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ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE OF RESPONSIVE 
EVALUATION AS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS 
OF IMPROVING THEOLOGICAL 
EDUCATION PROGRAMS 

DISSERTATION 

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for 
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate 
School of The Ohio State University 

by 

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**** 

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1996 

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ABSTRACT

Professional education, as it relates to religious vocations, is at an apparent crossroads in its history. Institutions of theological education need to find ways to ask questions and seek information to help improve the quality of their offerings. One of these ways is through formative program evaluation.

A program involves the investment of certain resources through a set of activities in order to achieve some desired outcomes. Program evaluation has to do with the process of assessing whether the invested resources are adequate to produce the desired results, and whether the outcomes are attained as a result of the program activities.

Formative evaluation aims at improving an ongoing program, in contrast to summative evaluation, which is done at the completion of the program to evaluate results, decide on the elimination or continuation of a program, and related purposes.

A model of formative program evaluation that seems adequate for theological education is the approach known as responsive evaluation. This is a naturalistic approach that orients more directly to program activities than to program intents, responds to the concerns of the audience, and takes into consideration different value perspectives. It is interactive, and versatile enough to allow for
the inclusion of quantitative data without doing violence to the process. It seeks for relationships between program intentions, interactions, and outcomes, in reaching conclusions and making recommendations for program improvement. The institution’s decision-makers own the process from the onset. They determine what are relevant issues to be evaluated, what questions need to be asked, and what audiences will be addressed in the process. They also decide what form of reporting will be used, and how the information obtained will be utilized.

The model was implemented on two separate occasions at different sites, by the same researcher, and the results were positive. The evaluation of the model was made in terms of its ability to: 1) compare intentions, interactions, and outcomes; 2) produce relevant feedback; 3) propose means for program improvement, and 4) suggest indicators of success in theological education.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be literally impossible to mention all the people who have contributed to bring this project to fruition. The writer has a debt of gratitude to his professors at the Ohio State University, especially to the following:

Dr. Donald Sanders, his first doctoral adviser, who introduced him to qualitative research.

Dr. Nancy Zimpher, his adviser and mentor, who guided him in the conceptualization of the project.

Dr. Gail McCutcheon, professor of curriculum studies, member of his doctoral committee, who gave him invaluable advise.

Dr. Kenneth Howey, member of his doctoral committee, also gave valuable insight.

Dr. Mari Nelson, coordinator of academic advising at University College and a personal friend, who offered continuous moral support and couching.

Many practitioners in the field of theological education also contributed their goodwill and expertise.
Dr. Barbara Wheeler, president of Auburn Theological Seminary, offered scholarly advise as well as field knowledge of program evaluation.

Dr. Frederick C. Tiffany, academic dean; Dr. Vergel L. Lattimore, director of alcoholism and drug abuse ministry; and the Reverend Carolyn Pettigrew, educational assistant to the academic dean, at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, gave many hours of their time to the implementation of the project.

Dr. Cecil B. Knight, president; and Dr. Steve Land, academic dean, at the Church of God Graduate School of Theology, gave unconditional support to the research.

Several members of the Association for the Theological Education of Hispanics acted as sounding board to appraise the plausibility of data interpretation and conclusions. Especially helpful were Drs. Justo González, Loida Martell, Pablo Jiménez, and the Reverend Elizabeth Conde-Frazier.

The Reverend Rubén Lugo, a fellow editor, perused the evaluation report for its trustworthiness. He and the Rev. Enrique de Jesús, a Christian education writer, read the manuscript of this report critically. Mrs. Vernice Brooks was very helpful with the secretarial work. Mr. Noel Burgueño did an outstanding job of laying out the entire document. Finally, Mrs. Meri Rivera, wife, confident, and constant source of inspiration of this writer, has endured without complaining the hardships of being the spouse of a doctoral student. Any merit behind this effort rightfully belongs to her.
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PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Secondary education; Supervision and curriculum

Biblical theology; Educational policy and leadership
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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

Introduction

This study is the result of an interest in the improvement of professional education as it relates to religious vocations. Its underlying premise is that principles and strategies used in the formative evaluation of preparation programs in other fields, especially teacher education, can be adapted to meet the need of improving theological education as well.

Formative evaluation. As it is used in this study, formative evaluation refers to the assessment of an ongoing program for improvement purposes. In contrast, summative evaluation is made upon completion of a program to determine the extent to which goals were achieved, to answer questions of merit and worth, to decide the termination or continuation of the program, and for other germane purposes.

As a practitioner in theological education, this writer has experienced gaps between program intentions and program outcomes, between classroom theory and field practice, as well as discrepancies in the expectations of various constituencies. The existence of these gaps and discrepancies has been confirmed through the
literature and through interactions with other concerned practitioners. As a researcher, the goal here was to examine the application of a specific form of program evaluation as a resource for improving the overall quality of theological education programs.

*Pertinent questions.* The following were some pertinent questions that had to be addressed:

1. What form(s) of program evaluation can help improve professional preparation and practice in theological education?
2. How does a specific institution of theological education assess the expected outcomes of its academic programs against the professional practice of its graduates?

Related questions included the following:

1. What are relevant issues in program evaluation?
2. What are its conceptual underpinnings?
3. What types of program evaluation models are in use?
4. What is theological education?
5. How is it organized?
6. What are the underlying commitments of theological education?
7. What are indicators of successful theological education programs from the perspectives of various stakeholding audiences (e.g., the theological school, practicing graduates, employers)?
8. What relevant issues in theological education can be enhanced through program evaluation?
Seminary and Church

The academic institutions most commonly associated with theological education are seminaries, also known as schools of theology. Here students with undergraduate degrees in a wide variety of disciplines, who want to pursue church-related careers, enroll in educational programs that are expected to equip them with the knowledge base, skills, attitudes, and values, to engage in professional practice.

In the words of a well-known theological scholar, H. Richard Niebuhr, the seminary is the intellectual center of the church's life. The purpose of the seminary is supposed to be the same as the purpose of the church, namely, to improve the overall quality of life in the community they serve (Niebuhr, 1956).

Paradoxically, since its very inception in this country, theological education has been criticized for exerting little if any effect on the life of the ecclesiastical community. Harvard, founded in 1636, set the pattern not only for theological education, but for American higher education as a whole, which was dominant until after the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1863. Following the British example, the master of arts was the highest graduate degree, and the goal of education was to raise a class of cultivated Christian gentlemen among the clergy (Littell, 1965). Apparently, the improvement of grassroots church life was not a priority.

Secular education has undergone drastic changes in philosophy and goals since colonial times, but the same is not as obvious in its theological counterpart. Both Protestant and Catholic seminaries have been accused of training people for job descriptions which no longer exist, if they ever did. "They train too many priests and ministers for the past rather than for God's future" (Littell, 1965, p. 335).
Generally, it is hard to distinguish the effects seminaries have had in the life of the churches. To illustrate this point, Miller (1966) compares the relationship between the church and the seminary with corresponding situations in medicine and law. In medicine, he claims, the school acts as a research and training organ, while exerting a continuous pressure on the level of professional care offered by the hospital. In law, the school likewise serves as an instrument of research and teaching, while effecting an intense pressure on the courts and the exercise of justice. This influence of training institutions on professional practice is almost absent in the case of religion, he argues. If there has been any influence at all, it has been in the opposite direction, that is, churches pressuring the seminaries to conform to their line of thought and practice.

The Resource Planning Commission of the American Association of Theological Schools (1968) concluded that

the training of men (sic) for priesthood and ministry must undergo profound changes if the churches are to be supplied with adequate leadership... theological education curriculum is still largely medieval in structure and purpose (p. 765).

Niebuhr (1956) concurs that the first impression theological schools in America give is one of perplexity or doubt, due to uncertainty of purpose. Hough (1981) talks of a “disarray in the core discipline of systematic theology” and of a lack of coherence in theological education, while Bauer (1968) adds that “theological education is at a crossroads in its history, and its seminaries cannot continue the same old way... they must think in totally new ways if they are to serve their age” (p. 728).

In summary,

complaints about theological education are as old as theological education itself. Today they sound forth from many quarters: alumni who say they were not adequately prepared for church work, faculty who bemoan their professional isolation and loneliness, students who experience the ministry fields as trivial and academic fields as irrelevant, laity who are sure that the gospel has long been absent from the school’s agenda (Farley, 1983, p. 3).
Treese (1990) identifies three types of crisis institutions of theological education face:

1. identity crisis - Who are we?
2. intentional crisis - What are we doing?
3. institutional crisis - How are we to do it?

Related issues include:

4. worth and relevance - How do we know whether what we are doing is the appropriate thing to do?
5. results - To what extent are we accomplishing our intended goals?

The above picture may suggest the need for a drastic reform in theological education. However, a proposal for reform has been beyond the scope of this endeavor. In the words of Farley,

"widespread and loud as these complaints are, they really do not add up to a call for a genuine reform of theological education... constituencies seem to be content with both the basic institution itself (the seminary) and the inherited conceptual framework in which theological education occurs... the present chorus of criticism does not call for reform in the sense of either a new institution or a new conceptual framework (1983, p. 3)."

This paper proposed a way to ask questions and seek information that could help improve the quality of theological education through program evaluation.

Program Evaluation

A program involves the investment of certain resources through a set of activities in order to achieve some desired outcomes. Program evaluation has to do with the process of asking questions whose answers will help the clientele, or "stakeholders," as they are sometimes called, decide the extent to which the resources invested are adequate to produce the desired results; the appropriateness of the activities through which the resources are invested; the worth and merits of the intended outcomes; and/or the extent to which the outcomes are attained as a result of the program's activities (Tucker, 1985). Arguments abound as to whether certain
methods of asking the above questions are in themselves superior to others or whether the value of a method is relative to the orientation of the audience, and to whether the main purpose of evaluation is to prove or to improve the program being evaluated (Stufflebeam, 1982; Wheeler, 1985).

The array of models and approaches to evaluation varies according to assumptions, beliefs, and values about knowledge in general and evaluation in particular held by the audience. Such assumptions determine what knowledge is worth having, what purposes may be served by having it, and what the most adequate ways of gathering, analyzing, interpreting, validating, reporting, and utilizing that knowledge are.

Program Evaluation in Theological Education

Present practice. In a personal interview with Dr. Barbara Wheeler, president of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, and a specialist in program evaluation, she observed that the major formal evaluation that goes on in theological education is of three types: 1) accreditation, 2) student feedback, and 3) faculty assessment.

The first type of program evaluation is assessment for accreditation, which in Dr. Wheeler's experience, is fairly casual and sometimes careless evaluation. Actual evaluative judgments are most often derived from surveys of alumni, asking what they thought was good and what was not. There are very few imaginative strategies for figuring out what part of the school's program is effective or what part is weak and needs attention. In summary, accreditation evaluation focuses mostly on meeting minimum standards; but some standards are so abstract or vague that it is hard to use them as valid measures of educational quality or achievement.
A second form of program evaluation that goes on in almost all theological schools is an end-of-the-course student feedback. Again, it is like opinion polling, said Dr. Wheeler. And a third kind is not program evaluation exactly. It is program evaluation under the guise of personnel evaluation. That happens wherever standard practices of faculty review are in place for promotion or tenure. It usually includes looking at that part of the program in which the faculty member is involved either administering or teaching, as well as publications and the like. Some schools have instituted regular reviews even for tenured faculty.

Put those three things together: accreditation, student course feedback questionnaires, and evaluation of faculty, and you have the sum total of the evaluation occurring in theological schools, concluded Dr. Wheeler.

**Difficulties.** Theological education faces a profound problem when it comes to evaluation. Very little of what it aims to achieve is measurable in conventional ways. A theologically educated person is not just someone with content mastery or who can carry on certain functional skills. Rather she or he is someone who is capable of clear thinking and wise judgment-making about God’s will for the world. It is hard to measure whether that is achieved. However, it could be studied through a form of evaluation that pays attention to how various audiences interpret their reality in light of what they perceive as the divine will for their lives. Theological institutions should always be aiming to clarify their own ideas about what a theologically educated person is and can do, and also asking whether they are achieving that standard. But if and when they do this, they face considerable difficulties, because the means for making judgments about what constitutes success in theological education are very elusive. The responsive approach proposed in this paper may help grapple with this difficulty, by focusing on how participants perceive and
interpret situations from different vantage points, and what they consider successful theological education.

A second difficulty in the evaluation of theological education is the issue of who the final customer of the seminary is, whether the student, the local congregation, the church at large, the community, an undefinable spiritual realm, or all of the above. In another personal interview, this time with the Commission for the Study of the Latino Protestant Churches, the question was raised as to what constitute valid indicators of successful theological education. (The Commission was a research and training organization, funded through a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, and hosted by McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. It included prominent Hispanic scholars such as Dr. Justo González, theologian, professor, and author of several seminary textbooks; the Reverend Daisy Machado, denominational leader in the Christian Church - Disciples of Christ, and professor at Texas Christian University; Dr. Daniel R. Rodríguez, professor of church history and coordinator of the Hispanic Ministries Program at McCormick Seminary; Dr. Benjamín Alicea, Hispanic coordinator at the Fund for Theological Education, and Dr. Sandra Mangual, professor at Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, among others.) The consensus was that, even in order to ask the question properly, a theoretical framework defining whom the seminary ultimately serves, must be agreed upon. A responsive approach can help institutions face this issue and ask relevant questions to clarify who their intended and actual clienteles are.
A third difficulty involves the nature of evaluation itself. Evaluation is an attempt to be rational about a human enterprise. Thus, in ecclesiastical circles it is often regarded as an elevation of reason above faith and then neglected and dismissed because, in the mind of the church, faith is superior (Nelson, 1975). It is sometimes hard to realize that the issue is not whether evaluation as a part of reason should or could threaten faith but what is the proper role of the rational in faith... the life [of faith] of a theological seminary stands in its own right, but the work of evaluation is to help in the understanding of that life so that decisions can be made to improve it or to guide it more adequately toward the goals that it has already established (Nelson, 1975, pp. 9, 10).

Addressing this issue would probably require an evaluation model that responds to the specific concerns of the audience rather than to prescribed standards; one flexible enough to pay attention to different value perspectives and to help the institution develop a better understanding of itself and its work.

In summary, three main difficulties faced by theological education in terms of evaluation: 1) its qualitative nature, 2) the dilemma of its ultimate clientele, and 3) the reluctance of theological institutions to submit to a process that attempts to apply reason to faith, could plausibly be addressed through program evaluation. The question was: What type of evaluation could be effective for these purposes? The proposal examined in these pages was that the approach known as responsive evaluation could be an answer.
Responsive Evaluation

Responsive evaluation is defined as a qualitative or naturalistic approach to educational assessment. Its main feature, as its name implies, is that it responds to audience requirements for information. A second feature, closely related to the first, is that the different value perspectives present are referred to in reporting the success or failure of the program (Stake, 1975). A third key feature is its flexibility. Issues and questions are identified by program decision-makers themselves, and may be modified in the process as needed. In contrast to other forms of preordinate models, the design is continuously evolving and new issues and concerns may emerge at any point in the process. Another aspect of this flexibility is that the process allows for the inclusion of quantitative data without affecting its qualitative nature.

In summary, responsive evaluation is oriented more directly to program activities than to program intents, responds to the concerns of the audience, and takes into consideration different value perspectives present in reporting the success of the program. An underlying assumption is that evaluation should respond to the natural way in which people assimilate information and arrive at understanding, that is, through direct experience, or when this is not feasible (as in the case of an observer), through surrogate experience.

Stake suggests the following steps for conducting responsive evaluation:

1. Talk to participating audience.
2. Place limits on the scope of the program.
3. Make personal observations.
4. Discover purposes of the project, both stated and real.
5. Conceptualize issues.
6. Think about evaluation designs, depending on needs (i.e., kinds of data needed).
7. Select approaches for data gathering, usually human instruments.
8. Gather data.
9. Select mode for reporting data.
10. Synthesize relevant data.
11. Choose report format fitting audience.

