

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH METHOD

This study intends to discover the leadership challenges facing the women alumnae of Dallas Theological Seminary. The research focuses on identifying these ministry challenges and collecting recommendations from the women alumnae as to how Dallas Seminary could best prepare women students for Christian ministry.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This study asked and answered the question, “What are the leadership challenges facing the Dallas Theological Seminary women alumnae and how can DTS best prepare women students to meet these challenges?” The following hypotheses were formed prior to the research process:

1. DTS women alumnae will offer many helpful ways for DTS to better prepare women students for the leadership challenges to be faced in ministry.
2. Leadership challenges will differ between married and single DTS women alumnae.
3. Leadership challenges will vary among DTS women alumnae who are working in small churches, large churches, parachurch ministries, overseas mission work, and academic settings.
4. Leadership challenges will differ between DTS women alumnae who are salaried or non-salaried.
5. The greatest leadership challenge for DTS women alumnae will be working with the male leadership in their ministry.
6. The more recent women graduates (1991-2003) will report that during their time at DTS, they felt more accepted and respected by the DTS faculty than those who graduated before 1991.

7. The more recent women graduates (1991-2003) will report that during their time at DTS, they felt more accepted and respected by the DTS male students than those who graduated before 1991.
8. DTS women alumnae will indicate their awareness that men and women in general have different leadership and communication styles.

Research Method

A descriptive survey, designed to discover the leadership challenges faced by seminary women alumnae served as the research instrument in this study. The instrument gathered both quantitative and qualitative responses by including both closed and open-ended questions. The recipients received paper copies of the survey by mail rather than electronic copies over e-mail in order to give the women alumnae the freedom and opportunity to write any additional comments that they felt were pertinent to the purpose of the study. Paper copies also allowed for confidentiality in responses.

Population

The women who graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary from 1977-2003 composed the target population for this study. The Office of Alumni and Church Relations at Dallas Seminary provided the original list of 950 names and mailing labels. The decision to target all the women graduates rather than selecting a random sample enabled the possibility of the greatest number of responses.

Subsequent to the original mailing of the survey, it was discovered that an undetermined number of the original 950 recipients had completed part of their course work at DTS, but they had never graduated. Ultimately, thirty-seven surveys were completed and returned by women who had taken classes at DTS, but had not completed their degree. These thirty-seven surveys were not included in the final tabulation of the data since the study only intended to discover the leadership challenges facing women

who had actually graduated from Dallas Seminary. In June 2004, Gary Hoyer, Director of Administrative Computing at DTS confirmed that 923 women have graduated from Dallas Seminary through 2003. The target population for this study was then adjusted to reflect the accurate number of 923.

Development of the Instrument

An investigation of all doctoral dissertations written in the past ten to fifteen years did not reveal any surveys that focused on the challenges facing women who have graduated from a conservative evangelical seminary. An original instrument needed to be developed in order to gain the desired information from the women who had graduated from Dallas Seminary.

The review of literature served as a primary source for the development of the instrument. From the literature review, a number of studies offered samples of surveys that helped to design the instrument for structure, content, and the forming of questions. Surveys used in doctoral work by the following people informed the development of the instrument: Sharon Dulaney, Cheryl Kimberling, Dianne Reistroffer, Lin McLaughlin, George Hillman, Jeannette Shubert.¹ In addition, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications* by Gray and Airasian² was consulted throughout the research process.

¹ See entries in the Bibliography for complete information for each of these projects.

² L.R. Gray and Peter Airasian, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).

Michele Green's doctoral work at Loyola University³ offered significant help in constructing the instrument. She conducted case studies of three major seminaries in the United States. Green interviewed female alumnae, female faculty, and female staff members on each campus. The results from her interviews surfaced specific challenges faced by seminary women, such as the need of female mentors and gender issues. Green's findings contributed to the design of questions for the survey.

The development of the instrument occurred as an independent study done under the guidance of Dr. Jerry Wofford, Adjunct Professor in Doctor of Ministry at DTS. Dr. Wofford reviewed numerous drafts during September-December 2003, drawing from his years of experience working in Ph.D. research. Dr. Gene Pond, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at DTS, provided samples of surveys used with current and past DTS students. His expertise in research and survey development contributed invaluable guidance in the content and structure of the instrument.

