 1.1).

## 3.3.1 Opinion from Youth For Christ Staff Members

We have interviewed four YFC staff members. They all had a different view on the partnership, but we have tried to make a good overview of the information they gave us about this partnership.

YFC staff members are positive about the churches that have already partnership with them, for confirmation some quotes which illustrate this.

*‘’I found the partnership with the churches who are involved pretty good. I appreciate churches that open the doors for YFC, so that YFC can use rooms to run the teen moms group.’’ (K. Barrantes)*

*“The churches who do work with us are great.” (E. Day)*

*“In general, the partnerships are increasing and getting better.” (K. Green)*

Some staff members have the idea that the churches think they do not benefit from partnering with them:

*“Some churches see us as competition.” (M. Wiles)*

*“Churches do not always trust us, because we are no part of the church.” (K. Barrantes)*

There are some churches that give money to YFC and see that as a kind of partnership. YFC appreciates this, but at the same time they would be glad if the churches also give other things. For instance, YFC needs more volunteers and they would be happy if the churches gives them that.

*“There are churches who support some staff members financially. Other churches try to give YFC some volunteers. The ideal situation is when churches do both: give money and manpower.” (E. Day)*

YFC staff members do not only express themselves on what the churches can give to them, but also on how much they give to other partners:

*“About 5 percent of our total finances is coming from the churches, collectively... Churches are in love with giving money to overseas ministries, while forgetting about their own needs right here in their neighbourhoods’’* and *“Individuals give money to churches in the conviction that the churches will give to the ministries. But in my opinion, a lot of money gets lost somewhere.” (M.Wiles)*

It is clear that YFC staff members have an opinion about the churches, whether those are positive or negative.

## 3.3.2 Opinion from Pastors and Youth Workers from Churches

We have interviewed 4 pastors from 4 different churches. Two of them were involved with YFC.

We first asked them what the partnership looks like. The churches who are involved support the ministries from YFC. They have some volunteers from their church who are at the campus by JAM clubs, Girl Talks and other ministries. Some of them give financial support. YFC also uses the facility of one church to run a teen moms group.

Three pastors told us that the partnership with YFC is based all on relationship. *“The partnership with YFC is all based on relationship, and the relationship is good.” (J. Sims)* Through relationships, they got churches to partner with them. The key to getting a partnership is therefore a good relationship. And to keep this going, one needs frequent contact with one another.

One senior pastor said that he knows that YFC needs more volunteers: *“YFC always needs more volunteers; that is a huge problem. YFC asks volunteers from our church, but we need volunteers to disciple our own kids, too.” (C. Tress)* As you can see, he knows about the need of YFC for more manpower, but he also has no capacity/capability to give this to YFC.

As a summary, we can say that the churches are positive about the relationship with YFC. The pastors that are involved with YFC do know about the desire of YFC, but sometimes they don’t have the capacity to answer that desire.

# 3.4 Conclusion

There are many churches in Palm Beach County. The fact that 10 percent knows about YFC, shows us that YFC is not very visible. This may be because the churches are not very interested, or that YFC could display themselves more effectively.

Christian faith is acted out through actions. Hospitality, Bible studies, ministry trips, taking people to church, generosity, etc. are the things we have seen and/or heard of. People may experience a pressure to perform these ‘Christian things’. It could be easy to forget about the ‘small things’, like quiet time, as some of the youth have pointed out by saying: *“I don’t know how to read my bible or how to pray. But I do volunteer…” (L. Jiruad)*  For our research project, this means that we could either try to give YFC a more balanced focus between big, outward actions and personal small growth. Or we can use this information to fit our advice into their culture. We are striving for something in between: give advice in such a way that it is not offensive, but something that will make them think.

Concerning partnerships from the YFC’s end: we have noticed that YFC is positive about the churches who are actively involved. Secondly, it is also apparent that they want more from the churches in general. They seem to be disappointed in how the partnership is going in overall. Also, some of them think that the churches do not trust them.

However, we personally wonder why YFC is not as visible in churches as they could be, by having information ready about the clubs, by presenting themselves (or the volunteers) in those churches and by knowing of the ministries and events of the churches themselves.

The partnership from the side of the churches: The local churches have many ministries within their own congregation. Also, they spend a lot of time and money on ministry events abroad. (See Ch. 5) However, it seems like the average church is focused on their own youth and their own ministry sites. Therefore, they could be less interested in the youth that YFC reaches. Some churches do not realize how hard it can be to get the youth plugged into churches. If they don’t see that struggle, they will not give it priority. Also, we learned from one church that not everyone knows how to deal with newly converted youth with any kind of background. It seems as though the churches have high expectations of people who will disciple those kids, and therefore can hesitate to give volunteers.

CHAPTER 4.

What Has Been Said About the

Needs of the Youth

This chapter zooms in on the needs of the youth who have made a decision to make Jesus Christ their personal Savior and are in contact with Youth for Christ. This chapter will give an answer on our fourth sub question. It shall be focused on three different areas: their faith, their personal development and their social network. Then we get into any extra things that the youth might express a need in. Some life changing things shall be mentioned and this chapter will be finalized with literature support and a conclusion. All the information in this chapter comes from the interviews we conducted with the youth, staff members and pastors (see I.1.7) and literature.

# 4.1 What Literature Says

In our literature research, we have explored several theories and different text books. This made us come with two sources which give us more information on the development in faith, personality and social contacts throughout the teen years. We will go into the theory behind some needs youth might have. Their own expressions may be understood better if one understands what experts have said about general needs.

## 4.1.1 Faith

We want to substantiate our findings with something theoretical about the development of faith by youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Therefore, we read a book from a woman, Sabine van der Heijden, who has done research on this topic, has personal experience with Youth for Christ and now teachers on youth work in the theology major at our university. She will shed more light on the topic of ‘faith’. (Heijden, 2012)

Typical for the cognitive development of the youth is that they learn to think more abstractly. That also concerns their faith development. When they were still a child, they had a concrete God image, but that picture/illustration changes when they get older.

They can gradually understand what words like ‘forgiveness’, ‘sins’ and ‘grace’ mean. And they can apply this to their own life. There are a lot of informational resources for the youth in this society of media and school. That can lead to critical questions about what they first believed as a child and how to change that image now.

Adolescents think in terms of black and white. Therefore, they can be radical in their enthusiasm or they can have a radical rejection of the faith. They can also be extreme in their emotions. This is because hormonal development has influence on their emotions. This all effects the way they experience or see faith.

A central theme in the teenage period of their life is the identity development. They think about issues like: who am I? Who do I want to be? Who can I be? They also think about where they come from and where they are going to after death. That can cause for a lot of questions to rise in their life.

There has been a big research in the USA about how youth could think about God:

* God is someone who requires of you that you are civil and behave properly towards people with authority (something you parents and teachers would say).
* God is someone who wants you to be happy and He wants to help you with that (like a therapist).
* God is someone whom you can ask for help if that is necessary or when you experience difficulties (like an high way patrol).
* God is someone you don’t have to take much notice of.

When children become adolescents, they develop more autonomy. In this age category, peers are very important to them. The peer group is a place where they practice their relationships, and where they learn to have their own opinion. So it is of importance that they have friends who are Christian, because that gives them positive confirmation about their faith and helps them to develop their opinions about faith.

Lastly, we want to say something about the importance of the family in order for the teens to grow in their faith. The influence of the parents towards their children is bigger when they are a child than when they are teens. But even in the adolescence period, the influence is still big. The responsibility for a young person to grow in their faith lies, in the first place, with the parents.

There are two different ways for faith transference: implicit and explicit. 80 percent of the faith transference is implicit. This means: how you live, how you see your faith in your life, what you communication style is, how you bring up your children, and what you family climate is, determines how the adolescent will view ‘faith’. The other 20 percent of faith transference is explicit. That means: how you act out your faith, in praying, reading the bible, in celebrations, in going to a church and how you teach your kids in their faith.

Sabine puts a big accent on the fact that the faith development of youth cannot be healthy and complete without these three inputs: nuclear family, the church and youth workers.

Through several e-mails, we have had a conversation with Sabine van der Heijden about the topic we are researching. She answered our questions for the situation in the Netherlands, not for America. Translated into English, this is what she said:

*“The problem, I believe, is that the churches neglect a specific task: reaching youth with the gospel and make them into disciples. That task is thence picked up very well by parachurch organizations like YFC (and in the USA also Young Life). To plug the youth back into the church isn’t working very well, because (a) the churches are not really focused on youth and their offer does not correspond with the youth culture very well and (b) they do not feel a responsibility for the youth who are being reached on the street, at a school or in a coffeebar, because this happens without their involvement.” (S. van der Heijden)*

We are of the same opinion and although this is about the Netherlands, we find the same in Palm Beach County. Solutions to this problem can be found in chapter 5 and 6.

## 4.1.2 Personal Development

The information below is derived from a book, called: Psychology of the Adolescence (Slot & Aken, Psychologie van de Adolescentie, 2010).

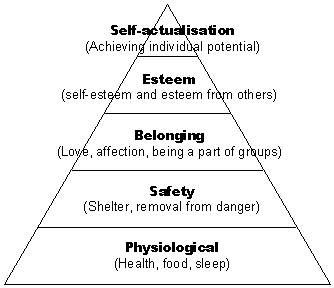
We want to give a brief description of the personal development of an adolescent. We want to use the theory of Erikson, because he gives a simple overview on this topic. He is the founder of the identity[[8]](#footnote-8) development. Other theories are based on this one. It isn’t necessary to use theories like Jim Marcia. Because that is about finding your place in society as an adult, making decisions, and having commitment. This is of less importance to us because he is focused on the late adolescence.

Erikson has introduced the identity theory in the adolescents psychology. The fifth stage of the identity theory is the one about identity development. Erikson speaks about ‘the feeling of identity’. This means that you feel you as the same person in different circumstances and times. And that other people recognize and appreciate you as one and the same person.

Since the theory of Erikson, identity is a central development task for an adolescence. When you are an adolescent, there are a lot of changes in your life, for instance: sexual development, more responsibility, more requirements to function like an adult and as an individual person in an adult society. To work on building your identity can be a big task for an adolescent. They have to change in different areas and have to choose a place in the society. This can result in an identity confusion: They have problems to respond to all the expectations.

In the table below, one can see what kind of conflicts and resolutions is considered normal for a person in different age stages. The table shows that an adolescent can be experiencing a conflict in identity versus confusion.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Erikson’s Stage Theory in its Final Version** | | | |
| **Age** | **Conflict** | **Resolution or “Virtue”** | **Culmination in old age** |
| School age  (6-12 years) | Industry vs. Inferiority | Competence | Humility; acceptance of the course of one’s life and unfulfilled hopes |
| Adolescence  (12-19 years) | Identity vs. Confusion | Fidelity | Sense of complexity of life; merging of sensory, logical and aesthetic perception |
| Early adulthood  (20-25 years) | Intimacy vs. Isolation | Love | Sense of the complexity of relationships; value of tenderness and loving freely. |



To the left is the pyramid of Maslow. (LeBon, 2011) It indicates that a person’s needs go from the bottom of the pyramid to the top. Someone cannot work on their esteem if their sense of belonging is not (mostly) fulfilled. Same counts for their sense of belonging: one needs to be healthy, fed, and away from danger, before they can adjust in a group and accept a loving act. This means that youth workers need to be aware of where the youth are in this pyramid, so that they can meet the right need.

## 4.1.3 Social Network(Slot & Aken, Psychologie van de Adolescentie, 2010)

Below we want to describe what kind of effect relationships with friends and family can have on the development of an adolescent.

**Friends**

It is of importance that we give thought to the next three aspects:

1. *What it means to have friends or be without friends*

Different kinds of research let us see that adolescents with friends are socially more competent, and are healthier in their emotional regulation. Adolescents with friends have better social skills, work more and better together with others, have less social problems, have a better self-esteem, and they do not feel as lonely. Those things are the same for girls as for boys.

