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LDS seminary participation in the Las Vegas, Nevada area for the class of 1998

Norman William Gardner
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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L.D.S. SEMINARY PARTICIPATION IN THE
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA AREA FOR
THE CLASS OF 1998

by

Norman W. Gardner

Bachelor of Science
Brigham Young University
1991

Master of Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1995

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Education Degree
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

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L.D.S. Seminary Participation in the Las Vegas, Nevada Area

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Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

L.D.S. Seminary Participation in the Las Vegas, Nevada Area for the Class of 1998

by

Norman W. Gardner

Dr. Gerald Kops, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Educational Leadership
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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (L.D.S. Church) attaches great importance to the religious education of its youth. The L.D.S. Church conducts a daily religious education program, called seminary, to church members ages 14 to 18.

A young person's completion of four years of seminary has long been viewed as an indicator of future church activity. While seminary attendance is not compulsory, great emphasis is placed in the L.D.S. Church on the importance of participation by potential students in the program.

The discontinuation of seminary enrollment by students is of great concern to the administrators of the program, to the ecclesiastical leaders of the Church, and to the parents of the students.

This study examined why some L.D.S. seminary students regularly attended and
graduated from the seminary program and why others discontinued their attendance. The areas of investigation identified possible influences which were analyzed to see if any were unique to either dropouts or graduates.

A questionnaire was devised to measure seminary graduate and seminary dropout characteristics in the areas of personal belief and church involvement, external influences, and structural factors within the seminary system.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (L.D.S. Church) attaches great importance to the religious education of its youth. Soon after the L.D.S. Church was organized in 1830, it provided a private denominational education system for its members (Berrett, 1988).

Need for Religious Education

Following the advent and growth of public schools in Utah, Wilford Woodruff, President of the L.D.S. Church, said in a letter to church leaders in 1888:

Religious training is practically excluded from the district schools. The perusal of books that we value as divine records is forbidden. Our children, if left to the training they receive in these schools, will grow up entirely ignorant of those principles of salvation for which the Latter-day Saints have made so many sacrifices. To permit this condition of things to exist among us would be criminal. The desire is universally expressed by all thinking people in the Church that we should have schools where the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Book
of Doctrine and Covenants can be used as text books, and where the principles of our religion may form part of the teaching of the schools (Berrett, 1988, p. 20).

The L.D.S. Church soon withdrew its emphasis on providing a total educational system and concentrated on religious education. Throughout the contemporary history of the Church, it has continued to leave secular education up to the public schools and to emphasize the development of spiritual and moral values in its youth.

The educational philosophy of the L.D.S. Church has refused to stress the intellectual element of human development at the expense of the moral and spiritual elements. Harold B. Lee (1953), a president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, reminded religious educators in the L.D.S. Church of what their educational priorities should consist:

This knowledge of truth, combined with the proper regard of it and its faithful observance, constitutes true education. The mere stuffing of the mind with knowledge of facts is not education. The mind must not only possess a knowledge of truth, but the soul must revere it, cherish it, love it as a priceless gem, and this human life must be guided and shaped by it in order to fulfill its destiny. The mind should not only be charged with intelligence, but the soul should be filled with admiration and desire for pure intelligence which comes from a knowledge of the truth. The truth can only make him free who hath it and will continue in it (p. 6).

In an address given to religion teachers in the L.D.S. Church, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. (1938) described the hunger and thirst which students have for a religious education:

These students (to put the matter shortly) are prepared to understand and to believe that there is a natural world and there is a spiritual world; that the things of the natural world will not explain the things of the spiritual world; that the things of the spiritual world cannot be understood or comprehended by the things of the natural world; that you cannot rationalize the things of the Spirit, because first, the
things of the Spirit are not sufficiently known and comprehended, and secondly, because finite mind and reason cannot comprehend nor explain infinite wisdom and ultimate truth.

These students hunger and thirst, as did their fathers before them, for a testimony of the things of the Spirit and of the hereafter, and knowing that you cannot rationalize eternity, they seek faith and the knowledge which follows faith. They sense, by the Spirit they have, that the testimony they seek is engendered and nurtured by the testimony of others, and that to gain this testimony which they seek for, one living, burning, honest testimony of a righteous God-fearing man that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph was God's prophet, is worth a thousand books and lectures aimed at debasing the gospel to a system of ethics or seeking to rationalize infinity (p.5).

Seminary in the L.D.S. Church

The Church Educational System (C.E.S.) is the organization commissioned by the L.D.S. Church to deliver a daily religious education program, called seminary, to Church members ages 14 to 18.

The first seminary program began with 70 students in the fall of 1912 in a church-owned building near the Granite High School in Salt Lake City, Utah under the direction of Joseph F. Merrell (Berrett, 1988). As the L.D.S. Church has experienced tremendous growth, the need to provide for the religious education of its members has continued. C.E.S. currently maintains seminary programs in all 50 states of the U.S. and 144 foreign countries and territories throughout the world with a total enrollment of over 377,436 students (Church Educational System [C.E.S.] , 1999).

When the Church Educational System initially began to grow internationally, Neal A. Maxwell (1971), then Church Commissioner of Education declared:

What was once said of the British empire can now be said of the Church Educational System: the sun never sets on it. . . . This is truly an international
school system... Pervading the entire system is the Church’s consuming
concern for spiritual, intellectual, and social development of human beings (p. 3).

Objectives and Curriculum of Seminary

The stated objective of the Church Educational System is:

To assist the individual, the family, and priesthood leaders in accomplishing the mission of the Church by, (1) teaching students the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the standard works and the words of the prophets, (2) teaching students by precept and example so they will be encouraged, assisted, and protected as they strive to live the gospel of Jesus Christ, (3) providing a spiritual and social climate where students can associate together, (4) preparing young people for effective Church service (C.E.S., 1994b, p. 3).

For these objectives to be accomplished, students must enroll in, and persist through, the full sequence of seminary courses. The seminary curriculum consists of four years of study in the standard works (scriptures) which include the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

In areas where there is a sufficiently large population of L.D.S. Church members, the curriculum is often delivered through a released-time program. In this setting, the public school authorizes students to be released for one period during school hours which allows the students to receive religious instruction in an off-campus facility.

In other areas of the Church, students receive their daily seminary instruction in an early-morning or daytime program where seminary is held either before public school classes begin, or during a lunch hour, or after school. Those students who find themselves in areas which are sparsely populated with members of the Church, may take seminary through a home-study program.
Seminary in Las Vegas, Nevada

In the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada, the L.D.S. Church has not recently pursued the adoption of a released-time program. Rather, seminary is delivered as an early-morning or daytime program. This means that seminary is offered either during the hour preceding school or the hour after school, with some locations also offering a lunch-hour program.

In Las Vegas, seminary classes are usually held at L.D.S. chapels located near the public school where the students attend. Because the vast majority of students attend seminary during the early-morning hour, volunteer teachers are recruited, trained, and supervised by full-time C.E.S. employees.

Expectation of Seminary Attendance

A young person’s completion of four years of seminary has long been viewed as an indicator of future church activity, such as serving a full-time mission and marrying in an L.D.S. temple (C.E.S., 1994a). The decision to participate in seminary is viewed as a result of adherence to a Church expectation.

While seminary attendance is not compulsory, great emphasis is placed in the L.D.S. Church on the importance of a young person being active in seminary. Elder Boyd K. Packer (1959), then a general supervisor of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion of the L.D.S. Church, emphasized the seriousness with which seminary is viewed when he remarked that, “In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, daily religious instruction is not just a frill or an embellishment. It is not just an appendage to a sound program of education. It is the very core of it” (p. 288).
While speaking at a general conference of the L.D.S. Church, President Spencer W. Kimball (1975) stressed the role of week-day religious education in achieving the goals of Latter-day Saints:

The goal of every Latter-day Saint is eternal life or exaltation! This can best be achieved by following the straight and narrow path which leads to this goal: namely, participation in the seminary and institute program, a mission, and an eternal marriage. In seminaries and institutes youth are encouraged to fulfill and are assisted in their training for a mission. Almost all of those who keep the vows made in the temple will inherit eternal life.

Week-day religious training is in a position to do as much as any instructional program in the Church to assist the home in directly helping youth achieve eternal life. I strongly advise all youth to continue on this path by participation in the seminary and institute programs.

All of our choice young people should avail themselves of this medium for recognizing and strengthening their eternal relationship with God, with their fellow men, and with themselves.

Many young people complete the requirements for seminary graduation, yet the L.D.S. Church has found that some students never attend seminary, and others begin seminary and later drop out of the program (p. 2).

The discontinuation of seminary enrollment by seminary students is of great concern to the administrators of the Church Educational System, to the ecclesiastical leaders of the Church, and to the parents of the students.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to identify what determines why some L.D.S. seminary students regularly attended and graduated from the seminary program and why others discontinued their attendance. The potential reasons were analyzed to see if any were unique to either dropouts or graduates.
Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What discriminating personal characteristics (namely, gender; academic achievement; private religious belief; personal Church involvement; attitudes towards religious education; and plans for the future) differentiated L.D.S. seminary dropouts from seminary graduates?

2. What external factors (namely, family structure; family change; family mobility; student employment; parental religiosity and influence; and peer influence) affected seminary completion and dropout?

3. What structural factors within the seminary system (namely, time seminary was offered; and teacher ability and rapport) affected seminary enrollment and dropout?

4. Did the rate of drop out differ significantly between the seminary programs in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada?

Delimitations

1. The survey was delimited to L.D.S. high school seniors from the class of 1998 who lived in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas. This provided region-specific data for an area where the seminary delivery system is fairly unique to the rest of the L.D.S. Church.

2. The data were collected on a one-time basis resulting in a potential loss of additional insights which might have been discovered had information been obtained on a yearly basis.
3. The scope of this study did not include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the seminary program.

4. L.D.S. high school students who never enrolled in seminary were excluded, since this investigation was confined to the study of seminary completion and dropout, not recruitment.

Definition of Terms

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Religious organization in which members are taught the importance of maintaining a wholesome and clean lifestyle. Great emphasis is placed on the teaching of traditional family values and Christian morals to the youth of the Church. It is commonly referred to as the L.D.S. Church.

Church Educational System (C.E.S.): Organization commissioned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to administer a daily religious education program.

Dropout: A student who had at one time taken at least two weeks of seminary and then for some reason discontinued attendance.

Employment: Job held by the student during the school year.

Family change: This may include any significant change in the student’s home environment (parental separation, divorce, death, etc.).

Family mobility: Changes of residence during the years of a student’s seminary attendance.

Family structure: This term refers to the adults with whom the student lives. It may include biological parents, step-parents, relatives, or other adults.
Grade point average: A measure of the student’s academic achievement in the public school.

Graduate: Seminary students who attend and receive credit throughout the four-year seminary program are awarded a diploma by the Church Educational System.

L.D.S. Mission: A two-year proselyting service which 19-year-old young men are expected to perform for the L.D.S. Church. Young women are permitted to serve a mission for an 18-month period of time.

L.D.S. Temple: Differs from a regular L.D.S. chapel. Only faithful members of the L.D.S. Church may participate in temple worship which includes marriage. A person’s level of dedication to church principles is often measured by their participation in temple worship.

Parental religiosity: Refers to the degree of religious belief and religious activity of the parents in the home.

Peer group: Friends and associates of the student.

Sacrament Meeting: The main worship service of the L.D.S. Church which is held on Sundays. A person’s activity level in the Church is often measured by the frequency of their attendance at this meeting.

Seminary: The program of daily religious education delivered by the Church Educational System to L.D.S. young people ages 14-18.

Student religiosity: The degree of the student’s personal religious beliefs and demonstrated religious activity.
Significance of the Study

The decision to enroll and participate in seminary is largely the result of adherence to a Church expectation. Thus, participation in seminary is viewed as a religious practice in the L.D.S. Church. Many factors influence the ultimate decision to participate, or not, in seminary. Parental influence is considered a powerful influence in shaping the religious beliefs and behavior of adolescents. The influence of the student’s peer group also contributes to his or her decision to complete the seminary program. Perhaps, most importantly, the student’s private religious beliefs and personal experience in church and seminary will shape the student’s attitudes affecting the decision to participate in seminary.

This study provided information regarding some of the variables which affect the continuance or discontinuance of student attendance in the four-year religious education program of the L.D.S. Church. The delivery system of seminary in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas is indicative of the way seminary is increasingly being offered in other areas of the Church. This study provided information needed for the development of potential strategies to encourage continuous enrollment and to reduce the number of student dropouts in seminary in Las Vegas and in other areas of the Church.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

While there have been many studies compiled on the issue of dropouts in the public schools, their results may not be applicable to the L.D.S. seminary dropout problem as most potential L.D.S. seminary students are enrolled and attending public schools.

In order to obtain the best possible understanding of the context in which the seminary dropout dilemma exists, the author reviewed all studies relating, in any way, to L.D.S. seminary enrollment.

Early C.E.S. Studies

Perhaps the first study of the Church Educational Program was conducted by Bennion (1934). This historical study reviewed the origins of church education including its commencement under Joseph Smith, the schools in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. It further detailed the evolution of the early adult education program, the seminaries, universities, and auxiliary programs. His survey of the origin and growth of the seminary system provided important and valuable documentation of the developmental era of the movement.
Motivated to present a new concept in religious education to the School of Education at Leland Stanford University, Tuttle (1949) reviewed the released-time religious education program of the L.D.S. Church. He provided a thorough investigation of the legal status of the released-time program.

Another early study performed by Rigby (1939) created a profile of the typical high school seminary teacher. The average teacher was a family man who had served a mission for the Church before teaching seminary. The typical teacher held at least a Bachelor's Degree, was in his early 30s, and was an active member in the Church and involved in community affairs.

Turner (1960) gave an extensive overview of the total educational system of the Church and specifically reviewed the teacher selection process of the Church Educational System. The seminary training program had been operating at Brigham Young University for four years and Turner found that 42.9% of the students who were trained were successfully placed in the system.

**Effectiveness of Seminary**

An early study on the effectiveness of seminary was Eberhard's (1959) "A Follow-up Study of the Graduates of the Seminary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Preston, Idaho." The objectives of the study included:

1. To collect data for use in evaluating the effectiveness of the total seminary religious education program in helping students successfully meet the problems connected with achieving those attitudes and beliefs which are consistent with and a harmonious part of the life of a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. To collect data for use in discovering areas in curriculum which need improvement so that a more consistent and intensive development of religious education objectives can be realized.

A questionnaire was formulated to investigate the influence that the seminary program had on the students' future plans and decisions. Some of the items from the questionnaire included:

1. To what degree do you feel your seminary training influenced you to attend your church meetings?

2. How much influence did your seminary work have on your desire to perform a mission for the Church? (For males only.)

3. To what extent did your seminary training help you to have a desire to pay your tithes and offerings?

4. How much desire did your seminary training create in you to be married in the temple?

5. How important do you feel it is to have your children graduate from seminary?

It was determined that practically all of the graduates from seminary desired that their children graduate from seminary. They also felt that the seminary did indeed create a greater desire for them to be married in the temple and that the seminary had motivated their attendance at their church meetings. Yet, it was discovered that, according to the respondents, the seminary program at that time failed to influence the students' desire to serve missions or to pay tithes and offerings (Eberhard, 1959, p.107-113).

Taylor (1962) attempted to measure the influence that seminary teachers had on the continuing enrollment of students. He made a study of 27 one-teacher seminaries to
investigate the notion that highly-rated teachers cause an increase in enrollment and that "effective teaching" fosters continuance in the seminary program. He hypothesized that the teacher plays the major role of influence on seminary enrollment, even more than that of parents, brothers and sisters, friends, church leaders, etc.

Taylor discovered, however, that parents were the most influential on the decision of students to continue. Church leaders were rated second in degree of influence, with the teacher's influence ranked third.