Mr. Bob Kaumeyer, Director of Placement at DTS, offered helpful input related to challenges seminary women face in finding ministry positions. In addition, the survey was submitted to Dr. Andrew Seidel and Dr. Jeannette Shubert, the first and second readers for this dissertation. They provided insight and guidance in the construction of the survey.

By December 2003, a final draft of the survey was completed. A pilot group of fifteen DTS women alumnae who graduated from 1978 and 2002 agreed to review the survey. They represented a diversity of ages, degree programs, marital status, graduation years, and ministry contexts. A cover letter for the pilot study (Appendix B) accompanied

³ Michele Green, "The Preparation of Women for Ministry: An Exploratory Study of the Traditional Curriculum in Evangelical Seminaries" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2002).

the survey. The women in the pilot study were asked to pretend to fill out the survey and time how long it took to complete. They were also asked to evaluate the survey and make any suggested changes such as clarity of questions, content, lay-out, and length. Fourteen of the women returned the pilot survey. The average time to complete the survey was thirty minutes. The women identified unclear questions, missing demographic information, and grammatical errors. Their suggestions greatly helped in the construction of the final draft of the survey (Appendix C).

The survey was printed in January, 2003. Dr. Mark Bailey, President of Dallas Seminary, graciously agreed to write a cover letter (Appendix D) to accompany the survey. A second letter (Appendix E), written by Joye Baker, survey designer, was included, explaining the survey and giving directions regarding how to fill out and return the survey in a self-addressed, stamped envelope. A return postcard (Appendix E) also accompanied the survey. The women alumnae were asked to fill out the postcard with their name and address and mail the postcard separate from the returned survey to maintain confidentiality. On the postcard the women could indicate whether or not they would like to receive a summary of the study. The total cost of the survey was \$2354.04. This included printing, envelopes, and postage. A detailed accounting of the expenses can be found in Appendix G.

Description of the Instrument

The survey (Appendix C) is nine pages long and contains ninety-one fixed-choice questions and twelve open-response questions. Each of the survey's six sections has a title:

- A. Your Current Ministry
- B. Leadership Challenges You Have Faced in Ministry
- C. Leadership Issues
- D. About You as a DTS Student
- E. Your Placement After Seminary
- F. About You Now

Each section of the survey gathered demographic information as well as responses to a number of different leadership topics related to seminary women graduates. The questions generated information related to the time each respondent attended Dallas Seminary as well as the years spent in ministry experience after graduation from DTS. The final question asked for suggested ways DTS could strengthen its program to best prepare seminary women more effectively for the challenges they would face in ministry.

Each question was assigned a number or letter for identification. Section A of the survey included questions related to the women's current ministry involvement. The first five questions were to be answered by those in vocational (salaried) ministry and numbers six through eleven were to be answered by those in volunteer areas of ministry. The women could answer in both sections if they were involved in both vocational and voluntary ministry. In each of the two categories, the women were asked to list their ministry title(s), area of employment, size of their church, and indicate whether their immediate supervisor was male or female. Following this information, there were six statements related to working with people in their ministry. Five options could be checked from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Section B was a thirty-two part inventory of different challenges women might face in ministry. The five options to choose from ranged from “not at all a problem” to “continually a problem.” Following the inventory, the respondents were asked to indicate their top three greatest challenges/problems from the list of thirty-two challenges from the inventory. Space was provided to write down any other challenges they had faced which were not included in the previous inventory.

Section C addressed various leadership issues. The first question contained three statements related to the way men and women lead, communicate, and work together. The women indicated their response on a five-point scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Question two asked for the respondents’ position on the role of women in ministry. The women could check whether they held a complementarian position, an egalitarian position, or neither. If they checked “neither,” space was provided to write a short description of their position. Question three asked for a one-sentence definition of the meaning of a “leader.” In question four, respondents could pick one woman of the Bible with whom they most closely identified. The final question asked, “Do you currently have anyone in your life you would consider a ‘mentor,’ someone who models a mature Christian faith and is a trusted source of wise counsel and guidance?” The option of “yes” or “no” could be checked.