1. *The influence of the characteristics of those friends*

Most of the time, friends have the same personality as the adolescent him-/herself. They are like each other in their attitude, ambitions and intelligence. This equality in characteristics can develop through two different processes:

* *Selection*: People have the preference to have relationships with people who are the same as they are. A reason for this can be that equality gives positive confirmation, because the other one has the same interests, and views and opinions. It is important for adolescents to have friends with the same opinions and attitudes, because that eventually leads to the confirmation of their own identity. Different friends with other attitudes and opinions can be a threat/risk for their self image.
* *Mutual* *socialisation*: Another source for the equality between friends comes from mutual socialisation and/or influence. This socialisation can happen when friends see each other as a role model and then imitate the behaviour of those friends. Youth also internalize principles through receiving rewards and encouragement.

1. *The quality of the friendship relation*

Equality is important to start a friendship, but equality is hardly important when a relationship has settled. Quality of a friendship is defined by the length of the relationship and the effect that the relationship has.

It seems as though the influence of parents starts to decrease in this teenage period. Friends/peers become the most influential group. However, studies show that parents still have a big impact on the lives and development of their young ones.

**Family**

Because of the increasing independency of the youth, the relationships with the parents change and get a different flavour. This changing/ transformation can result in stress and tension. But in most cases it is a gradual transition.

It seems as though the influence of parents starts to decrease in the teenage period. Friends/peers become the most influential reference group. However, studies show that parents still have a big impact on the lives and development of their young ones. But the youth spend more time with their friends without the supervision of their parents then before. So one can state that it is healthy for the youth to spend time with their friends and get more independency.

There are generally speaking two tasks for parents.

1: Support: give a safe and nurturing environment for your kid where a kid can develop.

2: Transference of knowledge, values and standards and give structure to your child (control).

These tasks are also important in the adolescence period, although those tasks do change a bit, because one has to deal with a lot more coming from a teenager than from a child. The youth need more autonomy and that demands an adjustment in the parental control. Not only the amount of control, but also how one acts out that control. If the parents’ tasks are acted out too much or too little, that can result in problems like defiance, passive or aggressive opposition, etc.

When a child grows up with parents who give him/her a lot of kindness/love and support, through democratic control and monitoring, then the development is perceived to be the most positive. Too little support and kindness from the parents can result in a negative self-esteem, poor grades in school, shortcoming of empathy, and negative expectations towards others in social contacts.

Too few rules, clarity, consistent control and supervision from the parents can lead to a weak control of impulses, a short come in social skills and problems in the child’s behaviour. Parents who are very authoritarian or strict and punish their children a lot can increase the chance of problematic behaviour and lower social qualities. Positive effects of the parental support can be that the teenager may feel free to fulfil his or her needs. Also, they can develop a positive self esteem, so that they feel free to excel in different skills.

The attachment theory of Bowlby says that one of the most important task of a teenager is to start a detachment process from their parents. The attachment relation with the parents decreases in the adolescence period, that is not necessarily a negative symptom: it is necessary to take steps back from the parents in order for the youth to develop as a young adult. Because, in this way they can get a own identity and positive friendships.

Literature says indicates that adolescents are in a phase in which they experience a lot of development and growth in different aspects. This can be confusing and can result in a lot of questions. Besides that, people around them start to expect more and more independence from them and they start to take on more and heavier responsibilities. Because these can be shaky times, it is good to have a rock to stand on.

Youth are starting to discover how they impact others with their behavior, attitude or words. They might start to think on how they want to change that. We believe that it is helpful and good for their development if one leaves room and time for them to discover who they are, what they are capable of, etc. putting more pressure on them to go through this process in a quick fashion can have negative effects.

Besides all this is it highly necessary for them to have a safe place: somewhere where they can be themselves and feel free to ask all their (existential) questions. This can be found in a safe group, but also with a friend or someone with more life-experience. Ask the youth if they have such a place/person. If not, do not let it go but start looking for a place/person where this teen can feel safe. A YFC staff member/volunteers or a pastor can be such a person. But what could be even more effective is to look for that person within their already existent social network: friends and family. It is possible that they might already have a functional relationship and have a lot of time to keep working on that safety aspect. Therefore: search for a role model/safe haven in the existent network of the youth.

# 4.2 Faith

With faith, we mean the spiritual concept of believing and trusting in God the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit, and have a desire to give one’s life over to His service.

## 4.2.1 Opinion of the Youth

We asked the seven youth what their needs are, concerning their faith. Most of them said that they wanted to learn more about the Bible and about God. Memorizing verses, understanding what is being said, and learning how to listen to God were some big points of possible growth. They think that going to a church can help them with these things.

They also had other ideas. Having an older Christian in their life whom can answer questions and pray with them was a need that several students mentioned. And they all agreed that their faith needs to be more than something you do on Sundays; that it needs to come from the heart at every point in their life. Once again, they are of the opinion that the church can support them in this.

Below are some representative quotes from three teens who gave the most information in a simple sentence.

*“Reading the Bible more, teens ministry, listen more to Christians who are older than me, go to church more.” (C. Wagler)*

*“I’d like to remember verses. Because that means that you have the Bible in your heart. Participating in church more often by really having a task can also help me grow in my faith faster.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“I want to become more serious. I want to also give my entire heart to God.” (A. Vega)*

## 4.2.2 Opinion of the Youth for Christ Staff Members

All the YFC staff members found it necessary that the youth have somebody to disciple them. They need someone who is a role model for them, whom they can come to with any type of question or issue and know that that person will always be there.

*“One person who want to walk the spiritual life with them.” (K. Barrrantes)*

All staff members mentioned that a church is a necessity for the new Christians. When we asked them why that is important, they mentioned the churches’ unique quality and opportunity in the fact that there is interactive fellowship with Christians of all ages, maturity and experiences. This is a place where the youth can come to learn, to grow, to be encouraged and challenged and where they can stay for the rest of their lives.

*“[They need a church] to learn the Christian culture, for interactive fellowship, to keep growing spiritually. And some need their own peers in a church to make them stay, so there is need for that in every church.” (E. Day)*

*“That is where Gods people are from all ages.” (K.Barrantes)*

It has been said that the youth need to understand who God is and what it means to follow Him on a personal level. K. Green said that it is also important that the teenager who just made the decision to follow Jesus has parents who take interest in their faith. Another YFC staff member said that it is necessary that the parents go to a church, as well. Because, if the father or mother goes to the church, the child shall follow, according to them.

Some other opinions about what the youth might need were specified around subjects like time management, tangible information and patience.

*“[They need] time in their schedules to do things for spiritual growth, they are too busy.” (K. Green)*

*“Treat them like a baby: don’t make them walk and run, but give them good food to get them to grow. Be a shepherd, not a commander.” (M. Wiles)*

## 4.2.3 Opinion of the Local Churches

All the pastors of the churches found it necessary that the youth have a discipler or a mentor who can help them grow in their faith. They all had different ideas about that discipleship, however. But it boiled down to the description of someone who spends time with the teen in a one on one setting on a regular and consistent basis, who will love them, build a trusting relationship with them and teach them all the important things about living life as a Christian. It would be ideal if that mentor is also part of the congregation that the youth goes to and that he/she has experience with teens.

*“They need someone in their life who will love on them, have trust in them and is consistent. Someone who will teach them the importance of God’s Word, why we go to church, how to pray, the importance of personal worship, how they can share their faith and stand firm in it. Just being there for any struggles or questions.” (J. McKeen)*

Besides this, there are some other things that they need:

* + - * *They need to be baptized. (J. Sims)*
      * *They need friends in the church to get connected. (A. Fillipone)*
      * *They need to know their identity in Christ. (C. Tress)*

On a more personal level, it is hard to say what they need, because every child is different and need their own kind of discipleship. That is a conclusion that all the pastors made, apart from each other.

## 4.2.4 Summary

In short, the summary we can make about the needs of the youth, concerning their faith is three legged. The youth say that they need to go to and/or be more active in their church, to read or memorize the Bible and have their faith come from the heart. Youth for Christ finds it most important that the youth are discipled one on one, have a church that connects with them, and that the youth make time for putting their faith into (daily) practice. The churches emphasize the need that they are discipled one on one and have consistency with that person who is discipling them.

# 4.3 Personal Development

“Personal development includes activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitates employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations.”

## 4.3.1 Opinion of the Youth

We asked the youth what they think they could still learn about themselves personally in order to become an even better person. This was an important question, because it indicated two things. Directly, their answers would reflect their needs, which we want to link back to YFC and the local churches in order for them to meet those needs even better. And indirectly, it would give us an indication as to how well/far a youth in a certain age group can talk about their personal development.

Our observation was that the young new Christians between the ages of 12 through 14 find it more difficult to answer this question than people from 15 on. But obviously, everyone varies in their personal maturity and we can therefore only advice that the youth worker or church member spends time with the youth in order to understand what questions are relevant for that specific teen and which are not. This information is good for YFC and the local churches to know, since that influences the way one communicates with and can expect from a youth.

For some kids, this question was difficult to answer:

“*That is the hardest question in my life.” (C. Wagler).*

But we are still surprised at their answers to this question. Issues like selfishness, attitude, persistence, patience, wisdom, trust and controlling emotions were mentioned. We want to mention some quotes, to give the reader a feeling for the diversity in needs.

*“Learn how to not be selfish and crave attention subconsciously, more helping other people, recognizing that others need what I need, too.”(S. Wilson)*

*“Wisdom and patience, through practice and reading about it.” (C. Wagler)*

*“Finish what I start, for myself and others.” (L. Jiruad)*

*“Change attitude: now a little whiny and strict. Later: no more whining, not as mean, more understanding.” (J. Pieris)*

*“My trust in people. I still have a little barrier, but I see improvement.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“Listen to what people say, less attitude towards people, and control my emotions a bit more.” (A. Vega)*

## 4.3.2 Opinion of the Youth for Christ Staff Members

Most of the YFC staff members think it is of biggest importance that the youth have a role model. This is different from a discipler or mentor. A role model teaches a young person how to live by living it out himself, mostly. A discipler has more concrete conversations and challenges for the teen and is not observed on an almost daily basis. The staff members expressed that Jesus can also be their example, so that they can learn from His character.

*“They need a role model for character qualities, so that they are accountable to someone. Parents are important. And one should tell about the characteristics of Jesus as an example.” (M. Wiles)*

Because this need is the most prominent, they are also concerned that it is a hard one to fulfill:

“*How can a boy learn to become a good man if there is no one to learn that from. These needs are difficult to provide.”* (*E. Day)*

Other needs mentioned:

1. *“Education: for the teen moms*
2. *Life skill stuff is necessary*
3. *Character development” (K. Barrantes)*

It is also important that they have a good relationship with their parents. Education, logic, and common sense are also important for the youth, according to the staff members we interviewed.

## 4.3.3 Opinion of the Local Churches

Like the staff members, most of the local churches said that it is good for the personal development of a kid to have examples and a role model. It appears that the youth also need time for this process. It cannot be expected that the newly converted Christians can develop their personality overnight into maturity. We asked them why it is important to have a role model for the personal development of the youth.

It is also important that they grow up and have a good education at school, to learn how to talk with people (social skills) and learn to look someone in the eye during a conversation. (A. Fillipone) The churches also mentioned that it might be good for the youth ‘’*to deal with freedom and responsibility, and have parents who support them.’’ (A. Fillipone)*

The Truth Point Church pastor is convinced that someone’s personal development is formed as his/her spiritual growth is positively increasing.

## 4.3.4 Summary

The youth seem to have numerous different ideas on how to grow in their personal development. One thing stands out: how they are in relation to others can be an issue to work on. Youth for Christ and the churches both mention the same needs: the need for a role model, good education and time. The churches add that the youth might also need someone who supports them and whom they can go to with questions.

# 4.4 Social Network

By social network, we mean the domestic family and peer group(s) of the youth we are researching.