(Guba and Lincoln, 1983, pp.25-26)

The process is continuous and interactive. Concerns and issues of stakeholding audiences serve as organizers for the information reported. As already stated, the model is versatile; it can incorporate elements of both naturalistic and experimental research approaches without doing violence to the process.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the value of the responsive approach to program evaluation for the improvement of theological education. The guiding questions were: *Is responsive evaluation an adequate resource for the improvement of theological education programs? If so, in what ways?*
Research subquestions were defined in terms of the following goals, listed in what could be a logical order in the evaluation process. The model would be considered effective if it could provide sufficient input to answer these questions satisfactorily.

1. To compare expected outcomes of a particular theological education program with actual effects as reflected by the professional practice of graduates.
2. To provide feedback to the school under study, that could be used as a resource for possible program improvement.
3. To evaluate the use of responsive evaluation as a resource for program improvement in theological education.
4. To suggest indicators of successful theological education from various perspectives (for example, seminary administration and faculty; potential, actual, and former students; practicing graduates; employers).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theological Education

Levels of Theological Education

Nowhere in the literature is there a common terminology to describe different levels of theological education. So, for the sake of clarity, the generally accepted taxonomy of institute, college, and seminary was assumed here.

Bible institute. The term Bible institute is applied to a wide variety of theological education programs. It may refer to short, intensive seminars aimed at the inservice training of local and regional leaders. These are usually sponsored by established schools, and are taught by faculty members of these schools during the summer. There are no academic requirements, and participants are granted certificates upon completion.

A second kind of Bible institute are the extension programs, that meet one or two nights a week for two or three years. They train mostly local church leaders. A high school education is recommended, but not enforced, as an entrance requirement. Participants are granted either certificates or diplomas, the difference being that a diploma conveys more prestige, depending on the quality of the program.
A third kind of Bible institute is the residential school, with a two or three-year program aimed at the training of candidates for the ministry. It may also operate extension programs like the ones described above. The high school diploma is required, although occasionally exceptions are made for highly motivated candidates that meet other requirements. Graduates are granted diplomas, and may or may not receive transfer credit should they decide to pursue their education at a higher level. Accreditation is not an issue of concern for Bible institutes.

The best available description of the work of Bible institutes is González’ (1988) study on the theological education of Hispanics in the United States and Puerto Rico, sponsored by the Fund for Theological Education. He underscores the valuable contribution of these grassroots institutions, especially for the training of both lay and ministerial leaders for the culturally and economically disadvantaged segments of society. Although González limits his work to Hispanics, his descriptions of theological institutions apply to the general population as well.

_Bible college._ Bible colleges are post-secondary institutions for the training of candidates for the ministry. They may offer two-year programs (comparable to a junior college), or four-year programs (comparable to a bachelor of arts or sciences). The high school diploma or its equivalent is required, and entrance exams are often administered to applicants.

These institutions may or may not be accredited. They grant degrees and/or diplomas, depending on their accreditation status. A college that is not accredited may choose to issue degrees to its graduates, but such degrees will have little academic or professional value outside the granting institution.
The main accrediting agency for Bible colleges in the United States and Canada is the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC), with headquarters in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The AABC issues more than a dozen publications, including handbooks with criteria for accreditation, policies and procedures, the history of the Bible college movement within the setting of American higher education, and others.

A recent doctoral dissertation by Gary R. Moncher (1987), traces the development of the Bible college movement in the United States, and identifies and analyzes its educational and theological contexts, its purpose and mission, distinctive environment and practice, and philosophy of education. According to Moncher, since their founding in the 1880's, Bible colleges have embraced a perennialist philosophy of education based upon the biblical tradition. They emphasize practical education for church and parachurch vocations, and the value underlying their purpose is "servanthood." Their curricula, extracurricular activities, and campus environments are designed primarily to prepare men and women to pursue a lifelong commitment to Christian service. Bible college programs intend to be "terminal," that is, their main goal is to prepare candidates to engage in active ministerial practice. However, many graduates choose to pursue seminary education.

Seminary. A seminary or school of theology is a graduate professional school. A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution is a required standard for admission. The school may be sponsored by a specific denomination (e.g., the Church of God Graduate School of Theology, in Cleveland, Tennessee); a cluster of denominations (e.g., Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, sponsored by Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, and others), or independent of any specific denomination (e.g., New York Theological Seminary). It may be part of a

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university system (e.g., Candler School of Theology at Emory University, in Atlanta). In some cases, a seminary has been the parent institution of a university, and then separated from it (e.g., Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Capitol University, in Columbus, Ohio).

The curriculum of most seminaries follows the orthodox fourfold pattern of biblical, church-historical, doctrinal, and practical theologies. The area of biblical theology includes courses such as Old Testament introduction, New Testament introduction, biblical hermeneutics, and exegesis of specific books of the Bible. Church-historical courses include church history, history of Christian thought, and denominational history and polity. Doctrinal theology includes Christian doctrines, theology of the Holy Spirit, and other systematic studies such as Pauline thought. The practical area includes studies in the life and ministry of the church, such as counseling, preaching, missions, music and worship, and supervised practice. That fourfold pattern embodies a movement from concern with normative historical reality to concern with truth and practice. Exceptions to this traditional curriculum are more the product of innovative individual professors than of creative institutional policies.

Accreditation is a major issue for these schools. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), with headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is the major accrediting agency for theological seminaries in the United States and Canada. Examples of degrees granted by seminaries are Master of Arts in Theology or in Sacred Music, Master of Religious Education, Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Sacred Theology. The Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Doctor of Ministry (DMin) are normally perceived as terminal professional degrees; the others have a more academic focus. Just as AABC
does in regard to Bible colleges, ATS has several publications covering various aspects of the seminary movement.

The scope of this paper was limited to theological education at the seminary level. Besides the usual limitations of time and resources, the main reason for this was that the seminary was considered the highest educational level in theology. Furthermore, most of the administrative and academic personnel at other levels were assumed to have at least some type of seminary education. Finally, it was expected that the results of this endeavor could be adapted to the improvement of theological education at the non-degree and undergraduate levels as well.

Relevant Issues

Relevant issues in theological education may be summarized in three categories, to wit: professional identity, curriculum orientation, and intended clientele. A fourth issue, which affects the other three, is the problem of accessibility.

Professional identity. A persistent problem theological schools face is the uncertainty and confusion that prevails in the church as to what constitutes appropriate professionalism. In their study of Christian identity and theological education, Hough and Cobb (1985) argue that the improvement of theological education depends in part on the clarification of the nature of professional leadership within the church. They see theological education as torn between academic norms, defined chiefly as excellence in the historical disciplines, and modern professional norms, defined in terms of excellence in performing the functions church leaders are expected to perform.

These authors survey the notion of ministerial identity in different periods of history. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they point out, the dominant figure in the clergy was the master, the authoritative teacher,
whose words carried the weight of law. Due in part to German influence, the
nineteenth century witnessed the scholar, the learned Christian gentleman, as a
model for the clergy. The end of the 19th century was the time of the revivalist
and pulpiteer. The influence of religious leaders was no longer based on their
ability to interpret a body of authoritative teachings, but on their ability to per­
suade religiously inclined persons of the importance of their own teachings.
Oratory replaced instruction as the dominant mode of clergy activity.

The new scientific world view of late 19th century resulted in the modern
idea of profession, which opened the door for many additional social roles in the
three traditional professions of law, medicine, and divinity. As a result, during
the first half of the twentieth century, traditional functions of preacher, teacher,
and priest receded in importance, and the management and counseling functions
became more dominant.

On one hand, no theological consensus on the purpose of the church has
emerged during the last half of the century. As a result, confusion about ministe­
rial identity has increased. On the other hand, social context has played a deter­
minant role in the character of ministry at any given time. Thus, it is to be ex­
pected that the dominant leadership characters in society in general will also
appear as the dominant understanding of the leadership in the churches as well.
That may explain why the models of chief executive officer, manager, and thera­
pist seem to be prominent among the clergy at present.

The chief executive officer perceives the church as a professional enterprise.
She or he is more concerned with administrative efficiency and effectiveness than
with the human relationships of the faith community. This adds to the crisis in
Christian identity about which Hough and Cobb write. Similar predicaments
occur with the manager and therapist models. Managers do not determine organizational goals; what they offer is their effective assistance in solving internal problems, so that the church may attain its goals more efficiently, whatever these goals may be. Therapists are for individuals what managers are for organizations. They seek to enable individual clients to discover their own values and goals, and to devise means to achieve them.

Hough and Cobb conclude that clarification of professional identity, as the basis for Christian practice, is a vital issue in theological education. They define identity as the internal history or memory by which Christians live individually and corporately. The concern of the seminary must be to help prepare persons who will be able to keep this memory alive, and to lead the church to become more of what this memory calls it to be.

Several other authors posit the question of professional identity, but as Hough and Cobb do, they leave the responsibility of finding answers in the hands of the seminary and the church. For instance, more than thirty years ago, Franklin H. Littell (1965) claimed that the crisis in protestant seminary education in America hinged upon a lack of consensus on the identity of church leaders. He saw a growing conflict in the concepts of clergy and laity, as well as in the status of women in the ministry, and said that the resolution of this conflict would determine the direction of the church’s work, including theological education.

Donald H. Treese (1990), studied the professional identity issue in the United Methodist Church, based on grassroots surveys. He suggested a moratorium on “how-to-do-it solutions” and an emphasis on “who-we-are issues,” as a key to improving theological education. He saw professionalism in the clergy not in the sense of physicians, lawyers, or engineers—that is, one who has knowledge not available to those they serve—but in the sense of one who shares knowledge and
experience; who envisions, inspires, encourages, and guides the church to what God calls it to be. Exactly "what God calls it to be" remains an elusive theme.

Curriculum orientation. Professional identity issues are inextricably related to curriculum issues. A recurrent theme in the literature is the dichotomy between theory and practice, and the dilemma of whether the aim of theological study is to teach clergy skills, provide spiritual formation, and mold scholars, on one hand, or to communicate and discipline basic modes of interpreting and engaging the human and divine reality of everyday raw experience, on the other. This dilemma may be conceptualized in the framework for curriculum orientations proposed by Eliot Eisner (1979, pp. 50-73).

According to Eisner, much of the controversy over what schools should be, how they should function, and what they should teach, arises from conflicting curricular assumptions and images. He characterizes five major orientations for dealing with curriculum problems, namely: 1) cognitive development, 2) academic rationalism, 3) personal relevance, 4) social adaptation or reconstruction, and 5) technical enabling.

The first orientation, development of cognitive processes, stresses process over content. The school concentrates on helping students learn how to learn, and on providing opportunities to use and strengthen the variety of intellectual faculties they possess. The second, academic rationalism, sees a major function of the school as to foster intellectual growth through worthy subject matter. This orientation begs the question of who determines what is worthy, what is true, what is good, what is beautiful, how life might be examined, and the like, which takes us back to the identity issue of what it means to be a member of the ecclesiastical community.
The third orientation, personal relevance, emphasizes the preeminence of personal meaning, and assigns supreme value to the person’s freedom to choose. The task of the school is to provide a resource-rich environment so that students will find what they need in order to grow. Plausibly, this emphasis leads to the manager and therapist clergy models described above.

In the fourth orientation, social adaptation and social reconstruction, the school is expected to serve the needs of society at large. Finally, curriculum as technology is a means-end model that stresses the development of skills to increase efficiency an effectiveness of performance. This again would reflect the managerial models of clergy.

Eisner concludes that in practice it is unlikely that any school will subscribe to only one orientation in its pure form. While one may be dominant, it is more likely that institutions will be somewhat eclectic in what they do.

As would be expected, proponents of curriculum designs for theological education focus on their preferred orientation. For instance, in his classical work on the purpose of the church and its ministry, H. Richard Niebuhr (1956) sees the seminary as the place where the church reflects upon and criticizes its other activities, such as preaching, teaching, and caring for its people, through the exercise of theoretical understanding.

A theological school, then, is that center of the church’s intellectual activity where such insight into the meaning and relations of all the church’s activities is sought and communicated. It is sought there first of all by those who are preparing to assume responsibility for the church’s work (p. 116).

The emphasis seems to be on reflective processes and on social adaptation and reconstruction. Niebuhr insists that the work of the seminary is necessarily reflective, but it needs to be carried on in the context of the church’s whole life.

"As illuminator and critic, the school endeavors to aid the church to understand
what it is doing, and by understanding, to modify or redirect these activities” (p. 125). Academic programs must obviously stress the development of reflective and critical competencies.

This view of theological education as reflective interpretation of church life is shared by Edward Farley (1983, 1988). Farley sees theology not as clergy-education pedagogy, but as situated reflection and interpretation of the church’s existence and action in the world. He conceives the curriculum as a movement towards modes of interpretation, “a map of the distribution of expertise and scholarship required for inquiry” (1988, p. 143). He claims that the lack of curriculum integration in theological education is due, 1) to the transformation of the study of theology into the study of discrete theological sciences [i.e., academic rationalism], and 2) to the growing perception of the ministry as task oriented with respect to specific functions [technical enabling]. The latter half of his book Theologia is dedicated to the pursuit of some methodological procedure to recover the material basis for the unity of theological studies. The material basis itself, which he labels “theologia”, seems hard to grasp.

In a paper published in 1973, the Theological Education Fund argued that curriculum issues cannot be addressed properly until issues of identity and clientele are dealt with. Otherwise, attempts at curriculum reform would be “like rearranging the dishes of a smorgasbord; it is difficult to decide whether the quality of the food is improved as a result” (p. 142). They propose a curriculum geared at meeting the needs of the church, and the clergy as enablers of the community’s daily practice of its faith [social adaptation and reconstruction].

A brief examination of current catalogs and self-study documents of various seminaries infers how institutions seek to affirm both their pursuit of academic excellence and their commitment to developing professional skills and providing
the church with a cutting-edge forum for reflection and self-fulfillment. Responsive evaluation can help the schools examine relationships between intentions and outcomes, congruence between expected and actual performance, and perceptions of their respective clienteles.

**Intended clientele.** Even a perfunctory look at mission statements and other seminary documents suggests a general agreement that the final consumer of theological education is the church at large. Phrases such as “to seek out and prepare visionary leaders for the church for the century ahead,” “to serve God and his church through the training of men and women,” “the formation of persons of faith and maturity, called by the church for the responsibilities of ministry,” “the goal of the seminary is like that of the church,” “to provide theologically informed leadership for the church,” are ubiquitous in the literature. Notwithstanding, experience shows that the same theological lingo means different things to different audiences. Program evaluation may help stakeholders ask relevant questions to clarify their particular definitions of who they are striving to serve ultimately, both in theory and in practice.

**Accessibility.** According to Pablo Jiménez (1995), executive director of the Association for the Theological Education of Hispanics, as long as the problem of who has access to educational opportunities is ignored, all other issues are moot. The covert denial of accessibility to minorities, women, and third world prospects, has been a hindrance to the enrichment of theological education, he claims. Eldin Villafañe’s (1995) reflections on urban ministry concur that in order to be pertinent, today’s theological education must be multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. It must provide opportunities to people that traditionally have had limited, if any, access to it, as has been the case with women, laypeople, and second-career professionals. A collection of essays edited by C. René Padilla (1986) calls for
radical changes in theological education, an urgent one being universal accessibility. It is not clear how program evaluation can help in this matter, except in making stakeholders aware of its existence. Nevertheless, it seems critical enough to merit at least to be mentioned here.

Program Evaluation

Nature of Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data, with respect to one or more criteria, in order to make informed decisions. All evaluation studies have as a goal the finding of worth for whatever reality is being evaluated; but the need for knowledge about worth, and the ways to define, discover, interpret, report, and use such knowledge vary greatly from circumstance to circumstance. Also at variance are epistemological views about relationships between the knower and the known, the nature of reality, and the role of science in the interpretation of reality.