Emphasis on Recruitment and Graduation

Beginning in the mid-1950s and the early 1960s much emphasis was placed on the need to enroll students and to help them graduate from seminary. While addressing the issue of youth enrolling in the seminary program of the Church, President Henry D. Moyle (Ward Education Committees, 1960) of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said:

Measured by any conceivable standard, graduates of our Seminaries and Institutes are better qualified to meet all of life’s problems than those who have absented themselves from these opportunities. . . . There may be some problems, some obstacles, some inconveniences in endeavoring to register for and attend Seminary and Institute classes regularly. It is the things in life for which we are compelled to struggle that generally are worth the most to us in the long run. The fruits of an educational system can be observed in the lives and accomplishments of our graduates from Seminaries, Institutes, and schools (pp. 52-53).

The majority of studies located on the topic of seminary participation were performed nearly 30 to 40 years ago. At that time, it was common for high schools to grant credit to students who were enrolled in a Bible study course at a released-time seminary program. This practice continued until 1978, when a United States district court found the practice to be unconstitutional based upon an interpretation of the
Establishment Clause of the Constitution. The L.D.S. Church immediately ceased all efforts to solicit the granting of public-school credit for Bible courses. Church educators were concerned that the discontinuation of public-school credit would have a negative impact upon seminary enrollment. Fortunately, due to an active recruitment campaign by the Church, there was no serious change in enrollment (Berrett, 1988).

In an effort to determine the influence of local church leaders on seminary enrollment in a non-released time setting, Loosle (1963) administered a questionnaire to leaders in approximately 30 L.D.S. Church congregations in Arizona. Specifically, the study was designed to determine if congregations with an organized education committee promoting religious education had an effect on the seminary enrollment of the youth in that congregation as compared with congregations without organized education committees.

Loosle’s review of literature found that “the Church Department of Education felt that when ward education committees were organized and when they were functioning as outlined, an enrollment increase was evident” (p. 45).

Loosle (1963) also reviewed a survey of seminary graduates which showed that “graduates placed ward education committees last among the factors which influenced most the taking of and the staying in seminary” (p. 45).

The analysis of the data in Loosle’s study found that there was no significant difference in the enrollment of youth in seminary from congregations with organized education committees and those without an education committee (Loosle, 1963). In spite of the lack of a significant difference in enrollment, Loosle held that the local authorities
of the Church still must exhibit enthusiasm about seminary and continue to work towards increasing seminary enrollment.

Studies on Seminary Non-enrollment

The Irving Junior High School Seminary in Salt Lake City, an early-morning seminary program, was studied by Janson (1959) who questioned both ninth-grade seminary students as well as non-enrolled students, along with some parents of each group. Janson found that 97% of the enrolled students’ parents and 86% of the non-enrolled students’ parents “desired” that their children attend seminary, with 65% of the enrolled students’ parents and 35% of the non-enrolled students’ parents “strongly desiring” that their children attend seminary.

When students not attending seminary were surveyed, some of the frequently marked responses to the inquiry of the “most important” reason they were not enrolled in seminary included: (a) negative response to religion, (b) lack of transportation, (c) disliked early class time (7:45 am), and (d) lack of information (regarding seminary).

Janson (1959) observed that:

. . . it is singular that 20% of non-attenders (and 14% of attenders) lived well beyond two miles from the seminary building, most of them somewhat scattered and isolated from eligible students. . . .

Thirty percent also indicated, in answer to another question, that they might have enrolled had they known more about the program, with 17.5% indicating that a personal contact might have influenced them to attend. . . .

Only 15% of the non-attenders indicated that they would not have enrolled in seminary regardless of how they had been approached (pp. 22, 32).

Other results of Janson’s (1959) study included:
... Not more than 20% of non-attendance could be accounted for in terms of lack of church conviction or activity either on the part of the non-attenders or on the part of their parents.

... Students could probably be more effective than adults in enlistment work.

Attendance seemed to be significantly greater among children of families of four or more children.

There were no significant differences in church activity between attenders and eligible non-attenders.

The early hour of class time was universally disliked and mentioned as a reason for non-enrollment (pp. 35-36).

Another early morning seminary program was studied by Arnold (1965) in Montana. He asked non-attending students to write in their "reasons" for not participating in the seminary program. He paraphrased his findings as follows:

Students unaccounted for ................................................................. 10%
Too hard to get up that early ............................................................. 25%
Simply not interested in seminary ..................................................... 20%
Too many other responsibilities ...................................................... 12%
Other conflicts .................................................................................. 10%
Negative response to teacher ......................................................... 7%
Negative response to class ............................................................... 5%
School starts too early ..................................................................... 5%
Negative influence of peers .............................................................. 3%
Lack of information ......................................................................... 3%

Interestingly, Arnold (1965) learned that over one-half of the non-attending students "agreed" that religion was important, seminary was held at a time they could attend, they got along well with seminary students, had a testimony, and transportation was not a problem (28% indicated that it was a problem).

Additionally, students indicated that their parents had not discouraged attendance, they did not live too far away, were concerned about religion, got along with the teacher,
did not have other obligations during seminary, were encouraged by someone to attend,
and got along with seminary students (pp. 19-20, 43-44).

Thus, Arnold (1965) concluded:

1. Students who want to attend seminary will be able to do so.

2. Students who don’t want to attend seminary will “find” interests or responsibilities . . . which conflict with the time of seminary instruction.

3. The time of class instruction is not a deterrent to attendance. Students who attend regularly indicate that getting up in the morning is hard for them as frequently as do those who do not attend seminary.

4. Transportation . . . can be obtained for students who are really interested in attending seminary (p. 31).

In his study of non-enrolled seminary students in Clearfield, Utah, Fowler (1966) concluded that the parents’ activity level in church was an important influence in whether the student went to seminary. The following ordered list includes the main reasons given by the respondents for their non-enrollment:

1. I did not want to.

2. Scheduling problems.

3. Seminary is too much like church.


5. Scriptures are not enjoyable.


7. Peer group influence.

8. Other classes were more important.

9. I couldn’t read too well.
Adams (1970) attempted to determine why some students never enrolled at the Layton L.D.S. Seminary during the 1968-69 school year. A questionnaire was sent to all non-enrolled students which listed 24 potential reasons for non-enrollment in a seminary class. Each student was to respond to each reason by giving the degree of importance in causing a decision not to enroll in seminary. Eighty percent of the non-enrolled students, 156 of the 195 surveyed, responded to the questionnaire.

The two most frequent reasons given for not attending were (1) I could not work seminary into my schedule, and (2) I don't want to take seminary. The following is a list of the reasons identified as important or very influential:

- I could not work seminary into my schedule ......................... 44.2%
- I don't want to take seminary ........................................... 44.2%
- I don't enjoy studying religion ......................................... 28.8%
- I have enough church on Sunday ...................................... 25.6%
- No one encouraged me to enroll ...................................... 21.8%
- I don't like church and seminary is too much like church .... 21.1%
- I don't think seminary is important .................................. 18.6%
- I did not enjoy it in the past ........................................... 16.0%
- My seminary teacher was not interesting enough ............... 15.4%
- Too much preaching by the teachers ................................. 15.4%
(Adams, 1970, p. 21)

Included in the survey were three items designed to measure the influence of the peer group on seminary non-enrollment. Adams (1970) found that:

Only the last category, peer group influence, contained none of the top 10 reasons for non-enrollment . . however, there were a sufficient number of students (9.2%) who considered this group as a determining factor for not enrolling in seminary. Apparently, the fact that some friends discouraged them (10.8%) and that friends were not enrolled (10.9%) does have appreciable influence on some students as to whether or not they enroll in seminary.
Adams' questionnaire included some questions relating to church attendance, church activity, and the students' attitude toward certain aspects of the Church. Eighty-three percent of the students responded that both parents were members of the Church, with half indicating that their fathers either held no priesthood or had never advanced beyond the lower, or Aaronic Priesthood within the Church. Adams (1970) concludes that "if the male parent held only the Aaronic Priesthood or none at all (50% fit this category), the children appeared to be inactive in church and seminary" (p. 36).

Fewer than half of the students' parents attended church 50% of the time. Adams (1970) summarized this finding by saying, "If the parents were active and attending church meetings, then the children appeared more inclined to attend church but, if the parents were inactive in their church meetings (Sacrament Meeting, specifically), the children had the same tendency" (p. 36).

Over half of the surveyed non-enrolled students reported having a problem living the Word of Wisdom (part of the L.D.S. Church's code of health and an indicator of church standing) (Adams, 1970).

Adams (1970) summarizes his findings on the attitude of parents in taking seminary by saying:

On the question, What do your parents say about your not enrolling in seminary?, 59 students (37.8%) indicated that the parents did not care if they enrolled or not, 35 students (22.4%) said their parents didn't discuss the subject with them, and one student was told not to enroll. Nineteen of the students (12.7%) indicated that parents tried to force them to enroll, while 42 of the parents (26.9%) merely pointed out the advantages of obtaining further seminary training. These figures show that 95 out of 156 (60.8%) students had parents who were evidently quite passive in regards to seminary enrollment of their children, while only 61 (39.2%) made an effort to have their children enroll in seminary (p. 28).
Finally, Adams (1970) asked the students, "Do you feel seminary should be taught to high school students?" Surprisingly, 117 (74.9%) of the non-enrolled students replied yes, while 10 students (6.4%) said no, and 29 (18.6%) indicated they were not sure.

The last part of the questionnaire, asked for specific recommendations, if they had any, for improving the seminary program to better fit the needs of the students and encourage them to enroll in and remain in seminary during their high school years. Some of the suggestions from the non-enrolled students are as follows (p. 30):

1. Try to teach them the value of seminary and tell them about the fun you can have being a L.D.S. student (going on missions, etc.).

2. Kick out the poor teachers.

3. Not have so much reading and homework.

4. Have more visual aids and films.

5. Have more outside guests come and speak.

6. Don't "bug" those not taking it to enroll.

7. Don't force everyone to take seminary if they don't want to.

8. Don't make it sound so easy to get good grades.

9. Have more discussions.

10. Have teachers be more interested in the kids' problems (all kids).

11. Quit rubbing in things that have been taught kids since they were two.

12. Have more discussions on "today"; don't dwell in the past so much.

13. Have more parties.

Studies on Enrolled Seminary Students

Research performed by Waite (1958) allowed him to create a list of the 10 most important reasons for which L.D.S. youth enrolled in the seminary program. They are as follows:

1. I want to increase my knowledge of the Gospel.
2. I want to gain a testimony.
3. I believe that what I learn will help me be a better church member.
4. I want to graduate from seminary.
5. My experiences in seminary help me develop high ideals which I feel are important for happiness.
6. What I learn in seminary will help me be more successful in marriage.
7. I felt the seminary will help me become a better parent.
8. What I learn in seminary will help me become a better parent.
9. I get training which will help prepare me for a church mission.
10. My parents encouraged me to enroll in seminary.

In 1966, Gamer analyzed the program of seminary recruitment and instruction by comparing the attitudes of those who are pressured into taking seminary against their will with the attitudes of those who voluntarily enroll after their first year of instruction. Gamer (1966) attempted to determine the effect of instruction upon the two groups and the difference which might exist between them.

In summarizing his literature review concerning the area of religion and attitude change, Garner (1966) concluded that:
1. Attitudes are not independent; they are related to something and are headed for some object.

2. Attitudes undergo reorganization when that which a person knows becomes intolerably inconsistent with that which he does.

3. How to alter different types of attitude depends, in large measure, upon the type of function the attitude has been performing.

4. The teacher-pupil relationship is a very large determining factor in attitude change.

5. Opinions seem to be the best gauge of attitude that we have.

6. Being a good Samaritan seems to have little connection with formal religious participation.

7. Student's needs and interests are still the most effective means of modifying attitudes.

The study was confined to ninth-grade released-time seminary students from the Salt Lake Valley Seminary District during the 1965-66 school year. The study was undertaken to determine if there was a significant difference in the change of attitude in the pressured group as compared to the change in the non-pressured group at the close of the first year of seminary instruction (Garner, 1966).

The results of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups' attitude at the beginning of the school year, nor was there a significant difference between the gains of the pressured and non-pressured groups as the year progressed. However, there was a significant gain among both the male and female non-pressured groups. When the church activity of the parents was measured with the
religious attitudes of the students, no significant relationship was found. Interestingly, three times more boys than girls felt they had been pressured into seminary.

Garner (1966) concluded that, students who feel they have been pressured into seminary, experience very little improvement in attitude towards the Church and its teachings. Yet, those who voluntarily enroll do show a significant improvement in attitude.

Garner (1966) summarized his findings with this insight:

The fact that this study found no evidence to support the supposition that parental church activity affects the religious attitudes of their children is not too surprising. First of all, the scope of this study did not include a representation of the many students who are inactive in the Church because of their upbringing (or lack of it) in an inactive, non-religious home. Secondly, if a parent thinks enough of the value of seminary to insist that one of his resistive offspring enroll, chances are good that this parent enjoys a certain amount of religious activity. Based on this reasoning, one might almost predict greater church activity among the parents of students who felt pressured into seminary than among the parents of those who voluntarily enrolled (pp. 65-66).

Robertson (1970) desired to determine if there were differences in characteristics of home environment, school environment, or within the students themselves between students enrolled at L.D.S. Institutes of Religion, who came from homes where both parents qualified as “inactive” in the L.D.S. Church and a similar group of students who did not enroll.

According to Robertson’s (1970) findings:

The study revealed only three direct areas of observable significant differences in the area of home environment and institute enrollment from a possible list of 13 areas. First, the father’s occupation showed an apparent influence upon the student’s decision to enroll in institute. Service and agricultural occupations produced the most positive influence, and machine trade, bench and structural work occupations provided the most negative influence. Second, the amount of education of the parents had a definite influence on enrollment in institute. Those parents who had
graduated from college and received higher degrees showed a more negative influence on institute enrollment than parents with less education. Third, in the area of direct parental influence on institute enrollment, students who were enrolled received almost twice as much positive influence from parents as did students who were non-enrolled (pp. 80-81).

When the student's past experience with religious education was reviewed, Robertson (1970) found that, “although the pressure the parents applied to a child to take seminary classes was not significant in determining institute enrollment, the fact that a student had registered for seminary indicated that he probably would enroll in institute.”

In summary, Robertson (1970) found the following regarding combination of factors influencing a student's decision to stay in the Institute program:

The top four factors of school environment which showed positive influences upon students were first, spiritual atmosphere of the classroom; second, institute personnel; third, institute instructional program; fourth, peer group influences. The first three all are dependent upon the teacher and show the need for a strong instructional staff. The peer group influence could also be indirectly attributed to the instructional staff. It can therefore be concluded that the major criteria for retaining an L.D.S. Institute instructor should be his ability to produce a spiritual atmosphere within the classroom, and his personal appeal to the students.

The bottom four factors of school environment were employment, ward activity, college class schedule, and institute physical facilities. The first three each show time as a factor. Employment would probably relate to whether a student were married or not, marriage being the greater negative influence upon institute enrollment. Ward activity was a definite negative influence, but before conclusions can be drawn more information should be obtained relating to this factor. The factor of college class schedule could be an excuse and more related to the student's being academically oriented and therefore less interested in institute classes. Although physical facilities did not produce a positive influence upon institute enrollment, only three students expressed it as a negative influence (pp. 86-87).

By far, the most important factor which influenced a student's decision to take classes at an institute was his or her personal interest in religion.
Over 97% of the students felt a positive influence to enroll in institute because of their personal interest in religion. It also was apparent that students who enrolled in institute tended to continue enrollment. There were 75% of those enrolled who indicated they were going to register for another class, while only 11.2% said they were not going to register. This could have been the influence of leaving school or other factors not attributed to the program itself (Robertson, 1970).

Early Studies on Seminary Dropouts

Hatch (1961) provided one of the first in-depth looks at the problem of seminary dropouts in the L.D.S. Church. He surveyed dropouts in 12 seminaries located in Utah during 1960-1961 and found that almost 60% of these students felt that the high-school classes were more important than seminary. These students believed that the public-school-graduation requirements prevented them from taking a released-time period each day. Fifty percent of the surveyed students, who attended urban schools with a six-period day, said that they would have taken seminary had there been a seven-period day at the school.

Hatch also found that the seminary program itself held some responsibility as 35% of the dropouts claimed that they quit because they did not learn much in seminary. Hatch admitted that a limiting factor of the study was that no comparison was made with seminary graduates.