## 4.4.1 Opinion of the Youth

We have given a description about the youth we have interviewed in chapter 2. So you know that a lot of kids come from broken homes. Some of them have troubles with their parents or siblings. When we asked the youth what can help them grow in their contact with family and friends, it was good to hear from the youth what they think can help them improve those relationships. There seems to be a big link between their needs in the personal development area and in their social network. Who they are as a person influenced the people around them, and because of this their needs may sound similar in both areas. Talking and listening to more mature Christians/their parents and changing their attitude were mentioned regularly. Their relationships with their parents and/or friends may also be improved, according to most youth. It was interesting to notice the youth mention them having problems with their moms, and not so much with their dad (as was actually expected). Also, they lose friendships once they decide to follow Jesus, and in a adolescent life that can have big impact.

Some quotes to represent what we just gave a summary on:

*“[I need] to talk with older people, who can give some advice and have wisdom. To have people who care about me. ...The relationship with both parents can be better. It can help through forgiveness, letting out anger and living more Christian like.” (C. Wagler)*

*“I need patience and humility, less arguing (I can do that through practicing) recognize own blame in situations. It takes me tripping myself before I notice.” (S. Wilson)*

*“I wish my old friends would like to see how happy I am and take that as something useful to them.” (E. Rodriguez)*

## 4.4.2 Opinion of the Youth for Christ Staff Members

Some of the youth who are converted come from a non-Christian background. It can be hard if the youth who believe in God now, have no friends or family members who believe the same as they do. And some of the youth who turn to Christ have no Christian friends. It is often hard to change their friends and make new friends, but some YFC staff members think that it is necessary:

*“Ditch their old friends, step away from certain things.” (E. Day).*

*“Friends can be great, they can also destroy” and “They need a Christian peer group.”(M.Wiles)*

YFC workers said that it is necessary for the youth that they have one on one discipleship in order for them to grow in their faith. But also, in their social network is it necessary for them to have people around who can be a good example for them. It is good to introduce the youth to people who live life in a Christian way.

## 4.4.3 Opinion of the Local Churches

The pastors said several individual things about the needs within the social network of the youth. But one thing is in common: having Christian friends. They all say that it is necessary that their closest friends are Christians, while not losing their non-Christian friends.

*“Be around believers and non-believers: the believers for a role model and for growth, the non-believers to practice their faith and have people who challenge them/ do not agree with them.” (J. McKeen)*

They also mentioned that family connections are of the essence. They believe that the father is the head of the family and that involving that family may be the key to getting youth plugged into churches. And in that family structure, A. Filippone said that *“the best thing for a kid is to have parents who have a good, functional marriage.”*

## 4.4.4 Summary

The youth say that they may need to change their attitude, if they want their relationships to grow. Besides that, they almost all need their relationship with parents or friends resolved. Youth for Christ has the opinion that they need Christian friends and a good example. The churches thinks that it is good to make your best friend a Christian friend and that the family gets involved, as well.

# 4.5 Other Needs

When we asked the youth what else could help them in any aspect of their lives, they mentioned forgiveness, serving and dealing with expectations. These could be things that others place on them (external motivation), or these virtues could have already become internalized. That makes the teen even more motivated to get these needs met.

The following quotes are meant as a brief overview of these things, in their own words.

*“Relationship with both parents can be better. It can help through forgiveness, letting out anger and living more Christian like.” (C. Wagler)*

*“Go to church every Sunday or Saturday. Put myself aside more often and serve others more. Get up early, plan things, ask for help from others.” (L. Jiruad)*

*“I want to change in being so hard on myself. I have very high goals for myself.” “I come across as confident, because I realize that others feel bad about themselves.” “I want to realize that doing my best is good enough.” (S.Wilson)*

It is beneficial to know about these ‘extra’ needs, because those can often be what keeps the youth up at night. To be aware of these needs/struggles can help the youth workers to connect with them even better. It also says something about their family background, their personal development and their youth culture. But most importantly, this teaches us that an adolescent is unique and has his or her own personal desires and struggles, based on their experiences and character.

# 4.6 Life Changing Things

We asked the youth what has changed since they had make a decision to follow Jesus. Why was this of importance to know? As we were conducting the interviews, we did not know how diverse these answers would be, but we were certain that coming to Christ can be a life changing event. The way one things, feels and lives can and perhaps should be influenced, because at that point their life is no longer their own. They have committed it to Christ. Whether it is by own will or because of Christian pressure, the teen will be challenged to change in certain ways; leave some habits behind and enhance others, in order to grow in their faith and become more Christ-like. As we suspected, their personal development and their social network were the two biggest area’s in a teens life that would feel this positive ‘pressure’ rapidly.

In our interviews, we had some kids explain major changes in their lives. All seven of them explained those changes on an emotional level. Often this had a close tie to a practical application of their faith and/or divine intervention from their Saviour. It is apparent that God changed their lives, starting with their heart. They received peace, joy, hope, forgiveness, love, direction/seriously, and purpose without this having to come from people around them. It is special to notice that each of the seven teens expressed a different change, and that all were positive.

We would like to share their story with the reader in short:

*“Before, it was utter chaos. I used marihuana, I was living away from my brother, my dad and mom were leaving, and I was not caring. Now, it is the best it has ever been, I don’t have to go to my parents and brothers, I can just go to God.”(C. Wagler)*

*“Before this event, I did not have any hope. I was selfish and materialistic. I was not very kind to people because often I was too shy to talk to anyone. Now I have hope in my life. I talk to a lot more people, because I like to learn. Besides, I am reaching my goals now.” (L. Jiruad)*

*“Before, I was sad. My mom would cry herself to sleep. I would too. Now there are less fights in the house. There is less tension. More peace.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“I like how life is now. I will always be watched and loved, whatever I go through.” (J. Pieris)*

*“I used to fool around, now I am more serious.”(A. Vega)*

*“I feel better now, because I realize more stuff about God, what He thinks about us, how He forgives us, etc,” (Anonymous )*

*“I used to fill my time with nonsense, because I did not have an overall goal. God is now my purpose, if you don’t have that you don’t have anything. Now, relationships have more weight, they are more important for me.” (S. Wilson)*

The life changing things that the youth experience, give an indication of the impact of their decision.

## 4.6.1 What Has Gone Well

Needs are often expressed in the things that do not go well. And since we are researching the needs of the youth, that was a big question we focussed on. However, before we came to that question, we also wanted to leave room and emphasis what things have gone well since their decision. This, because that brings balance into the conversation and into this project.

The things that have gone well after their decision to follow Jesus are again as diverse as their characters. However, three improvements jumped out at us. First of all, their (school)performances have improved, with reasons like more confidence and joy.

*“My grades have gone really well, and so is my violin practice, because I am happier.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“School, because I feel more confident.” (Anonymous )*

Another improvement mentioned of the youth was relationships:

*“Getting along more with my family and friends. Me and my mom have a kind of horrible relationship. But I have been trying to get that better. And my dad stopped smoking this year because of me.” (A. Vega)*

*“My relationship with my brother is going better. I am not angry anymore.” (C. Wagler)*

Help in hard times is the last but not the least thing that has been mentioned by more than one teen.

*“In hard times, God helps me to decide what to do. It is like He reads my mind.” (J. Pieris)*

*“God protected my heart, in relation to boyfriends. I don’t need a guy to tell me I am beautiful to know I am. That encourage me, I don’t feel alone anymore.” (S. Wilson)*

This question was of importance, because we did not only want to focus on what can be improved but also see the good things that are happening in their lives. This might also help YFC stay encouraged to keep up the good work.

## 4.6.2 What Has Been Hard

We asked this question, so that we can paint a picture of where some other needs may lie. Our questions on faith, personal development and social network were suggestive. This time, we left it open for interpretation, so that the answers will reflect part of their own priority and struggle that lives besides the points we already addressed.

In these things, YFC may be able to meet them even better, as could the churches. Relationships and ‘old ways’ kept appearing when we asked this question. The relationship with parents and friends can be in a different stage with each person, but whether it was before or after their conversion, many teens have difficulty in this area.

*“Relationship with my mom, it is hard to talk to her. I deal with it by trying to be myself and keep talking about it with other people.” (C. Wagler)*

*“I don’t talk to my old friends.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“Keeping friends has been hard. One of my best friends doesn’t talk to me anymore, because I have become more serious.” (A. Vega)*

The old ways are hard to leave behind. The youth might need more support in this area.

*“It has been hard to not go back to the way things were, to the way I was: Listening to bad music, read the Bible, hear the truth, hang out with the wrong crowd (people who keep you away from growing in God).” (L. Jiruad)*

*“I struggle with giving up some music and literature. I struggle with making time for God, because music relaxes me but it is a distraction, sometimes silence is louder than anything else.” (S. Wilson)*

Other things, like reading the bible regularly and dealing with people who cuss, were also mentioned. But those were individual needs and not ones that were also mentioned by some others whom we interviewed and are therefore not as representative as these two needs mentioned above.

# 4.7 Conclusion

Below, we will give a compressed conclusion of this chapter. We will use the summaries given above and the rest of the information to display in short what impact this has for answering our research question.

Discipling has been the most prominent ‘need’ that both the churches and YFC have mentioned. But most importantly, the youth have also mentioned the same need: a need for someone they can ask questions to, spend time with, get personal attention from, learn how to read the bible and pray with, etc. Discipling is in the focus of faith, and we think that this says something about the spirit of the age in Florida. It is interesting that they all mentioned this need. We have thought about why they all think that *this* is necessary. We think that the need for a discipler has a link with the growing individualism. Today, the society promotes people to become an individual and to do your own thing. But we think that it is very good for Christians to live in a community, so that there is someone who can teach you. Because God does not say: ‘do your own thing’. God has His own rules/society. And because the Christian rules and the knowledge of how to live as a Christian is not taught in the world, it is good to have a discipler. So the need for discipling can say something about the growing individualism in America/Palm Beach County.

This need for discipling has impact on our research, since it displays that there is a big need for this. But it also tells us that most people have already tried numerous things to fill that need. We wonder: how is it possible that this need has not been met, while everyone thinks this is of big importance? What is the barrier? And what can we do about that? We will talk about this in Chapter 5.

Sounding similar, people have also stressed the importance of a role model. This is important for the personal development of the youth. This would be someone that lives the life that the youth can learn much from. The youth themselves mention a change in attitude and their social skills towards others. For the rest, we experienced that every youth has their own personal and unique need in this area. Literature says that the youth can be confused by all the different developments they are going through, and experience a pressure to fulfil expectations. As Maslow also indicates, in order to connect with the kids, one has to be aware of the different stage they kid may be in. For instance: don’t lecture on self-esteem if the kid is literally hungry.

In the social network need, it jumped out at us that the youth needs a supportive peer group. This means that they need Christian friends, who build them up and give them positive confirmation on who they are (in Christ). Literature research says that adolescents need friends with similar characteristics and opinions, in order to grow in their self-esteem and identity. Relationships seem to be a big issue for young Christians, and it is amazing to realize that their decision for Christ has helped them in that area, as with other areas like making decisions, concentrating in school and spending money wisely. Relationships are also mentioned when asked what has been hard. Music and spiritual discipline seem to also be a struggle. For our research, this confirms our suspicion that youth need positive, confirming friends and family. Our conversations with staff members and churches also tells us that the concept of family involvement is often neglected. This may be with different reasons, but in our eyes they still leave a big chunk behind.

Another observation: We noticed that YFC gave a general list of needs for the youth, and not specific ones, because they reach too many kids in one week to sit down with all of them individually and figure out their unique needs. In other words, they have contact with the youth individually, but they know some of the youth better than others. This is because some youth have been joining the club for a longer period of time, or talk more easily about themselves during the club. For this reason, YFC wants to have more volunteers. Because then, they can give all the youth more personal attention and meet the specific needs of the youth better.

Were YFC smaller and reaching fewer kids, we would have been able to give specific advice on specific needs. Since those needs are not made specific, our advice will be generalized.