The three major epistemological views that guide modern inquiry in the social sciences are logical positivism, phenomenology, and critical theory. Table 1 illustrates axiomatic differences in the three epistemological views.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT OF AXIOM</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Phenomenology</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Single, tangible, convergent, fragmentable</td>
<td>Multiple, intangible, divergent, holistic</td>
<td>Multiple, contradictory, evolutionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knower-known relationship</td>
<td>Uninvolvement, dichotomy</td>
<td>Closely involved</td>
<td>Mutually involved</td>
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<td>Nature of truth statements</td>
<td>Context-free generalizations</td>
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<td>Relation of value to inquiry</td>
<td>Value-free</td>
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<td>Value-bound</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge and human interest</td>
<td>Technical interest; realm of empirical analytic meaning</td>
<td>Practical interest; realm of intersubjective meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of disciplines re. interests</td>
<td>Natural sciences; systematic social sciences</td>
<td>Historical-hermeneutic sciences; e.g., history, anthropology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of research approaches</td>
<td>Scientific experiment; statistical analysis</td>
<td>Participant observation; open-ended interviews</td>
<td>Moral discourse aimed at active self-understanding and collective self-formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Axiomatic differences in epistemological views
(Adapted from Guba and Lincoln, 1983.)
Briefly stated, the positivistic approach assumes a strict subject-object dichotomy in which the knower is uninvolved with the known. Abstract ideas are meaningful only if they can be reduced to hard physical facts that can be observed objectively and measured scientifically. Phenomenology, in contrast, views knower and known inevitably involved with one another. Significant reality exists only in human perception, and cannot be measured objectively without some distortion. Critical theory sees knower and known even more mutually involved, though both may fail to recognize this fact. A researcher, for instance, is inevitably an agent of change or a reinforcer of the status quo.

A positivistic evaluator typically examines "behavior," that is, units that are constituted by his or her own conceptual scheme and not by that of the actor. A phenomenologist studies "actions," units that are constituted by the culture and related conceptual schemes of those being studied. The critical theorist studies "ideological distortion," the relation and possible contradiction between the way people behave in practice and the way they understand themselves to be acting. The work by Eric Bredo and Walter Feinberg (1982) contains a comprehensive study of these three approaches, with a preferred emphasis on the latter. (They call phenomenology the "interpretative approach.")

Very few people hold pure views in one or other approach to knowledge; most are somewhere in a continuum between scientific objectivism and social criticism. The various positions are apparent in the program evaluation models presented below. According to the issues and values emphasized by the theorists who embrace them, models can be grouped under experimental research designs, naturalistic or descriptive approaches, and decision-oriented strategies, which correspond roughly to the three epistemological views described above.
Program Evaluation Models

As stated earlier, a program involves the investment of certain resources through a set of activities in order to achieve some desired outcomes. Program evaluation is the process of assessing the extent to which the invested resources are adequate to produce the desired results, the appropriateness of the activities through which the resources are invested, the worthiness of the intended outcomes, and the extent to which the outcomes are the result of the activities. The purpose of this section is to review underlying assumptions of different evaluation models, and to identify advantages and disadvantages of each.

Experimental research designs. Throughout much of its history as a field of applied research, program evaluation has been dominated by empirically oriented approaches that elicit images of survey questionnaires, numerical response choices (e.g., 1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree), and reports emphasizing statistical analysis. Experimental research holds up as ideal the classic design of the scientific research experiment, influenced by the epistemological views of logical positivism. It focuses on single, tangible elements of objective reality. The investigator is detached from the reality under investigation. Program variables are tested under controlled conditions trying to find causal relationships. Examples of these designs in program evaluation are systems analysis, behavioral objectives, and goal-free approaches.

Systems analysis. This approach follows the scientific management concept, whose underlying principle is that systems consist of interrelated components, each of which has a prescribed function within the system. The performance of the various functions leads to the highest level of efficiency of the system as a whole.
When programs are conceived as systems, evaluation consists of assuming a few quantitative output measures, usually test scores, and relating the differences in programs to variations in test scores. The data are often survey data and the outcome measures are related to the programs via correlational analyses. Conceptual frameworks or "organizers" are program inputs and outputs. Research questions deal with combinations of inputs and implementation strategies which most efficiently produce desired outcomes (Howey and Zimpher, 1989a).

A vast body of literature deals with this and other types of quantitative data survey and analysis. Examples are the works of Minium (1978), Gay (1981), Fowler (1988), and Scheaffer et. al. (1990). Gay's is a comprehensive survey of competencies for quantitative research in general; Minium's is also a complete course on the use of statistics for data gathering and analysis. Fowler concentrates on methods for data collection and analysis, and Scheaffer on sampling.

Behavioral objectives. This approach, initiated by Ralph Tyler (1950), and championed by Bloom (1976) and others, assumes that student performance can be conceptualized in terms of specific observable behaviors. These behaviors can be measured objectively by norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests. Prescribed behavioral objectives become the organizers, and research questions deal with the extent to which students meet specified performance standards. Aside from the classical works of Tyler and Bloom, Robert Mager's (1962) treatise on the topic sheds insight into evaluation through behavioral objectives.

Goal-free evaluation. Goal-free evaluation, proposed by Scriven in 1972, claims that educational assessment should evaluate actual effects against a profile of demonstrated needs in education. Thus it uses effects, rather than objectives, as organizers. According to Scriven, knowledge of goals might actually be a contaminating step in evaluation. He identified cases in which side benefits of a
program were at least as valuable as the initial objectives. In this approach, the evaluator needs to generate two items of information: an assessment of actual effects and a profile of needs against which the importance or salience of these effects might be assessed. If a product had an effect that could be shown to be responsive to a need, that product was useful and should be evaluated positively.

Advantages. When the purpose of an educational program is perceived as "to produce certain desirable changes in the behavior patterns of the students" (Tyler, 1950, p. 69), determining the degree to which such changes in behavior are actually taking place can be achieved following the experimental design approach. Consensus on desired outcomes, as well as on cause-effect relationships, facilitate the concentration of efforts toward the achievement of objectives. By identifying observable patterns of strengths and weaknesses in a program, feedback is provided for revision and modification where needed.

Experimental designs are based on a precise and internally logical rationale. Data are gathered with highly reliable instruments, capable of objective verification. Results are easy to interpret. In situations where statistical information is required to determine the future of a program, this approach to evaluation is advantageous.

Disadvantages. In order to be true to scientific rigor, experimental designs require conditions that are difficult if not impossible to meet in most educational contexts. Thus, these designs would be more problematic to theological education than qualitative approaches, due to the qualitative nature of theological studies. It is not usually possible, for example, to assign persons randomly to experimental programs. By the same token, control groups may be unobtainable without risking students' human rights. Programs may have objectives so broad
and vague that adequate tests for before-and-after measurements cannot be constructed reliably. Programs may have significant effects which are not susceptible to objective measurements. Since a purpose of evaluation is to demonstrate, or at least strongly suggest, cause-effect relationships, lessening scientific rigor may result in less certainty of causal conclusions.

Although experimental designs focus on desirable objectives or outcomes, they do not provide guidance to determine the merits or worth of particular objectives, nor standards to judge discrepancies between objectives and performance (for instance, how large must such discrepancies be before a performance is judged to be inadequate, or what happens when the discrepancy is positive - the students learned more than was expected). Another disadvantage of goal-free evaluation is that it does not say what effects to look for, nor how to set judgment standards.

_Naturalistic or descriptive approaches._ The differences between experimental and naturalistic methods are so great as to make them nearly opposites. Naturalistic approaches, also known as descriptive or qualitative, are oriented towards the phenomenological epistemology, which as stated above, claims that some aspects of reality cannot be explained quantitatively without distortion. Significant reality exists only in human perception, and must be viewed as a whole, observing, thinking, and sharing with others, seeking to achieve some kind of synthesis.

The assumption underlying naturalistic evaluation is that evaluation is contingent on interpretations of program content, program activities, and participant perceptions. Facts are not separated from values. Multiple perceptions are recognized and enhanced, and reporting includes thick descriptions and working hypotheses. Comprehensive studies on naturalistic theory and methods include
books by Patton (1980), Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Guba and Lincoln (1983), and Miles and Huberman (1984). Examples of naturalistic approaches are case studies and responsive evaluation.

**Case studies.** These involve intensive examination of a particular place, a specific group of people, or some activity. The three perspectives (place, people, activity) are often applied in combination. A case need not be limited to persons or enterprises, but it can also be an institution, a program, a responsibility, a collection, a population, or whatever "bounded system" is of interest.

Organizers of a case study are determined by its purpose, which is to understand the properties of the class to which the instance under study belongs. Guba and Lincoln (1983, p. 371) identify four classes of purpose in actual case studies:

1. To chronicle, that is, to develop a register of facts or events in the order (more or less) in which they happened.
2. To render, that is, to depict or characterize.
3. To teach, that is, to provide with knowledge, or to instruct.
4. To test, that is, to "prove" or to try.

As may be expected, any given case study may have multiple purposes, although a case may become overly complex if it endeavors to deal with a large number of purposes simultaneously, they warn.

Evaluators following this approach spend extended periods of time "in site," observing the case under study, interacting with participants, and comparing their own perceptions and understandings with those of others. Themes and hypotheses may be important, but they remain subordinate to the understanding of the case.
An example of case study research is the work conducted by Howey and Zimpher (1989b), on preservice teacher education at several colleges and universities in the United States.

Responsive evaluation. Responsive evaluation is the basis for this paper. As described on page 10 above, this approach orients more to program activities than to program intents, responds to the concerns of the audience, and takes into consideration the different value perspectives in reporting findings. The concerns of the audience serve as organizers for the information gathered and reported.

An illustrative example of the responsive approach is the model for evaluating teacher education programs proposed by Nelly and Nutter (1984).

Advantages. Wheeler (1985) summarizes the advantages of naturalistic designs over experimental research from an epistemological perspective. She claims that naturalistic designs place high value not so much on how to know, but on the subjective human judgments of what is true.

Experimental research designs produce the truth about phenomena which can be specified, measured, and analyzed with scientific precision. Descriptive evaluation illumines realities which are broadly defined, imprecise, rapidly changing - realities whose interpretation is best accomplished by artful insight... Ultimately this is a difference not only about how to know but about what is worth knowing (pp. 103, 104).

Naturalistic inquiry helps people interpret and understand their own concerns throughout different modes of sensing information (nuances and meanings) that are more powerful than any questionnaire or other quantitative tool. Furthermore, audience participation fosters a sense of ownership of the process and the results, which make them more meaningful and usable. Evaluators leave paper trails in the process, and prepare thick descriptive reports, which permit others to examine their conclusions and replicate the studies in other contexts.
Another advantage is versatility. For instance, a responsive evaluation that requires statistical information can incorporate questionnaires or other quantitative tools without doing violence to the process.

Disadvantages. The main disadvantage in qualitative evaluation is limited generalizability, due to the context-specific nature of the process. At the very best, the applicability of findings to other cases is unsure. At worst, they may not apply to any case at all.

Since data gathering and interpretation are functions of human perception, reliability depends on evaluator’s competence and ethical stand. If special care is not given to intersubjective agreement and other forms of validation, “we are left with interesting stories of what happened, of unknown truth and utility” (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 22). Obviously, the element of utility here refers to applicability of findings and conclusion, and does not diminish the value of stories and narratives to help understand the specific context under study.

Finally, qualitative studies are more time consuming and costly than quantitative approaches. Participant observers need to be trained, and it may take as much time, or even more, to analyze and report than to gather data.

Decision-oriented strategies. Decision-oriented or comprehensive strategies are anchored on critical theory, one of whose ultimate goals is to influence change. They are similar to responsive evaluation in that both place priority on the context of evaluation and claim that designs and methods should be chosen for their relative value in the context. Instead of focusing on how information is to be obtained and interpreted, decision-oriented strategies take into account the ultimate use of evaluation, which is to make decisions. Thus, decisions become the organizers for both method and content.
The evaluation process starts by posing the following questions: What is the purpose of the evaluation? Is some critical decision imminent, or is the evaluation primarily “for the record”? At what stage of development is the program which is to be evaluated: in conception, just begun, in process, or at the end of a cycle? Depending on answers to these questions, different methods of evaluation may be employed. Unawareness of the purpose of an evaluation and the stages of program development may ultimately result in serious errors in choice of method.

The knowledge base of these strategies is pragmatic or utilitarian; so utility determines the value of the endeavor. Examples of decision-oriented strategies are the context-input-process-product (CIPP) and the discrepancy evaluation models.

**Context-input-process-product.** CIPP, introduced by Daniel Stufflebeam (1982), is a model geared at producing useful information for judging decision alternatives. There are four kinds of program decisions: 1) choices of objectives, 2) choices of program designs, 3) choices about how to implement a design, and 4) judgment of results which leads to decisions about future programs. Corresponding to the four kinds of decisions are four types of evaluation: context, input, process, and product.

Context evaluation serves planning decisions to determine objectives; input evaluation serves structuring decisions to determine project designs; process evaluation serves implementing decisions to control project operations; and product evaluation serve recycling decisions to judge and react to project attainments (Stufflebeam, Foley, Gephart, Guba, Hammond, Merriman, and Provus, 1971, p. 218).
Context evaluation is mainly general and systematic, aimed at monitoring the system and providing information on needed changes. The other three are specific and ad hoc; they come into play only after a planning decision has been reached to effect some sort of systemic change. Specific evaluation designs for each vary according to the setting for the change.

**Discrepancy evaluation.** This model compares performance with previously determined standards in order to assess the extent to which the standards have been met. Program designs are conceived as systems utilizing input (e.g., teachers, students, desks, paper) and processes (e.g., classes, testing) to produce certain outputs (e.g., knowledge, skills, attitudes). Inputs, processes, and outputs can be conceptualized at different interacting levels.

To the extent to which discrepancy evaluation views programs as systems and aims at determining the achievement of intended goals or standards, it is comparable to system analysis and behavioral objectives approaches. An example of discrepancy evaluation is the assessment model proposed by Daugs (1989) for the science component of the elementary teacher preparation program at Utah State University.

**Advantages.** The CIPP model was the first to expand the list of available organizers for evaluation beyond objectives. It has proved especially useful for programs or projects of large scope and multilevel organizations. It is rational and systemic in its approach, so it fits well with systems theory. Besides, it is very well operationalized, providing guidelines, even detailed worksheets, for virtually every application. The discrepancy model provides the additional category of cost-benefit studies to the list of evaluation types required for a complete strategy.
When the systems or the decision-making approaches are used, evaluation becomes an integral part of a program, thus helping stimulate and plan change. The information collected can be used to judge or decide whether the program is effective and whether decisions which were made relative to the program are defensible.

**Disadvantages.** Decision-making models make what are probably unwarranted assumptions about the rationality of decision makers, the openness of the decision-making process, and the ease with which operational decisions makers can be identified. They overlook the reality that in most cases decisions are essentially political rather than rational, and that they may surge rather than be made explicit at some preconceived point. They also fail to deal directly with questions of value and human relations. Finally, because of their complexity, these models may result more difficult and costly to operationalize than anticipated.

**Other approaches.** Most evaluation approaches have been developed within the framework of social research and use techniques of applied psychological and sociological research. Among approaches that do not seem to take social research as primary reference are those which advocate the methods of historical study, anthropological field study, literary criticism, and legal procedure. Historical, anthropological, and literary methods are closely related to the descriptive approaches described above, and thus usually classified as naturalistic designs. They are listed separately here because their advocates are less concerned with the shortcomings of experimental design than are descriptive evaluators. They also suggest a strict attention to the method of the discipline, rather than a generalized description of phenomena.
A case for historical method is made by Weis and Rein (1970) in their proposal for the evaluation of broad-aim programs. Other examples of this fourth category are the connoisseurship and the adversarial models.

**Connoisseurship model.** This model proposed by Eisner (1979) is based on the metaphor of art and literary criticism. It uses the human being as evaluating instrument, and the "critical guideposts" that the evaluator has internalized through training and experience as organizers. The evaluator is a "connoisseur," who by virtue of his background is able to "appreciate" the characteristics and qualities of phenomena to a better degree than a less sophisticated observer.

An advantage of this strategy is that evaluation does not need to follow a scientific approach, but like in descriptive approaches, depends on human appreciation and values. On one hand, it provides a fresh perspective about how to make evaluations by opening, in the words of Eisner, "a new window through which educational practice can be studied and described."

On the other hand, this approach fails to provide operational guidelines for the evaluator. Instead, it relies heavily on the evaluator's competence, and thus presupposes a kind of elitism which few evaluators claim. Finally, it proposes a methodology not subject to the usual criteria for methodological adequacy.