When the family structure and religiosity were analyzed through a survey of the students’ bishops, Hatch (1961) discovered that 60% of the fathers of the dropouts were given a fair or poor rating by the bishop in regards to the father’s attitude toward the Church. Approximately 50% of the mothers received a similar rating. Church attendance was seldom or never for 50% of the fathers and for 40% of the mothers.
In 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave the Church instructions regarding a law of health which is now known as the Word of Wisdom. Abstinence from hot drinks (coffee and tea), alcohol, and tobacco are expected (Doctrine and Covenants 89). In the L.D.S. Church, men and women are expected to live in accordance with this health code to be members in good standing.

In the Hatch (1961) study, about 60% of the dropouts' fathers were “breaking” the Word of Wisdom regularly or occasionally as were 40% of the mothers. He also found 25% of the dropouts “breaking” the Word of Wisdom regularly or occasionally.

Hatch (1961) listed the 10 reasons checked most frequently by the dropouts for leaving seminary. The statements and the percent of respondents checking “yes” to each are as follows:

1. I felt that other classes at the high school were more important (about 60%).
2. I had a class conflict and could not work seminary into my schedule (about 50%).
3. There were too many required classes which I had to take at the high school (about 45%).
4. I disliked the stress which was placed on journal work (about 40%).
5. I would have taken seminary if we had had a seven-period day (about 35%).
6. I did not learn much in seminary and lost interest; therefore, I quit (about 35%).
7. I found too much repetition in Seminary, Sunday School, and Mutual Improvement Association classes (about 30%).
8. I see little value in religious education at the present time (about 25%).
9. I plan to register for seminary next year (about 25%).

10. Seminary was too routine, and it was not enough of a challenge (about 20%).

Hatch (1961) made important conclusions regarding the vital role of the teacher in the drop-out problem. Some of his findings are as follows:

1. In order for a class to be interesting it has to have some variety, offer a challenge, and apply to the students' life today. The student wants help with his everyday problems.

2. Some teachers have the ability to appeal to students much more than other teachers. Knowledge of the subject is not enough. The teacher must be able to transmit the knowledge to the student and help him to apply it in his own life.

3. Many of the teachers are not recognizing the individual differences of their students. They are attempting to fit every student into the same mold.

4. Where there is only one teacher at a seminary, sometimes personality conflicts develop and some of the students refuse to take seminary from that particular teacher.

5. The attitude of the parents in the home influenced the lives of the students more than any other single factor.

The attitudes of continuing and non-continuing seminary students were compared by Clarence Schramm (1963). He studied all ninth and tenth grade students in the Pocatello Seminary during the month of May 1963. He analyzed the completed high school registration forms for the 1963-64 school year. If seminary enrollment was included on the form, the student was classified as a continuing student, if seminary enrollment was not included, then the student was given non-continuing status.
Schramm (1963) surveyed both groups of students focusing on information in six major categories: satisfaction in terms of seminary goals, personal harmony with certain L.D.S. religious principles, family pressure to continue or discontinue seminary training, peer group pressure to continue or discontinue seminary training, student interest in the seminary program, and students' interaction with the seminary faculty. The survey instrument contained 10 statements relating to each of the above areas.

He concluded that the mean responses between the continuing and non-continuing seminary students were significantly different at the one percent level of confidence for each of the six major areas included in the instrument. The continuing students' mean responses were nearer the positive end of the scale, while those of the non-continuing students were nearer the negative end of the scale.

Schramm (1963) found that continuing students responded with a more positive assurance that the seminary was helping them to achieve some of the goals set by the seminary course work and discontinuing students reported a greater "lack of harmony" with gospel principles than continuing students. The continuing subjects perceived their parents as desirous that they continue seminary instruction and were more susceptible to their parents' opinion. The non-continuing students responded that they did not experience as much encouragement from their family as the continuing students did, nor were they as concerned with their parents' approval.

Non-continuing students reported a greater tendency to choose friends outside the seminary group than did the continuing students. Continuing students responded more frequently that they had friends enrolled in seminary. The continuing students felt more positive about respectability of being enrolled in seminary and encountered fewer
negative reactions to the program at their public school than did the non-continuing students. Both groups of students reported that "my seminary teachers are sincerely interested in helping me." The groups were both in agreement that they were not confident in taking their problems to their seminary teacher. Non-continuing students also responded more negatively in the areas of seminary teacher qualification, grading system, classroom atmosphere, teacher approachability, and the presence of an inside group (students who received special privileges).

Schramm (1963) summarized his findings:

The probability of a seminary student continuing or discontinuing the prescribed course of study was significantly influenced by the extent to which the student felt that seminary classes were interesting, that his family and friends expected him to enroll in seminary, that he was experiencing personal satisfaction in the seminary program, that he had a favorable association with the seminary teacher, and that his personal life was harmonious with church standards (p. 51).

Taylor (1964) chose to study the problem of seminary dropouts by searching for differences in students who enrolled in the released-time Ogden-Weber Seminary and those who didn’t in the 1963-64 school year. The attitude, mental achievement, and grade-point-averages were compared between the non-enrolled students and those who were attending seminary.

The differences in attitude were measured by responses to an instrument authored by Taylor. The eight areas in which attitude was measured included: (a) association with the seminary faculty, (b) student situation in high school, (c) attitude of peers toward seminary, (d) student attitude toward extra-curricular activities, (e) influence of the family, (f) student attitude toward the Church, (g) student interest in seminary, and (h) attitude toward church leaders (Taylor, 1964).
The difference in responses between the students and non-students were found to be significant in seven of the eight measured areas. The area identifying the student's attitude towards extra-curricular activities show little significant difference between the two groups. The area showing the most difference between the students and non-students was "influence of the family" where each of the statements answered in this area were significant at the .001 level. According to this study, the family plays an important role in a student's decision to enroll in seminary. Interestingly, the study also found that over 50% of the non-enrolled students had a positive interest in seminary.

The difference in mean grade-point-averages, which were calculated from semester grades on the high school report cards, between the seminary and non-enrolled students showed that seminary students received .49 or almost one half a grade higher than the non-enrolled students. The mental achievement of the students was measured by using the California Achievement Test scores found on the personal high-school record cards of the students. When the difference in the mean mental achievement test scores was analyzed, the seminary students scored 11.06% higher than non-enrolled students (Taylor, 1964).

The most frequent reason given by seminary students as to why they enroll in seminary was that they wanted to learn more about God, Christ, the gospel and the Church. The next most frequent response was that the student wanted to prepare for a mission.

The non-enrolled students responded most frequently that they were not taking seminary because there was another class that was more important or more desirable.
The next most frequent reason given was that the student was not interested in seminary or did not like it (Taylor, 1964).

The Church Educational System used to follow the practice of awarding graduation diplomas to students who completed three years of Seminary. When a student opted to attend seminary during the fourth (senior) year, he or she was awarded a fourth-year certificate. Salisbury (1965) surveyed the released-time students from the Burley, Idaho L.D.S. Seminary to determine the reasons for which 60% of the students failed to obtain a fourth-year certificate during the years 1961-1965.

Salisbury (1965) found that 43% of the students reported the main reason for discontinuing was the difficulty in scheduling classes. Only 17% of the students revealed a dislike for seminary classes. The parents of discontinued seminary students had generally not enrolled or not completed seminary themselves. The parents of discontinued seminary students had a lower record of academic accomplishment than the parents of students who completed seminary. Siblings of discontinued seminary students had similar patterns of non-attendance.

Salisbury (1965) also found that the students who had discontinued seminary had a nine percent lower record of church attendance than those who did not drop out.

Daniel Cutler (1966) sought to determine why some students withdrew from seminary in the Salt Lake Valley Seminary District during the school years of 1964-65 and 1965-66. The survey, which was sent out to all of the dropouts, investigated the following six research questions with the tabulated results:

1. "Is the teacher influential in causing students to withdraw from seminary?"

Only 23% of the dropouts did not approve of their teacher's personality and mannerisms.
2. “Is the seminary dropout antagonistic towards religion in general?” A very low eight percent of the surveyed students shared a basic antagonism or disinterest toward religion.

3. “Are high school scheduling and graduation requirements a factor in causing students to withdraw from seminary?” More than 47% of the subjects said that school schedule conflicts were the most important reasons for discontinuing seminary. Cutler (1966) notes that of these 47% with conflicts, 37% took elective classes such as physical education, study hall, arts and crafts, and shop.

4. “Are seminary dropouts involved in time-consuming extra-curricular activities at the high school?” Seventy-five percent of the surveyed students were engaged in extra-curricular activities.

5. “Are seminary class methods, requirements, and curriculum related to the dropout problem?” More than 33% of the students said that they were dissatisfied with seminary class methods and seminary curriculum.

6. “Is there a pattern of inactivity in church functions among the seminary dropouts?” Surprisingly, Cutler found that seminary dropouts were above average in church attendance.

Of the students who dropped out of seminary, about 35% had at least two years in the program before they withdrew. Approximately 22% indicated that they had completed one year and 20% had completed less than one year (Cutler, 1966).

When the dropouts were questioned regarding their attendance at church, more than 33% of the students said that they always attended Sacrament meeting, while 60%
indicated that they attended Sacrament meeting one-half of the time or more (Cutler, 1966).

Regarding the future plans of the young men surveyed, about 28% indicated that they would like to serve a mission, while approximately 35% of the young men said that they did not desire to serve on a mission. About 36% indicated that they had not made a definite decision whether or not to serve a mission (Cutler, 1966).

McClung (1972) studied L.D.S. seminary students in the Southern Alberta Seminary District to determine why some of them were not enrolled for the 1970-71 school year. This was the first time that this type of study had been conducted with the seminary program in Canada.

A questionnaire was sent to 263 non-enrolled seminary-aged students. McClung found that the responses from the non-enrolled students included:

1. I did not feel seminary was helpful to me (31%).
2. I see little value in religious education at the present time (31%).
3. I did not feel “at home” in the seminary class (40%).
4. Seminary was too routine and was not enough of a challenge (28%).
5. The teacher was always telling us what not to do, instead of what to do (21%).
6. I find too much repetition between seminary, Sunday School, and MIA (44%).
7. The seminary teacher had poor discipline and too much time was wasted (12%).
8. Lacked encouragement from home in registering for seminary (20%).
9. I did not have transportation to seminary (25%).
10. I could not work it into my high school schedule (41%).
11. I was forced into seminary before but not again (21%).

McClung believed that the following demographic information helped to explain the non-enrollment problem:

It was found that 29% of the fathers and 23% of the mothers were not members of the L.D.S. Church. About one fourth to one half of the homes had one or both parents who were not members. This would account for much of the non-support of Church sponsored programs.

There is a high rate of mothers working outside the home to help support the family financially and 42% of the homes had no priesthood. Leadership training in the home was almost non-existent. Attitude of parents was not only portrayed but emphasized a mushrooming effect wherein the youth’s attitudes were much poorer than attitudes of parents (p. 62).

McClung also sent a questionnaire to the parents of these students and arrived at the conclusion that:

The lukewarm attitude of parents towards the Church causes an unfavorable attitude in youth towards enrolling in seminary. Adoption of in-service training for parents regarding the real purposes and benefits of seminary will result in increased enrollment. Very little change needs to be made in the quality of instruction or in the seminary teacher’s approach to his classes (p. 62).

Smith (1975) made a study of the early-morning seminary program in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area by surveying all potential seminary students in the ninth through twelfth grade. He suspected that drastically increased gasoline prices were the cause of decreasing attendance and increasing number of dropouts in the early morning seminaries. He surveyed regular attenders, poor attenders, and discontinuing students as well as their parents and bishops to determine the causes for the attendance problems. He suggested that perhaps distance from the seminary was a factor relating to enrollment and
continuation. Smith concluded "that contrary to the hypothesis, distance from seminary classes does not make much difference to the percentage of enrollment except in a few cases where it contributes to the difficulty of arranging dependable rides" (p. 83).

He found that the major cause of non-enrollment in the early-morning seminary program in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area was the individual student's lack of interest and total inactivity in the L.D.S. Church. Other areas which were investigated, such as school conflicts, work conflicts, and the presence of a negative reaction to previous seminary experience, were found to be insignificant in influencing the student's decision to dropout.

As Smith (1975) also studied seminary students who had dropped out, he found that nine percent of them felt that seminary was "too early" and thus was their biggest reason for low attendance. There was no significant difference in the school or work schedules of dropouts and attenders.

However, 31% of the dropouts indicated a negative reaction to seminary at their primary reason for not attending. Of this group, 20% said they "lost interest," and 11% dropped out only after they "overcame parent pressure" to attend seminary. Five percent indicated that they felt a negative reaction to the teacher (Smith, 1975).

When teacher rapport was measured, Smith (1975) found that "about 17% fewer dropouts than attenders felt that the teacher encouraged them, and 30% fewer dropouts than attenders felt the teacher was interested in them outside of class" (p. 82).

When church leaders were surveyed, 75% of them felt that a lack of parental support was the main cause of seminary drop outs. Interestingly, none of the dropouts indicated lack of parental support as the main reason for leaving. Only 10% fewer
dropouts than attenders indicated that they received encouragement from their parents to enroll in seminary (Smith, 1975).

The counterpart to seminary which delivers the religious education of college-aged students in the L.D.S. Church is the Institute of Religion. Gleave (1970) studied L.D.S. students who were enrolled full time at the University of Utah, Weber State College, and Utah State University. He compared those students who were enrolled at the respective Institutes of Religion with a sample of L.D.S. students who were not enrolled in Institute classes.

He discovered that parents' influence was felt in three main areas which created a statistically significant difference in the enrollment of young adults in an Institute of Religion. The direct attitude of the parents towards Institute enrollment was found to be a major determinant as to whether a student enrolled or not. According to this study, voluntary church attendance was the most conducive to a continued interest in religion on the part of the student.

Interestingly, the occupation of the father of the student influenced his or her enrollment. Gleave believed that this influence was associated with a materialistic or non-materialistic attitude in the home environment. Gleave said, “The occupations associated with low Institute enrollment were medicine, law, management, and salesman ship (noted for high incomes). The occupations of agriculture and education (noted for low incomes) gave the strongest support to Institute enrollment” (Gleave, 1970, p. 134).

The study also revealed that the “instructional program” and the “spiritual program” at the Institute had a significant effect on student enrollment. Finally, it was
found that those who students perceived were in positions of authority such as L.D.S.
church leaders, seminary and Institute teachers, and parents significantly affected Institute
enrollment (Gleave, 1970).

Gleave (1970) concluded that, "one of the major significant differences revealed
by this study that influenced enrollment was the student’s orientation to spiritual or
material values. The Institute seemed to be successful in supplying a spiritual dimension
to its students; the problem was recruitment--getting the students and the Institute
together. After a student had enrolled for four classes, the Institute had “good holding
power on him” (p. 144).

Salisbury (1970) looked at the L.D.S. Institute of Religion program and studied
the factors which determined the attendance, non-attendance, and recruitment of students
during the school year of 1967-1968.

As in the seminary program, activity in the Institute of Religion program was
found to be a predictor of future church activity. The ability of the Institute of Religion
program to influence the lives of young people is contingent upon the enrollment and
participation of students. Salisbury (1970) emphasizes the fact with a quote from a letter
sent from the administrator of the Church Education Program to all stake presidents in the
Church:

. . . even the finest young men and women of the Church who have
been fully active prior to going away to college, fall off in their Church
activity if they do not enroll in Institutes of Religion or are not attending
Church schools. On the other hand, those who attend institutes of religion
maintain a high activity in the Church in all of its meetings and the rate of
marriage in the temple is remarkably high (Salisbury, 1970, p.12).
Some of the findings, that Salisbury (1970) discovered in the institute program, are relevant to a study on the seminary program. They include:

1. The majority of students in the institute program held positions of responsibility in the Church organization. In reference to this item, Salisbury inferred that activity in the Church also increased participation in the institute program.

2. Activity in the seminary program influenced students to attend institute classes. Thirty percent more of the seminary graduates took institute classes than those who had not taken seminary.