CHAPTER 5.

Contribution from Youth For Christ and the Local Churches

Based on our interviews with the youth, the staff members and the local churches, we have collected many different ideas from each party about what is already going really well and what things may still need improvement. In this chapter, we will focus on what YFC and the churches are already offering the youth, and what else could be necessary. Our own personal thoughts are withheld from this chapter and shall be put into words in chapter 6, when we formulate our advice.

# 5.1 What Does YFC Already Offer the Youth?

Youth for Christ puts a lot of time and energy into pursuing unreached teens. This requires a lot of creativity, motivation, guts and time. In this section, we will put into words what has been said about their efforts and their successes.

## 5.1.1 What Does the Youth Say

We noticed that the interviewed youth feel comfortable in the clubs/events that YFC organizes. They all said that they experience a freedom to ask questions and say what they want to say. This is combined with a sense that the staff members have or make time for them personally. This indicates that the staff members are capable of creating a safe environment. The youth also said that YFC is strong in building relationships with them. They stimulate a relationship with the staff members, with the group, and with Jesus. And when necessary, they even bring them in contact with other Christian youth.

*“They helped me by have a relationship with Jesus and help others have that. I feel free to ask questions, they make time.” (S. Wilson)*

*“YFC gives me the opportunity to connect with other Christian youth. They helped me to connect with a youth group. That helps me to going out more and try new things. That makes me grow in who I am. (A. Vega)*

Besides the freedom for the youth to be themselves and the safe environment to build authentic relationships, the staff members spend time explaining life to the (converted) youth. They prepare the youth for the decision they want them to make and are honest about all the changes and challenges that it might bring. This mild form of psycho education is highly appreciated.

*“They help me understand what is going to be happening with being His friend. Like going into a new house, they give me a tour of what will happen. When I have a hard time: he will help me with living my life.” (J. Pieris)*

As one can see above, they are all positive about these attribute of YFC. Based on our theoretical background, we support this enthusiasm. Youth need unconditional acceptance and clarity. From what we have heard of all the seven youth combined, YFC gives them both.

We also asked them how YFC helps them with building up their faith towards God. We have learned that the youth emphasis several things. They appreciate practical stuff, like learning from the Bible, being taught how to pray, taking them to Church and giving them necessary ‘stuff’ for being able to be responsible.

*“They give me stuff of need (like diapers and clothing for my kids) and they give me a ride to church.” (L. Jiruad)*

But mostly, the youth mention developmental growth that YFC has helped with or stimulated them in. Respect for one another and for yourself is one other thing that has stuck to a couple of teens. Also, letting go of past In their words:

*“I learned that God uses the broken, and that you are not supposed to clean yourself up first. I don’t have to be perfect for God. They helped me recognize that the stereotype about the perfect church people is not true.” (S. Wilson)*

*“They talked to me about how I can practice my faith in real life. They taught me that living with God can make your life better and helped my apply principles, so that I can help others. They also tell me how to get past the junk in my life.”(E. Rodriguez)*

## 5.1.2 What Does Youth for Christ Say

YFC staff members told us that they have more small groups then before, named the Girl Talk and the 1.21 talks with guys. In those small groups, there is a lot of opportunity for more personal time with the youth. They talk about their faith, life situations/lessons and about taking next steps in their faith. The teens attending those groups are not necessarily Christians, meaning that they are combining two aspects in one. First, there is the feeling of a peer support: all the new Christians can share their struggles with one another and relate to each others’ situations, while uplifting one another as well. Secondly, they are plunged into the challenge of standing up for their faith in the presence of non-believers, while the YFC staff members strive to keep the atmosphere open and safe.

Another thing that YFC has done is bringing more and more volunteers onto their clubs and ministry sights, with the goal that they will run those clubs someday. Therefore, YFC can have more clubs in total, because they have more manpower. They recruit and equip the volunteers. *“We develop some kind of leadership training.”(E. Day)*. When they have more manpower, two things can happen.

1. As already mentioned, they will be able to run more clubs, meaning that more kids can be reached.
2. The youth will get more personal attention, since the amount of kids per leader becomes smaller.

What the youth have mentioned in 5.1.1, the staff members confirm. When needed and possible, the staff members (or their volunteers) take the kids to church. But a task that may be even more important and has a direct link to bringing kids to church, is that they (try to) function as “*a bridge between Campus Life and churches.” (M. Wiles)* We have heard it said by several, if not all, staff members that Youth for Christ is an organization that takes on a task that the churches do not or cannot pick up: pursuing unreached youth. In an ideal situation, after that task is fulfilled by YFC the churches will pick up from where YFC left off and continue to disciple the youth that have given their lives over to God.

# 5.2 What Do the Local Churches Already Offer the Youth?

Just like it is good to keep in mind what YFC has done and accomplished, it is also of importance to see what the churches have already offered the youth. They may have programs, mission statements, efforts and successes in reaching young believers and keeping them in their congregation. As we have asked the youth and those churches, we have written down their answers. Summarizing and place those quotes in the right perspective, one can read below what has been said about the churches’ work.

## 5.2.1 What Does the Youth Say

The youth said that the church teaches them on relevant subjects and give good sermons. They said that they learn how to pray and what it means to be a Christian. Six of the seven youth have answered positively to this question about the church. What has been mentioned the most is that the church helps them live a Christ-like life. Through learning what it is supposed to look like, and giving them practical application methods, they are able to take steps forward in their faith. In their own words:

*“They help me recognize what it means to have a relationship with Jesus and apply subjects to my life.”(S. Wilson)*

*“I love how things are organized and orderly, there is visual aid to help understand a passage in the bible, like a film. It feels for me like one big family.” (L. Jiruad)*

“*Church has made me brighter and looking out more. I also have interest for other people more because of the church.” (A. Vega)*

Lastly, one guy told us that he likes it that the churches have fun activities, especially on holidays. *(Anonymous )* This for us is an indicator that most youth are appreciative of the church because of the services and Christian stimulation/fellowship. But it also says that a percentage of the youth enjoy church because of events and fun activities and not necessarily because of their message. We believe that character, age and how recent the conversion was has impact on the responses.

## 5.2.2 What Do the Churches Say

All four churches told us that they have a mentoring program for the youth, so that the teens have a mentor/ discipler. Not every church has enough mentors for all the youth, however. They find that their mentoring programs are useful, but still too small. YFC has the problem of finding volunteers to deal with kids, but the churches are experiencing the same. But for right now, we focus on the fact that those programs exist, have been set up and are being used.

Two of the churches that we interviewed have a special service for the youth during the week. In our unofficial observations, we have found this to be quite a common thing. It raises more eyebrows when a church does not have a youth program than when they do.

Besides the mentoring program and the youth services, churches also offer their youth (=the youth that attend their church and/or youth group) *“camp during summer, a week bible school in the summer, and a mission trip every year.” (J.Sims)* This has provided some churches a challenge, because they feel that they are in somewhat a competition with all the other programs that the kids have to choose from. Schools, parents, para-church organizations and the churches all seem to want to provide kids with a schedule of things to do. It is not so much a choice in ‘good or better’ programs, but more about time management. And in order to wipe out the competition, some churches focus on their youth specifically and provide them with something that is interesting and linked with their personal talents.

*“We feel like we need to give the youth things to excel in, otherwise we won’t keep their attention. They are not competing with other after school activities, but do what they are good in.” (A. Filippone)*

# 5.3 What Extra Can be Desired

We have been talking about all the things that Youth for Christ and the local churches already offer the youth. This is good to have in sight, because naming strengths brings their qualities in the right light and helps people stay positive and motivated. This research has also led to some needs that seem to not have been met or have not yet reached a satisfactory level, however, and that is what this section will zoom in on. When we display these ideas, we will try to prevent already giving our thoughts on how to improve the situation. From these points, we will formulate our advice in chapter 6.

## 5.3.1 Of Youth for Christ

First, we will get into the needs that different parties have expressed about YFC. These are points that YFC might already know about and struggle with, or these could be new eye-openers.

**What Does the Youth Say**

The youth had different opinions about what they might need extra from YFC. One thing a few said in common, though, is that they would all like to have more (direct) talks about Christ during clubs. This means that they would like to see the ten minute interruption in their game be more specific. The kids who have just come to Christ are hungry for more information. They wonder why YFC talks more about biblical principles (like stealing, cheating, friendships, etc.) than Christ Himself. Also, they want to learn how to live a Christ-like life and would love to pray with someone. As a nuance, we feel the need to state that it is good to consider that the youth who have not made a decision to follow Christ might not feel this need at all. Therefore, YFC can keep in mind that the new Christians need more about Christ, while the rest might not. In their own words, this is what they said they needed on this aspect:

*“Help me get to know God more. Talk more about Christ and tell me your personal story.[And] help me see what it means to give my heart completely to God and how to do that”(A. Vega)*

*“They can help me by praying with me. They don’t do it as much as I would want.” (J. Pieris)*

One other things that sprung out at us, as we did the interviews, is that the youth have a need for personal attention. It doesn’t always matter to them if that is face to face, through texting or by having more clubs. As long as the youth feel that they can ask questions, talk, and be reminded and encouraged, this need could be met.

*“I need more one on one time, to talk with them.” (E. Rodriguez)*

*“I would like to have more Campus Life during the week.” (C. Wagler)*

*“They could help me by texting me, reminding me to finish things and pray together (on the phone or in person).” (L. Jiruad)*

Besides this two issue that most of the youth had in common, they also listed several other needs that have not yet been met by YFC. Below a list of other ideas of the youth on what might help them. Most of it is inspired by personal needs, and not representative needs. We do want to mention them, however, to indicate that youth cannot be place in a box and that every kid has his or her own needs:

*“It might be good if YFC tells us more why they are at school and why they have Campus Life clubs.” (C. Wagler)*

*“They can help me with changing my attitude: let me be more easy going, make me stronger.” (J. Pieris)*

*“They can encourage me to read my bible more.” (Jessica)*

One girl said that she did not feel comfortable when she came to YFC for the first time:

*“At first, I was overwhelmed because they asked me all kinds of questions about God and the Bible and I felt dumb, so I did not want to come again.” (L. Jiruad)*

Somehow, it did trigger curiosity in her, and that is why she went to the club the next week again. This is a compliment as well as a challenge to YFC: be aware of how you come across.

**What Does Youth for Christ Say**

Before being told by us, the YFC staff members seem to know that the youth need personal time. All of the staff members of YFC said that they need more staff and/or volunteers. In other words, manpower is a big need. As they said:

*“We need more manpower to get people in JAM club or Campus Life to get kids into girl talk or 1.21. Because in these smaller groups, there is more personal time for the youth.”(E. Day)*

They would like to do this, by “*empower[ing] more volunteers, staff members and parents, and invest more in other adult leaders.” (K. Barrantes)* This is of importance, because the leaders then become motivated, envisioned, and equipped. Although YFC handles a low level entry policy, they do want to see the network around the youth strengthened and able.

Besides this, there are other things that the YFC staff members think that they can do extra. Most of what they said boiled down to the need for a place where the youth can find Christian role models, people who have time and experience for these kids and a place where they can get involved. In their words, the kids need a church. They have been convinced of this fact for a very long time and have tried many different ways of getting the kids plugged into churches. During the interviews, the staff members said that they need to:

*“Keep up the talks and the confrontation with the churches.” (M. Wiles)*

*“Connect the youth with people who are truly living with Christ in all areas of their life.” (K. Barrantes)*

*“[Have] more contact with churches.” (K. Green)*

What has not been said very much, is that YFC might need to involve families and neighbourhoods. Only one staff member mentioned this, while we believe that it would have big positive impact on the youth. Why do we mention it here, if there is not a representative group who have mentioned it? Because it is representative for the group to *not* mention it. Here is the quote of the one staff member who did address this topic:

*“YFC has a lot of connections with schools, they use schools for their activities. It can be good to make more connections with families and neighbourhoods.” (K. Barrantes)*

In a team meeting, we have observed that one other person has emphasised this topic.