**Adversarial approach.** This approach follows the legal metaphor, including trial by jury. Adversaries are appointed to contest presuppositions and choices at every point in a program. Arguments for and against the program are presented, and questions focus on achievement of desired outcomes and their efficiency and effectiveness (Howey and Zimpher, 1989a).

Advantages and disadvantages of this approach can be seen as two sides of the same coin. On one hand, it can be used to evaluate data gathered at any point
or by any technique of social and psychological research. On the other, it does not offer any original clues about how to collect evidence.

Choice of a Model

The first and foremost consideration in the choice of a model is the epistemological platform, that is, the assumptions, beliefs, and values about knowledge in general and evaluation in particular, of the audience. This will determine what knowledge is worth having and what purposes may be served by having it. It will also lead to the concerns and interests of the audience: what kind of study would help in the decisions the evaluation is intended to inform. In case of mixed audiences or complex interests by the same audience, an eclectic evaluation which combines several approaches to the same question or topic may have to be devised.

A second factor is the stage of development of the project under evaluation. For example, a project in an early stage, requiring information to improve its operation as it develops, needs a design which provides relevant information quickly and easily.

A third important factor is cost. Although in principle no form of evaluation is more expensive than others, in practice some require more time and elaborate operations, and thus are more costly. The budget available for an evaluation may affect the choice of a model, or require to modify the level of completeness of the model adopted.

Other considerations regard the choice and roles of evaluators - whether they are from within the program or outsiders; whether they make judgments and
recommendations or simply assemble and analyze data--; the timing of the evaluation, and its scope—whether formative, to improve a program in process, or summative, to make judgments about the overall quality of a finished program.

Program Evaluation in Theological Education

Other than institutional self-studies and survey questionnaires, literature on the use of program evaluation for the improvement of theological education is scant. Only two examples were found by this writer: an essay by C. Ellis Nelson (1975), and a series of articles in volume 23 of the Journal of Theological Education, a publication of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

Nelson attempts to encourage decision-makers to use evaluation as a normal part of the seminary’s regular work and of projects in continuing education. His work can be useful as an introduction to the field, to “demythologize” evaluation, as it were. It contains an annotated bibliography, especially of books on educational evaluation.

Among the Journal articles, the one by Barbara Wheeler is a particularly relevant survey of evaluation models, with guidelines for their application. Grayson L. Tucker analyzes evaluation from a theological perspective, and suggests a theory for doing theological reflection on evaluation, based on five levels of understanding: 1) the understanding of God, and the authority for such understanding, that shape evaluative questions, 2) the principles of obligation that guide the evaluative process, 3) the conflicting human and institutional needs at stake in the evaluation, 4) the constraints, pressures, possibilities, and knowledge present in the context, and how they are taken into account, and 5)
recommendations for action that flow from the evaluation, their level of acceptance, and their adequacy. A third article, by Bill Leonard, reviews the issue of pluralism among evangelicals in the United States. He claims that evangelical Christians in this country are experiencing a new degree of diversity or pluralism, which affects 1) the theological language used in evaluation, 2) the evaluation of constituents within the seminaries, and 3) the constituency which evaluates the seminaries. These are only a few of the complex issues which evangelical seminaries confront as they evaluate their own theology of evaluation, he concludes.

Concluding Remarks

The dearth of information on the use of evaluation for the improvement of theological education programs supported the rationale for this study: that this was an issue worth probing, and that its exploration would presumably identify at least one viable alternative for its application.
CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

Underlying Assumptions

A review of the literature on theological education, as well as personal visits to educational institutions and interviews with several key people in the field, left the clear impression that the professional preparation of men and women for religious vocations could and should be improved. The major assumption underlying this study was that formative program evaluation could be an adequate resource for this purpose. As defined on page 1 above, the goal of formative evaluation is precisely the improvement of an ongoing program. By comparing program intentions with outcomes, decision-makers can use the information thus obtained to reach the desired results more effectively. Apparently, aside from summative evaluations such as accreditation, end-of-course student surveys, and faculty assessment, little or no ongoing evaluation for the improvement of theological education programs was taking place.

Both the indicators and the means for making judgments about what constitutes success in theological education are very elusive. Any meaningful evaluative endeavor must take into consideration the assumptions, beliefs, and values of stakeholding audiences. The second assumption underlying this study was
that the approach known as responsive evaluation provided for these considera-
tions and thus could be adequate for this purpose. As already stated on page 9
above, this model is flexible and takes into consideration the needs, concerns,
and values of the audience.

Stake (1975) used the responsive approach to evaluate the arts in education.
Theology has characteristics that are similar to those of the arts. For example,
both emphasize the affective domain. They deal more with individually or socially
constructed reality than with objective reality. In both, ends are not as clear or
as finite as they are in some other fields. Judgments of quality in both religion
and the arts depend more on individual perceptions than on quantifiable stan-
dards. A work of art, for instance, may be a masterpiece in someone's apprecia-
tion, and a piece of meaningless trash in somebody else's opinion. Likewise, a
sermon, as well as other religious performances, must be assessed taking into
consideration the value perspectives of the audience. A work of art is holistic;
the total is more than the sum of its parts. Something invaluable is lost if you try
to appreciate the whole picture by analyzing its components. Similarly, a reli-
gious service must be seen as a whole and not as a combination of disparate
elements. These and other shared qualities of theology and the arts make both
more amenable to qualitative evaluation than to scientific experimental research.

Plan of Action

Strategies. The plan was to select a theological seminary and conduct a case
study in the use of formative responsive program evaluation. The study involved
strategies for the examination of the program-in-intent, the program-in-action,
and the program-in-practice.
Goals. As mentioned in chapter 1 above, research questions were stated in terms of the following goals:

1. To compare expected outcomes on the part of the seminary with actual effects as reflected by the professional practice of graduates.
2. To provide feedback to the institution, that could be used as a resource for possible program improvement.
3. To evaluate the use of responsive evaluation as a resource for program improvement in theological education.
4. To suggest indicators of successful theological education from various perspectives (e.g., seminary administration and faculty; potential, actual, and former students; practicing graduates; employers).

The evaluation of the model would be the primary purpose; the others were expected secondary results. However, the goals were listed in an assumed logical order of accomplishment rather than in terms of primary or secondary concerns.

Participant selection. Site selection was based on proximity to the researcher's area of residence and willingness on the part of the institution. The original project included a comparative study of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish institutions; but for practical reasons, this present endeavor was limited to Protestant theological education. The ultimate goal was to complete the comparative dimensions of the study at later dates.

Graduates for follow-up were selected from lists available at the seminary, depending also on proximity and willingness to participate. Five candidates with one year of practice and five with three years were chosen. The idea of a three-year limitation was based on the notion that the effects of a preservice program are indistinguishable from other intervening variables after the third year of inservice (Ayers, 1980; Hall, 1981; see also Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).
Procedural outline. The study focused on the research questions stated in chapter one: Is responsive evaluation an adequate resource for the improvement of theological education programs? If so, in what ways? The procedure was guided by the following outline proposed:
OUTLINE

I. Fieldwork
   A. Preliminaries
      1. Visit area seminaries to learn about their programs and to present
         the project.
      2. Identify one seminary that may be willing to participate.
   B. Understand the program (program-in-intent).
      1. Study documents, such as curriculum, catalogs, brochures.
      2. Conduct on-site interviews with key personnel.
         a. Academic dean
         b. Other program administrators (e.g., curriculum committee)
         c. Faculty members
   C. See the program implemented (program-in-action)
      1. Interview students.
      2. Observe classes.
      3. Attend extra-curricular activities such as chapel services, com-
         mencement, social functions.
      4. Visit the library, bookstore, and other support facilities.
   D. Follow-up.
      1. Identify and communicate with practicing graduates.
         a. Surveys
         b. Interviews
      2. Communicate with employers.
         a. Surveys
         b. Telephone interviews.

II. Data analysis and interpretation

III. Report
Evaluation Model

As stated earlier, the model utilized in this project was the responsive evaluation approach developed by Robert Stake. It was selected for its versatility. Among other advantages, it provided for both intended and actual outcomes, took into consideration value judgments of participants at various levels, and was able to incorporate diverse methods of data collection without doing violence to the process.

A diagram of Stake's model is presented below. (Note: The following section relies heavily on the application Elizabeth Nelly, of the University of Kentucky, and Norma Nutter, of Ohio University, make of Stake’s model to teacher education programs.)
Figure 1: Schematic of a proposed model for evaluating theological education programs

Source: A Model for Evaluating Teacher Education Programs, by Nelly & Nutter, p. 13
Discussion of the Model

Rationale. Rationale refers to the overriding philosophy and basic purposes of the theological education program. This provides a basis for selecting reference groups that will pass judgment on various aspects of the program and for selecting the specific standards by which the program should be judged. It also provides the basis for judging whether all parts of the program form a coherent whole.

Sample questions to examine the rationale are:
1. Who are the proximate and ultimate groups affected by this program?
2. How is it intended to affect them?
3. What types of settings are the graduates prepared for, and to serve what types of parishioners?
4. What specific concept of the seminary’s role guides this program?

Intentions. Intentions refer to goals, objectives, or intended outcomes, in other words, those aspects of the theological education program that are deliberately planned.

Data. Data are those descriptive facts that show whether program intentions are in fact realized and whether significant, unintended events occur.

Antecedents. An antecedent is any condition existing prior to teaching and learning which may relate to outcomes. Examples of antecedents are characteristics of students, faculty, and physical and fiscal resources; institutional policies; program history, tradition, and geographical location.

Interactions. Interactions constitute the actual curriculum in action, that is, the interactions between students and faculty, students and facilities, students and students, students and field, students and knowledge. It is a dynamic process of events and experiences.
Outcomes. Outcomes are those effects attributable to the program; those occurrences, whether intended or unintended, and whether positive or negative, that manifestly result from the program.

Contingencies and congruencies. Contingencies and congruencies are aspects of the context of a program. Contingencies are those external factors that impinge on programs, such as a hiring freeze; congruencies refer to the degree of correspondence between the intended and the actual program.

Standards. Standards are those rules or guidelines against which the quality or value of the program is measured. Sources of standards may be formal external groups (e.g., program owners), established goals, identified needs of clients, or those informal or unmodified standards held by the various groups involved in or affected by the program.

Judgments. Judgments are statements of the quality or value or effectiveness of a program and its components.

The Model in Action

Following are sets of sample questions to elicit information for the implementation of the model.

A. Intentions - Antecedents

Antecedent conditions that influence the intended curriculum of a preservice program fall into three major categories: 1) student characteristics, 2) faculty characteristics and 3) support facilities and personnel.

1. Students

   a. In the context of stated program goals, what characteristics should students in this program exhibit?
b. Do institutional and program policies encourage students with these characteristics to apply to this program?

c. Does the pool of candidates available to this program exhibit these characteristics?

d. By what means does the institution/program screen out students lacking these characteristics?

e. What are the constraints on the program’s ability to attract and hold desired students?

2. Faculty

a. What faculty characteristics does this institution traditionally reward with salary increases, promotion, recognition, and tenure?

b. In the context of stated program goals, what characteristics should the faculty in this program exhibit?

c. What program demands will the faculty be required to meet?

d. What recruitment and hiring policies does the institution use to attract and retain faculty with the desired characteristics?

e. How will faculty without desired characteristics be removed from involvement with this program, or be given professional development opportunities?

f. Is there a correspondence between what the institution wants from faculty and what the program wants?

3. Support facilities and personnel

a. What facilities and equipment are required for achievement of program goals? What locations are most feasible?

b. What are the repair and maintenance procedures?
c. What scheduling of equipment is necessary to realize program goals?

d. What is the history of institutional support for theological education programs?

e. What is the status of the program within the institution?

f. What is the history of relations between the program and local churches or other field resources?

g. What field sites are necessary for students in the program? What sites are planned for? Are these plans realistic?

B. Intentions - Interactions

As distinguished from antecedents, interactions are the actual encounters that represent the dynamic element of education. Intended interactions are the curriculum as envisioned by the program planners - plans for course content, field and clinical experiences, instructional materials, readings, lectures, projects, research activities, assignments, and so forth. Sample questions about intended interactions are:

1. What experiences are planned for students in course content, skill acquisition, and clinical or field experiences? How does each of these relate to program goals? How will they be assessed?

2. What materials and teaching strategies will be used? Do these relate to program goals?

3. What projects will the students undertake? Do these reflect program goals?

4. Do time allocations for course topics and requirements match the degree of complexity of these topics and requirements?
5. What retention policies will assure that suitable students remain in the program? What implementation procedures will show that the policies exist in practice as well as on paper?

6. How will unsuitable students be identified and moved out of the program? How will this process be assessed and made evident?

7. What is the process by which students will inform faculty of their curricular needs and problems? What documentation will confirm the extent of this process?

8. By what process will faculty evaluate students and inform them of their progress? How will this process be documented?

9. Is there a mechanism by which students may evaluate faculty? Where will these evaluations be on file, who will collect them, and who will have access to them?

10. How will evaluation results be used? How will this usage be confirmed by later observers and evaluators?

C. Intentions - Outcomes

Outcomes are the consequences of educating. Intended outcomes consist of those competencies -knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, or aspirations- that the program planners intend to inculcate in trainees between entry into the program and some point after graduation. Sample questions about intended outcomes are:

1. How are students expected to be different after they have completed this program, as compared to their entry characteristics/skills? How will such differences be known?

2. How will this program affect faculty characteristics / skills / professional development? How will these effects be judged, and by whom?
3. What will this program cost in terms of staffing? facilities? time and priority allocations? research and service functions of the institution? How will these costs be measured?

4. What are the expected benefits of this program in terms of public opinion? reactions of teachers, administrators, and other school service personnel? How will these reactions be known?

5. Where will the graduates of this program be employed and by whom?

D. Data - Antecedents

Examination of all available data is impossible; so data must be selected in terms of the rationale for the program, the purposes of the evaluation, and past evaluative experiences. At the data-antecedent level, the task is to determine whether the program is adequate in terms of students, faculty, and resources and, if not adequate, exactly where it is inadequate.

1. Students
   a. What quantitative data (e.g., admission tests) describe student characteristics?
   b. What qualitative data (e.g., interview reports, letters of recommendation) describe student characteristics?
   c. Do these data describe the characteristics specified by program goals?
   d. Does the program attract the students envisioned by the planners?
   e. Which students have been screened out and at what points in the program? By what means?
   f. What are the limits to the program's ability to attract and retain the desired students?
   g. If there is conflicting evidence, where are the discrepancies?
2. Faculty
   a. What are the actual conditions of faculty employment and workload? How do these compare with policies stated in catalogs and handbooks?
   b. What data describe the characteristics of faculty in this program?
   c. Do current faculty members exhibit those characteristics described in the program intentions?
   d. Is there evidence that faculty who lacked desired characteristics were removed from the program or were provided with appropriate professional development opportunities?
   e. What faculty have been added to the program recently? Who has left recently? What program gaps have been filled in, and what gaps have been created?
   f. Do faculty perceive a conflict between program needs and institutional goals?
   g. Do faculty indicate an awareness of student needs, goals, and progress?
   h. How do faculty intend to use program evaluation data?

3. Facilities
   a. Is the equipment necessary for the program available? accessible? operational?
   b. Is the required staff in place? trained? capable?
   c. Are needed support and maintenance budgeted for?
   d. What is the funding status of the program?
   e. What support for the program is provided by the sponsoring churches or corresponding program owners?
f. Are the available field sites appropriate for program needs? How is this appropriateness determined, and by whom?

E. Data - Interactions

Observations of interactions should produce data illustrative of both intended and unintended occurrences.

Sample questions for identifying data on interactions are:

1. What are the principal intended interactions? How is their occurrence documented, and by whom?
2. What unintended interactions occur persistently? How is their occurrence evidenced?
3. What do faculty say about the benefits or drawbacks of the coursework in this program? How do they make their perceptions known?
4. What do current students say about their experiences in the program? When do they communicate their reactions, and to whom? What effects do these reactions have on course content?
5. What do program graduates and other consumers, for example, local congregations who employ them, say about what is taught in this program and/or how it is taught? When and how do they communicate their reactions and to whom? How are these reactions reflected in program interactions and outcomes?
6. Are there discrepancies between the content of the program and expectations for its graduates? What are they, who documents them, and what has been done to resolve them?