3. Non-attending students stated that the main reason they had not enrolled in institute was that scheduling of college classes interfered. The majority of students who attended institute claimed that this was no problem for them. Therefore, it was concluded that scheduling of college classes was not the major problem as indicated by those who had not attended.

4. It was inferred that a student’s peers had a profound effect on his attitude toward institute.

5. Well-planned activities in the individual institutes helped to recruit students into the program.

6. The quality of the institute teacher was a major factor in the success of the program.

7. Students who had achieved in academic endeavors were more likely to attend institute classes.

8. Students whose parents had attended institute classes were more amenable to the institute program.
Gibbs (1978) surveyed students in Southern California to assess what factors would influence students to enroll in courses at L.D.S. Institutes of Religion (the college level counterpart of seminary). He also tried to discover what factors motivated some students to complete their Institute courses of study.

A personal desire to learn about the gospel and study the scriptures was the influence which prompted most students to initially enroll in Institute courses. Gibbs (1978) discovered that friends were the major source of influence for a student's initial enrollment in Institute when compared with the influence from Institute instructors and Church leaders. The major personal relationship influencing continued enrollment was the Institute instructor.

While pursuing the issue of dropouts, Gibbs (1978) found that 14.6% of the 501 respondents had considered dropping their Institute classes during the fall semester of 1977. Those students who reported themselves as only moderately active in the Church had considered dropping classes at a rate of 40.5%. This was much higher than those who considered themselves to be active in the Church.

Reasons for students to consider dropping their Institute classes included problems with school scheduling and employment. Gibbs (1978) concluded that, "the students' consideration to drop classes was not generally influenced by the Institute program itself, but rather from outside pressures which impinged on their time and abilities to fulfill their commitments to school, work and Church" (p.148).

Curiously, Gibbs (1978) found that "when comparing reasons for completion of Institute classes between those who considered and those who did not consider dropping classes, no major differences were found to exist between the two groups" (p.147).
Although some students considered dropping Institute, the student's personal commitment, desire for spiritual growth, and knowledge, that they felt they were gaining, provided enough motivation to prompt continued enrollment.

**Contemporary Studies on Seminary Dropouts**

**Arizona Dropout Study**

In a more contemporary study on the subject of seminary participation, Fotheringham (1990) conducted interviews with a sample of both graduates and dropouts. The results were used to guide the formulation of a survey instrument.

This questionnaire was sent to all 390 dropouts in the Arizona area. An equal number of graduates were selected. Each seminary principal identified all graduates at that seminary and then randomly selected a number of graduates corresponding to the number of dropouts at that particular seminary. This allowed the sample to be stratified according to whether the seminary program was early-morning or released-time.

One drawback to the findings in Fotheringham's research was the low response rate from the dropouts (60 out of 390 dropouts or 15%) which may have hindered the comprehensiveness of the study.

There were four research questions which were used in the investigation by Fotheringham (1990):

1. Are there discriminating personal characteristics (specifically, academic achievement; attitudes towards religious education; socioeconomic status; race/ethnicity; and sex) that distinguish L.D.S. seminary dropouts from continuing students?
2. Are there external factors (specifically, peer associations; parental influence; work; advanced educational opportunities; early assumption of adult roles and outside support by others) that determine students' continuation in religious education?

3. Are there structural factors within the seminary system (specifically, teacher proficiency and rapport; type of program; the program itself and recruitment techniques) that affect seminary continuance?

4. Are there church related factors (specifically Priesthood involvement) that have an effect on seminary continuance or discontinuance?

In regards to personal characteristics, Fotheringham (1990) found that gender, race, and socioeconomic status had little to do with seminary discontinuance in Arizona. However, when academic achievement was measured on a four-point scale, it was discovered that dropouts consistently scored themselves one grade point lower in academic achievement than seminary graduates. That difference was significant beyond the .01 level.

Fotheringham found that graduates and dropouts differed greatly in their attitudes towards religious education. Several questions were asked in an attempt to determine whether attitude was the cause of seminary discontinuance or rather the result of the seminary experience. Students were asked to mark how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I attended seminary because I wanted to.” The findings showed that dropouts were less likely to respond that they were self-motivated to attend seminary.

When asked to respond to the statement, “Before I attended seminary, from what I heard, I figured it would be a good experience,” students who graduated had expected seminary to be a good experience significantly more than the dropouts. In an effort to
determine if the students had a positive attitude at the onset of seminary attendance, the respondents were asked to react to the statement, “I feel I attended seminary with an eagerness to learn.” Once again, the graduates differed significantly from the dropouts.

The attitude towards religious education was measured by the statement, “I feel there is great value in religious education.” The graduates demonstrated a greater belief in the value of religious education, yet this may be the result of the four-year seminary experience. Finally, the students responded to the statement, “I have a desire to be a faithful member of the Church.” Again, the graduates answers differed significantly from those of the dropouts.

In summary of these findings, Fotheringham states, “It is understood that post hoc analysis of attitude is delicate, however, the stability of difference across all questions is a powerful indicator that the two groups had different attitudes towards seminary and religion in general” (p. 70).

When external factors were analyzed, Fotheringham found that there was little difference between graduates and dropouts in the average number of hours worked at a job. The outside support of others was investigated under the areas of friends, parents, and church leaders.

Fotheringham found that graduates were more likely to have friends who were active members of the Church and that those friends were more likely to attend seminary as compared to the friends of the dropouts. Fotheringham’s findings show, however, that, “while both groups differed with respect to type of friends and friendship reaction to seminary, neither felt their friends were a significant influence on their seminary attendance” (p. 74).
Nevertheless, Fotheringham decided that, “from the foregoing one might conclude that although each group definitely has a different friendship pool, the influence of those friends is believed to be negligible. However, there was one question that did elicit a significantly different response. Graduates agreed with the statement: I would attend seminary regardless of what my friends think (question 38, p = .000), whereas, dropouts did not feel as strongly that their friends were not an influence. It may be dropouts are more keenly aware of a friend's influence because it required a more drastic change in behavior. Some graduates undoubtedly have no idea what it's like to attend seminary when their friends are opposed to it. The dropout response to this questions reveals that friends do have some influence. The fact that graduates reported having active member friends and friends more positive about seminary attendance makes it easy to believe that friendship influence is less perceptible to the bolstered graduate” (p. 74).

When the influence of parents was analyzed, dropouts claimed that their parents were the main reason that they attended seminary far more frequently than did graduates reported. When asked if the parents believed in the necessity of taking seminary, the graduates felt more strongly than did dropouts, that their parents believed in the importance of seminary attendance. Fotheringham concludes:

What does it mean when dropouts perceive their parents as hedging on their belief in the necessity of attending seminary and yet describe them as the major reason they attended? It is as though even those parents who believe strongly in the program realize at some point their children must choose for themselves. This interpretation is consistent with the responses to questions 11 (I feel I had complete choice about my attending seminary) and 59 (I would attend seminary regardless of how my parents feel about it). The graduates felt that they had more choice (p = .016) and that they would attend regardless of parental influence (p = .000). However, as shown in Table 9, the graduates responded more forcefully than the dropouts that their "parents would not permit [them] to discontinue seminary..." (question 18) (p. 78).
The final area of investigation was the structural factors of the seminary program itself. The need to determine if students thought that they had gained anything from the seminary experience guided a significant portion of Fotheringham’s study.

Following the student interview phase of his study, Fotheringham found that:

...while the majority of students did not designate seminary as their favorite class, most students felt they gained from the experience. Many students expressed the belief that a different program type (e.g., early morning instead of released time) would have helped them continue seminary. Although a few students characterized much of their seminary experience as a waste of time, every student, except one, said they would recommend it to their member friends and relatives. Only one student said she would recommend that a friend or relative leave seminary prior to graduation. The very things dropouts felt would have kept them attending were the things graduates said kept them attending (p. 84).

Approximately 20 questions were formulated on the questionnaire to help measure whether students felt that they had gained something from the seminary experience. Seminary graduates designated that they had achieved gains in the areas of having a greater understanding of the gospel (question 12), spiritual help (question 24), help in developing a testimony of the gospel (question 27), missionary preparation (question 45), greater knowledge of the scriptures (question 63), and a preparation for a temple marriage (question 64).

The area of greatest contrast between the seminary graduates and the dropouts, was on question 46 (I am living the gospel better as a result of taking seminary). The graduates strongly believed that they were living the teachings of the Church better because of their seminary attendance.

When Fotheringham asked, (question 47) “If I desired to increase my spirituality, love for the scriptures and feeling for my Heavenly Father, I would feel seminary would be very helpful,” the graduates believed at a significant level (p= .000) that seminary
would provide such gains. On this question, the mean response of the dropouts was much higher (2.0 compared to the average mean of 2.89) than on the other “gain” questions. This suggests that many dropouts felt that they could achieve gains from seminary if they were so inclined.

In the area of seminary structural factors, Fotheringham concludes, “Of all the program-related questions, the groups were similar only on their belief that seminary could be more interesting (question 23). Those who complete all four years appear to be highly in favor of the program, and those who fail to complete seminary may see the value of it, but to a much lessor degree” (p. 87).

The area of teacher proficiency and rapport was also investigated for its potential influence on the decision to drop out. Fotheringham’s interviews found that, “important as the teachers’ role obviously is in the classroom, they do not appear to be the major reason students continue or drop out of seminary” (p. 89). The results of the survey found that graduates described their teachers as fun, qualified, and someone with whom they could share their problems. However, when asked to respond to the question, “The reason I continued seminary was because of my teacher,” graduates mostly answered “not sure” (p. 90). Dropouts generally marked “somewhat disagree” with the same question suggesting that neither group believed their teacher was a major reason to continue seminary.

The fourth research question addressed by Fotheringham was to see if church leader involvement had any effect on seminary continuance or discontinuance. Both graduates and dropouts “somewhat agreed” that they “heard seminary frequently mentioned in church” (question 39). They also “somewhat agreed” that their “Bishop
often stressed the importance of attending seminary” (question 50). Both groups were asked to respond to the statement, “My church leaders influenced my seminary attendance greatly” (question 51). There was a significant difference in responses with the graduate mean signifying that they were “not sure” and the dropout mean indicating that they “somewhat disagreed.”

Seminary Participation Study

The Church Educational System (1995) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints conducted research in 1995 to help understand why some youth in the L.D.S. Church enroll but do not complete the seminary program. The self-stated goal “was to identify what determines why some students enroll, obtain credit, and graduate from seminary and why others do not...” (p. 1).

The six research questions which guided this investigation into the participation of students in seminary are as follows:

1. How do program characteristics such as type of seminary (early-morning, released-time, etc.), teacher characteristics, seminary environment, distance to seminary, and regional differences relate to patterns of seminary enrollment, completion, and dropout?

2. How do local ward dynamics, such as seminary recruitment activities, and ward leader involvement affect seminary enrollment, completion, and dropout?

3. How do differences among youth, such as attitude, religiosity, Church involvement, school activities, and work affect seminary enrollment, completion, and dropout?
4. How do family differences, such as parental religiosity, relationship with parents, and family mobility affect seminary enrollment, completion, and dropout?

5. How do individual, family, ward, and program characteristics combine to affect patterns of seminary enrollment, completion and dropout?

6. Are there program adjustments that could enhance enrollment in and completion of seminary courses?

Results from this study and others indicate that youth, who would be considered "inactive" in Church-sponsored programs, do not attend seminary. While there are some youth who do not attend church meetings but are enrolled in seminary, this study concluded that they, "showed a pattern of dropping out and of little or no seminary credit received" (C.E.S., 1995). Thus, it is presumed that, generally speaking, inactive youth simply do not attend seminary because it is a Church program. Therefore, the emphasis of the research performed by the Church Educational System focused primarily on the influences upon seminary attendance of youth from families which are considered "more active" in their church participation.

A sample of both full-time and volunteer seminary teachers and principals were surveyed. They were asked to determine the degree of influence of a list of factors on a student’s decision to drop out of seminary or not to enroll at all. The “lack of parental support” and “lack of commitment by youth” were both seen by seminary staff as having the greatest influence on a student’s decision not to enroll in seminary, or to enroll and then drop out of the program.
Other factors which were judged as having some degree of influence included:
(a) peer influence, (b) credit requirements for high school, (c) extra-curricular activities,
(d) preoccupation with girl/boy friend, (e) seminary teacher’s ability, (f) time of day
seminary is held, (g) employment conflicts, and (h) transportation problems.

One of the conclusions made in the C.E.S. study distinguishing part of the
difference between non-enrollment and drop out was that, “generally speaking, non­
enrollment is considered to be an issue of individual and family motivations
(commitment on the part of youth and parental support) rather than factors over which the
seminary or teacher have control. Dropping out is seen as being moderately related to the
teacher’s ability (2.7 out of 5) and the hour that seminary is held (2.5 out of 5)” (p. 20).

In regards to the delivery system of seminary, it was noted that, in areas where
early-morning seminary is offered, youth “are more likely to have never enrolled, or to
have enrolled and dropped out, than youth in released-time seminary” (p. 21).
Additionally, “youth in released-time units are more likely to obtain full credit (66%) than
either those in early-morning (45%) or those in home-study (16%)” (p. 21).

There were differences in the mobility of youth depending on the delivery system
of the seminary program. This study showed that “32% of youth originally in early­
morning seminaries experienced one or more moves during the four years of the study
compared with 17% of those originally in released-time areas” (p. 23).

The youth in the C.E.S. study were grouped as follows: (a) youth who had never
enrolled in seminary, (b) youth with partial seminary credit who dropped out before their
senior year, (c) youth with partial credit who remained in seminary in the their senior
year, and (d) youth who obtained a full four years of credit. The distinction was made
between youth with partial credit who dropped out and youth with partial credit who were enrolled during their senior year. The authors of the study state that, "one is seen as starting in seminary and failing to maintain attendance, while the other is seen as starting seminary, perhaps later in high school, but hanging in there through the senior year" (p. 37).

Relationship of characteristics and attributes of youth and seminary participation. The C.E.S. study found the following factors to have a positive relationship with seminary participation: (a) attendance at sacrament meeting, (b) firm religious belief, (c) private religious behavior, (d) youth plans to remain active in the Church, (e) youth plans to go to the temple, and (f) for young men, youth plans to serve a mission.

The study also found that several characteristics of youth are negatively related to seminary participation: (a) deviance (tobacco, alcohol, drugs), (b) mobility (moved one or more times during the past four years), (c) change in parental-family during the past four years, (d) employed four or more hours a day, (e) extra-curricular activities four or more hours a day.

Religiosity of youth. The Church Educational System (1995) found that "90% of full-credit youth indicated they currently attend sacrament meetings three or four times a month compared with 83% of those with partial credit who stayed in, 52% of those with partial credit who dropped out, and 23% of those who never enrolled" (p. 38).

The religious belief of the youth was measured using a scale consisting of five questions: "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God," "I believe that God exists," "I know God loves me," "I believe the Book of Mormon is the Word of God," and "My relationship with God is important to me" (p. 38). The study showed that "the large
majority of youth for each youth-type displayed strong belief in the truthfulness of these statements. There were differences by youth-type, however. Checking the percent of youth who made these statements described them “very much” or “exactly,” it was found that 96% of full-credit youth fell in this category compared with 91% of youth with partial credit who stayed in, 86% of youth with partial credit who dropped out, and 84% of youth who never enrolled” (p. 38).

The private religious behavior of the students was determined by measuring four areas, including: (a) private prayer, (b) reading the scriptures, (c) thinking seriously about religion, and (d) talking about religion to friends. Table One summarizes the findings of the C.E.S. (1995) study by showing the percent of youth who responded as participating in these activities regularly.

Table 1

Seminary Participation and Private Religious Behavior of Youth

Percent Who Do Activity a Few Times a Week or Daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Behavior</th>
<th>Never Enrolled</th>
<th>Enrolled/Dropped</th>
<th>Enrolled/Stayed In</th>
<th>Received Full Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pray</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Scriptures</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about religion</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about religion</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Future Plans. In regards to future plans, 96% of the youth with full credit reported a desire to stay active in Church compared to 86% of youth with partial credit who stayed in seminary, 57% of students who dropped out, and 37% of youth who were never enrolled.