One last idea of improvement comes from S. Sjoblom. He talks about geographic consideration:

*“Geographic consideration: work and go to church and schools in the same area. This means that it would be good if YFC workers go to the church and schools in the same area where they live. Because then they know the people in this area and can build a relationship with them. Can them bring to their church etc.” (S. Sjoblom)*

This can be a good way to result in some good fruit. However, we think that this is an idea that cannot be lived out easily, because there are more regions than staff members. This means that they cannot reach as many schools as they do now.

**What Do the Churches Say**

As we have said, we interviewed different churches, some of them were more involved than others. But all of them said that it would be good if YFC is more visible in the churches. Almost all of them would like to have more contact with YFC. One even said that although they as a church were involved with YFC, he really had no idea what exactly is going on and how else they could help YFC. Communication and visibility are two items that popped up.

*“It may be good if YFC staff members or volunteers get themselves more in front of the congregation, for instance in their own church. Have people know that our church is involved with YFC. They need to be more visible, and display YFC’s desires and needs.”(J. McKeen)*

Why is this of importance? Because if YFC has contact with and is visible in a church, that church will be much more inclined to be involved with YFC and help them out than when they are not so visible.

*“The church is more involved if YFC goes to their church and has more contact with the church.” (J. Sims)*

Besides the communication methods and the frequency of contact, there are some other desires from the churches directed towards YFC. These display of needs are already focussed on solutions. That is a good sign: the churches we talked to are solution oriented. In Chapter 6, we will take all of these points and turn them into practical advice.

*“YFC needs one person who does 2 things: 1. Lay relationships with churches so that every club has at least one pastor present and 2. Directs the kid who made a decision to the church who is already present.” (J. Sims)*

*“A more clear track for somebody who wants to get involved with bringing kids into church. They would like some information on the steps: what will be required of the volunteer? What do you do and what is the end result? That will give them security to try and see the vision.” (J. McKeen)*

*“Transportation: It would be ideal if YFC staff members or volunteers bring the kids from their club to the service on Sunday, to get new kids into church.” (C. Tress)*

*Prepare the Youth to Fit Them into Church*

After we asked the four pastors what their thoughts are on any improvement from YFC’s end, we asked are more specific question: how can YFC prepare the youth to fit into their church. What is a necessary change in order for the youth to feel comfortable in their church? All the pastors had different ideas on this preparation. One focussed on transportation, another on contact information, a third on being positive about the church and the last one on relationships. This could mean two things: 1. All those four things are necessary with every church or 2. Each church has a different need. We believe that each church is different, had different opportunities and abilities and therefore have different needs. Once again, we can emphasise the importance of getting to know the churches.

*Transportation*

Mr. C. Tress had the idea to use the Youth for Christ van to take kids to church. Volunteers from YFC or from the churches can take the children to church or to a youth service during the week. So it is necessary for the church to talk about transportation with the YFC staff members.

*Contact Information*

Mr. A. Filippone thought that it may work if YFC gives him a list of names of the recently converted kids with their contact information. The adult mentors from is church can call them and try to plug them into the church. By calling/texting them and meeting them before church service, they hope to have the youth feel more comfortable. “*The key to getting kids plugged in are adults who give them attention.”*

*Be Positive*

Mr. J. McKeen said that YFC staff members or volunteers on the clubs can be more positive about the church. Speak more about the church during the clubs. And for example, do not say ‘they (the church) do not have a youth ministry, but say: you can start it!’.

*Relationships*

Mr. J. Sims said that it may be good if there is more contact with YFC, so that there is a bigger or stronger relationship between YFC and the churches. He thinks that churches are more willing to work with YFC if they have more contact with YFC.

## 5.3.2 Of the Churches

As we asked our interviewees about YFC, we also asked them what their church could do extra for them. Before we get into the details, it is interesting to notice that all of the newly converted youth are going to a church. None said that they did not have a place to go to. This tells us that YFC and the churches are already accomplishing a lot in this area.

**What Does the Youth Say**

We are talking about improvement. Why is this necessary? Because not everyone is helped by the church:

*“Honestly, I think they have not done anything.” (C. Wagler)*

We found that the youth want the church to be a personal church. They want to have a church where they feel comfortable and feel at home. They need a place where they belong, to have their identity encouraged and confirmed. We asked them what kind of church is comfortable for them. Unconditional acceptance and genuine interest in one another were the two things that jumped out. What would help with giving the youth a sense of belonging and acceptance is giving them a task and making them involved.

*“[They should] know some names when greeting. Genuinely wanting to meet you. Start with certain people, it will spread. Involvement helps me to feel at home in a church.” (S. Wilson)*

*“Don’t stare at me if I am new, if I wear the ‘wrong’ clothing or if I don’t give a lot of money during the collection. But I feel comfortable in a church where everybody says hi, give hugs, and if there is not a boring pastor. Jokes and visual aid during the sermon help.” (L. Jiruad)*

Besides this, a lot of the youth want to have more personal contact and relationships with people from their church. This is an aspect of a personal church. Some of them want to have more personal time with the pastor, to ask him questions or to pray with him. Of course, this is not always possible, since the pastor can be busy. However, the feeling arises in the teens that church members do not always pour attention and time into them, because those church members do not have that need themselves.

*“There is sometimes the mentality of: I don’t need any more people in my life. But just because you don’t need friends, does not mean others don’t need it. Notice others. I need personal relationships in a church.” (S. Wilson)*

They also gave us some quotes on other things that they would like to have in the church they attend. The opportunity to ask personal and perhaps embarrassing questions, being direct in how they should be living, and having a youth group are three other representative answers that the youth gave. In their own words:

*“They can help me more with life and learning: ‘growing up kind of things’ that I wouldn’t want to ask my parents, about God, Bible, boyfriends etc… Giving me the opportunity to ask questions.” (J. Pieris)*

*“They can help by being even more direct, and tell people how to live their lives, scripturally based.” (C. Wagler)*

*“Some churches do not have a youth group. That would be a great way to connect to a church. Because that helps in situations for teenagers. Talk about situations fitting for our age.” (E. Rodriguez)*

**What Does Youth for Christ Say**

Some YFC staff members think that it would be great if there are more youth pastors present at the YFC events. They want this, because of two reasons. 1. It makes the churches more involved with YFC and with the teens, so that they will come to support the ministries and 2. The youth will become familiarized with a certain church, lowering the boundaries for them to attend there as well, as it may be uncomfortable for them to go for a first time:

“*It can be overwhelming for teenagers to go to a church for the first time. The churches have to be prepared for these teens, so that they can catch and lead them. Make it more welcome and explain why they do the things they do.”(E. Day)*

For this to become a reality, churches need to be two things, according to M. Wiles. They need to be healthy and they need to be willing to take a risk. The health indicates a church with enough members to support a ministry like this and with enough mission to back up YFC’s. in order to make win-win situations, this health is necessary of both the church and YFC. The churches also need to be willing to take a risk, because the church might not get out of it what they are expecting. The choice is: do you play it safe and risk missing out on seeing Gods hand move, or do you take a risk and hope that God will bless your input?

**What Do the Churches Say**

It was interesting to notice that not only the YFC staff members said that it would be good if some pastors are at the campuses. Half of the pastors we talked to said the same thing. They did bring a nuance into it, however, by saying that it does not necessarily have to be a (youth) pastor who is present. It can be any church member with their heart in the right place and perhaps some experience with youth. This is possible, because the purpose of church members being on clubs is that the churches are involved and that the youth start to feel comfortable with churches and that they might feel inclined to go to the involved church after their conversion.

*“Every church [should] adopt a JAM club, so that every club from YFC has a member of a church present. It is not necessary that that is a youth pastor, it can also be a worshipper, volunteer, etc.” (C. Tress)*

Some pastors would like to have more staff members or volunteers on their own team, for instance for mentoring kids in their church. And one church we talked to is clearly focused on families. This pastor has some things that he would like to offer in his church:

“*Get the parents involved (“I believe that if parents believe, the kids will follow. It is almost genetic, like the color of your eyes”.) Help the parents with a healthy marriage.” (A. Filippone)*

*“Being available in order to develop relationships.” (J. McKeen)* is one other thing that churches have mentioned. Relationships seem to be of big influence and great importance in the lives of teens. It is something that pops up at almost every single interview that we have conducted. Being available is a key to building functional and constructive relationships.

## 5.3.3 Of Them Together

Here, we are referring to the partnership between YFC and the local churches (see chapter 3 for more details on their existing partnership(s)). We find this of importance to mention, because we realized throughout our research that the youth need something that YFC cannot offer. We hope, together with the staff, that the local churches will meet (part of) those needs.

**Ideas for Improvement by Youth for Christ**

Thankfully, a lot of YFC staff members had ideas on how to improve their partnership with the churches. Understanding one another was the theme that three of the four staff members seemed to agree on. Understanding one another is important for partnership with organizations, like it is for relationships. Motivational congruence is only possible if one has taken the time to listen to the other side of the coin and talk about the difference and similarities between the two missions. Once some compromises have been made, if necessary, one will begin to form a relationship that is functional and satisfactory.

*“The churches need to understand our mission, and we need to understand their desire. Creating partnership with churches is like creating relationships with people.” (K. Green)*

*“I think that the way to get better partnerships is to learn from the churches whom we do work well with and figuring out what motivates them and how to make those partnerships stronger.” (E. Day)*

**Ideas for Improvement by the Churches**

Below are listen the ideas that pastors have on improving the partnership with YFC. Two of them, like already known, are already actively involved while two others are not so much. A big thing that we noticed was that the pastors want YFC to be more visible in the churches, because that can improve the partnership, the communication and the process of getting more volunteers from the churches. Pastor J. Sims even used a metaphor, trying to describe how YFC can become more visible:

*“Spread yourselves out over churches, like sheriff cars are spread out over neighbourhoods. It has impact!” (J. Sims)*

Like mentioned in 5.3.2, pastors also believe in the benefit of being on the ministry sights that YFC has. However, they do not always have the time or manpower or capability to make this wish come true. Therefore, one pastor looked at the concept or reaching youth from a different angle and said:

*“Use the enthusiasm from the church members on WHATEVER, and plug kids into that. If someone likes to fix bikes, and someone else likes baking, then get the kids to those people! Use talents and gifts! Forget the JAM clubs, this works too!” (J. McKeen)*

Being a good partner with YFC, McKeen is not bashing the work that is being done at JAM clubs. What he *is* trying to do, is help people think broader and realize that every talent can be used.

There are also some other ideas:

Mr. J. McKeen said that it can help if YFC has information available about the ministries and clubs that they run. If YFC has times and information on the clubs and gives that to the churches, it could help to get volunteers from those churches. This, because the volunteers would know what YFC desires of them and how they should get about it. There will be less hesitation because of an unknown.

Mr. C. Tress has an idea about the 1.21 groups and Girl Talks. He said to connect those groups with youth groups in churches. This means that the youth from YFC who are converted meet other Christian people in youth groups. That can be good to make new Christian friends for them. It can likewise be good for the youth in the church youth group to meet up with kids from a different background but with the same faith.

He has also the idea to use the YFC van to pick up the children and bring them to church (see 5.3.1).

# Conclusion

Now we want to form some conclusions about all the information in this chapter. It is clear that the youth that we interviewed is positive about YFC. They all said a lot of different positive things about what YFC has offered them. It is good to keep this in mind, and not only to look at the things that can be improved. This is for encouragement.

We mentioned that all the churches express that they have a mentor program for the youth. And we also came to the conclusion that every single youth we interviewed is going to a church on a regular basis. However, not one of the youth we talked to said that they have a personal mentor from within the church. This strikes us as odd. Here are some possible reasons why this could be possible:

* The youth didn’t know about the mentor program of their church. And this can mean that the churches do not give enough attention to their mentor program.
* It can also mean that the youth did not find it important enough to mention that they are part of a mentoring program in their church.
* We interviewed only 4 churches. In the whole of Palm Beach County, there are over a hundred churches. This can mean that it was just by coincidence that all the churches we interviewed have a mentor program.