F. Data - Outcomes

There is an array of outcomes for which data should be sought. Sample questions about outcomes are:
1. What data are available on program graduates? Who collects these data? Who receives the information? Does this information affect program content? How are effects documented?

2. What students leave this program? Why do they leave? What documentation is there of student-attrition rates and causes?

3. What knowledge and skills does this program develop in students by the point of graduation? How are these evidenced? How are the results fed back into the program?

4. How do outside consumers (e.g., local churches) evaluate the total program? How are these data collected? What evidence is there that they have an impact on the program?

5. Are other data available concerning graduates of the program (e.g., employment rate, continuation in the ministry)? How do these data support program intentions?

G. Standards

For any given program, the referent groups directly involved (for instance, program faculty, accrediting agencies, graduates, school administrators) may devise standards relative to the goals to which the program is oriented, as well as quality levels for which the program is accountable.

Following are sample questions for clarifying the fit between standards and program realities concerning students, faculty, and facilities and personnel.

1. Students

   a. Does the program appear to be collecting and using appropriate data to enforce admission and retention criteria? Are program criteria and efforts consistent with standards relating to student characteristics?
b. Are the data sufficient to indicate whether the program meets curriculum standards for students?

c. What data show the quality of graduating students? Do these data show whether exit standards have been met?

d. Were weaknesses or deficiencies relating to the student body identified prior to this evaluation? If so, have these been addressed in such a way as to meet the appropriate standards?

2. Faculty

a. Is the pool of data on faculty sufficiently current, reliable, and comprehensive to permit standards to be applied?

b. What data have been collected as evidence of continuing faculty ability and effectiveness? Are these data sufficient to show whether standards have been met?

c. What evidence shows faculty involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs? Is there evidence adequate to show whether standards are met?

d. Were weaknesses or deficiencies relating to faculty identified prior to this evaluation? If so, have these been addressed in such a way as to meet the appropriate standards?

3. Facilities and support personnel

a. Are the available data on facilities, services, and support personnel sufficiently current and reliable to permit application of standards?

b. Are the data on funding formulas sufficient to permit application of appropriate standards?
c. What data have been collected on support for program needs in materials, facilities, services, and support personnel? Are these adequate for showing whether standards have been met?

d. Were weaknesses or deficiencies relating to facilities, services, or personnel identified prior to this evaluation? If so, have these been addressed in such a way as to meet the appropriate standards?

H. Judgments

Judgments consist of perceptions of the extent to which antecedents, interactions, and outcomes match the relevant standards. They can be provided in brief statements such as “adequate” or “inadequate,” or elaborated to specify areas of deficiencies, adequacy, and strengths. Sample questions to arrive at judgments are:

1. How closely do the program’s antecedents, interactions, and outcomes match the appropriate standards?
2. Are the program data consistent with the standards for curriculum interactions?
3. Do intended/unintended outcomes strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of the program?
4. Which standards are inadequately met in the program and why? What appear to be sources of deficiency?
5. Which standards are met adequately, and how could they be met more strongly?
6. Which standards are met in an exemplary way, and what are the sources of these strengths?
Management of Data

Data Gathering and Interpretation

Information was gathered through participant observation, personal interviews, and study of documents. In cases where personal interviews were not feasible, telephone interviews were conducted. In one case in which personal or telephone contact with a significant source of input was not viable, correspondence served as a third option.

The worksheets in the following pages were used as data gathering and interpretation instruments.
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Recommendations:

Table 2 - Program evaluation worksheet
Table 3 - Evaluation concerns

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<th>RELEVANT QUESTIONS</th>
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Notes:

Table 3 - Evaluation concerns
As Stake (1975) warns, the actual pool of data was much smaller than the
data desired because of the practical constraints on gathering information. A
second reason for this was that since the model was expected to respond to the
needs of the audience, the concerns of the audience established the scope of the
project.

The project was implemented following Stake's "prominent events in
responsive evaluation." Questions and issues that emerged in the early stages of
the process served as organizers for data gathering, analysis and interpretation.
A complete list of such questions and issues is included in chapter 4 below.

Figure 2 illustrates Stake's "prominent events" in the process of identifying
issues and problems, as well as other stages of the evaluation.
Figure 2: Prominent events in a responsive evaluation

Source: Evaluating the Arts in Education, p. 20.
Data Reporting and Utilization

The intended application of the project was to provide the participating institution with feedback and recommendations that could be utilized for program improvement. The institution was given the choice to decide the form(s) of reporting to be followed: 1) progress reports throughout the process, 2) a final oral report, 3) formal written report, 4) partial reports to various audiences, 5) combinations of the above. A combination of oral progress reports and a final written report was chosen.

Evaluation outcomes, especially findings and recommendations, were to be shared with appropriate audiences such as faculty, administrators, students, board of governors, and other groups with a stake in the improvement of the program. Final decisions about what, when, how, and with whom to share, depended on institutional decision-makers and not the researcher. By the same token, reports, whether partial or complete, would be the property of the institution, not to be made public by the researcher unless previously authorized. Correspondence, recordings, transcripts, and other field notes, were kept secure, to assure confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

Trustworthiness

A valuable component of any research is its concern for rigor. In qualitative approaches, this is understood as the need to persuade audiences of the trustworthiness of the information provided and the interpretations that are drawn from it. In order to procure as reliable a fit between what was recorded and interpreted as data, and what actually occurred in the field under study, the following check points were observed throughout the process.
1. Plausibility - Did the account and its interpretation seem plausible? Did they hold up internally and make sense in light of the researcher's broad understanding of theological education in particular and human behavior in general? In this sense, the researcher's knowledge of the field was a valuable asset. The ability to make judgment would be greatly limited with an investigator new to the field of theological education.

2. Stability - Was the account consistent with other accounts from the same source, or with accounts from other sources who could have shared the same experience?

3. Member check - Did individual participants agree with the researcher's rendition and/or interpretation of an experience?

4. Paper trail - Were there enough thick descriptions, that is, literal description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances of the evaluation, the characteristics of the people involved, the nature of the community in which it is located, and the like? Were there recordings, transcripts, notes, and other documents, to support the researcher's conclusions?

5. Triangulation - Was there a colleague with enough knowledge of the field, who could validate the credibility of findings, interpretations, conclusions and/or recommendations?

6. Replicability - Was there enough documentation to facilitate the implementation of the project in another setting?

Finally, the evaluator as instrument posits a potential problem in naturalistic inquiry. Data may be "contaminated" by the researcher's preconceived ideas, whether she or he is even aware of the existence of such preconceptions. Therefore, this researcher sought at all times to be aware of personal biases and
assumptions. He kept a personal diary where he left written records of such biases. He also made conscious efforts "not to put thoughts in the minds of participants," and to subject all the process to the highest ethical standards possible.
CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Preliminary Observations

Overcoming Resistance

In the process of identifying a suitable institution for this project, the researcher had the opportunity to visit several theological seminaries (including Catholic, Protestant, and non-denominational), Bible colleges, and a major accrediting agency. A second accrediting agency was contacted through the mail.

Initial contacts were usually with the school president; and when she or he was not available, with the academic dean. In almost every case, the academic dean proved to be the key person with whom to work on a regular basis.

Most institutions were willing to cooperate as long as it was a purely academic exercise: help a graduate student complete his research. But they were less than anxious to submit themselves to "the real thing," that is, a serious evaluative endeavor with potential consequences for the school itself.

Without exception, those institutions that declined the invitation to participate were very polite, but equally firm. For instance, one president pointed out that their sponsoring organization had had a clear philosophy of its magisterium for ages; they knew what type of clergy the church needed and how to train it; so a program evaluation would be an exercise in futility. Several schools offered
copies of their most recent institutional self-studies, with the implications that self-study processes were comprehensive enough to satisfy their evaluation needs. (The position of this researcher was that a formative program evaluation could be complementary to a self-study for accreditation. However, it was very difficult to persuade an institution that had gone through a grueling soul-searching process, that another evaluation was in order.) In short, overcoming resistance to probing was a major hurdle in the project.

**Assurance of Privacy**

Another obstacle to overcome was the issue of confidentiality. Institutions were understandably reluctant to have their shortcomings become a chapter in a doctoral dissertation or any other public document. Some key people had been waiting for an opportunity to share their honest opinions, but whose respective positions could plausibly be in jeopardy if they were identified by name. (Paradoxically, those "honest opinions" that cannot be expressed openly are often crucial for the future of a program, as this researcher confirmed in more than one case).

In order to protect confidentiality, the following caveats were observed throughout the process:

1. No institution, program, or individual was to be identified by name in this and other reports.
2. Participants' permission was requested prior to tape-recording interviews.
3. Interviews were transcribed personally, and in some cases where help was needed, someone not familiar with the institution or person involved was hired.

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4. Tapes, transcripts, letters, and other documents were kept in a safe place.
5. Requests for confidentiality and anonymity of participants were honored, especially in reporting to the institution.
6. Evaluation results were not shared with outsiders (except for triangulation and plausibility purposes).
7. The entire project was treated with the rigor of a professional endeavor. A working protocol was agreed upon with participants from the onset, and followed independently of familiarity with the setting.

Pilot Projects

*Effects of Accreditation*

At least two preliminary projects were carried on in preparation for this one. The first was called "The Effects of Accreditation in a Bible College." It studied changes wrought by the process of self-study for accreditation at an institution of theological education. The findings supported the thesis that, on one hand, this type of evaluation is a valuable tool to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to establish priorities and target dates to overcome the weaknesses and enhance the strengths. On the other hand, the focus seemed to be on meeting minimum prescribed standards. And in the experience of a high-level official of an accrediting agency, there was a latent possibility that data were embellished to reflect a picture that was less than accurate.

At the institution under study, improvements in physical facilities and in the redaction of normative documents were observable. Improvements in the overall quality of academic programs were not as obvious, in the opinion of faculty and students.
Curriculum Issues

The second pilot study, carried on at a theological seminary, had two purposes:

1. Identify actual decision-makers in curriculum matters.
2. Involve decision-makers in asking relevant questions about forces that shape curriculum decisions at a theological institution of higher education.

The findings in this study supported the notions that the decision-making process was not as clear-cut in practice as it was in theory; that decisions were influenced by stakeholding audiences at different levels; that institutions needed to find ways to assess incongruences between intentions and outcomes and to resolve them. One important lesson participants in this study learned was that the identification of relevant issues and questions was a slow, often frustrating, process. The results, however, were rewarding. They concluded that when colleagues were able to conceptualize a problem in a joint effort, it became easier to work on its solution.

Actual Study

Site Selection

Description. The site for the actual study was selected following the criteria of proximity and willingness. A graduate theological school, located in a small city in the Midwest, twenty-five minutes from a major metropolitan area, was the final choice. The school was sponsored by a mainline Protestant denomination, one of thirteen such seminaries in the United States. Founded in 1960, its mission was
In response to the grace and call of God in Jesus Christ, the [name of the school]... is committed to excellence in theological education that will enable the people of God for lay, diaconal, and ordained ministries of the Church in the world. [Taken from the mission statement.]

The school offered the following degree programs:
1. Master of Divinity
2. Master of Arts in Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
3. Master of Arts in Christian Education
4. Master of Arts in Liturgical Arts
5. Master of Theological Studies
6. Doctor of Ministry

The faculty represented at least four Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Jewish faith. Augmenting the resident faculty were missionaries in residence, visiting professors, guest preachers, and internationally-known scholars. The student body was equally diverse, with more than 10 denominations represented. Gender representation was approximately equal; minorities such as Blacks and Hispanics constituted about 15% of the enrollment. The campus was spacious and picturesque.

Initial approach. Initial contact was made when the researcher wrote a letter of introduction to the president of the institution, expressing his desire to work with the school in a research project. That letter resulted in a meeting with both the president and the academic dean. The president showed interest in the project, and thus gave instructions to the dean to serve as facilitator for its implementation.

Program selection. At a second meeting with the dean, a specific target program was identified. The reasons for its selection were: 1) the program was unique in its approach to a specific area of counseling, 2) it was at stage in which
the type of formative evaluation proposed in the project could make a meaningful contribution to its improvement.

The dean scheduled a meeting with the director and assistant director of the program for the following week. At that meeting, the program administrators concurred with the dean's perception of the timeliness of the proposed evaluation. They proceeded to provide brochures, catalogs, course syllabi, and other literature, to help the researcher become familiar with the program.

In summary, the initial three visits to the seminary accomplished, at least partially, the first four of Stake's "prominent events in responsive evaluation," namely: 1) talk with clients, program staff, audiences, 2) identify program scope, 3) overview program activities, and 4) discover purposes and concerns.

Relevant Issues and Questions

Identification of issues. After two hour-long meetings with program administrators, a list of relevant issues emerged. A second list of pertinent questions about each issue emerged from the first. Audiences at various levels were identified, of whom the questions needed to be asked. Following is a sample of one issue, with related questions and audiences:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>RELEVANT QUESTIONS</th>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Clientele</td>
<td>A. Who are the consumers of this program?</td>
<td>Program Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Why do the students choose this program?</td>
<td>Students,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What do they say in the application for admission?</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What do they say once they are in the program?</td>
<td>Admissions office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What do they say when they leave the program?</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What are some of the characteristics of the student population?</td>
<td>Admissions office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Who should be in the program?</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Who does the seminary want to attract?</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Who is the seminary attracting?</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Who should the seminary attract?</td>
<td>Denominational leaders, Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Who should help them get here?</td>
<td>Denominational leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Relevant issues

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Research instrument. The next step was to prepare a document with the issues and questions, and present it at a faculty meeting. There it was discussed and modified, until consensus was reached on the issues and questions for which the seminary needed answers, as well as the audiences from whom answers were desired. The document became a research tool for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. The issues served as organizers of data.

These steps pertained to Stake's following "prominent events," 5) conceptualize issues, problems, 6) identify data needs, re. issues, 7) select observers, judges, instruments, if any.

Data Collection

Activities. The ensuing months were dedicated to data collection and analysis. The researcher made weekly visits to the seminary, to the point that he was greeted by students, faculty, and staff as one of them. During this time, the following activities were implemented:

1. Conducted twenty five interviews with applicants, students, faculty, staff, former students, graduates, employers, denominational executives, and parishioners. Interviews stopped when the researcher felt he had reached a point of diminishing returns; that is, no significant new information was being obtained.

2. Studied documents such as student profiles, applications for admission, course syllabi, exams, student papers, yearbooks, promotional brochures, employer evaluations, and alumni surveys.

3. Attended four class sessions.

4. Shared at a faculty luncheon.

5. Participated in the activities of "Alumni Day."
6. Visited the bookstore and the library, and reviewed supporting resources for the curriculum.

7. Attended two church services conducted by program graduates.

8. Visited two work sites that employed program graduates.

9. Visited two state headquarters of the sponsoring denomination.

10. Attended a graduation ceremony, and assessed the support given to the seminary by denominational leaders, alumni, and surrounding community.

Selection of participants for interviews. An initial list of potential candidates for interviews was developed in collaboration with program administrators. Thereafter, the list kept growing naturally. For instance, a student being interviewed would say, “You know who would love talking to you about this program? So and so. She just graduated, and started a counseling program at her own church”. Or, “You must talk to professor so and so. He teaches one of the best courses I’ve ever attended.” A board member would say, “Have you interviewed the bishop? I met him once, and he showed a deep concern for the future of this program.”

Other sources of potential candidates were the seminary’s magazine, alumni’s meeting, and word of mouth. More than one person approached the researcher because they had heard about the evaluation and wanted to share their personal insights with him.

Interviewing procedure. Interviews took place at the most diverse places: a Mexican restaurant, a pastor’s study, an empty classroom, under a tree, wherever was most convenient for the people involved. Average duration was forty-five minutes. The researcher’s experience was that after that period, significant new input was minimal, and his effectiveness diminished as well.
Whenever possible, participants were given a copy of the research instrument, with issues and questions, ahead of time, so that they could ponder the issues. The interview would begin more or less like this:

*Interviewer:* Do you mind if I use a cassette recorder for our conversation? It is only so that I can give you my undivided attention. If you agree, I will be the only one to use the recording.