In a similar fashion, 93% of those with full credit, said they intended to go to the temple compared with 83% of youth with partial credit who stayed, 57% of students who dropped seminary, and 30% of youth who never enrolled.

Eighty-two percent of those young men with full seminary credit, indicated that they planned on serving a mission compared to 58% of young men with partial credit who stayed in, 33% of young men who dropped out, and 9% of those who never enrolled.

Work and extra-curricular activities. In summary of their findings regarding employment and extra-curricular activities of seminary students, the authors of the C.E.S. (1995) study stated:

It was found that youth who had full seminary credit for the four years of high school were more likely to work and be involved in extra-curricular activities than other youth, but less likely to be involved in these activities more than four hours per day. They are also less likely than other youth to date once a week or more. These findings led to the hypothesis that youth who plan to attend and graduate from seminary place limits on the amount of time they devote to work, extra-curricular activities, and dating in order to allow for time to attend seminary. In other words, seminary attendance is one of their priorities, and they organize their time accordingly. On the other had, youth who are not particularly dedicated to completing seminary may easily find a rationale for not doing so by spending more time on the job, in extra-curricular activities, or dating (p. 67).

Car ownership and related expenses. The data gathered by the C.E.S. (1995) study failed to support the idea that car ownership is a significant cause of non-enrollment
or dropping out. “There was no significant difference by youth-group for driving a car to school, making car payments, paying for the gas, or paying for the insurance” (p. 45).

**Deviant behavior.** When the youth were surveyed regarding deviant behavior (smoked, drank beer, drank hard liquor, used drugs), only “one percent of full-credit youth reported regular deviant behavior compared with eight percent of youth with partial credit who stayed in, 16% of those with partial credit who dropped out, and 23% of those who never enrolled” (p. 48).

**Parent and family attributes and seminary enrollment.** C.E.S. (1995) found that, . . . there is a positive relationship between attaining full seminary credit and having a family with both biological parents present, regular family prayer, and regular family scripture reading. There is also a positive relationship between youth with full seminary credit and the importance of religion to the parent as reported by the youth. There is a negative relationship between attaining full credit and having a family that has changed its parental-family makeup or moved during the past four years (p. 49).

**Family stability.** The stability of the family was found to have influence upon youth who obtained full credit. The C.E.S. (1995) study found, “27% of youth who never enrolled, 31% of those with partial credit who dropped out, and 33% of those with partial credit who stayed in reported a change in parental family makeup during the preceding four years. This compares with seven percent of youth with full credit. The percent of change in parental family makeup is not much different for the different youth types except for families of full-credit youth. These families appear to be much more stable than those of partial-credit youth or youth who never enrolled” (p. 51).

Part of the C.E.S. (1995) study included open-ended questions asking why individual students had never enrolled in seminary or why they had enrolled and then
dropped out. The results of the study showed that, "the four comments made most frequently by youth who did not enroll or who enrolled and dropped out is that they feel seminary is boring or uninteresting, the time of day seminary is held, a conflict with desired or required academic classes, or simply that other activities had higher priorities for them. Relatively few cited any personal characteristic such as unworthiness, inactivity or lack of testimony as their reason for not attending" (p. 61).

Interestingly, the C.E.S. (1995) study also discovered that the father's attitude towards religion is very important. C.E.S. concludes that "it is rather surprising to find youth's perception of the importance of religion to the father more closely related to seminary completion outcomes than some of the other measures. Previous research among L.D.S. youth has shown the mother's religiosity to be more highly related to outcomes than those of the father" (p. 66).

The final conclusions of the C.E.S. study were that the future plans of the youth "have the closest relationship of these many variables to seminary completion outcomes ... these studies also verified the causal relationship between parental religiosity, and youth's religiosity in determining youth's plans for future behavior" (p. 66).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify what determines why some L.D.S. seminary students regularly attended and graduated from the seminary program and why others discontinued their attendance. The potential reasons were analyzed to see if any were unique to either dropouts or graduates. The following questions guided this research:

1. What discriminating personal characteristics (namely, gender; academic achievement; private religious belief; personal Church involvement; attitudes towards religious education; and plans for the future) differentiated L.D.S. seminary dropouts from seminary graduates?

2. What external factors (namely, family structure; family change; family mobility; student employment; parental religiosity and influence; and peer influence) affected seminary completion and dropout?

3. What structural factors within the seminary system (namely, time seminary was offered; and teacher ability and rapport) affected seminary enrollment and dropout?
4. Did the rate of drop out differ significantly between the seminary programs in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada?

**Selection of Subjects**

The population for this study included all L.D.S. Church members who were of the age to graduate from high school in the year 1998 and lived in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada. There was no reason to believe that the class of 1998 will differed significantly from any other age group of students.

Students were categorized into one of two specific groups. These groups included students who enrolled in and attended seminary for four years until graduation, and students who enrolled in seminary and subsequently discontinued their attendance. L.D.S. high school students who never enrolled in seminary were excluded, since this investigation was confined to the study of seminary completion and dropout, not recruitment.

**Instrumentation**

The Church Educational System conducted research in 1995 to help understand why some youth in the L.D.S. Church enroll in but do not complete the seminary program (C.E.S., 1995). A questionnaire was developed to survey the youth selected for the study. Permission was obtained from C.E.S. to utilize portions of the questionnaire.

Additionally, a comprehensive study of seminary participation was conducted in Arizona in 1989 (Fotheringham, 1990). The questionnaire developed by Fotheringham was formulated after interviewing a number of both seminary graduates and dropouts. Permission to use portions of this questionnaire was obtained from the author.
The combination of elements from these two questionnaires seemed to best represent the cumulative results of dropout research conducted over the past 40 years in the Church Educational System. The instrument was designed to obtain pertinent information concerning students who had chosen to participate in seminary for the full four years as well as from the students who had chosen to discontinue their attendance.

However, the newly-formed questionnaire consisted of 13 pages of questions. After consulting with members of the researcher’s dissertation committee, it was concluded that the undue length of the questionnaire would have a negative impact on the student-completion rate. Thus, some questions were eliminated and others combined to create a more concise questionnaire which incorporated the most important parts of the original instrument and still performed its purpose to investigate the research questions posed in chapter one of this dissertation.

The questionnaire was checked for content validity by administering the survey to a test sample of approximately 15 students. These students offered feedback on the wording of the questions and some minor modifications were made. The instrument was also reviewed by a panel of four professional educators in the Church Educational System. They also provided their observations regarding the wording of some of the elements on the questionnaire.

The reliability of the survey instrument was verified in order to determine if the questionnaire would yield its results with consistency, stability, and dependability. A commonly used reliability coefficient, Cronbach’s alpha, was used. It is based on the “internal consistency” of the survey meaning that,
"...it is based on the average correlation of items within a test.... We assume that the items on a scale are positively correlated with each other because they are measuring, to a certain extent, a common entity. If items are not positively correlated with each other, we have no reason to believe that they are correlated with other possible items we may have selected. In this case, we do not expect to see a positive relationship between this test and other similar tests.... Since alpha can be interpreted as a correlation coefficient, it ranges in value from 0 to 1" (Norusis, 1994, 147).

In this case, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated and a value of .9367 resulted which indicated that the survey was reliable.

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Church Educational System of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Their review committee evaluated the instrument being used for: (a) question content appropriateness, (b) potential harmful impact, and (c) undetected negative stereotyping. Approval for the study was also obtained from the Area Director of the Church Educational System in the U.S. Nevada Area.

**Human Subjects Protocol**

The use of the survey was contingent upon the approval by the Social-Behavioral Committee of the U.N.L.V. Institutional Review Board regarding the human subjects protocol. The committee requested that a consent form be signed by the parent of each student completing a questionnaire. In addition, it requested that each student sign a statement of assent to acknowledge that he or she had discussed the participation in the survey with his or her parents (Appendix C). The researcher complied with these requirements and obtained the consent and assent forms from nearly all subjects in the study.
Data Collection

Existing attendance records at each seminary included church membership data which provided information to identify the students who enrolled in seminary but later dropped out and also when they discontinued their attendance. The data were extracted from each seminary’s computer COSTAR database.

Survey of Dropouts

The combined student dropout data from all the seminaries was used to create a mailing list for the survey. The questionnaire was mailed, in May of 1998, to all 435 students who had been identified as having discontinued their enrollment in seminary. Included with the questionnaire was a postage-paid envelope to facilitate the return of the survey.

The researcher immediately received back 115 unopened surveys with indications from the post office that the surveys were undeliverable inasmuch as the addressees were no longer residing at the addresses printed on the envelopes. It is assumed that at least 115 of the students had moved from their last known place of residence and were therefore impossible to contact.

Two weeks after the initial mailing, telephone calls were made to non-respondents to determine if they had received the questionnaire. If the subject did not care to complete the questionnaire, permission was requested to obtain his or her responses to the survey over the telephone.

It is assumed that of the original group of 435 discontinued seminary students, 320 students should have received the questionnaire through the mail. After the follow-up phone calls were made to those who were available, a total of 49 surveys were
completed and returned to the researcher. This return rate of only 15% is perhaps indicative of the fact that this group was generally unmotivated in regards to seminary and thus were predisposed not to answer questions regarding a lack of seminary attendance.

**Survey of Graduates**

The survey of seminary graduates was conducted by having the questionnaire administered to as many of the potential graduates as possible. This process was completed on-site at each seminary facility. These students had previously been given the consent/assent form to be signed by their parents and themselves. Of the 640 students who graduated from seminary in May of 1998 in the Las Vegas area, 267 students (42%) completed the survey.

**Data Analysis**

The data from the completed surveys were entered into the SPSS computer software for statistical analysis. Cross-tabulation and chi-squares procedures were generated on all variables. The steps taken for the analysis of the data were reviewed by an information technology consultant at U.N.L.V., who verified that correct procedures had been followed with the SPSS software.

**Cross-tabulation**

Since the attitudes and behavior of seminary graduates and dropouts are determined by the relationships among several variables, the analysis must use more than one variable at a time. Namely, the student’s status as a graduate or dropout was measured against each of the other variables listed in the survey. These other variables were each tested, one at a time, for independence from the student’s dropout status.
In tests for independence performed between two categorical variables, a null hypothesis was made that the two variables were statistically independent. Independence implied that knowledge of the category in which an observation was classified with respect to one variable had no affect on the probability of being in one of the several categories of the other variables (Witte, 1993).

The observed frequencies for each category of each variable were entered in a two-way classification table, commonly referred to as a cross-tabulation (Norusis, 1993).

Given the hypothesis of independence of the two variables, the expected frequency associated with each cell of the contingency table should have been proportionate to the total observed frequencies included in the column and in the row in which the cell was located as related to the total sample size (Witte, 1993). If the null hypothesis of independence was matched with the data and the observed frequencies were significantly different from the expected frequencies, then it was assured that the null hypothesis was not true and the two variables were considered dependent.

**Statistical Significance**

The Pearson chi-square is a non-parametric statistical test designed to test the null hypothesis for qualitative data expressed as frequencies. The chi-square reflects the size of the discrepancies between observed and expected frequencies, and the larger the value of chi-square was, the more suspect the null hypothesis was (Witte, 1993). The value was calculated by summing, over all cells, the squared residuals divided by the expected frequencies (Norusis, 1993). The test helped to determine whether the difference between the two groups was statistically significant. The chi-square test is a test of
independence; it provides little information about the strength or form of the association between two variables (Norusis, 1993).

For the chi-square test to be valid, the minimum expected frequency must be greater than one. In addition, no more than 20% of cells can have an expected frequency of less than five. If one of these parameters is not met, then there is a need to re-code the variable by collapsing the categories of the variable and performing the chi-square test anew (Norusis, 1993).
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify what determines why some L.D.S. seminary students regularly attended and graduated from the seminary program and why others discontinued their attendance. The potential reasons were analyzed to see if any were unique to either dropouts or graduates. The results of this study may assist in creating a profile of those students who may be at risk of dropping out of the seminary program.

Development of the Survey Instrument

After researching previous studies on seminary participation, a questionnaire was developed. This survey instrument incorporated some elements from past questionnaires. These were modified to suit the objectives of the current study. This new survey instrument was developed and influenced by the questionnaires used in recent seminary-dropout studies.
The Survey Objectives

The survey instrument consisted of 31 questions. The same questionnaire was administered to both the seminary graduates as well as to the dropouts. The following questions were used to guide the formulation of survey questions:

1. What personal characteristics (namely, gender; academic achievement; private religious belief; personal Church involvement; attitudes towards religious education; and plans for the future) differentiated L.D.S. seminary dropouts from seminary graduates?

2. What external factors (namely, family structure; family change; family mobility; student employment; parental religiosity and influence; and peer influence) affected seminary completion and dropout?

3. What structural factors within the seminary system (namely, time seminary was offered; and teacher ability and rapport) affected seminary enrollment and dropout?

4. Did the rate of drop out differ significantly between the seminary programs in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada?

Research Question 1

What personal characteristics (namely, gender; academic achievement; private religious belief; personal Church involvement; attitudes towards religious education; and plans for the future) differentiated L.D.S. seminary dropouts from seminary graduates?
Gender

As found in Table 2, the cross-tabulation of the variables of seminary completion and gender, revealed that, among dropouts, 59.2% were boys while 40.8% were girls. This difference in percentage was not found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 2

Cross-tabulation of Gender and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(43.4%)</td>
<td>(59.2%)</td>
<td>(45.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(56.6%)</td>
<td>(40.8%)</td>
<td>(54.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=4.13; \text{1df; N=316; p=.044}$)

Grade Point Average

The surveyed students were asked to report an estimate of their average high school grades. As seen in Table 3, the self-reported grades of graduates showed that 69.7% held an “A” average, while only 34.7% of the dropouts reported the same. This difference in the percentage of “A” students was measured with the chi-square statistic and found to be significant at the .01 level.
Table 3

Cross-tabulation of Grade Point Average and Seminary Status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(67.7%)</td>
<td>(34.7%)</td>
<td>(64.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-C</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(30.3%)</td>
<td>(51.0%)</td>
<td>(33.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(14.3%)</td>
<td>(2.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=51.304; 2\text{df}; N=316; p=.000$).

Private Religious Beliefs

The strength of the personal religious beliefs of the students was measured with four statements. The surveyed students were asked how well each of the four statements described their personal experiences, feelings, and beliefs. They were to respond to the statements on a scale ranging from “not at all” to “exactly.” The four statements were designed to match the feelings and beliefs of a typical religiously-active seminary student.

1. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The percentage of seminary graduates, as shown in Table 4, responding that this statement “exactly” matched their beliefs, was 93.3% while only 75.5% of dropouts felt...
the same. The Fisher's Exact Test of significance found that this difference is statistically significant at the .01 level. The results appear to show that none of the students held to an atheistic point of view. Rather, the students' reaction to this statement shows that the real difference is between mild belief and strong belief in God.