Conclusion: the fact that the youth do not have a mentor or did not tell us about it and the churches said that they do have those programs, could be an interesting topic to do further research on. Because this is beyond our research focus, we will not go into much further detail. We hope that YFC and/or the churches will do something with this observation.

In this chapter we have put our findings into words, concerning points of interest where YFC can think about some improvements. As one can read, the youth have expressed their desire to have more (direct) talks about God. They also want more personal stories from the YFC staff members or volunteers. The fact that they mention this can mean that they don’t have people around them who tell them their story. They may be in need of personal conversations. The youth we interviewed didn’t all come from a Christian family. Therefore, we can imagine that they are hungry for personal stories to learn from.

Another interesting conclusion is that YFC have a desire for stronger and better connections between the churches and the youth. They want this, because it can become easier for the youth to join the youth groups of those churches. But at the same time, the churches mentioned that they want YFC to be more visible. So that they know the needs of the youth. A conclusion is thus that YFC and the churches both want to have more communication between them. Thankfully, that wish is mutual. That is important to know, because now we know that both parts are motivated. This enhances further possibilities.

As we have already said, the youth want more personal stories from the YFC staff members or the volunteer adult leaders. At the same time, the youth also told us that they want more personal contact with the church. A clear conclusion is that the youth want a lot of things to be more personal. As we said before, this can say something about the spirit of the age we are living in, because there is a lot of individualism. And it looks like the youth do not only want to be an individual, but also want more togetherness with others. This is important to keep in mind for our advice to YFC and the local churches.

Another observation that we have made while conducting our research is that there is a pattern: the youth are all expressing their desire for more personal attention. We believe this could be part of the consummation mentality of the post-modern society. They do not want a boring pastor, do want exciting events, and people who will always be there for them whenever the youth wish to contact them. If this is true, there are two options:

1. Give in to this demand of the youth and meet their every need, or;
2. Help change the youth’s mindset by setting reasonable boundaries.

Another conclusion is that YFC definitely wants to have more pastors involved at the ministries on schools. And also some pastors that we talked with are of that opinion. Nevertheless, the pastors are sometimes too busy with their own church to be involved with YFC ministries, although they do say that other people from their church can join the YFC ministries. So, again, the conclusion is that YFC and the churches both have the same opinion about this subject. And that both parties are motivated to go for this, even though it is not always realistic to ask of the churches that they are involved, regardless.

Lastly, a conclusion about the ideas for improvement from YFC and the churches. We noticed that the ideas for improvement from YFC were more theoretical and about what has to change in one’s mind. And the ideas from the pastors were more practical. According to the philosopher Kant, there are two branches of knowledge: practical and theoretical knowledge. The combination of both makes the knowledge complete. This can mean that it may be necessary for YFC and the churches to combine their ideas together and make an agreement on how to improve together. If this is done, it could very well be that the improvement is founded on credible arguments and is practical enough to be put into practice almost immediately.

CHAPTER 6.

Our Advice to Youth for Christ

In this chapter, we formulate our social work advice for Youth for Christ in order for them to meet the needs of the youth even better. This advice is for YFC, about the contribution from YFC and the local churches. We added the local churches to this advice, so that it is well balanced. However, we will not present this to the local churches since they are not the organization we are doing this project for. This balance is given so that YFC knows what they could ask of the churches, while keeping in mind what they can contribute themselves.

We want to make this advice solid, and we do this by backing it up with theories and methods. Those have not yet been mentioned in this transcript, because this was not our focus to do research on. By giving these theories and methods, we are labeling our advice: what are we actually saying and does it already exist? We want to suggest to the reader that they can do further research on this, if interested.

We have elaborately displayed what three different parties have said about their partnerships, their contact with the youth, the needs of the youth, and their own strengths and challenges. Now we use all the information given in these previous chapters, especially chapter four and five, bring it down to some concrete, applicable and fitting advice.

It is good to mention that this research result is not about: “what is the truth?”. It is about: “what do people perceive the truth to be?”, because we deal with people, and everyone has his or her own point of view. We are convinced that one thinks, feels and deals with a situation according to the way he or she perceives it. Therefore, we build our research and advice on the opinions of many representatives.

As we did this research project, in conversation with the three parties, we came to the conclusion that faith, personal development and social network interconnect with one another. For example: because of someone’s new found faith (faith), they change (personal development) and relate to people differently (social network). Therefore, it is not logical to pull these three forcefully apart, when giving our advice.

In chapter 4, we described the needs of the youth, concerning these different areas. In short, those would be:

* Faith: going to church more, being more involved, and know how to live a Christian life - *discipleship*
* Personal development: education, someone they can ask any question to - *role model*
* Social network: Christian friends, change their attitude, have someone as an example - *example*

In chapter 5, numerous different ideas are put into words. Most of them are good to seriously consider. However, we cannot put all those ideas that we think are good in this chapter. We want to focus on a couple, of which we think can be of biggest impact. Our advice, on the side, is: read through chapter 4 and 5 carefully and see what else you can use.

To meet these needs, we join the opinion of YFC and the local churches, that two things are necessary:

1. Better partnership between YFC and the local churches so that the needs of the youth can be met;
2. More manpower to personalize the attention towards the kids.

We want to add a third necessity to this list. Based on the interviews with the youth, we see another needs arise. Generally speaking, this is about how to best connect with the needs of the youth. Respectively, these three points will be thoroughly worked out as advice in the following titles.

# 6.1 Meet Specific Needs of the Youth

Like already said, specific needs of the youth arose as we were conducting our interviews. Because the youth are unique, their needs are, too. However, a few needs were similar and we want to highlight those.

## 6.1.1 Family and Friends

Family Systems Theory (FST)

A human being cannot function or be understood outside its social context. There is always an influence, back and forth. In different contexts, a human being displays different behavior (behavior repertoire). Therefore, this theory states that one will have more effect if you keep the social context in sight, in order to have more lasting impact on the child. The homeostasis within a family context may be disturbed once a child parts from the family views. This may have problems as a result.

Psychosocial Development

It is beneficial to the youth to have friends who think like them (in this case, Christian friends). This confirms their identity in a positive way. (4.7.3) Also, they are learning who they are in contact with others. Erikson says: a person of 13-19 years old struggles with identity vs. role confusion. Significant relationships are peers and role models. Existential question arise, like: Who Am I? What Can I Be? This struggle is most visible in social relationships. (Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, 2012)

**Involve Families**

Have a few Spanish and Creole speaking people whom you can always call if you need translation. In that way, you can involve any family with a language barrier better.

As the FST states, it is of importance that you change the entire family, and not only one member. Hence, make families a bigger focus. Kids can feel a huge pressure from home, especially when they start to form other opinions then their parents. A teenager needs to be very strong to be able to make a decision for Jesus if his/her parents are not behind that choice. Help the kid out and have contact with the families, unless you believe that it would be devastating for the child if his/her parents knew who you are.

*Practical: You can do that when you see the parents who pick their child up from YFC or when you talk about Camp. Make a parent night: a time for parents to come and have drinks and food and talk about YFC and their children. They youth may even do something fun for them.*

*About the translation: Make your personal connections known and open to other staff members.*

**Christian Friends**

We want to advise YFC to connect the youth with other Christians (Psychosocial Development), for instance in a youth group or at their clubs that YFC runs.

Besides that, the youth say that they want to change their attitude and behaviour towards their friends. Like the Psychosocial Development from Erikson says: they can feel confused and insecure about their role and identity in a social context. For YFC, this could be a sign to give more ‘food’ on this subject. Talk to them about friendship, about how they come across to others, etc. But at the same time, be aware of the fact that they are teens and that it will take time for them to mature into a person everyone will accept and like.

*Practical: YFC staff members or volunteers can try to bring the kids to youth groups of a church. Or if there is someone of the church present by the club of YFC, than he or she can bring them to the youth group. Be alert on this item, ask the youth if they have Christian friends, if they would like to have more Christian friends, and if they want to go to a youth group with you.*

*To become practical about their attitude and behavior, talk during the clubs more about this subject in your conversation with them. Or give every week a statement or discuss question about this topic. Personal time: use the speed date idea again (6.1.4), this time specific for one topic (like attitude).*

## 6.1.2 Churches

EPH

This kind of therapy is focused on one’s experiences in immediate situations and is based on authentic relationships. The core value is that one should have a balance between autonomy and togetherness. When this balance is interrupted, people may experience numerous social and psychological problems.

**Equip churches**

Train the churches to deal with the backgrounds of some of these kids. If the churches feel incompetent, they will feel insecure about what they can offer YFC and there is a big chance they will back out and never partake. When churches partner up by taking kids in, they will want to know what to do with them. Some churches have experience, most do not.

In 6.1.1, we have talked about the cognitive behavioral therapy. It states that your thoughts influence your emotions and behavior. If you as a church think “I am not competent to deal with the kids of YFC” that influences your behavior.

*Practical: Talk with them about this process and check if their thoughts are based on facts. Use the training that you give volunteers for the churches as well. Besides this, we think there are some conferences about this topic. It would be ideal if you go together with the churches to conferences or seminars about this topic, but directing them to those conferences could be good enough as well.*

**Involve Youth**

When youth decide they want to go to church, and have a specific one on their mind, one way to make them more comfortable is to get them involved. Let them do something: a welcome, handing out snacks, whatever. Make them feel welcome and important and involved.

To feel more involved in the church does not only mean to give them a task in the church. It can also mean that the youth feel known in the church: that people know their name/face/story, etc. It can therefore be good to give them more personal attention, have a youth group, have fellowship after church, etc. Or invite the youth over for dinner by a couple of the church. Be creative to give them a welcome feeling in the church.

Now we have only talked about their involvement in churches, but we would like to also suggest involving them with YFC. This will allow him or her to grow in their faith and it will give you more people to lead.

This refers back to the EPH, because it stimulates the togetherness, while also putting emphasis on the autonomy. The togetherness is found in working with the church and YFC to get something going. The autonomy is found in the responsibility and personal creativity to deal with their given task.

*Practical: Involved in churches: this is more a task for the churches. But YFC can talk about this with the churches, if they have an appointment together. YFC can say that this is important for the youth (because they told us) and if the churches want to meet this need more and more.*

*Involve with YFC: Once they make a conscious choice and you can be certain that they are growing in their faith, take a risk and let them lead one of the small groups at a JAM club, for instance. Talk with them before and after, to see if they are up for it and how they did, but give them this opportunity.*

**Transportation**

*“This is a huge problem!”* (J. Sims) It can be a problem for the youth to go to a church, because they have no transportation. Use the Family Group Conferencing method as described in 6.2.2 to see who can be involved in this transportation solution.

*Practical: You might be able to use the YFC van and bring them to church. Or volunteers from the different churches can take the youth to church. Another idea: everybody who runs a club can take those kids to church. Therefore you can also use your own car.*

## 6.1.3 At Clubs

**Familiar faces**

If there is someone from a church (youth pastor, worship leader, volunteer, etc.) on every club, it can improve the process of getting the recently converted kids into a church. Since they will already have a name with the face, they might be less hesitant to try it out. Young people between the ages of 13 and 18 are usually afraid of the unknown. Like said before, Erikson talks about the stage in which the teens can be insecure and confused. Unknown situations stimulate that confusion and they will therefore try to avoid them. Because of this, it may be good to make the local church a more familiar face.

Also, when the pastors/volunteers are on the clubs there will be more possibility for those clubs to be run in short small groups. This allows for the youth to have more quality time to talk about personal subjects.