Section D dealt with the women’s years as a DTS student. Demographic questions asked age, year of graduation, degree(s) earned, campus attended, marital status, Spiritual Formation involvement, and internship completion. The final question included four statements soliciting information about the respondents’ relationships with

the faculty and the male students. Five possible options ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Section E concerned ministry placement after seminary. Respondents indicated whether or not they had sought a paid ministry position after graduation. If they had secured a ministry position, they could check how long it had taken them to secure a position or indicate if they were still looking for a position. If they had wanted a position, but had not been able to find one, they could write in factors they felt accounted for their situation. Question three asked the question, “Has the fact that you are a woman had an impact on your ability to obtain the job of your choice?” Different options such as “being a woman has helped, hindered, or had little impact on obtaining a job” could be checked in response. Additional space was given for respondents to list all the positions, salaried and unsalaried, held since graduation. The final question in Section E was a “yes” or “no” question asking whether or not the respondent held a secular job.

The first seven questions in Section F were current demographic questions related to age, ethnicity, location of home, marital status, years married, number and ages of children, and church affiliation. Question eight asked for a written response to the inquiry, “If you once were, but no longer are, in a salaried ministry position, what was the reason you decided to leave vocational ministry?” Following this question respondents could indicate on a scale of one to five how many close women friends they have. The survey ended with the final question in Section F. This open-ended question requested the respondents to offer “specific ways DTS could strengthen its program to prepare seminary women more effectively for the challenges they will face in Christian ministry.”

Each section of the nine-page survey was on a separate page to make it easier for respondents to follow. The survey was printed on five pages, front and back. The second hypothesis stated that marital status would impact the leadership challenges of women seminary graduates. It was validated by correlating marital status in Section F with the list of thirty-two challenges in the inventory in Section B.

The third hypothesis stated that leadership challenges would vary according to whether women graduates were working in small churches, large churches, parachurch ministries, overseas work, or academic settings. The fourth hypothesis stated that leadership challenges would vary according to whether women graduates in vocational ministry were salaried or non-salaried. Results related to the third and fourth hypotheses were computed by correlating demographic information in Section A with the list of thirty-two challenges in the inventory in Section B.

The fifth hypothesis speculated that the greatest leadership challenge for women was working with male leadership in ministry. The responses to B17, "Prejudice towards me as a woman in ministry," and B18, "Acceptance by the male leadership in my ministry," addressed this hypothesis. In addition, B33, which asked each respondent to list her "three greatest challenges/problems in ministry" from the previous thirty-two part inventory, offered information related to the fifth hypothesis.

The sixth and seventh hypotheses predicted that the women students who graduated in more recent years (1991-2003) would feel they had been more accepted and respected by the faculty and the male students than the women students who had graduated in the earlier years (1977-1990). Correlating the year of graduation for each respondent (question D3) with responses to numbers 9a, 9b, 9c, and 9d informed the sixth

and seventh hypotheses. The eighth and final hypothesis concerned the differences in leadership and communication styles of men and women. This hypothesis was validated by the responses to the three statements listed in question one of Section C of the survey.

Procedures for Collecting the Data

The Dallas Seminary Department of Alumni and Church Relations, directed by Dr. Doug Cecil, supplied three sets of mailing labels. The labels served as the master list of all women alumnae who received a survey. The first mailing went to 950 women alumnae on 1 February 2004. The mailing included two cover letters (Appendix D and Appendix E), the survey itself (Appendix C), a stamped self-addressed return envelope, and a postcard to be filled out and returned (Appendix F). The respondents were requested to write their current address on the postcard and indicate whether or not they wanted a summary of the results of the survey sent to them.

Approximately 200 women returned their completed surveys by 1 March 2004. The names of these first respondents were identified from the separate postcards they had returned. These first 200 names were removed from the second set of mailing labels. In addition, on the third set of mailing labels, a small dot was placed by the names of the women alumnae who had returned their surveys. Address changes were also noted on the labels. The third set of labels was used to send a summary of the survey to respondents who requested a summary.

On 1 March 2004 a reminder postcard was sent to all the women alumnae who had not returned their surveys (Appendix H). Another 200+ women returned their surveys by 8 June 2004. Four more surveys arrived later in the summer, but too late to be included in the final results. Thirty-seven surveys were completed and returned by

women who had taken classes at DTS, but had not completed their degree. These thirty-seven surveys were not included in the final tabulation of the data since the study was only intended to discover the leadership challenges facing women who actually graduated from Dallas Seminary.

A total of 418 surveys were returned of the 950 that had been sent. With the exclusion of the forty-one surveys (thirty-seven non-graduates and four late returns), 377 valid surveys were obtained. This is a 40% return rate. When compared to the official number provided by the DTS Computer Services Department of 923 women graduates who have graduated from DTS as of December, 2003, the survey responses represent 41% of women who have graduated from DTS from 1977 to 2003.