Table 4

Cross-tabulation of Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not much - Very much</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(6.7%)</td>
<td>(24.5%)</td>
<td>(9.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exactly</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(93.3%)</td>
<td>(75.5%)</td>
<td>(90.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=15.178; 1\text{df}; N=316; p=.001$)

2. My relationship with God is important to me.

In answer to this statement, 69.4% of dropouts stated that this "exactly" matched their feeling. Yet, as viewed in Table 5, 85.8% of graduates felt the same. The Pearson value shows that the difference in the percentages of the two groups is statistically significant at the .01 level.
Table 5

Cross-tabulation of Importance of Relationship with God and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all - Very much</td>
<td>38 (14.2%)</td>
<td>15 (30.6%)</td>
<td>53 (16.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exactly</td>
<td>229 (85.5%)</td>
<td>34 (69.4%)</td>
<td>263 (83.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267 (100%)</td>
<td>49 (100%)</td>
<td>316 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=5.111; 1\text{df}; N=316; p=.026$)

3. I believe the Book of Mormon is the word of God.

The study of the Book of Mormon is viewed as indicative of a church member’s faithfulness. It is one of the courses of study in the curriculum of seminary. The statement on the survey, about the student’s belief in the Book of Mormon, shows the greatest difference between seminary graduates and dropouts. As shown in Table 6, 88% of graduates “exactly” agreed to the statement, while only 55.1% of dropouts did. This is shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.
Table 6

Cross-tabulation of Belief that the Book of Mormon is the Word of God and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Much - Very Much</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(12.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(44.9%)</td>
<td>(17.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact</td>
<td>235</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(88.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(55.1%)</td>
<td>(82.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=31.654; 1 \text{df}; N=316; p=.000$)

4. I feel God approves of the way I live my life.

This statement revealed some unexpected results. While there was still a significant difference, at the .01 level, showing that graduates were more likely than dropouts to feel that God approves of their life, Table 7 shows that the responses from the graduates were spread over a greater range than anticipated. Only 36% of seminary graduates reported that the statement matched their feelings “exactly” concerning God’s approval of their life, with 43.4% stating that it matched their feelings “very much,” and 18.7% saying that it matched their feelings “somewhat.”
Table 7

Cross-tabulation of God's Approval of the Way I Live My Life and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all - Somewhat</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(20.6%)</td>
<td>(51.0%)</td>
<td>(25.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(43.4%)</td>
<td>(20.4%)</td>
<td>(39.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exactly</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(36.0%)</td>
<td>(28.6%)</td>
<td>(34.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=21.294; 2$df; $N=316; p=.000$)

Perhaps seminary graduates were hesitant to respond that they were in full agreement with the statement because this variable attempted to measure acceptable behavior more than just belief.

**Personal Church Involvement**

Attendance at the Sunday worship service, called Sacrament Meeting, is viewed as a partial measure of a person's activity in the Church. A student who attends church regularly would normally participate in seminary as well. As the cross-tabulation of the two variables of seminary completion and church attendance shows in Table 8, a
student who attends church regularly is indeed more likely to attend and graduate from seminary. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 8

Cross-tabulation of Student Attendance at Sacrament Meeting and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance at Sacrament Meeting</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2 times a month</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(4.9%)</td>
<td>(51.0%)</td>
<td>(12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times a month</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(95.1%)</td>
<td>(49.0%)</td>
<td>(33.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=83.356;\ 1\text{df};\ N=316;\ p=.000$).

I attended seminary because I wanted to. While attitude is difficult to measure, this question attempted to determine whether the student was self-motivated to attend seminary, or whether there was coercion involved. If the student was "forced" to go to seminary, perhaps there is a greater likelihood of that student dropping out.

As viewed in Table 9, 14.3% of dropouts "strongly disagreed" with the statement, 12.2% of them "disagreed," and 28.6% of dropouts were "undecided." Either the coercion which students felt during their time attending seminary perpetuated a negative attitude leading to discontinuance of seminary, or upon reflection of their experience, the
dropouts refuse to admit that they ever had a desire to attend thus admitting responsibility for the decision.

Table 9

Cross-tabulation of Self-Motivation to Attend Seminary and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I attended seminary because I wanted to.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(36.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(55.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2=69.405; 2\text{df}; N=316; p=.00000).\

I have a desire to be a faithful member of the Church. This variable contributes to the information about a student's attitude regarding religious education. Interestingly, Table 10 shows that 67.4% of dropouts did choose to respond that they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. This would indicate that, while they may have a negative attitude about seminary, they still regard activity in the Church as important. This may indicate that efforts by the seminary program may yield positive results in recruiting back those students who have discontinued their attendance.
Table 10

Cross-tabulation of Desire to be a Faithful Member of the Church and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have a desire to be a faithful member of the Church.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(86.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=88.509; \text{2df}; \text{N}=316; p=.00000)$.

Student’s Attitudes Towards Religious Education

My seminary experience helped me gain a testimony of the gospel. As shown in Table 11, just over 40% of the dropouts admitted that they were assisted in gaining a testimony of the gospel from seminary. This shows that seminary was at least partially effective in reaching its objective even with some of the dropouts. Thus, the cause of the early departure from the seminary program for some students must be attributed to something other than the program itself.
Table 11

Cross-tabulation of Gaining a Testimony of the Gospel and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have a desire to be a faithful member of the Church.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
<td>(32.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(12.4%)</td>
<td>(32.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(86.1%)</td>
<td>(34.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(χ²=77.021; 2df; N=316; p=.000).

I feel I attended seminary with an eagerness to learn. The attitude of eagerness to learn does seem to have an influence over whether a student stays in or leaves the seminary program. The responses illustrated in Table 12, show that only 32% of dropouts said that they either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they attended with this attitude of eagerness. This is contrasted with over 77% of the graduates feeling that they possessed an eager learning disposition.
Cross-tabulation of Attending Seminary with an Eagerness to Learn and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(22.1%)</td>
<td>(67.3%)</td>
<td>(29.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(47.9%)</td>
<td>(18.4%)</td>
<td>(43.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(30.0%)</td>
<td>(14.3%)</td>
<td>(27.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=41.164; 2\text{df}; N=316; p=.000$)

I feel my seminary experience gave me good missionary preparation. It is natural that those students who completed seminary are more likely to feel that they derived something from the experience. As seen in Table 13, over 83% of the graduates felt that they received good preparation for a mission. While only 30% of the dropouts felt the same way, it bespeaks of the fact that almost one-third of the dropouts perceive a mission as part of their future plans.
Table 13

Cross-tabulation of Feeling that Seminary Experience Gave Good Missionary Preparation and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>44 (16.5%)</td>
<td>34 (69.4%)</td>
<td>78 (24.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>109 (40.8%)</td>
<td>9 (18.4%)</td>
<td>118 (37.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>114 (42.7%)</td>
<td>6 (12.2%)</td>
<td>120 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267 (100%)</td>
<td>49 (100%)</td>
<td>316 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=62.654; 2$df; $N=316; p=.000$)

I am living the gospel better as a result of taking seminary. The results in Table 14 show that a much larger percentage of seminary graduates felt that they were better church members due to their seminary attendance. This difference in percentage was found to be statistically significant. The personal religious experience of a student could influence whether that student persists in seminary to graduation. Perhaps the seminary program itself has the ability to increase the exercise of personal religiosity of a student. Either way, seminary graduates are more likely to say that they are adhering to church standards than are seminary dropouts.
Table 14

Cross-tabulation of Living the Gospel Better and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am living the gospel better as a result of taking seminary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(17.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(38.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(44.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=59.690; 2\text{df}; N=316; p=.000$).

*My seminary experience helped me prepare for a temple marriage.* Marriage in the temple is viewed as a crucial indicator of a person's adherence to church standards. Table 15 illustrates that over 89% of graduates felt that seminary contributed to their preparation for a future marriage in the temple. Only 38.4% of dropouts agreed that seminary prepared them for the same. Again, this seems to indicate that at least 38.4% of the dropout students are looking ahead to a possible marriage in the temple.
Table 15

Cross-tabulation of Seminary Experience Helped to Prepare for Temple Marriage and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(10.9%)</td>
<td>(61.2%)</td>
<td>(18.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(38.6%)</td>
<td>(20.4%)</td>
<td>(35.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(50.6%)</td>
<td>(18.4%)</td>
<td>(45.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Total</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(χ²=69.483; 2df; N=316; p=.000)

Student’s Plans for the Future

Be active in the church. In Table 16, we see that 94% of the seminary graduates said that they “definitely will” be active in the Church. This is contrasted with only 40.8% of the discontinued seminary students stating that they “definitely will” be active in the Church. The p-value shows that this is significant at the .01 level.
Table 16

Cross-tabulation of Expectation to be Active in the Church and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I expect to be active in the Church.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Not - Probably Will</td>
<td>16 (6.0%)</td>
<td>29 (59.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Will</td>
<td>251 (94.0%)</td>
<td>20 (40.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>267</strong> (100%)</td>
<td><strong>49</strong> (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2 = 95.916; 1 \text{ df; } N = 316; p = .000$).

Graduate from college. In looking ahead to the future, 64% of seminary graduates said that they anticipate graduating from college. Of those who discontinued seminary, 46.9% responded that they believed that they would attend and graduate from college. This difference in the response rates, as shown in Table 17, was not found to be significant at the .01 level.
Table 17

Cross-tabulation of Expectation of College Graduation and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not - Probably will</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(36.0%)</td>
<td>(91.8%)</td>
<td>(94.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely will</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(64.0%)</td>
<td>(46.9%)</td>
<td>(61.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2$=5.111; 1 df; N=316; p=.026)

Get married. Table 18 illustrates that when considering the likelihood of marriage in their future, 85.4% of graduates expected to get married as compared to 65.3% of dropouts saying that they “definitely will” be married. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

Have a job or career. In the L.D.S. Church, young men are taught that, upon marriage, they are responsible to be the provider for their family. Young women are encouraged to get as much education as possible, yet they are also taught that their most important role is that of nurturing children in the home. Thus, one would expect that fewer L.D.S. young women will foresee having a full-time career as compared to L.D.S. young men.
Table 18

Cross-tabulation of Expectation of Marriage and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not - Probably will</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(14.6%)</td>
<td>(34.7%)</td>
<td>(17.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely will</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(85.4%)</td>
<td>(65.3%)</td>
<td>(82.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=11.457; 1\text{df}; N=316; p=0.002$)

The results of comparing the answers of seminary dropouts with graduates, found that more dropouts (75.5%) expect to have a career as contrasted with 68.9% of the graduates. This difference, shown in Table 19, was not found to be significant at the .01 level.

Go to the temple. An important step in the religious life of member of the L.D.S. Church, is to participate in worship in the L.D.S. temple. An anticipatory desire, on the part of a young person, to attend the temple, would serve as an indicator of adherence to church expectations.
Table 19

Cross-tabulation of Expectation of Having a Job/Career and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not - Probably will % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.0%)</td>
<td>(13.8%)</td>
<td>(7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely will % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(94.0%)</td>
<td>(86.2%)</td>
<td>(92.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not - Probably will % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(50.3%)</td>
<td>(40.0%)</td>
<td>(49.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely will % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(49.7%)</td>
<td>(60.0%)</td>
<td>(50.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male: ($\chi^2=1.992; 1\text{df}; N=316; p=.231$)
Female: ($\chi^2=.754; 1\text{df}; N=316; p=.478$)
The study found that 90.3% of graduates believe that they “definitely will” go to the temple. Table 20 shows the contrast of 40.8% of the dropouts hoping to participate in temple worship. This difference was found to be significant at the .01 level.

Table 20

Cross-tabulation of Expectation to Participate in Temple Worship and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I expect to go to the temple.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Not - Probably Will</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(9.7%)</td>
<td>(59.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Will</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(90.3%)</td>
<td>(40.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=70.413; 1\text{df}; N=316; p=.000$).

Go on a mission. Young men in the L.D.S. Church have been taught that it is their duty to prepare for and to serve a two-year proselyting mission. Young women, while welcomed to serve a mission, are not under the same obligation. In this study, one would expect to observe fewer girls anticipating to serve missions than young men, regardless of whether they graduated from seminary or not.

The cross tabulation analysis of this variable was further categorized by gender in order to get a more useful measure of the variable, “expect to go on a mission.” In Table
21, the results were significant showing that 81.9% of male seminary graduates strongly believed that they would serve a mission. Only 24.1% of male dropouts said that they "definitely will" plan on serving a mission.

Table 21

Cross-tabulation of Expectation to Serve a Mission and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely Not - Probably Will</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(18.1%)</td>
<td>(75.9%)</td>
<td>(29.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely Will</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(81.9%)</td>
<td>(24.1%)</td>
<td>(70.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Total</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely Not - Probably Will</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(87.4%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(88.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely Will</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(12.6%)</td>
<td>(11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Total</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male: \( \chi^2=37.101; 1 \text{df}; N=145; p=.000 \).

Female: \( \chi^2=2.831; 1 \text{df}; N=171; p=.133 \).
Research Question 2

What external factors (namely, family structure; family change; family mobility; student employment; parental religiosity and influence; and peer influence) affect seminary completion and dropout?

Family Structure

An attempt was made with the questionnaire to determine what the student’s family consisted of by asking, “Who are you living with now?” The survey allowed the student to select from the following: (a) mom and dad, (b) mom and step-dad, (c) dad and step-mom, (d) mom only, (e) dad only, (f) other relative, or (g) other situation.

Since there were several cells in the cross-tabulation which had values less than the expected frequency, several categories of responses were combined. The analysis which follows simply illustrates a comparison between those students who live with both their mother and father and those who live in some other family setting.

The results found in Table 22, show that 88% of graduates came from homes where mother and father were present. Just 59% of seminary dropouts came from a home where both natural parents were present. This finding was significant at the .01 level.

Family Change

A related question to the one on family structure, asked the surveyed students, “Have you lived with these same adults or in the same situation over the past four years or has your situation changed during that time?” The intention of this question was to determine if there was a significant change such as death, divorce, or separation in the student’s family setting during the years of seminary attendance.
Table 22

Cross-tabulation of Family Structure and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom and Dad</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=25.033; 1\text{df}; N=316; \text{p=.000}$).

Table 23 shows that 5.6% of the seminary graduates experienced a change in the make up of their family and 8.2% of dropouts did as well. The test for statistical significance found that there was no difference between the two groups.

Family Mobility

The survey also attempted to see if family transiency had an effect on the student completion of seminary. Specifically, students were asked, “Do you still live in the same house you lived in four years ago, or have you moved during that time?”
Table 23

**Cross-tabulation of Family Change and Seminary Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes in four years</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(94.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed at least once in four years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($ \chi^2 = .475; 1 \text{df}; N=316; p=.511$)

In Table 24, seminary dropouts answered that 32.7% of them had moved at least once over the past four years. Graduates from seminary responded that 25.8% of them had also moved at least once during the years they had attended seminary. There was no statistical significance in the difference between the two groups. Thus, no statement can be made regarding the effect of family mobility on student completion of seminary.

**Student Employment**

Students were asked, on the questionnaire, to mark if they were employed during their time in seminary and, if so, how many hours per week. In the analysis of the responses, it was found that neither group tended to be employed more than the other.
Table 24

Cross-tabulation of Mobility and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>No move in four years</th>
<th>Moved at least once in four years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>198 (74.2%)</td>
<td>69 (25.8%)</td>
<td>267 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33 (67.3%)</td>
<td>16 (32.7%)</td>
<td>49 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>231 (73.1%)</td>
<td>85 (26.9%)</td>
<td>316 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(χ²=.977; 1df; N=316; p=.381)

As viewed in Table 25, the seminary graduates responded that 54.7% of them worked an average of at least 11 hours per week during high school. The dropouts similarly answered that 57.1% of them worked an average of at least 11 hours per week during their years in high school.

Parental Religiosity and Influence

Mother's attendance at sacrament meeting. The main worship service of the L.D.S. Church, held on Sundays, is called Sacrament Meeting. A person's activity level in the Church is often measured by the frequency of their attendance at this meeting. The surveyed students were asked to estimate how often their mother attended church meetings.
Table 25

Cross-tabulation of Employment and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(31.5%)</td>
<td>(30.6%)</td>
<td>(31.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 hours per week</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(3.4%)</td>
<td>(2.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 hours per week</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(10.5%)</td>
<td>(12.2%)</td>
<td>(10.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 hours per week</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(35.2%)</td>
<td>(22.4%)</td>
<td>(33.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 21 hours per week</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(19.5%)</td>
<td>(34.7%)</td>
<td>(21.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=8.199; \text{4df; N}=316; \ p=0.085$)

An attempt was made to provide an option to select on the questionnaire for all possible responses. However, the researcher inadvertently neglected to provide an option for students to respond to if they did not live with their mother, or did not have a mother. Nevertheless, the eight students who did not respond at all to the question, assumably because they do not live with their mother, were counted as missing observations and were not included in the analysis of the variable.
The tabulated results in Table 26, show that 95.5% of seminary graduates have mothers who attend church meetings “3-4 times a month.” This is compared to 68.2% of seminary dropouts echoing that their mothers had the same level of church attendance. The difference in percentages was found to be statistically significant.