*Practical: Be more active as YFC to get someone of the church in your club. Explain this importance to the church. And talk about what the task of this person is and if they want to invite the kids to their youth group… are they in for that?*

*Ask the persons of the church if they want to do more with the youth in their church. Give them the ideas like mentioned in 6.3.2 (Involvement).*

*Also, it can be good if the church member who attends the YFC club makes his/her church more known to the youth. Do not only advertise, but invite the youth as well. And do not only invite the kids but also invite their friends. It can be easier for them to go to a church if they know somebody there and do not feel too alone when they go.*

**Talk More About the Church**

During the YFC ministries/events, one might want to consider talking more about the churches. Do not only think more positively, like mentioned in 6.1.1, but also talk about it in an uplifting and excited way. The youth can find it hard to show imitative in something that is foreign to them. We can imagine that the youth do not want to go to the church if they have to go on their own. It is necessary that someone goes with them.

*Practical:*

* *Talk about your own church and what it means for you to go to church. Explain what the church is, what they do, what they have to offer the youth, etc. Let them ask questions and have them know why it is important to go to church.*
* *Suggest taking the youth to a church. Mention this as much as possible. Make it more ‘normal’ for them to go to church than ‘abnormal’.*
* *We want to suggest that the staff members take the converted youth to church at least once. Also think about taking the non-believing friends with them, so that they can experience it together.*

## 6.1.4 Personal Faith and Bible Knowledge

The youth told us that they want to have more informational talks about Christ. They also told us that it can be a great help if the YFC staff members or volunteers talk more about their own faith. The youth says that it is of importance that your faith comes from your heart. Make it more personal, since that is what attracts the youth. When something is personal, they cannot deny it. And if YFC gives more attention to the Bible, because of their experiences, that might build up the young believers. Conclusion: make it more personal during the clubs and draw more attention to the Bible.

## 6.1.5 More Literature Background

Throughout this entire advice, we keep coming back to the main advice, which is the fact that the youth need personal discipling. It can help to give the youth a disciple from their own social network. Because they know that person. They also need a role model in their life.

Literature says indicates that adolescents are in a phase in which they experience a lot of development and growth in different aspects. This can be confusing and can result in a lot of questions. Besides that, people around them start to expect more and more independence from them and they start to take on more and heavier responsibilities. Because these can be shaky times, it is good to have a rock to stand on.

Youth are starting to discover how they impact others with their behavior, attitude or words. They might start to think on how they want to change that. We believe that it is helpful and good for their development if one leaves room and time for them to discover who they are, what they are capable of, etc. putting more pressure on them to go through this process in a quick fashion can have negative effects.

Besides all this is it highly necessary for them to have a safe place: somewhere where they can be themselves and feel free to ask all their (existential) questions. This can be found in a safe group, but also with a friend or someone with more life-experience. Ask the youth if they have such a place/person. If not, do not let it go but start looking for a place/person where this teen can feel safe. A YFC staff member/volunteers or a pastor can be such a person. But what could be even more effective is to look for that person within their already existent social network: friends and family. It is possible that they might already have a functional relationship and have a lot of time to keep working on that safety aspect. Therefore: search for a role model/safe haven in the existent network of the youth.

# 6.2 Partnership

We believe that if the partnership between YFC and the local churches is improved, it will have significant impact on the youth. The way they can be involved in churches, can grow in their faith, change in their personality, relate to their social network in a more mature and uplifting manner is greatly depended on their possibility to settle in a church. The youth’s need for Christ-like discipleship can be met by the churches, even more than by the outreaching organization YFC. Below are four ways in which we think that this partnership can be set up or improved.

## 6.2.1 How You Think

Theoretical grounds should be given for every bit of advice. We will explain what it is. How it applies will be explained in our specific advice.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

The CBT is a theory based on thoughts. It explains how our thoughts regulate our feelings, and therefore our behavior. It goes into the impact of experience and how human beings base their behavior on what they have experienced in the past. The inductive method is about what we think are facts, when indeed they are not. Therefore, question and test your thoughts. (Nationa Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists., 2007) Cognitive structures are frameworks of reference in which our thoughts are placed.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

This therapy is part of the CBT, designed to help people understand that your behavior and emotions are regulated through your thoughts. Pinpointing dysfunctional thoughts, one can exchange them for more positive thoughts. This will have its influence on emotions and therefore behavior. "*Men are disturbed not by events, but by the views which they take of them*." (What is REBT, 2006)

Self Fulfilling Prophesy

“Any positive or negative expectation about circumstances, [events](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/events.html), or people that may affect a [person's](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/person.html) [behavior](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/behavior.html) toward them in a manner that [causes](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/cause.html) those [expectations](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/expectation.html) to be fulfilled. An [employer](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/employer.html) who, for example, expects the [employees](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/employee.html) to be disloyal and shirkers, will likely treat them in a way that will elicit the very [response](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/response.html) he or she expects.” (Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, 2012)

**Thinking Positively About the Church**

Start of by thinking more positively about the churches. Like said above, this will influence emotions and behavior (REBT). The churches may do more than you sometimes express. Pastors are involved, there are pastors leading the clubs, churches offer room and space, they support you financially, think of ways to give volunteers, etc. *“People love the local churches, but they only mention the negative things.”* (J. Sims) Prevent a self fulfilling prophesy in your contact with the local churches: if you go into the relationship thinking that they are willing and open, that will change the conversation and more likely give you that positive outcome then when you enter the conversation with a negative or disappointed preset presumption.

*Practical: Watch your words during team meetings, specifically the ones on Monday morning at the office, or any and all conversations about the churches. Allow your colleagues to keep you accountable. Keep in mind what they already offer you, or what they could offer you besides money, and enter a conversation with them in an enthusiastic, open manner.*

**Find the Fear**

There is tension between some churches and YFC. At least from some YFC staff members’ point of view. We’d say: figure out what fear lies behind the tension, so that you can deal with the core of the problem, and not the symptoms. When there is tension, it is triggered by a fear, which came to life by warped thinking. Thoughts regulate emotions and behavior. Therefore, make sure your thinking is correct and uplifting. The emotions and behavior towards churches will change, like the REBT states. And if that changes, perhaps the behavior from the churches towards you will change as well. And although this bit of advice may work both ways, and the churches should also investigate their own hearts to see what is keeping them from expelling the tension between them and some organizations like YFC, we present this to you so that you may lead others by example.

*Practical: during a team meeting, let this topic arise and discuss openly with one another what possible fears could be. Let someone write all the ideas down. Then talk about those fears and if they have any ground. Then, at the end, pray about the fears still standing. Let this be a ground on which you can change your thinking.*

**More Time and Broader Focus**

Lay more focus on connecting with churches for partnership. Although they might not give as much money, respectively, than an individual donor you are in good relationship with, they can offer a lot more than only financial support: they are a source for volunteers, they could give an opportunity to use their facilities, they could support you financially, they support you in their prayers, they can be on the campuses so that the kids will get to know the church and feel comfortable moving there once they become believers, etc. Like the CBT states, one can change ones connotations with a specific words (cognitive structures) by adding new information or changing ones thinking.

Think long term.

*Practical for ‘more time’: accept the challenge to spend more time on building relationships with churches. Do this, because you know the long term and overall benefit for the youth and for the organization. We know you are all very busy and have many different tasks and focuses at hand. We suggest you make daily list of all the things you spend your time on during a work day. Do this for 2 weeks. At the end of those 2 weeks, you will have a rather clear picture of all your activities and how much time it costs you. Decide on what is not as important as the rest, discuss it with your supervisor, scratch these off the list and instead devote yourself to building relationships with churches during that period of time every week.*

*Practical for ‘broader focus’: Think for your own what the word ‘partnership’ and ‘support’ mean for you. And try to think the next time when you hear the word partnership or support, also about the other ways that it can mean. You can also ask your supporters, partners or potential partners with up ask him what partnership and support for him means. And try to get a broader focus on this word by others.*

*Go to the churches. All do this individually and divide the churches between all of you, or have one person do this full time (see 6.1.3).*

**Relationships with Young/Small Churches**

Jim Sims is part of both a large and a small church and is as involved as he can be with YFC. In our discussion with him and our coach, he said*: “A huge church has too much going on.”* We therefore want to take two bit of advice and give it to YFC to ponder on.

1. Young churches might have more time, more enthusiasm, more ideas, and are not yet involved with a lot of different ministries as older churches can be. They are not stuck in their ways yet and can easily be molded. Even though you might have some negative experiences, do not let that influence your ability to step into a conversation, fresh and open (CBT).
2. Small churches might give you the opportunity to be a blessing to them by listening to their needs and desires, connecting with them in their ministries. They might not have ‘too much going on’.

*Practical: Get more contact with the younger/smaller churches, through: everyone’s knowledge of churches, visiting them, call them or have an appointment with them. Talk to anyone, but try to build up a relationship with the senior pastor. Have them partner up for the youth, not for YFC.*

## 6.2.2 Connect with the Churches

Transactional Analysis (TA)

“Transaction analysis is a kind of psychotherapy that (among other things) analyses our everyday communication - why do we say things we say, how do we say them and what made us say that. It uses simple words such as child, parent and adult (these are the names of our three ego states) to describe seemingly complicated processes in our mind.” (Transactional Analysis, 2003)

Motivational congruence

Motivational congruence is the agreement between two people/parties to have workable goals in a professional setting. (Menger, 2008)

**Communication**

We have talked to churches who barely knew what YFC did and how they could be of help, and yet they had volunteers running some clubs. This tells us that communication from both sides could be better. We want to encourage you to be grateful for whatever the churches may offer, but do not be satisfied with some help here and there. Build up the relationship by extensive communication. As you enter the communication process, think of these three things: 1. Why do you say this 2. How do you say it and 3. With what purpose do you say it?

*Practical: have everyone sit and think about the churches near their own mission sights. Then decide who you want to have a partnership with. Have this ‘social map’ clear, so that you can be focused in who you are going to reach and why.*

*Once in contact with them, sit down with them listen:*

1. *Ask questions, in order to understand where the mission of the church lies. Make their mission connect with your mission, so that you can create a win-win situation (or motivational congruence). And talk about how that win-win situation can be made very practical in daily life.*
2. *Ask about the ministries that they are already doing. Instead of wanting them in your ministries, see if you can join their ministries. Because that shows goodwill and because it can also be a way to connect the kids with churches. If those kids find out how cool/fun those churches can be, they might stick.*

## 6.2.3 New Job Description

We would like to suggest a new job description, for someone to commit full time to. YFC needs one person who does 2 things: 1. Lays relationships with churches/(senior) pastors (so that every club has at least one pastor present) and 2. Directs the kid who became new Christians to the church who is already present at that school. Because of the fact that Palm Beach County has numerous churches, this has to be a full time job. If you hire a young person, they have qualities but less already existing connections with churches. If you hire a older person, they have the qualities, the experience and the connections, but might ask more salary. We would like to suggest that YFC puts the priority of connecting with churches higher than a correct salary and would therefore be in search for someone with a lot of experience and connections.

We can comprehend the concept that this suggestion cannot be followed up on within a short period of time. Therefore, we want to suggest a plan B: have a team/committee commit to this, so that the time can be divided up until someone is hired to do this specific job.

*Practical: Talk together in a team meeting about this job description, and who may be fitted in this job. Is that somebody of YFC staff members or do you have to find another person? Besides this, focus on who could be in this committee, what the tasks will be, the goals, etc.*

## 6.2.4 Be Visible

Theory of Presence

This theory is based on the assumption that being present can do more than our hasty society allows us to believe. In it, the relationship is top priority. It is unconditional, daily, informal, following, warm, open, and fine tuning is the key. By being present, one can build up unforced and long term relationships. (Powerpoint Presentie, 2012)

**Fellowship/Prayer Time**

At first we thought: Is it possible to set up a time in the week or the month, that some YFC staff members go to some churches/pastors and pray for this ministry with those involved churches? But in conversation with local pastors, we learned that there are already numerous retreats/lunches/fellowship meetings planned by local churches for which YFC is invited. We encourage this fellowship with local churches, so that relationships can be built (Theory of Presence). Be visible in places of impact. We believe it is better to join the existing events than start up a new one, for 2 reasons. 1. Not many people have time for more than one of these events and 2. It displays trust if one joins a certain event, rather than being able to control the one you are setting up yourself.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” (Matt. 6:21) It doesn’t say: where your heart is, there your treasure is also, but that is how we often read it. This verse implies that if one invests into something, his/her heart will attached to it. If someone puts time and energy and prayer into this ministry, although it might not have their hearts yet, it will pull their heart in. One can do that with the already involved churches. But it can also be a way to get uninvolved churches involved in the future: ask them to pray with you once a month, and see what God does!