(If the person agreed, then the researcher would put his notepad aside, turn on the recorder, and refer to the issues and questions.)

*Interviewer:* These issues and questions are only a guide to our conversation. You may choose to speak to any of them, in any order you want. Or you may speak to any other issue regarding the program.

The conversation would proceed in an unstructured manner, although most people made efforts to keep on track, addressing the issues in the instrument.

*Personal diary.* During the process, the researcher kept an informal diary, where he wrote what he called “notes to myself,” with perceptions, personal biases, and warning flags. These served to reflect on the process and to keep track of details that could affect future interpretation of data. They proved useful at the time for analysis and interpretation. Following are some samples of such notes.
Sept. 15
I must refrain from making back-to-back appointments for interviews. Schedule no more than 2 interviews in the same period. After a while, I become tired and lose concentration.

Oct. 10
This young lady impressed me as if she were giving "Sunday-school answers." That is, she was telling me what she thought I wanted to hear, and not what she honestly believed. I must keep this bias of mine in mind when using this information.

Oct. 25
Transcribing an audio tape is tedious enough when you do it right after the interview. It is killing when you keep postponing the task. Make up your mind; do it right now.

Nov. 2
Wow! It is amazing what people tell you when they feel they can trust you. It is a shame that you cannot be as honest with your own as you can with a stranger.

Figure 3: Personal notes
Interview transcripts were submitted to the respective participants for member checks. Perceptions and interpretations were checked with program directors for credibility.

This aspect of the project responded to Stake's eighth "prominent event," observe designated antecedents, transactions, and outcomes.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Raw data were classified according to issues. They were interpreted in terms of program intentions, interactions, and outcomes, using value judgments from different audience levels. Main sources for intentions were catalog descriptions, course syllabi, and conversations with professors. Main sources for interactions were actual class observations and conversations with students. Main sources for outcomes were alumni surveys, and conversations with alumni, parishioners, denominational executives, and employers. Special attention was given to recurrent themes, and to congruencies and discrepancies in the ways people perceived and evaluated the program.

At this point, the researcher was highly satisfied with the progress. Possible recommendations for program improvement began to emerge. Events 9: thematize; prepare portrayals, case studies, 10: winnow, match issues to audiences, and 11: format for audience use, were accomplished. Then a major setback happened, that affected the final event: formal reporting.

**Evaluation Report**

When the researcher was getting ready to assemble a formal report, he was forced to interrupt the project abruptly, due to an unexpected job assignment.
overseas. Although the move was unavoidable due to the researcher's commitment to his organization, this was unfair to the institution at best; at worst it was plainly unethical.

The researcher was confident that he would be able to complete the report from his new position, but this did not happen. Afterwards, he decided to replicate the study at another site, making sure to bring the project to completion.

Replicability

Two years after the original occurrence, the evaluation project was replicated at a new site by the same researcher.

Site Selection

Criteria. This time around, the researcher had resources available to travel, and a flexible schedule. So, proximity was not a required feature. Instead, a seminary where the researcher had personal interest in its improvement was chosen as first alternative. The focus of the project would be an actual evaluation for the sake of the school, regardless of its possible use as part of this study. Obviously, the second criterion, willingness, still had to be met.

Site description. This second site was the flagship theological institution of higher education of an international Protestant denomination. It was located in a small town in the Southeast, the so-called “Bible belt.” The nearest metropolitan area was one hundred and fifty miles further south.

The seminary was adjacent to the denomination's largest undergraduate institution, a four-year liberal arts college, with which it was often mistakenly identified. It was struggling to obtain recognition among academic circles as a cutting-edge center for conservative, Wesleyan theology.
Initial contact. As in the previous case, the researcher wrote to the president, explaining his interest to conduct a program evaluation at a minimal cost to the school. It so happened that the institution was celebrating its twentieth year of operation. It had just undergone a self-study, and in general, was at a developmental stage where this type of evaluation could be a valuable asset for immediate and long-range academic planning. Both the president and the academic dean saw this opportunity as godsend. The second criterion, willingness, had been met.

Project Implementation

Potential problems. The study was implemented step by step from scratch, along the same guidelines of the first one. On one hand, the previous experience was a welcome asset. On the other, the researcher discovered that familiarity with the process was a potential source of problems. What the literature on the process of deliberation calls “impending habits” (for example, tendency to rush to preferred alternatives, seeking a universal solution to problems, holding predetermined solutions, oversimplification), were pitfalls to avoid (see Pereira, 1984; Roby, 1985; McCutcheon, 1995).

Program selection. The seminary offered two programs of study. One led to the degree of Master of Divinity (MDiv) and the other to the Master of Arts in Church Ministries (MA). The three-year MDiv was the standard seminary degree and offered flexibility of emphasis in ministerial preparation. The two-year MA focused on one of four areas of ministry, namely, 1) discipleship and Christian formation, 2) missions, 3) preaching, and 4) pastoral counseling.

The evaluation alternatives for this study were: 1) include both the MDiv and
MA programs, 2) choose one program, 3) focus on one specific area of one pro-
gram. At a meeting with the president and the academic dean, the decision was
to evaluate all the programs and their relationships to one another under the
common purpose of the seminary.

After several meetings, the following issues were identified: 1) student clien-
tele, 2) program relevance, 3) curriculum relevance, 4) community formation, 5)
denominational assumptions, 6) seminary-church relationships, and 7) dissemi-
nation. A series of questions were raised regarding each issue:

I. Student clientele

A. Who are the consumers of the various programs the seminary offers?
   1. Why do the students choose this seminary?
      What do they say in the application for admission?
      What do they say once they are in the seminary?
   2. What are some characteristics of the student population?

B. Who should be in the seminary?
   1. Who does the seminary want to attract?
   2. Who is the seminary attracting?
   3. Who should the seminary attract?
   4. Who should help them get here?

II. Program relevance

A. What kind of program is more relevant to the future of the church?
   1. How important is the MA now and for the future in meeting the
      needs of the ministry in the [denomination]?
   2. How important is the MDiv?
   3. To what extent should the seminary continue to emphasize the
      training of chaplains?
B. What are some problems that hinder the accomplishment of these programs?

III. Curriculum relevance

A. How relevant is the present curriculum?
   1. Are there courses that need to be added? Why?
   2. Are courses being offered that need to be modified? How? Why?

B. What are the strengths of the curriculum? What are the weaknesses?

IV. Community formation

A. To what extent have the community formation activities helped the ministerial development and practice of the students?

B. What types of activities contribute the most to community formation at the seminary?

C. What are some hindrances to the community formation efforts of the seminary?

V. Denominational assumptions

A. How do denominational leaders perceive the seminary?
   1. What is the place of the seminary vis-a-vis the ordination track?
   2. What should be the place of the graduates in the ordination track?

B. What are the church’s expectations regarding the seminary?
   1. How do denominational leaders see graduates serving the church?
   2. How do students and graduates see themselves serving within the church?
   3. What are the students’ perceptions about the church’s attitudes toward the seminary?
   4. What are the graduates’ perceptions of such attitudes?
VI. Seminary-church relationships
   A. How is the seminary serving the church?
   B. How should the seminary serve the church?
   C. What kinds of activities should the seminary be addressing?

VII. Dissemination
   Where should the seminary concentrate exposure efforts?

The next step was to develop a research instrument using the issues as organizers for data collection and analysis.

*Activities.* The activities in this second study included:

1. Participated in the following seminary activities: one faculty meal, one faculty birthday celebration, three chapel services, two training workshops for pastors and state overseers (also known as bishops).

2. Attended six class sessions.

3. Shared in one meeting of a community of faith group.

4. Attended worship activities at six local churches under the ministry of seminary students and alumni, as follows: two students, one recent graduate, one with one year of experience, and two with three years.

5. Made one visit to the seminary library and another to the seminary textbooks section of the church’s bookstore.

6. Conducted thirty personal open-ended interviews with seminary students, alumni, staff members, faculty, members of the board of directors, state overseers, pastors, denominational executives, one former president of the school, and three prospective students. (Some participants responded from more than one perspective, for example, as a member of the board of directors and as state overseer).
7. Conducted two telephone interviews, in cases where personal inter­views were not possible.

8. Studied seminary brochures, bulletins, promotional handouts, fund-­raising literature, catalogs, course syllabi and handouts, chapel pro­grams, course exams, press releases, and applications for admissions.

*Project Completion and Results*

This time the circle of prominent events was completed. A final report was assembled and officially submitted to the institution. Prior to that it was “triang­gulated.” Triangulation is a verification technique in which an interpretation of data, for instance, is exposed to a source, method, or scheme other than the main approach, for validation purposes. In this case, a colleague who was familiar with the seminary as well as with the process of responsive evaluation, perused the report for trustworthiness. His comments were recorded on a copy of the document. He was an important resource for fine-tuning the final draft.

The institution presented the document to its governing board. Then the researcher was invited to discuss it with the administrative council of the seminary. At that meeting, he was invited to share his recommendations at a joint convocation of faculty and students, as groundwork for action.

In summary, the institution seemed satisfied with the candidness of the report, and considered the findings and recommendations as valid and useful. As a case in point, the researcher was informed that another evaluation by an independent organization, contracted by the seminary for institutional develop­ment purposes, had shown comparable results.
(Note: For ethical reasons, the evaluation report was not included in this paper. Only a sample section appears in the following pages. Concerned readers may have private access to the complete document through this researcher.)
**Issue: Student Clientele**

**Goal.** The seminary aims to serve the Church by training men and women for the ministry. [Taken from the mission statement.]

**Intentions.** The seminary strives to attract people who have a strong commitment to parish ministry, and who are academically qualified to do graduate work. Although its main thrust is the pastoral needs of its own denomination, the door is open to qualified candidates from other churches, as well as to people interested in ministries other than pastoral.

**Interactions.** Students choose this school for its denominational affiliation and its strong Wesleyan Pentecostal emphasis. They perceive the seminary as a cutting-edge institution of conservative evangelical theology, high academic standards, and a very competitive faculty. This impression is shared by prospective students, students, alumni, and denominational leaders alike.

Between eighty and eighty-five percent of the students belong to the [parent denomination]. It is a predominantly white male population, with a median age of 32.5. Approximately 15 percent are international, and 14 percent female. In the past years there has been an increase in married and in female students. Academic standards of admissions are high.

**Outcomes.** There is a feeling among church leaders that the school is not placing enough emphasis on the students’ vocational call to pastoral ministry. Thus, the seminary is attracting “dysfunctional students,” that is, people without clear goals or commitments, who are looking for identity and direction, for a place “to hang their coats” while they sort out what they will do with the rest of their lives.

Furthermore, there are practitioners who are not successful in the ministry, and assume that going through the seminary will make them successful. Others want the safety and prestige of para-church ministries (for instance, chaplaincy and counseling), at the expense of the pastoral needs of the denomination.

International students, particularly those whose first language is not English, feel at disadvantage. They claim that most of the faculty do not identify with their multicultural needs, and that little is done to help with the language barrier.

Figure 4: Report sample

*(Continues on the following pages.)*
Evaluation and recommendations. The seminary faces the dilemma of meeting perceived expectations of a high body count at the expense of quality, or being selective at the risk of becoming elitist and provincial. There are no clear-cut resolutions to this dilemma. However, the following recommendations may be practicable.

1. Keep a strong emphasis on candidates who expect to engage in parish ministry. Challenge people about their call.

2. Keep entry requirements high, but make provision, to the extent that the resources available allow it, to offer programs and activities tailored for people who lack the academic background to do graduate work.

3. Place greater emphasis on students sent and supported by their local churches, states, and countries.

4. Consider the feasibility of a two-phase admissions process.
   a. Admission to the seminary, based on academic criteria.
   b. After certain number of hours, admission into a program, based on academic progress, attitudes, ministerial practice, and commitment to the ministry.

5. Require at least a summer session of intensive work in English as a second language as a prerequisite for candidates who are not proficient in English.

6. Strengthen the office of international student advisor.

Issue: Community Formation

Goal. The purpose of community formation activities is to foster sharing, caring and support, and reflection on questions of ministry and ministerial identity.

Intentions. The seminary strives to model a genuine community of faith, where students feel responsible for the uplifting of one another, where opportunities are provided for confrontation and confession of sins and other shortcomings, and where participants can safely clarify their call or lack of it. Community of faith experiences are considered essential for the whole theological formation of the students, at the same level with classroom work.

Interactions. Approximately one third of the students are being reached by community formation endeavors. Vertical scheduling (i.e., three-hour blocks of academic work) make attendance to non-academic activities difficult. Furthermore, commuters, especially one-day-only students, cannot or will not participate.

Outcomes. Each community of faith group is as good as the person who leads it, and the level of commitment of the individuals. Opinions among students and alumni run the gamut from and indispensable experience to a sheer waste of time.
For those who take the model seriously, it has often become a substitute for church involvement. It is some sort of close, exclusive unit, where people minister to each other; but they are not touching the outside circle. As a result, it may convey a misconception of what community formation should be in the local church context.

Chapel services, as part of the community formation efforts, received a high evaluation without exception. But again, some seminarians see them as a substitute for local church attendance.

*Evaluation and recommendations.* The community of faith model is excellent, but its implementation at the seminary is less than satisfactory. In some instances where it is working, it has become a product rather than a process. This is a critical issue, inasmuch as several academic institutions in the international sphere are modeling their student life activities after the community of faith pattern at the seminary.

The school needs to do a better job of monitoring student involvement and training group leaders, to optimize the opportunities for mutual upbuilding among students, staff, and faculty.

*Recommendations:*

1. Some staff members are aware of the value of the community of faith, but they feel overburdened with other responsibilities. The seminary could involve area pastors in community formation endeavors, in a joint venture between the local church and the school.

2. Use retired ministers from the community.

3. Include more intentional community formation activities among staff and faculty.

4. Get students plugged in with local churches and monitor their involvement.

No practical alternatives have been offered to serve commuters and other students who miss the community of faith for reasons beyond their control. Perhaps, activities such as occasional retreats, special convocations, and seminary-sponsored revivals may be helpful.
Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to assess whether responsive evaluation was an effective resource for the improvement of theological education programs, and if so, in what ways. One way to make the assessment was the extent to which the following research subquestions, expressed in terms of goals, were or were not met:

1. Compare expected outcomes on the part of the seminary with actual outcomes as reflected by the professional practice of graduates.
2. Provide feedback to the school, that could be used as resource for improvement.
3. Evaluate the use of responsive evaluation as a resource for improving theological education programs.
4. Suggest indicators of successful theological education.

The model would not be considered an effective tool if it failed to help the audience identify and examine relevant issues and concerns from different perspectives, and if in the audience's assessment, the process could not elicit sufficient data and the corresponding interpretations and recommendations for program improvement.

*Compare intentions with outcomes.* One of the advantages of the responsive model was that it provided for the examination of program intentions, program interactions, and program outcomes, taking into consideration contingencies and congruencies that could either facilitate or hinder the success of the program. The researcher was able to assess program intentions through several means. First, he had three conversations with the president and the academic dean of the school, where institutional as well as program goals were discussed. Second, he studied
the catalog, where program and course objectives were spelled out. Then he browsed through course syllabi, class handouts, promotional brochures, newspaper ads, and press releases. This gave him a notion of what the institution said it was accomplishing.

Through interviews with students and faculty, class attendance, and participation in other school activities, the program was seen in action. Student demographics, faculty credentials, academic and extra-curricular loads of faculty, class scheduling, physical facilities, budgetary difficulties, conflicting perceptions, denominational pressures, and the school's social-emotional climate in general, were sources of facilitating and/or hindering elements (i.e., congruencies and contingencies). Some of these congruencies and contingencies (for example, student demographics and faculty loads), were easy to assess through statistical reports, class schedules, and the like. Others, such as perceptions and pressures from the parent organization, had to be inferred through interviews and informal conversations. However, this researcher found out that people were willing to express themselves freely, especially if their anonymity was assured. As a result, there was enough input to make reasonable inferences possible.