Procedures for Analyzing the Data

Each completed survey was assigned an identification number upon receipt. The identification numbers ranged between 001 and 415 because the invalid surveys were included before they were identified. Each question on the survey was assigned a capital letter identifying its section of the survey and a number indicating the question. A coding was devised in order to assign quantitative answers to each of the ninety-one fixed-choice responses (Appendix I). The responses to all the questions were entered into an EXCEL spreadsheet. Dr. Gene Pond, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at DTS, used the statistical program SPSS to compute the results of responses and correlate the data of the 377 valid surveys.

In addition, Laurie Weber Norris, DTS Assistant Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, transcribed ten of the twelve open-ended responses from the survey. Two of the open-ended questions (D8 and E4) were not transcribed because, after

receiving back the surveys, it was determined that the questions were not relevant to the study. The following list indicates the open-ended questions that were transcribed:

What is your vocational ministry title? (A2)

What is your volunteer ministry title(s)? (A7)

Please list any other challenge(s)/problem(s) you have faced that is/are not included on the previous 32-part inventory. (A34)

If you checked the third statement (“neither”), please explain your position on the role of women in ministry in one or two sentences. (C2)

One of the aims of DTS is to develop leaders for ministry. In one sentence, define what you believe “leader” means. (C3)

With which woman of the Bible do you most closely identify? Why? (C4)

If you have not secured a salaried position of your first choice, what factors do you think account for this situation? (E2)

Has the fact that you are a woman had an impact on your ability to obtain the job of your choice? Please explain our answer. (E3)

If you once were, but no longer are, in a salaried ministry position, what was the reason you decided to leave vocational ministry? (F8)

What are some specific ways DTS could strengthen its program to prepare seminary women more effectively for the challenges they will face in Christian ministry? (F10)

The responses to these questions generated 150 single-spaced pages of written responses. These comments offered anecdotal information from the DTS women alumnae that addressed specific survey questions as well as additional comments that will be useful as Dallas Seminary seeks to improve their preparation of women for ministry.

The answer to the first half of the research question, “What are the leadership challenges facing the Dallas Theological Seminary women alumnae?” was derived from question B33, “From the statements on the last two pages [of the thirty-two part

inventory], what would you say have been your top three greatest challenges/problems in ministry?” These answers were correlated with demographic information from questions A1, A2b, A3, A6, A8, A9, and F4. The demographic information related to the marital status of the women graduates, their vocational and volunteer positions in ministry, and their context of ministry, i.e., small churches, large churches, parachurch ministries, overseas work, or academic setting. Question B34 offered the opportunity for respondents to suggest additional challenges not included on the thirty-two part inventory. These additional suggestions were transcribed, reviewed, and listed according to topic and the number of times each topic was mentioned. The challenges that were most often mentioned were identified and put into a list in highest to lowest order.

The answer to the second half of the research question, “And how can DTS best prepare women students to meet these challenges?” derived from question F10, “Think back over your years as a student at DTS and your personal experiences in ministry. What are some specific ways DTS could strengthen its program to prepare seminary women more effectively for the challenges they will face in Christian ministry?” The open-ended responses were transcribed, indicating the respondent for each written response. The responses were analyzed and each individual recommendation put into a list according to how many respondents mentioned each recommendation. From this information a percentage could be determined that indicated the top recommendations made by the women alumnae.

Although many of the questions on the survey did not relate directly to the research question, they were included in the survey to obtain additional information that would be helpful to the on-going pursuit of developing women as godly servant-leaders

at Dallas Seminary. The literature review for this DMin project investigated the differences in the way men and women lead. One of the primary leadership differences is the priority women give to relationships. Survey questions A4, A5, A10, A11, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, D9, and F9 were designed to address some of the relational issues of women leaders. The responses to these questions were tabulated and are included in chapter four of this dissertation.

Questions E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, and F8 offer information regarding ministry placement issues for women. Responses will inform the Dallas Seminary placement office of data useful in the advisement of women students. The information also helps seminary faculty and staff as they guide women students towards ministry opportunities after graduation. A written summary from the placement questions will be given to Mr. Bob Kaumeyer, Director of Placement at DTS. The tabulated results have also been included in chapter four.