Table 26

Cross-tabulation of Mother’s Level of Church Attendance and Seminary Status

| How often does your mother attend Church meetings? | Graduate from Seminary |   |   | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--|---|
|                                                  | Yes (Graduate from Seminary) | No (Non-Graduate from Seminary) | Total (Graduate from Seminary) |
| Other                                           | 12 (4.5%)               | 14 (31.8%)             | 26 (8.4%) |
| 3-4 times a month                                | 252 (95.5%)             | 30 (68.2%)             | 282 (91.6%) |
| Total                                           | 264 (100%)              | 44 (100%)              | 308 (100%) |

($\chi^2=36.295; 1\text{ df}; N=308; p=.000$).

Father’s attendance at sacrament meeting. The surveyed students were also asked to estimate how often their father attended church meetings. Once again, there was not an option for students to select if they did not live with their father. This resulted in 15 students failing to respond to this particular question. These missing observations were not included in the analysis of the data.
The results illustrated in Table 27 show that 89.7% of seminary graduates have fathers who attend church meetings “3-4 times a month.” This is compared to 56.4% of seminary dropouts stating that their fathers had the same level of church attendance. The difference in percentages on this variable was also found to be statistically significant.

Table 27
Cross-tabulation of Father’s Level of Church Attendance and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often does your father attend Church meetings?</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(10.3%)</td>
<td>(43.6%)</td>
<td>(14.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 times a month</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(89.7%)</td>
<td>(56.4%)</td>
<td>(85.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>301</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=30.132; 1$ df; $N=301; p=.000$).

I would attend seminary regardless of how my parents feel about it. One of the tenants of the L.D.S. Church, is for adherents to honor and respect their parents. This question is a difficult one, in that it pits this characteristic of respect for parent’s wishes against the personal religious convictions of the student.

Most seminary graduates (83.6%) responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they would attend seminary regardless of how their parents felt about the
program. Fewer seminary dropouts (40.8 %), as seen in Table 28, reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they would attend seminary regardless of how their parents felt about the program. While this difference was found to be statistically significant, it would be inappropriate to assume that seminary dropouts are more willing to be obedient to their parents, even when faced with the choice of following personal religious convictions or not.

Table 28

Cross-tabulation of Attendance at Seminary Regardless of How Parents Felt and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would attend seminary regardless of how my parents feel about it.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(16.5%)</td>
<td>(59.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(33.0%)</td>
<td>(14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(50.6%)</td>
<td>(26.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=42.590; 2$df; N=316; $p=.000$).
My parents believe in the necessity of taking seminary. It is assumed that parents who are convinced of the benefits of the seminary program, will be more likely to have children who persist through the program to graduation. The students were asked to report whether or not they agreed with the notion that their parents believed in the necessity of taking seminary. Table 29 reveals that the seminary graduates (97.8%) overwhelmingly responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Only 71.4% of dropouts felt that their parents believed in the necessity of taking seminary.

Table 29

Cross-tabulation of Parents’ Belief in the Necessity of Taking Seminary and Seminary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(13.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(84.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2=55.984; 2df; N=316; p=.000$).
Peer Influence

Most of my friends attend seminary. This question attempted to determine whether the student derived support from his or her peer group to attend seminary. The students who graduated from seminary are more likely to have a peer group which attend seminary (81.7%). As also seen in Table 30, students who discontinued their seminary enrollment were much less likely (32.6%) to associate with other seminary attenders.

Table 30

Cross-tabulation of Friends' Attendance at Seminary and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most of my friends attend seminary.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>Yes  No Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(18.4%) (67.3%) (25.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>49  33  82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(34.5%) (16.3%) (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>92  8  100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(47.2%) (16.3%) (42.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267 49 316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%) (100%) (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi ^2 = 51.901; 2df; N=316; p=.000$).

I would attend seminary regardless of what my friends think. The influence of peer pressure is matched with the personal religious convictions of the student. Table 31 clearly shows that nearly all seminary graduates (98.5%) agreed that they would attend
seminary regardless of what their friends thought. Far fewer dropouts (63.3%) felt that they would go to seminary in spite of what their friends might think.

Table 31

Cross-tabulation of Attendance at Seminary Regardless of What Friends Think and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would attend seminary regardless of what my friends think.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(22.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(76.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2$=79.851; 2df; N=316; p=.000).

Research Question 3

What structural factors within the seminary system (namely, time seminary was offered; and teacher ability and rapport) affect seminary enrollment and dropout?
Time Seminary is Offered

It was difficult for me to attend seminary because of when it was offered. The majority of seminary classes in Las Vegas, Nevada, are held before the public schools begin in the morning. This often necessitates that students arise quite early in the morning to attend seminary.

In response to the question of whether or not it was difficult for the student to attend seminary because of the time of day it was offered, 73.4% of graduates stated that it was not difficult to attend. Fifty-three percent of seminary dropouts agreed with the statement saying that it was difficult to attend because of the schedule. Table 32 shows that this was a statistically significant difference in the responses of graduates and dropouts.

Table 32
Cross-tabulation of Difficulty of Attendance at Seminary Because of When Offered and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate from Seminary?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(40.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(33.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>(26.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Ability and Rapport

My seminary teacher made the scriptures exciting to study. A student who feels that their teacher helped him or her to enjoy the learning process in seminary, is more likely to graduate from seminary. As seen in Table 33, the majority of seminary graduates (85.8%) felt that their teach did make the curriculum exciting to study. Less than half of the seminary dropouts (42.9%) felt that they enjoyed the learning experience when they attended seminary.

Table 33

Cross tabulation of Seminary Teacher Making Scriptures Exciting to Study and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My seminary teacher made the scriptures exciting to study.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( (\chi^2=40.801; 2df; N=316; p=.000) \)
I felt I could share my problems with my seminary teacher. The study attempted to measure the existence of trust in the teacher/student relationship of the respondents. There were 62.6% of the seminary graduates who agreed that they felt comfortable enough to share their problems with their seminary teacher. Only 32.6% of the dropouts indicated that they felt they could share their problems with their teacher. Table 34 displays that this difference was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 34
Cross-tabulation of Existence of Trust in Teacher/Student Relationship and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt I could share my problems with my seminary teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>100 (37.5%)</td>
<td>33 (67.3%)</td>
<td>133 (42.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>88 (33.0%)</td>
<td>8 (16.3%)</td>
<td>96 (30.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree % within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td>79 (29.6%)</td>
<td>8 (16.3%)</td>
<td>87 (27.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2$=46.357; 2df; N=316; p=.000).
Overall, I really liked my seminary teachers. The teacher’s ability to relate to teenagers and establish a good rapport with them appears to have an influence on whether a student decides to continue in seminary to graduation. The results illustrated in Table 35 demonstrate that most seminary graduates (93.7%) felt that they really liked their seminary teachers. A majority of the seminary dropouts (61.2%) really liked their seminary teachers, yet the difference in percentages was found to be statistically significant.

Table 35

Cross-tabulation of Liking Seminary Teachers and Seminary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall I really liked my seminary teacher.</th>
<th>Graduate from Seminary</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree - Undecided</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td></td>
<td>(6.4%)</td>
<td>(38.8%)</td>
<td>(11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td></td>
<td>(33.0%)</td>
<td>(26.5%)</td>
<td>(32.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>162</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Graduate from Seminary?</td>
<td></td>
<td>(60.7%)</td>
<td>(34.7%)</td>
<td>(56.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2=15.205; \ 2df; N=316; \ p=.000\).
(χ²=43.639; 2df; N=316; p=.000).

**Research Question 4**

The final question which guided the research attempted to ascertain if the rate of drop out differed significantly between the seminary programs in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Time of Discontinuance**

Students were asked to mark the school years during which they were enrolled in seminary. An interesting trend was discovered after tabulating the findings from those who had discontinued seminary. Table 36 reveals that the seminary dropouts may be classified in two ways - those who attended for a period of time and then completely discontinued the program, and those who were enrolled during each year, but discontinued their attendance during one or more of those years.
Table 36

Discontinued Students’ Final Year of Seminary Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminary Year</th>
<th>Students Claiming this to be their Final Year in Seminary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98 (Some attendance for all four years)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responding as Discontinued Students</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dropout Rates**

For the purposes of this study, the seminary programs which were surveyed, were those in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada. New seminary programs adjacent to newly constructed high schools were excluded if they had been in operation less than four years. In addition, magnet schools were also excluded from the study as it is extremely difficult to determine if the students dropped out of the seminary or if they simply returned to their neighborhood high school. Table 37 illustrates the actual numbers of students who graduated and who discontinued at each seminary.
Table 37

Dropout Rates of Individual Seminary Programs in the Las Vegas, Nevada Area for the Class of 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminary Name</th>
<th>Graduated from Seminary?</th>
<th>Rate of Discontinuance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic/Boulder City</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonanza</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaparral/Valley</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheyenne</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cimarron*</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durango</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eldorado/Rancho</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Valley</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverado</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>619</strong></td>
<td><strong>320</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cimarron Seminary had an incomplete historical database.

**High School Completion**

Of the 49 seminary dropouts who responded in the survey, 46 of them reported that they were preparing to graduate from public high school. Only three of the seminary dropout students revealed that they had also withdrawn from the public school. No specific reasons were given as to why they discontinued their public education.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always placed a great emphasis and importance on the religious education of its youth. The Church Educational System is the organization commissioned by the L.D.S. Church to deliver a daily religious-education program, called seminary, to Church members ages 14 to 18.

As the L.D.S. Church has experienced tremendous growth, the need to provide for the religious education of its members has continued. C.E.S. currently maintains seminary programs in all 50 states of the U.S. and 144 foreign countries and territories throughout the world with a total enrollment of over 377,436 students (Church Educational System [C.E.S.], 1999).

Seminary in Las Vegas, Nevada

In the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada, the L.D.S. Church has not recently pursued the adoption of a released-time program. This necessitates that students generally attend the daily program either before or after the hours of public school. These seminary classes are usually held at L.D.S. chapels located near the public schools where the students attend. Because the vast majority of students attend seminary during the
early-morning hour, volunteer teachers are recruited, trained, and supervised by full-time
C.E.S. employees.

Expectation of Seminary Attendance

A young person’s completion of four years of seminary has long been viewed as
an indicator of future church activity, such as serving a full-time mission and marrying in
an L.D.S. temple (C.E.S., 1994a). The decision to participate in seminary is viewed as a
result of adherence to a Church expectation.

While seminary attendance is not compulsory, great emphasis is placed, in the
L.D.S. Church, on the importance of a young person’s activity in seminary. The dilemma
of discontinuation of seminary enrollment by some students, is of great concern to the
administrators of the Church Educational System, to the ecclesiastical leaders of the
Church, and to the parents of the students.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify what determines why some L.D.S.
seminary students regularly attended and graduated from the seminary program and why
others discontinued their attendance. The potential reasons were analyzed to see if any
were unique to either dropouts or graduates.

Data Collection

The population for this study included all L.D.S. Church members who were of
the age to graduate from high school in the year 1998, and lived in the greater
metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada.
Students were categorized into one of two specific groups. These groups included students who enrolled in and attended seminary for four years until graduation, and students who enrolled in seminary but subsequently discontinued their attendance.

A questionnaire was designed to obtain pertinent information concerning both students who had chosen to participate in seminary for the full four years, as well as from the students who had chosen to discontinue their attendance. An effort was made to survey all of the seminary graduates and seminary dropouts from the high-school graduating class of 1998.

The survey was administered to as many of the seminary graduates as possible, at the actual seminary locations. Of the 550 students who graduated from seminary, in the Las Vegas area in May of 1998, 267 students (48%) completed the survey. Of the 320 discontinued seminary students, who received the questionnaire through the mail, only 49 of them (15%) returned completed surveys.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this investigation into the issue of seminary dropouts:

1. What discriminating personal characteristics (namely, gender; academic achievement; private religious belief; personal Church involvement; attitudes towards religious education; and plans for the future) differentiated L.D.S. seminary dropouts from seminary graduates?

2. What external factors (namely, family structure; family change; family mobility; student employment; parental religiosity and influence; and peer influence) affected seminary completion and dropout.
3. What structural factors within the seminary system (namely, time seminary was offered; and teacher ability and rapport) affected seminary enrollment and dropout?

4. Did the rate of drop out differ significantly between the seminary programs in the greater metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada?

Findings

1. There was no significant difference found in the percentage of boys (59.2%) and the percentage of girls (40.8%) who were dropouts.

2. The surveyed students were asked to report an estimate of their school grades. The self-reported average of high school grades from the graduates showed that 69.7% held an “A” average, while only 34.7% of the dropouts reported the same. This difference between the two groups was found to be significant at the .01 level.

3. The percentage of seminary graduates which responded that the statement, “I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” exactly matched their beliefs, was 93.3% while only 75.5% of dropouts felt the same. The Fisher’s Exact Test of significance found that this difference is statistically significant at the .01 level.

4. In reaction to the statement, “My relationship with God is important to me,” 69.4% of dropouts stated that this “exactly” matched their feeling, yet, 85.8% of graduates felt the same. The Pearson value shows that the difference in the percentages of the two groups is statistically significant at the .01 level.

5. The greatest difference found between seminary graduates and dropouts, in the area of personal religious belief, was with the statement, “I believe the Book of Mormon is the word of God.” Eighty-eight percent of graduates “exactly” agreed with the
statement, while only 55.1% of dropouts did. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

6. Only 36% of seminary graduates reported that the statement, “I feel God approves of the way I live my life,” matched their feelings “exactly,” with 43.4% stating that it matched their feelings “very much.” Dropouts reported that 28.6% felt that the statement “exactly” matched their feelings, and 20.4% felt that it matched their feelings “very much.” The differences in the responses were found to statistically significant at the .01 level.

7. The seminary graduates were more likely to regularly attend church (95.1%) than were seminary dropouts (49%). This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

8. In regards to the statement, “I attended seminary because I wanted to,” 14.3% of dropouts “strongly disagreed,” 12.2% of them “disagreed,” and 28.6% of dropouts were “undecided.” Of the seminary graduates, 91.7% of them either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. This was confirmed to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

9. Over 67% of the dropouts chose to respond that they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they had a desire to be a faithful member of the Church. This compares with 98.5% of the graduates stating that they agreed with the statement. This was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

10. Just over 40% of the dropouts admitted that they were assisted in gaining a testimony of the gospel from seminary. Over 91% of the graduates felt the same way. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.
11. Only 32% of dropouts said that they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they attended seminary with an attitude of eagerness. This is contrasted with over 77% of the graduates feeling that they possessed an eager learning disposition. This was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

12. Over 83% of the graduates felt that they received good preparation for a mission. Only 30% of the dropouts felt the same way. This difference was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

13. When asked if they felt that attending seminary helped them live the gospel better, 88.8% of the seminary graduates agreed, while only 30.6% of the dropouts felt the same. This was confirmed to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

14. Over 89% of graduates felt that seminary contributed to their preparation for a future marriage in the temple. Only 38.4% of dropouts agreed that seminary prepared them for the same. This difference was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

15. Ninety-four percent of the seminary graduates said that they “definitely will” be active in the Church. This is contrasted with only 40.8% of the discontinued seminary students stating that they “definitely will” be active in the Church. The p-value shows that this difference is significant at the .01 level.

16. In looking ahead to the future, 64% of seminary graduates said that they anticipate graduating from college. Of those who discontinued seminary, 46.9% responded that they believed that they would attend and graduate from college. This difference in the responses was found to be significant at the .01 level.
17. When considering the likelihood of marriage in their future, 85.4% of graduates expected to get married as compared to 65.3% of dropouts saying that they “definitely will” be married. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

18. In regards to having a job or career in the future, the survey found that more dropouts (75.5%) expect to have a career as contrasted with 68.9% of the graduates. This difference was not found to be significant at only the .01 level.

19. The study found that 90.3% of graduates believe that they “definitely will” go to the temple. This is in contrast to only 40.8% of the dropouts hoping to participate in temple worship. This difference was found to be significant at the .01 level.