For example, in its intended goals, the seminary was committed to meeting denominational expectations of preparing men and women for effective parish ministry. The researcher visited several local parishes pastored by both students and graduates. He attended worship services, talked to parishioners, employers (state overseers), and alumni. These activities helped assess program outcomes. The formal report presented to the school at the end of the evaluation compared intentions, interactions, and outcomes from the perspectives of various audiences.
In cases of conflicting perceptions, the conflicts were pointed out.

Assessing the evaluation process in terms of this goal, the Director of Institutional Research at the seminary said,

The greatest difficulty in this evaluation was with the goals and expectations of the seminary, because the stated goals in the catalog were very brief and unclear. What the model did was test how true those written goals were to the unwritten goals. The model surfaced what people saw us as doing, and really told us what we envisioned ourselves as trying to do. [personal interview]

He stressed that one of the most significant accomplishments of the process was to force the school to compare the explicit curriculum, as the institution saw it, with the hidden curriculum, as others saw it. For example, the theory and practice of community formation is a major component of the school program. The seminary makes conscious efforts to model a genuine community of faith, where students feel responsible for uplifting one another, where opportunities are provided for confrontation and confession of sins, where people are affirmed for who they are, and where the spiritual, social, and emotional growth of both the individual and the community are a priority. The general opinion among students and faculty was that the community of faith model was excellent, but its implementation at the seminary was less than satisfactory. One student said, "Teachers are too busy doing other things. When we meet in community of faith groups, they don't seem to care about our worries. They want to get rid of us as soon as possible, so that they may go back to what really matters." A professor commented, "Even where the model was working, it has become a product rather than a process. Students use the experience as a substitute for church attendance." One of the questions the researcher asked of practitioners was, "To what extent have the community formation experiences at the seminary helped
your own practice?" Most of the times the influence was unnoticeable. In the words of a third-year practitioner, "I learned more about this from my pastor than at the seminary."

As an ordained minister with more than thirty-five years of experience, and also as a former bishop, this researcher has found no significant difference in the quality of community formation activities of seminarians and non seminarians. Thus, the gap between program intentions and outcomes in this area has been confirmed. The explicit curriculum stresses the importance of community formation, to the extent that it is considered at the same level with classroom work. The hidden curriculum portrays it as an attempt to "soothe the conscience," as it were, into believing that in this context spirituality is as relevant to seminary education as academics.

On the positive side, the seminary claims to have a highly qualified and competent faculty. Every person interviewed agreed that this is the case. So, this is an issue where intentions and outcomes concur. Another area where this happens is in regard to seminary-church relationships. The school strives to help the parent denomination reflect on its ministerial practice. According to a high-level denominational official, "Whenever the General Assembly [the highest decision-making body in the denomination, in all matters and at all levels] faces difficult questions regarding the application of theological principles to everyday problems, we go to our theologians at the seminary. They are always available and willing to assist, and we value their recommendations."

This is an unusual situation. In the literature as well as in this writer's experience, churches are often suspicious of the seminary. They accuse theologians of being liberal thinkers who disdain revelation as irrelevant and the miraculous as fantasy. In this case, however, the church resorts to the seminary for the
inservice training of bishops and other leaders, as well as for consultation on theological issues. This writer attended two inservice seminars, and in both cases the atmosphere was one of mutual respect and cooperation.

Sometimes, expectations and actual practice were contradictory. For example, denominational executives, one of whom was a former president of the seminary, saw the primary goal of the school as the training of the church's ministry. However, a seminary education was not a requirement for ordination, and the consensus was that it would not be a requirement in the foreseeable future. In contrast, the church has a strong one-year ministerial internship program (some sort of formal mentoring scheme for practitioners and candidates without seminary education), which is required for licensing and promotion. Graduates from this program compete with seminarians for positions in the church. As an intended compliment to the seminary, one state overseer said, "When it comes to pastoral work, graduates from the school are just as good as those from the ministerial internship program." Afterwards, he realized that the comparison was not favorable to the school, and he tried to clarify what he meant. He mentioned the fact that the internship program is highly practical, is conducted in the candidate's home environment, and trains pastors in a shorter period of time than the seminary. In spite of these "home advantages" of the other program, the school still does a good job, he concluded. This apparent incongruence between what the church says about the value of seminary education, and the importance it places on a competing program, was a vital issue for the seminary.
In summary, the question of whether this evaluation was capable of comparing intentions with outcomes was answered positively, both by the evaluation report, a sample of which has been included above, by concerned audiences, and by the institution itself.

*Provide feedback.* The most adequate assessment of this goal was provided by the academic dean of the seminary in his evaluation of the process. He said,

[This evaluation] was like the doctor's diagnosis of a patient who was in denial. We [the seminary] were like a patient who says, "I know I am sick, but I do not want the diagnosis." What you [the researcher] did was to precipitate for us that recognition which is a very important first step. Therefore, we both participated and resisted. We felt the pain, but we were not so sick that we were bedridden. So, the evaluation was extremely helpful in that it forced us to face our own denial.

He further stated that through the various forms of formal and informal feedback (e.g., meetings with the researcher, faculty remarks in the lounge, student questions regarding what was going on, and particularly the formal report), the evaluation process discovered: 1) conflicting visions about the seminary, 2) denial of such conflicts, and 3) the need for an ongoing evaluation process. He added,

We should have scheduled a series of post-evaluation meetings. After you met with the administration of the seminary, we needed for you to meet with the faculty, the staff, the students, and the board of governors, to discuss your findings and recommendations, and to continue with the process.

According to the Director of Institutional Research, another thing the evaluation accomplished was that "it helped us clarify our sense of identity; who we are in the larger context of the church, by getting a perception of how others view us."

As stated elsewhere in this paper, the institution was struggling with a sense of identity. It was often confused with a sister liberal arts college. Furthermore, it
was struggling to obtain recognition among academic circles as a cutting-edge center for conservative, Wesleyan theology. The evaluation did not provide solutions to the problem of identity, but it brought the issue to the surface. In the words of the dean, it forced the seminary to start a serious soul-searching process. "One thing is for sure, it will never be business as usual," he said.

After the evaluation report was presented to the governing board of the seminary, the school president told the researcher in an informal conversation that a board member had challenged a statement in the report: "He said, Can he prove this? But I explained that the purpose of the evaluation was not to prove or disprove anything, but rather to make us aware of these issues, and to see how other people perceive what we are doing. In that sense, this is a valuable tool to help us take steps in the right direction." He added that the board agreed with his perception.

It would have been advisable for the board to invite the researcher to discuss the report. This action was postponed indefinitely, due apparently to an overloaded agenda. In the final evaluation session, the dean asked the researcher's cooperation in the development of strategies to continue the evaluation efforts of the seminary.

In summary, the assessment of the evaluation process, made informally by the president, and formally by the dean of the seminary and the Director of Institutional Research, supported the conclusion that the second goal, provide feedback to the institution, was accomplished. As a matter of fact, according to the dean, the creation of a full-time position in charge of institutional research and development was due in part to internal processes triggered by the evaluation.
Secondary accomplishments in this area were:

1. Helped identify potential students.
2. Clarified misconceptions on the part of potential students.
3. Identified areas where the seminary needed a more aggressive promotion.
4. Identified perceived program strengths and weaknesses.

*Evaluate the responsive evaluation model.* The primary purpose of this study was to assess the value of responsive evaluation as an effective means of improving theological education programs. This researcher had three opportunities to test the model, namely, 1) a pilot project, 2) an incomplete case study, and 3) a complete implementation. The mechanics of the study, that is, the procedural outline derived from the model, was easy to follow. What Stake called "prominent events," occurred almost naturally.

The model was capable of comparing intentions with outcomes, and of assessing different value perspectives. It provided feedback to the institution, that could be used for program improvement. It also brought to the surface critical issues that the institution had been denying, which needed urgent attention. In the three cases, one outstanding value of the model was that it forced decision-makers to identify relevant issues, ask pertinent questions about each issue, and identify audiences whose perspectives about the issues were vital for program improvement. In the pilot project it even stirred up issues of who the real decision-makers were and what decision-making processes were in effect at the institution. As the dean in the third case said, this feature of responsive evaluation could be a first step in an ongoing process of self-evaluation.

According to the Director of Institutional Research, another value of responsive evaluation was that "the instrument was very non-threatening." Any evaluation, by the very nature of the process, produces a high level of anxiety. The
responsive approach, in contrast, "helped view the school as a whole in a way that allowed everyone to own it without feeling personally judged," he said. Furthermore, opinions and value judgments of audiences that are normally not taken into consideration (prospective students, for example), were seriously weighed. Others that are usually limited to opinion-polling questionnaires (such as practicing graduates and employers), were given the opportunity to express themselves freely in a non-threatening environment.

In one of the pilot projects, the researcher interviewed the highest-ranking officer of the school's parent denomination. Supposedly, this person had the power and authority to make (or at least strongly influence) decisions regarding the very existence of the program under study. Interestingly enough, he was more willing to share his concerns with the researcher than with program directors. "I am worried about this program. It is not supplying the needs of the church the way it should. The problem is that, since I am the general bishop, if I tell them that, they will feel that I am against the school. They are very sensitive to criticism, especially if it comes from this office. I am glad you are doing this evaluation. It would be easier for them to pay attention to these matters if they came from an outside observer like you. So please, don't mention my name in your report."

The "triangulator," that is, the person who perused the evaluation report for validation purposes, said, "I believe this model could be applied not only to seminary education, but to other church programs as well. I would like to try it myself to evaluate the world missions program in my local church."
In summary, on one hand, there was no indisputable evidence to warrant the conclusion that this evaluation resulted, or will result, in program improvement. On the other, decision-makers at the seminary affirmed that the process precipitated actions that were already yielding positive results. Among others: 1) the creation of a full-time position for institutional research, 2) the development of instruments for administration, faculty, board, and peer evaluations, taking into consideration different value perspectives, 3) discussions about conflicting visions and identity issues, 4) clarification of institutional goals.

The context-bound nature of the process precluded the applicability of findings to other settings, or even to the same setting in different circumstances. The seminary was at a developmental stage in which this evaluation was especially helpful. Anticipating results under different circumstances would be at best guesswork, and at worst, poor research practice.

One of the positive features of the approach, namely, ownership of the process, was at the same time a restraint. Sometimes there was a fine line between offering suggestions regarding issues, questions, and judgments, and "putting thoughts in people's heads and words in their mouths," as it were. On one hand, the researcher was comfortable with the extent of prompting required at times to help participants articulate their perceptions. On the other, he felt he had to be especially careful to keep the expressed concerns of the institution as the primary focus of the entire process.

In conclusion, there was supporting evidence to the effect that the responsive approach to program evaluation could be an effective means of improving theological education programs, at least to the extent that the process served as
catalyst for other efforts. The fact that the researcher was an experienced practitioner in the field under study was an asset in the perception of nuances that might have been overlooked by a less familiar observer.

Suggest indicators of successful theological education. A secondary goal of this study was to identify indicators of successful theological education. This was an ambitious goal, since the literature, as well as practitioners in the field, considered it an elusive theme for which there was no consensus. The responsive approach did not claim the ability to identify markers of success, and there was no evidence that it did. However, what the process was able to do was to encourage institutional decision-makers to identify concerns that could be used as indicators of success in a specific context.

For instance, in conversations with parishioners the question was asked, "What would you consider a successful minister?" Invariably, answers focused on the ability to foster a community atmosphere, demonstration of compassion, and pastoral care. Although important, technical skills such as mastery of biblical languages, managerial abilities, or the application of counseling techniques, rated secondary. In this writer's experience, it is not unusual to hear someone say about an apparently successful pastor, "He can preach to multitudes, he knows Greek and Hebrew, and he can make the church grow in numbers. But can he show compassion? Is his congregation a social club, or a real community of faith? Is he a shepherd, or a chief executive officer?" Obviously, these comments are made not just of seminary graduates, but of any practitioner of religious vocations. Nevertheless, schools of theology can listen to them, in their efforts to find out what churches expect their product to be.
In conclusion, although responsive evaluation may not produce a checklist of indicators of successful theological education, it may help audiences identify what they themselves consider indicators of success.

**SUMMARY**

The question of whether the responsive approach could be used as an effective means of improving theological education programs could be answered with a qualified yes. In the experience of this researcher, the process could be a contributing factor for improvement, depending on the context and on the interest of concerned audiences. In the end, the value of any finding or recommendation would be determined by the use the specific institution made of it.

The process was at the same time grueling and rewarding. On one hand, the number of interviews required to get a comprehensive picture of the case under study was relatively large. In the two cases where the model was implemented, the researcher found that after an average of six interviews in a category (for example, faculty, students, denominational leaders), the amount of new significant input was minimal. So for an average of five categories, twenty-five to thirty interviews was a reasonable amount. On the other hand, the ability to put the pieces of the emerging picture together, and to draw conclusions and recommendations from it, was a source of satisfaction. The evaluator's background as a practitioner in the field under study was an asset throughout the process.

The project was implemented at no cost for the school. The only investment on their part was the time and effort dedicated to the process. This was reasonable inasmuch as, by their willingness to participate, they contributed to the
assessment of the model. However, under other circumstances, it would be expected for the evaluator to be compensated for his or her work.

The issue of confidentiality was vital from the onset. That prevented the inclusion here of letters, evaluation reports, and other supporting evidence. For example, the seminary was willing to provide this researcher with copies of evaluation forms and other documents that they considered direct results or at least byproducts of this process. They would not approve the publication of such documents, for possible violation of institutional privacy. However, they approved their inclusion in a "databook," as part of the researcher's paper trail.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Intended Goals

At the crux of this study has been a concern for the improvement of theological education programs. The undergirding assumptions were that theological education programs could and should be improved, and that responsive evaluation could possibly serve as an adequate resource for this purpose.

The way in which this researcher looked at possible answers was to implement the responsive model and to assess its application. Research subquestions for the implementation of the model were expressed in terms of the following goals: 1) compare intentions with outcomes, 2) provide feedback, 3) evaluate the model, and 4) suggest indicators of success. Following is a summary of findings, as discussed in chapter 4 above.

Compare intentions with outcomes. The definition given at the onset stated that program evaluation has to do with the process of asking questions whose answers will help stakeholders appraise the extent to which the intended results of a program are actually being accomplished, and whether the resources invested are adequate to produce those results.
As has been pointed out throughout these pages, one of the advantages of the responsive approach is that it provides for the examination of program intentions, program interactions, and program outcomes, taking into consideration the contingencies and congruencies that may either facilitate or hinder the implementation of the program. Program intentions are reviewed by means of catalogs, course syllabi, and related literature. Program interactions are seen through participant observation and conversations with the people involved. Program outcomes are inferred also through observation and interviews with graduates, employers, and other consumers. Inasmuch as questions are asked at several levels of involvement, the judgments of different audiences serve to compare outcomes from various vantage points.

The sample report in chapter four, as well as supporting evidence provided by the school in the assessment of the process, support the conclusion that this first goal can be met using this approach.

*Provide feedback.* The responsive approach is interactive. Rather than a linear movement, the prominent events of the evaluation form a circle, with the action moving in either direction as needed. The researcher is in continuous communication with program decision-makers, and may provide feedback at any point in the process.

The experience of this writer was that some crucial input (for example, a prospective student on the verge of making a decision based on inaccurate perceptions) could not wait for a final report, but had to be conveyed to the school immediately. Likewise, partial reports about specific issues could be given, either orally or in writing, if and when needed.
An illustration of the importance of feedback in the present endeavor occurred when a board member of the school under study challenged a statement in the evaluation report. The ensuing dialogue revealed that the challenge was not based on the accuracy of the statement, but on the member's perception of the issue in question. It was agreed that even though the statement produced uneasiness, it was valid and needed to be addressed.

Some audiences who were reluctant to provide feedback directly to the school, did so through the anonymity of the evaluation. Although survey questionnaires could provide this type of feedback, they lack the versatility to perceive nuances and covert value judgments the way a naturalistic approach like responsive evaluation could do.

The final evaluation report, with conclusions and recommendations, was probably the most comprehensive piece of feedback for the school. It could be shared with concerned audiences, totally or in part, and lay the foundation for immediate or future action. In summary, the capability for feedback at various stages and levels of concern was probably one of the most valuable contributions of responsive evaluation to potential program improvement.