*Practical:*

1. *One staff members knows the times and days when there is a meeting for fellowship/lunches/retreats, for instance Meg;*
2. *A week before this meeting she can give a reminder via email or during a team meeting;*
3. *Reserve the van;*
4. *If at least Bill and Jeannie can be present, this will be of big influence (hierarchy).*

*Besides this, have printed material/flyers for the youth. When they ask about the church, you can tell them and them hand them something tangible. That might help them with their decisions and might influence the family as well, since this flyer could very well be laying around in the house.*

**Church Members on Clubs**

*How* one can get church members on the clubs will be explained in the next section, called ‘manpower’. Right now, we focus on the effect it will have once they are there.

If one gets a church member on every club that YFC runs, at every school they are reaching, then it will not only help the youth connect with the church in a casual way. It also helps give the (youth) pastors perspective on what really goes on with these kids’ lives and how YFC tries to reach them. They start knowing about the backgrounds, the homing situations, they personal needs and struggles and they may even be involved with the process of seeing that kid come to Christ. By being present, they can build up relationships. They will be more prepared and more motivated to take that kid into their own congregation and possible youth group if they have been involved from the start. This, because then it becomes more of a heart matter than a business deal.

*Practical: To get the church members on the clubs, see manpower(6.2). for them to know about the backgrounds, they need to be in personal conversations with the youth. Start up a speed-dating game during a JAM club or Campus Life. Have the church members, the staff members, the volunteers and the youth talk to one another for 5 minutes before moving to the next person. Before it starts: make a list of 6 questions that you want to know about the other person. During the 5 minutes, you may ask them. This is a fun way to get closer to the kids.*

# 6.3 Manpower

We discovered that the youth need personal time. YFC will therefore always need more people involved, who have a heart for youth, a personal relationship with God and a basic knowledge of the Bible. Although it would serve many purposes to have more people on staff or as a volunteer, our sole purpose for suggesting ideas on how to get more manpower is so that the youth may be benefitted by it. We learned that the youth need one on one time, and that cannot be given them if those people are not available. In the gap of time between their moment of decision and the time when they get hooked up with a supportive local church, there needs to be someone in their life whom they can trust, can turn to with any possible question, know will always be there when they are in trouble or just need someone to listen to them. To meet this critical need, we will suggest different ideas on how to get more people on your team.

## 6.3.1 Be Visible

Where can one get extra manpower? We thought of: churches, Christian colleges, conferences and personal relationships.

Since only 10% of the local churches know about YFC, be more visible in the churches you are already in connection with and those you do not yet know. Ask the churches you have good contact with to spread the word to one other church that they have good connections with. This, because you are more likely to get in if the pastors call for you, than if you call. Include the Christian colleges and conferences to make announcements, hang up posters, visit them once in a while, be present at their ministry events and fellowship meetings, etc.

*Practical: Think about which staff member(s)/volunteer can work at this topic. But also look broader and search for people in your own (personal) network who have a talent for one of these things and could be willing to help you:*

* *Make posters,*
* *Collect data on events so that the flyers can be made*
* *Take the posters and flyers to churches, colleges and conferences*
* *Be clear about your needs for manpower on the website*
* *Know about the different ministries,*
* *Make a schedule as to who will go where when, etc., to make announcements or to simply be present.*
* *Talk to your friends/relatives about your work, explain to them what it is like and continue to stimulate them to think about volunteering or if they know about someone who might like to.*

*Give this staff member(s)/volunteer a clearly task about how to stay more visible.*

*Besides this: continue to look for more ways. Stay intentional.*

## 6.3.2 Have a Plan

Family Group Conferencing

This method is used to empower oneself *in* ones network. It is: “Using the own strength and resources of people to make a plan and make decisions for the future and thus keep the directorship of their lives in their own hands.” (What we do, 2011)

**Use Your Connections**

Many staff members have been committed to YFC long enough to have several, if not many, good connections with churches and/or individuals. So use the pastors that you have gotten to know to get more people from local churches involved. Also, use your supporters/donors to get into the churches, since almost all of them go to church. And finally, broaden your focus: motivate the senior pastor to partner up with you. He is the key to get the rest of the congregation involved. But don’t only look at the pastor or youth pastor to get involved. Anyone from a church (like worship pastor) can help you build that bridge.

*Practical: In a team meeting, grab a big piece of paper and brainstorm together about all the connections that you have. Be creative in this. Then talk about the potential uses of these connections. This is using the Family Group Conferencing method.*

*When you have an appointment with someone of the church, a PBA student, a teacher, or someone who supports you, talk about the connections that they may have. Ask if they know someone who can help YFC to get more manpower. Make this subject usual to discuss during your contact with them. Let them think about it.*

**Use Your Talents**

It has been said by an involved pastor from a small church that there are more ways than one to get volunteers and church members involved with the youth that YFC is reaching. Use the talents and joys that ‘ordinary and non-volunteer’ church members have to get them connected with kids. In this way, youth can build up relationships in a non-forced environment and they might make the transition to a church more easily.

*Practical: We want to suggest and challenge you to sit down with churches and start a conversation about all the talents and joys they have in that church. Someone likes to cook, another likes to fix bikes, another does graphic design or does the sound technical stuff during a service. Ask those people if they are interested in sharing their talent with some kids who might like to do the same. Announce many fun stuff like this during clubs/events and have kids sign up. Exchange their phone numbers and get them connected together. Set a date and time for that church member to expect some kids and let them know some of their background.*

**Step Plan Volunteers**

Have a step plan for the potential volunteers to look into. And have those lying in as many churches as possible, even if those churches have not partnered up (yet), because individuals may be interested even if the pastor is not. This step plan will give potential volunteers a guide and a vision. Helping you out becomes a lot more tangible, and hopefully attractive. We believe this is important, because just like teenagers, adults can also hesitate to step into the unknown. Be very clear on what you need and why, and people will then know what they are signing up for. They can pray more specifically, too.

*Practical: In this guide, mention:*

* *times*
* *dates*
* *locations*

*You already have this information on your display of clubs with school names, days and times. Use this information to make n attractive flyer.*

*Also give information on:*

* *what they, as a volunteer, will do;*
* *under who’s supervision they will be;*
* *that they will have a training and what they will learn during that training;*
* *what their responsibilities will be;*
* *and what result will be their striving.*

*Have a phone number they can always call and an personal email address (not a standardized one). And have all of this same information on the website.*

*Make a flyer to get more volunteers with the information you can see above. Give someone the task to put the same information on the website of YFC. This person can also respond the emails from the website.*

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ATTACHMENTS

# A.1 Interview Questions

Below are the interview questions we used with the three different target groups: the youth, the Youth for Christ staff members and the local churches.

## A.1.1 Youth

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Answer** |
| 1. Name |  |
| 1. Age |  |
| 1. Do you have friends? 2. How do you guys get along and what do you do? |  |
| 1. Do you have parents? 2. How is your relationship with your parents? |  |
| 1. Do you have siblings? 2. How is your relationship with your siblings? |  |
| 1. How did you get in contact with YFC? |  |
| 1. How long have you been in contact with YFC? |  |
| 1. What kind of activities from YFC did you participate in? |  |
| 1. When did you make a decision to follow Jesus? |  |
| 1. How did that happen? |  |
| 1. How was your life before this event? 2. And how is it now? |  |
| 1. How do/did your friends and your family respond to your decision? |  |
| 1. What differences have they noticed in you? 2. How is that for you? |  |
| 1. Since your decision, what has gone really well? |  |
| 1. And what has been hard? |  |
| 1. How do you think you can grow in your faith? |  |
| 1. What do you think you could still learn about yourself personally, to become an even better person? |  |
| 1. And is there anything that could help you grow in your contact with your family and your friends? |  |
| 1. Is there anything else that you would like to see changed or helped? |  |
| 1. What has YFC already done for you to help you adapt? |  |
| 1. And how can YFC help you even more? |  |
| 1. Do you attend church? If so, how is that for you? 2. If not, how come and would you like to? |  |
| 1. Have local churches done something for your? 2. And how can local churches help you even more? |  |
| 1. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us? Or perhaps you have some questions? |  |
| 1. May we use your name and surname in our research or do you wish to stay anonymous? |  |

## A.1.2 Youth for Christ Staff Members

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Answer** |
| 1. Name |  |
| 1. Age |  |
| 1. How long have you been working with YFC? |  |
| 1. What got you here? |  |
| 1. And what is your task? |  |
| 1. What kind of youth do you work with? (age, social status, gender, home situations) |  |
| 1. What is your goal/mission in this line of work? |  |
| 1. How is your contact with the youth? 2. What about specifically with the ones who recently converted? |  |
| 1. How would you describe the quality of the partnership between YFC and the local churches? Could you give us some reasons? |  |
| 1. What are the main characteristics of the youth within West Palm Beach? |  |
| 1. What do you think that the recently converted youth in your own group need to grow spiritually? 2. For their personal development? 3. And socially? |  |
| 1. What do you think that the recently converted youth *in* *general* need to grow spiritually? 2. In their personal development? 3. And socially? |  |
| 1. How is the Christian faith acted out in Florida, culturally based? |  |
| 1. What do you think the church and/or YFC can offer to help these young people develop after they convert? |  |
| 1. What has YFC already tried? |  |
| 1. What are some new idea’s you might be having? |  |
| 1. May we use your name and surname in our research or do you wish to stay anonymous? |  |

## A.1.3 Churches

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Answer** |
| 1. Name |  |
| 1. Age |  |
| 1. Name of the church |  |
| 1. How long have you been part of this church? 2. What is your task/position here? |  |
| 1. How would you best describe this church? 2. What is its mission? 3. What are the core values? 4. How do you act that out? |  |
| 1. Are you involved with ministries? 2. Have you heard of YFC? And if so, do you partner up with them? |  |
| 1. What made you partner up with YFC? |  |
| 1. What does that partnership/support look like exactly? |  |
| 1. How would you describe the *quality* of the partnering with YFC? 2. Could you give us some reasons for that? |  |
| 1. How many youth do you have in this church? 2. How would you describe them? |  |
| 1. What are some activities or support they are getting to mature in their faith? |  |
| 1. What is the mission of the church, related to the youth specifically? 2. What is the reason that the church has this mission statement? |  |
| 1. What past attempts has this church made to attract the youth and keep them in your congregation? |  |
| 1. What works? |  |
| 1. Where lie some difficulties? |  |
| 1. If you are partnered up with YFC, what do they do to help you with this? |  |
| 1. What can YFC do extra? |  |
| 1. What do you think that the recently converted youth needs to grow spiritually? 2. In their personal development? 3. And socially? |  |
| 1. What can the church do extra to meet the needs of the youth? |  |
| 1. How can YFC and this church work together to make this work? |  |
| 1. How can YFC prep the youth, so that they can fit into your church? |  |
| 1. May we use your name and surname in our research or do you wish to stay anonymous? |  |

1. Needs: the total sum of the necessities that the young Christians would like to see fulfilled: in their personal development, socially, and spiritually. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Young: the students on campus [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Contact: participating in the events that YFC hosts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Youth: from now on we will label the ‘recently converted young Christians who are in contact with Youth For Christ’ as ‘youth’. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Personal development: “Personal development includes activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitates employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations.”(Personal Development, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Social network: the domestic family, peer group(s). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Local churches: all the churches in Palm BeachCounty who want to work together with YFC. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Identity: “The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable.” (Farlex, 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)