20. A difference in future plans was found showing that 81.9% of male seminary graduates that they “definitely will” serve a mission. Only 24.1% of male dropouts said that they “definitely will” plan on serving a mission which was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

21. The results of the survey show that 88% of graduates came from homes where mother and father were present. Only 59% of seminary dropouts came from a home where both natural parents were present. This finding was significant at the .01 level.

22. According to the survey results, 5.6% of the seminary graduates experienced a change in the structure of their family as well as 8.2% of the dropouts. The test for statistical significance found that there was no difference between the two groups.

23. Seminary dropouts answered that 32.7% of them had moved at least once over the past four years. Graduates from seminary responded that 25.8% of them had also
moved at least once during the years they had attended seminary. There was no
significant difference discovered between the two groups.

24. The seminary graduates responded that 54.7% of them worked an average of
at least 11 hours per week during high school. The dropouts similarly answered that
57.1% of them worked an average of at least 11 hours per week during their years in high
school. There was no significant difference between the two groups.

25. The survey results show that 95.5% of seminary graduates have mothers who
attend church meetings “3-4 times a month.” This is compared to 68.2% of seminary
dropouts echoing that their mothers had the same level of church attendance. The
difference in percentages was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

26. The survey also shows that 89.7% of seminary graduates have fathers who
attend church meetings “3-4 times a month.” This is compared to 56.4% of seminary
dropouts stating that their fathers had the same level of church attendance. The difference
in percentages on this variable was also found to be statistically significant at the .01
level.

27. Most seminary graduates (83.6%) responded that they either agreed or
strongly agreed that they would attend seminary regardless of how their parents felt about
the program. Fewer seminary dropouts (40.8%) reported that they either agreed or
strongly agreed that they would attend seminary regardless of how their parents felt about
the program. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

28. The seminary graduates (97.8%) overwhelmingly responded that they either
agreed or strongly agreed that their parents believed in the necessity of taking seminary.
Only 71.4% of dropouts felt that their parents believed in the necessity of taking seminary. This was confirmed to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

29. The students who graduated from seminary are more likely to have a peer group which attend seminary (81.7%). Students who discontinued their seminary enrollment were much less likely (32.6%) to associate with other seminary attenders. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

30. Nearly all seminary graduates (98.5%) agreed that they would attend seminary regardless of what their friends thought. Far fewer dropouts (63.3%) felt that they would go to seminary in spite of what their friends might think. The difference was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

31. In response to the question of whether or not it was difficult for the student to attend seminary because of the time of day it was offered, 73.4% of graduates stated that it was not difficult to attend. Fifty-three percent of seminary dropouts agreed with the statement saying that it was difficult to attend because of the schedule. This is a statistically significant difference at the .01 level in the responses of graduates and dropouts.

32. The majority of seminary graduates (85.8%) felt that their teacher did make the curriculum exciting to study. Less than half of the seminary dropouts (42.9%) felt that they enjoyed the learning experience when they attended seminary. This was shown to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

33. There were 62.6% of the seminary graduates which agreed that they felt comfortable enough to share their problems with their seminary teacher. Only 32.6% of
the dropouts indicated that they felt they could share their problems with their teacher. This difference was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

34. Most seminary graduates (93.7%) felt that they really liked their seminary teachers. A majority of the seminary dropouts (61.2%) also liked their seminary teachers, yet the difference between the two groups was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

35. The rate of seminary discontinuance was not found to be significantly different between the seminary programs in the Las Vegas, Nevada area.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The results of this study seem to echo many of the findings of previous seminary discontinuation studies. In particular, the two contemporary studies on the seminary dropout problem, as reviewed in Chapter Two, were found to coincide most often with the findings of this study.

When the personal characteristics of the seminary student were reviewed, the personal religiosity of the student was found to be a common factor among graduates in the study by Fotheringham (1990) as well as in the Church Educational System (1995) study. The individual student’s future plans which were found in this study to be significantly different for seminary graduates, were also found to be such in the C.E.S. (1995) study. The academic achievement level, as measured by grade point average, was shown to be an important difference between seminary graduates and dropouts in the Taylor (1964) study and in the Fotheringham (1990) study.

Another major similarity illustrated by previous studies, was the importance of the church activity level of the parents. Some of the earlier studies point to the influence of
the mother being the most important, however, the C.E.S. (1995) study corroborates with the results of the current study to show that the father's religiosity exerts the most influence.

Several previous studies, such as Smith (1975) and Fotheringham (1990), found that the expertise of the teacher and his or her ability to develop rapport with students was an important influence on the decision to remain or not in seminary. In addition, Schramm (1963) showed that the peer group of the student was influential on the same decision.

The similarities seen in the results of the current study and in those of past studies on seminary participation, seem to indicate that there are common factors which influence a student's decision to stay in seminary regardless of whether the student is in a released-time or early-morning program.

Conclusions

In any discussion on the topic of dropouts in education, it is assumed that many factors intermingle to influence a student's decision to persist in the specific educational program or to discontinue attendance. While the task is formidable to identify exactly what factors keep a student in seminary or not, many interesting differences in the beliefs, behaviors, and circumstances of the two groups of students can be noted.

Insignificant Factors

In considering the findings of this study, it is of interest to consider a few of the variables which were not found to be of great significance in the comparison of seminary graduates and dropouts.
For example, gender was not found to be a good indicator of who is at risk of dropping out of seminary. Perhaps a surprising outcome was found in analyzing whether the change in family structure affected a student’s decision to depart early from the seminary program. While there were students in both groups which experienced a family change (i.e., parental separation, divorce, death, etc.), the variable was not found to be a significant identifier of an at-risk student in this study.

While more dropouts than graduates reported that they had moved at least once in the past four years, the mobility of the student’s family was not found to be a significant factor. In addition, no significance was found when analyzing whether the student was employed at a part-time job during the years the student attended seminary.

**Dropout Profile**

One of the outcomes of this study resulted in the categorizing of some factors which tend to be indicative of a seminary dropout student. It is very possible that these indicators, when viewed as a whole, might be used to create a profile of a student who is “at risk” of discontinuing seminary.

The structure of the family was found to be important. Dropouts were much more prone than graduates to come from non-nuclear homes such as a step-parent, single-parent, or other family setting. The Church activity level of both the mother and the father were found to be significant indicators of a student’s seminary enrollment status. Far fewer dropouts acknowledged that their parents believed in the necessity of taking seminary than did graduates.
Friends seem to play an influential role in a student’s desire to persist in or to leave seminary. The great majority of graduates report that their peer group attends seminary as contrasted with only one-third of the dropouts conceding the same.

The students’ high school grade point average was significantly less for seminary dropouts than for seminary graduates.

While some of the aforementioned factors are the result of influences which are often out of the control of the Church Educational System, they must not be ignored in the development of solutions. For example, the organizations within the L.D.S. Church, which have influence upon the parents of seminary students, must continue to emphasize the need for parents to teach and emulate church principles and standards to their children. The home environment has been shown in this study to be a significant factor in a student’s decision to participate in seminary and thus it must be included if a realistic strategy of intervention is formulated.

Since the peer group of the seminary student also wields influence on the decision to stay in seminary, efforts might be taken in two general areas to increase the likelihood of positive peer influence. The seminary students themselves must recognize the great potential influence they possess to assist less enthusiastic students who are at risk of dropping out of the program. If the peer group of the potential seminary dropout is expanded to include more students who enjoy seminary, there may be a greater chance that the at-risk student would be persuaded to continue through to graduation. In addition, efforts could be made to invite and include the non-attending peers of the at-risk student in activities at the seminary. This strategy may reduce the negative influence
which the non-attending friends, of the at-risk student, might exercise in regards to the seminary program.

There are additional factors which can and must be addressed by the Church Educational System to discern if more can be done to reduce the number of seminary dropouts. These factors involve areas where the development of pro-active strategies may bring some success in the continuance of seminary student enrollment.

Seminary dropouts were far less prone to attend church meetings. Barely half of the dropouts surveyed strongly believed that the Book of Mormon was scripture. The seminary dropout was considerably less likely to value his or her relationship with God and was less inclined to feel that God approves of the student’s life. While two-thirds of the dropouts expressed a desire to be a faithful member of the Church, nearly all of the graduates felt the same.

In reflecting upon the value of the seminary experience, graduates were far more likely to say that seminary had helped them gain a testimony of the gospel. Less than a third of the seminary dropouts stated that the program had prepared them well to serve a mission and to be married in the temple. Relatively few of the dropouts were inclined to say that they were living the gospel better as a result of taking seminary.

When the students’ plans for the future were measured, the dropouts were far less likely to indicate that they had a desire to be active in the Church, to be married, to go on a mission, and to go to the temple.

Most dropouts point to the time of day, that seminary was held, as creating an inconvenience. Far fewer dropouts than graduates felt that their seminary teacher made
the scriptures exciting to study. Less than a third of the dropouts felt as though they could share their problems with their seminary teacher.

**Recommendations**

Future studies may seek to measure the influence of deviant behavior (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, pre-marital sexual activity, gang activity, etc.) on the students’ decision to attend or discontinue seminary. While this study only surveyed the students themselves, important information regarding the issue of dropouts might have been obtained had the parents and ecclesiastical leaders been surveyed.

The Church Educational System must maintain its emphasis on recruiting teachers who are skilled in meeting the religious education needs of adolescents. These teachers should focus their efforts on assisting the individual student to develop a well-founded set of personal religious convictions and values. These private religious beliefs may provide the intrinsic motivation for the individual student to remain throughout the seminary program.

Inasmuch as the peer group seems to have an influence on the decision to dropout, active seminary students should be included in the efforts to reach out to those who have left the program.

**Summary**

In view of the fact that the majority of seminary dropouts stated that it does have a desire to be a faithful member of the Church, it is recommended that the Church Educational System continue to search for ways to assist students in persisting through the entirety of the seminary program.
The factors which seem to create the largest degrees of difference between graduates and dropouts, are those areas of private religious belief and personal religious practice of the individual student. The degree to which the student believes in and practices the standards of the Church the more likely that student is to have a successful seminary experience. Thus, efforts must be focused on assisting students to incorporate consistent private religious behavior into their lives.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

SEMINARY PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE
SEMINARY PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you? (circle one)
   1  Male
   2  Female

2. Are you graduating from high school this year? ___Yes ___No
   If No, please explain__________________________________________________

3. Were you enrolled in seminary for any part of the school years shown? (circle one answer for each year shown)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes, I was enrolled</th>
<th>No, I was not enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I will graduate from seminary this year and receive a four-year diploma.
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

5. Which of the following best describes your high school grades? (mark only one)
   ___ Mostly A
   ___ About half A and half B
   ___ Mostly B
   ___ About half B and half C
   ___ Mostly C
   ___ About half C and half D
   ___ Mostly D
   ___ Mostly below D

6. Who are you living with now? (circle one)
   1  My mother and father
   2  Mother and step-father
   3  Father and step-mother
   4  Mother only
   5  Father only
   6  Other relative (grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister)
   7  Foster family
   8  Spouse
   9  Roommates
   10 Live alone
   11 Other, please describe ________________________________
7. Have you lived with these same adults or in the same situation over the past four years or has your situation changed during that time? (circle one)
   1  Same situation over past four years
   2  Situation has changed at least once over past four years

8. Do you still live in the same house you lived in four years ago, or have you moved during that time? (circle one)
   1  Have lived in same house over past four years
   2  Moved at least once over past four years
      If moved, how many times in past four years? _______________________________

9. Do you work while in school? (circle one)
   ___A. No
   ___B. Yes, 0-5 hours a week
   ___C. Yes, 6-10 hours a week
   ___D. Yes, 11-20 hours a week
   ___E. Yes, over 21 hours a week

10. How often did you attend Sacrament meeting over the past three months? (circle one)
     1  Never or rarely
     2  1-2 times a month
     3  3-4 times a month

11. As you look to the future, which of the following things do you think you will do? (circle one number for each item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definitely will not</th>
<th>Probably will not</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Probably will</th>
<th>Definitely will</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be active in the Church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate from college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a job/career</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the temple</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go on a mission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate from seminary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How well do the following statements describe your personal experiences, feelings, or beliefs? (circle one number in each line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Exactly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

122
Please read each statement and then circle the number that best represents your feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. I attended seminary because I wanted to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have a desire to be a faithful member of the Church.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I would attend seminary regardless of how my parents feel about it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My parents believe in the necessity of taking seminary.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Most of my friends attend seminary.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I would attend seminary regardless of what my friends think.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My seminary teacher made the scriptures exciting to study.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Overall I really liked my seminary teachers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I felt I could share my problems with my seminary teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. If you live with your mother, how often does she attend Church meetings? (circle one)

1. Never
2. 1-2 times a month
3. 3-4 times a month
4. She is not a member of the Church.

14. If you live with your father, how often does he attend Church meetings? (circle one)

1. Never
2. 1-2 times a month
3. 3-4 times a month
4. He is not a member of the Church.
24. It was difficult for me to attend seminary because of when it was offered. 
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
25. My seminary experience helped me gain a testimony of the gospel. 
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
26. I feel I attended seminary with an eagerness to learn. 
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
27. I feel my seminary experience gave me good missionary preparation. 
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
28. I am living the gospel better as a result of taking seminary. 
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
29. My seminary experience helped me prepare for a temple marriage. 
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
30. If you were enrolled in seminary for some semesters and not for others, what are the main reasons you did not enroll for those semesters? 
   
   
   
   
   
31. The questions we asked may not tell us everything about you that is important. Please add any comments you would like to make. 
   
   
   
   
   
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND FEEDBACK!
APPENDIX B

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
L.D.S. SEMINARY PARTICIPATION STUDY

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

This is a request for your son or daughter to participate in research being conducted by Norman Gardner who is a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. While this project is not an official study of the L.D.S. Church, the questionnaire has been reviewed and approved by the Church Educational System of the L.D.S. Church.

The purpose of this study is to collect data which may help the seminary program to better meet the needs of all seminary students. The study will attempt to determine why some youth attend seminary for all four years and why others dropout.

The survey consists of a questionnaire which takes no more than ten minutes to complete. This will be administered at the seminary building during seminary class time. If this is acceptable to you, please sign this consent form and have your student return it to seminary. The survey will be given sometime during the next few days.

Your child's decision to participate in this survey is completely voluntary. It is important for you to know that there will be no names used in this study, every participant will remain anonymous.

If you have questions regarding this research project, you may contact Norman Gardner by phone at 895-9673, or by sending comments to P.O. Box 72273, Las Vegas, NV 89170-2273. You may also contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at 895-1357.

Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my child to participate in this study.

_________________________________________  PLEASE PRINT NAME
SIGNATURE

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

We hope that you will help us by participating in an important survey. We need to hear from you as this study will assist us to identify areas needing improvement in the seminary program. Your decision to take part in this survey is voluntary and you should discuss with your parents as to whether or not you should participate. Should you decide to help us with this survey, please sign this form along with one of your parents and return it to your seminary teacher. It should only take 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire which you will receive at seminary. If you have any questions about the survey, please call NORMAN GARDNER at 895-9673.

I understand that it is my choice to participate in this survey.

_________________________________________
PLEASE PRINT NAME

_________________________________________
SIGNATURE
APPENDIX C

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL APPROVAL
DATE: June 18, 1998

TO: Norman W. Gardner (EDL)
M/S 3002

FROM: Dr. Fred Preston
Chair, Social/Behavioral Committee
of the Institutional Review Board

RE: Status of Human Subject Protocol entitled:
"L.D.S. Seminary Participation: In the Greater Metropolitan Area
of Las Vegas, Nevada for the class of 1998"

OSP #303s0598-031s

This memorandum is official notification that the protocol for the project
referenced above has been approved by the Social/Behavioral Committee of the
Institutional Review Board. This approval is approved for a period of one
year from the date of this notification, and work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond a
year from the date of this notification, it will be necessary to request an
extension.

If you have any questions or require any assistance, please Marsha Green at
895-1357.

cc: G. Kops (EDL-3002)
OSP File
REFERENCES


Clark, J. R., Jr. (1938). The charted course of the Church in education. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.


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