Evaluate the model. The experience of this researcher in the implementation of the responsive evaluation model has been positive, first in a pilot project, and then in two more comprehensive applications. The model was capable of producing what qualitative researchers call verstehen, a deep-seated understanding of the context under study. It was inclusive in terms of audiences, issues, values, and other factors that could affect the success of the program.

One of the disadvantages of the model was that it resulted time-consuming and costly. In order to be effective, the researcher had to spend long hours on
site, and in two cases he had to contract additional resources to transcribe inter-
views.

Suggest indicators of success. As with any qualitative inquiry, the goal of re-
sponsive evaluation is not to produce universal claims to truth, but rather to
concatenate seemingly disparate pieces of evidence in order to support the de-
velopment of grounded and warranted theory, that is, theory that explains phenom-
ena. Such theory is necessarily context-bound. So, the approach may not be able
to produce a "laundry list" of indicators of successful theological education as
suggested in this objective. Furthermore, it is apparent in the literature, as well as
in the opinion of practitioners in the field, that such indicators are very elusive.

One thing this approach did was help concerned audiences decide what they
themselves considered indicators of success. In the cases reported above, for
instance, degrees of congruence between intentions, interactions, and outcomes
in the various issues identified as relevant to the respective programs under
study could be interpreted as indicators of program strengths and weaknesses. A
reasonable conclusion, then, was that while responsive evaluation could not
identify indicators of success, it suggested ways to determine such indicators in a
particular context.

Conclusions

All evaluation models have both advantages and disadvantages. The choice
of a model depends on variables such as one’s epistemological platform, the
nature of the phenomena under evaluation, and the purposes of the evaluation.

Qualitative approaches have some key attributes, which are illustrated in the
responsive model of program evaluation. These attributes are: 1) uses the natural
setting as the direct source of data; 2) is descriptive; 3) is concerned with the process rather than simply with outcomes or products; 4) tends to analyze data inductively; and 5) emphasizes meanings. The subject of theological education may be stated in an oversimplified manner as the discovery and affirmation of the divine will for humankind, which will result in a life-style commensurate with the highest ethical standards. The accomplishment of this task is hard to evaluate with any approach. However, the importance responsive evaluation puts on human meanings, interactions, and value judgments, as well as in thick descriptions of phenomena, probably make it more amenable to the task than a more rigorous and detached approach.

As a case in point, this writer is familiar with an undergraduate institution of theological education that has as its highest award to graduating students what they call "the Medal of Honor of the Faculty." They also give awards for overall academic excellence, highest grade point average in theological studies, performance of pastoral skills, missionary endeavor, and others. However, the Medal of Honor of the Faculty is the most coveted trophy, the only one that includes a cash prize.

The entire faculty votes for the candidate for this award. The person selected must reflect, in the eyes of the entire academic community, the ideal graduate the institution wants to produce. There is no checklist of requirements. Selection is based on observation throughout the student's entire program, interpretation of attitudes as well as actions, value judgments, in other words, a qualitative approach to evaluation.
In the view of the faculty, no quantitative measurement can pinpoint what they consider a theologically educated person. By creating this award, their goal is to be able to look inductively at the senior class, point to one of the graduands, and say, "This is what we are all about!" Ideally, the selection process leads to a review of what the school claims to be doing, what it is actually doing, and the results as they are reflected in the graduating class. If at any given year they are unable to grant the prize, it is a matter of serious concern.

The opinion of this writer is that, unaware of it, this academic senate is practicing informal responsive evaluation. In the final analysis, the worth of any evaluation depends on the use concerned audiences make of the findings and recommendations. The best report is worthless if it is only "for the record," or to justify preconceived actions, such as the elimination of an unpopular program or the affirmation of a preferred one.

Recommendations

Pertinent Questions

Some pertinent questions have been raised in these pages, that have not been answered adequately, and merit further study. Examples of these are: 1) What constitutes a theologically educated person? 2) What are indicators of success in theological education? 3) What are adequate images for the clergy that will serve the needs of the Christian church at the turn of the century? A recommendation for theological educators and researchers would be to ask those questions at appropriate forums, with the expectation that conclusions will be reached that will help improve theological education.
Need for Comparative Assessment of Models

From its very inception, the purpose of this endeavor has been to examine the usefulness of one particular evaluation model. A systematic evaluation of evaluations, that is, a comparative application of different models, has been beyond its scope. This is also a matter that merits attention.

Concern for Replicability

Another recommendation for persons interested in formative program evaluation is to adapt the present model to their particular concerns and try it. The experience of this researcher is that the model can be replicated, but this affirmation needs the support of further testing by other researchers. The sample letters, forms, and other documents included in the Appendix below may facilitate this endeavor.

Use of the Model

A final issue this researcher faced was: "Would I use the system again? How? Where? To what extent?" The answer was affirmative. The experience was enriching, both personally and professionally. The responsive approach could be implemented in institutions willing to take a candid look at themselves and at how others see them, and to make a serious investment of time, effort, and finances in the endeavor. The scope and extent of its use would depend on the specific context. This evaluator found the process smooth, non-threatening, and yielding both anticipated and unexpected results. Borrowing a phrase from computer lingo, it was "user-friendly."
On one hand, this researcher would not recommend the approach for institutions where the evaluator has vested interests. In other words, this may not be the most effective approach when the evaluator is an insider, because his or her ability to weigh conflicting value judgments, for example, could be affected by his or her personal interests. On the other hand, a researcher who is not at least familiar with the field under study, may be at a disadvantage in her or his effort to capture shades of meanings, feelings, or values, that may be relevant to interpreting a situation.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A - SAMPLE LETTERS

1. Follow up on an initial telephone contact.

February 11, 1992

Dr. ________________, President

Dear ________________:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me on the morning of February 17, 1992, in regard to my dissertation project. I am including here some background information for the meeting.

I am an ordained minister in the Church of God (international headquarters in Cleveland, TN), and a former Bible college president. Presently, I am a doctoral candidate in the area of Educational Policy and Leadership at the Ohio State University. My research interest involves the use of program evaluation for the improvement of theological education.

For my dissertation I want to study theological education programs, and how various graduates from such programs implement what they learned in their
ministerial practice. The idea is that the resulting feedback from this type of follow-up study serve as a resource for possible program improvement.

I am looking forward to discussing this project with you, in the hope that the [ ] School may be interested in participating in it.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely, etc.
2. Reminder of the purposes of a meeting.

March 2, 1992

Dear ____________________:

This is a reminder of our appointment for this coming Thursday, March 5, 1992, at 2:00 P.M. The main goals for the meeting are to verify the Seminary's availability to participate in my dissertation research project, and to agree on a tentative procedure for the field work if the answer is positive.

As promised, I am sending you a rough draft of my research questions, as well as a suggested protocol for the work at the school. I am looking forward to meeting with you again, hoping that the response to my inquiry is positive.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully, etc.

ENCLOSURE
3. Member-check of field notes

May 25, 1992

Professor __________________

__________________________

__________________________

Dear ____________________:

Greetings.

I am sending you the transcript of our recent conversation regarding the evaluation of the ____________ program at __________ for your approval. If there are any corrections or changes, you may choose to make them in the document itself and return it to me. Or if you prefer, you may drop me a line or give me a call (614-443-2240 home; 292-8000 office).

If I don't hear from you in the next few days, I will assume that the transcript as is contains the essence of what you said.

As I promised, these notes are intended for my personal use only. No names, nor any details that may serve to identify specific participants, will be used in my report of this study.

Thank for your valuable input. etc.

ENCLOSURE
4. Request for names of prospective students

February 2, 1994

Dr. __________________
Vice President and Academic Dean
___________ College

Dear __________________:
I am helping __________ School in a process of formative program evaluation. This is a type of evaluation specifically geared toward improvement, as compared to evaluation for accreditation or other criterion-related purposes. The School has identified several issues of concern, as well as questions about each issue. The idea is to ask these questions of people at different levels of involvement. Participation will be kept strictly confidential, and the results will be for internal use only.
I would like to interview __________ College seniors, who are planning to apply to the School in the near future. Could you help me identify them? I would need from forty-five minutes to an hour of their time.
I will be in _________ on February 15-17. We could meet at their convenience, day or night (except early Wed. evening).
For your information, I am including the list of issues and questions that serve as the basis for the project. They may, however, feel free to address any concern regarding the School.

etc.
5. Report cover letter

October 26, 1994

________________
Academic Dean
________________ School

Dear ________________:

Greetings.

As you may see by the enclosed letter, I had planned to have the preliminary report on the evaluation project of the seminary ready before the end of the academic year. Then came [explanations]. So, the report kept being postponed. Here is the report, with a copy for the President. Please, go over it, and let me know your response. We can meet to decide whether this will become the final document, or whether you want to make any changes.

Thank for your patience. etc.
Sample of "Notes to myself":

1. Resist the temptation to skip steps in the procedure.
   a. For example, do not try to interpret the data directly from the taped interviews without a transcript. It doesn't work!
   b. You need the transcripts in front of you in order to organize the issues.
   c. Another example, it is harder to write the report without first taking time to sort the issues in writing. You can't just sort them in your head, or assume that you know them.

2. Do not procrastinate. The difficulties of the project increase in direct proportion with the time elapsed between stages.
## EVALUATION CONCERNS

### ISSUE

#### Student clientele

A. Who are the consumers of the various programs the seminary offers?  
1. Why do the students choose this seminary?  
   a. What do they say in the application for admission?  
   b. What do they say once they are in the seminary?  
2. What are some of the characteristics of the student population?

B. Who should be in the seminary?  
1. Who does the seminary want to attract?  
2. Who is the seminary attracting?  
3. Who should the seminary attract?  
4. Who should help them get here?

### RELEVANT QUESTIONS

#### Audience

- Students
- Faculty
- Alumni
- Admissions office

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<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>RELEVANT QUESTIONS</th>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
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<td>Students Faculty Alumni Admissions office</td>
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<td>1. Why do the students choose this seminary?</td>
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<td>4. Who should help them get here?</td>
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### Program relevance

**A.** What kind of program is more relevant for the future of the church?  
1. How important is the MA now and for the future in meeting the needs for the ministry in the [denomination]?  
2. How important is the M. Div.?  
3. To what extent should the seminary continue to emphasize the training of chaplains?  

**Audience:** Church leaders  
**School administration**

### Curriculum relevance

**A.** How relevant is the present curriculum?  
1. Are there other courses that need to be added? Why?  
2. Are courses being offered that need to be modified? How? Why?  

**B.** What are the strengths of the curriculum? What are the weaknesses?  

**Audience:** Students  
**Faculty**  
**Alumni**

### Community formation

**A.** To what extent have the community formation activities helped your ministerial development and practice?  

**B.** What types of activities contribute the most to community formation at the seminary?  

**C.** What are some hindrances to the community formation efforts of the seminary?  

**Audience:** Students  
**Faculty**  
**Staff**  
**Alumni**
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<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>RELEVANT QUESTIONS</th>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
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| Denominational assumptions   | A. How do denominational leaders perceive the seminary?  
1. What is the place of the seminary vis-a-vis the ordination track?  
2. What should be the place of the graduates in the ordination track?  
B. What are the church's expectations regarding the seminary?  
1. How do denominational leaders see graduates serving the church?  
2. How do students and graduates see themselves serving within the church?  
3. What are the students' perception about the church's attitude?  
4. What are graduates' perceptions of such attitudes? | Executive Committee  
Bishops, overseers  
Church leaders  
Students  
Graduates |
| Seminary-church relationships | A. How is the seminary serving the church?  
B. How should the seminary serve the church?  
C. What kinds of activities should the seminary be addressing? | Church leaders  
Alumni |
| Dissemination                | Where should the program concentrate exposure efforts? | Church leaders  
Alumni |
APPENDIX D - SAMPLE CLASSIFICATION OF RAW DATA

Student Clientele

(Partial List)

1. Between 15 and 20% are international.
2. Should attract young people who will be supported by their local churches, states, and countries. That would give the supporting agencies a sense of ownership.
3. There has been an increase in married students.
4. Increase in dysfunctional students, looking for identity and direction, for a place "to hang their coats" while they sort out what they are going to do with the rest of their life. (two respondents)
5. Should be a finishing school for [denomination] workers. At the same time, remain open to other audiences.
6. Place greater emphasis on students being sent by their congregation - more local church involvement.
7. School is not been promoted strongly enough within minorities, especially the Black community.
8. Need to deal in depth with drop-out rate. Find out why people don't come back.
Community Formation

(Partial List)

1. Very helpful - mutual support.
2. It is as good as the person who leads it. I have had both; last year it was a waste of time; the professor could care less. This year, it's a genuine experience of mutual care and support.
3. The local pastors seem unaware of the tensions we face at the seminary. At the community of faith, this awareness is present.
4. A waste of time... a pitiful waste of time.
5. Helps the individual clarify her call or lack of it.
6. It is worse than nothing, because it has become a substitute for local church involvement. The week we have chapel or community of faith, the feeling is that you had all the church you needed.
7. The professors are too busy. They believe in community of faith, but they don't have the time.
8. Commuters miss community of faith experiences. We don't know what to do to substitute.
9. Area pastors should be involved in community formation experiences at the seminary.
10. How about a faculty community of faith?
Interview With a Denominational Executive

(Excerpt)

Researcher: I want to hear your comments on student recruitment. Who do you think the seminary should be trying to attract?

Participant: If we are not careful, we could see the seminary attracting only those with certain intellectual capacity. We might develop some kind of elitist group in the church. I don't agree with that at all. The seminary should basically be finishing school for [denomination] workers. Not just training leaders... state overseers... department heads... this kind of thing... and I'm afraid that those who go to school feel that they are not to get their hands dirty, they are not to get involved in inner city ministry or get down in the street level...

Pastors, we need pastors. You may be a C student all the way through. But the seminary ought to help you be more effective, to reach more souls, to keep your house in order, because you are building on the right foundation...

Researcher: Are you saying that the school should be more selective in the people that are admitted, in terms of the call to minister?
Participant: Yes. And I believe that the [denomination] owes, to every [denomination] man and woman called to preach, the educational opportunities to make them more effective ministers for God.

Researcher: What about the emphasis on the training of chaplains?

Participant: I'm proud of the strides we made in that area, in the number of chaplains we have trained in the last ten or fifteen years. I don't know if the denomination understands the impact those chaplains are making and the tremendous job they are doing... My concern is whether we are enhancing one ministry at the sacrifice of another.
Interview With Prospective Student

(Excerpt)

Participant: Most students at [ ] College say they would prefer another seminary, because they want exposure to a different setting. Coming here would narrow their experience.

Researcher: So, why did you choose this particular seminary, out of the alternatives?

Participant: I don't know... I have a sense of God leading me to be there. I have a call to the ministry, and this seminary is conveniently located near [ ] College.

Researcher: Are you from this area?

Participant: No, I'm originally from Jamaica, and my family lives in Florida.

Researcher: What have you heard about the seminary?

Participant: Know what? The school is not promoted strongly in the Black community in Florida. Leaders there are not emphasizing it enough... When I came to [ ] College, everybody said that academic standards at the seminary were good. It's just as good as any other institution of higher learning.

Researcher: Just as good...

Participant: Yeah... but it has another advantage, it's a [denomination] institution... it's doctrinally sound... and the credentials of the faculty are impressive...

Researcher: Have you heard about any weaknesses of the seminary?

Participant: Definitely not enough exposure among minorities... They should spend more time and money promoting among the Black community.
Today I attended a class taught by Dr. [ ]. I asked him if I could interview him after class. He said he would be busy, because he has a community of faith group. I asked if he would allow me to attend this group. He said I would be more than welcome.

Note to myself: I have a particular interest in this program because I have witnessed two Bible colleges abroad that have modeled their student life after the community of faith program at the [name of the institution]. In other words, this program is affecting a large number of people worldwide, for better or for worse.

The group consists of 12 people. They meet on the platform of the seminary chapel. The climate is informal, comfortable, and friendly. Students feel free to express themselves.

The professor introduces me, and explains that I am helping the seminary evaluate its programs. He asks me to address the group. I ask the students if they would like to share their personal insights and recommendations regarding the community of faith experience. Below are some of their comments...