

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The research carried out is known as descriptive research. This study intended to collect information regarding the life and ministry of Costa Rican evangelical pastors and to construct a profile that faithfully reflects their life and ministry worldview.

The following chapters will relate in detail how this information was collected. First, the research strategy will be outlined. Second, the procedures for implementing the strategy will be defined. Third, the variables of interest will be defined. Fourth, the procedure used to select the participants of the study will be stated. Fifth, the instrumentation for the survey will be discussed. Finally, the analysis procedure to be applied to the data will be presented.

Research Strategy

The research presented in this dissertation has been carried out according to the following steps:

1. Through precedent research and the Socio-religious Research Committee (CISRE) of the Evangelical Alliance (FAEC), key issues and concepts related to leadership and church growth were identified and incorporated into the structure of the research with a sensitivity to maintaining the Costa Rican world view.
2. With the input of CISRE and FAEC, the survey instrument drafts were constructed

and tested on selected segments of the pastoral population.

3. Interviews were conducted with Costa Rican church leaders to determine the degree of priority of these issues in the lives of the pastors and to maintain the study's fidelity to Costa Rican culture and world view.
4. In August 1994, preliminary data were collected using an initial pilot survey. This pilot survey was distributed to eighteen (18) evangelical pastors serving in Costa Rica.
5. After the pilot survey was returned, an analysis and comparison of data on variables of interest was carried out based on survey responses. From the information that was gathered, a second pilot survey was constructed.
6. In September 1995, a second pilot survey was distributed to larger sampling of thirty (30) Costa Rican pastors. Based on the findings of this survey, graphs were produced and presented to CISRE. Presentations were also made in several FAEC meetings to raise awareness in the study and to gain the support of the pastors and mission leaders. From this draft the final survey instrument was constructed.
7. The survey instrument was then distributed to the ten largest evangelical church associations and in meetings of the Evangelical Alliance.
8. Upon the return of the survey instruments data analysis and tabulations were carried out, as reported in Chapter IV.
9. After tabulating the data, interviews were carried out with thirty (30) selected

pastors. The results of these interviews is included in Chapter IV.

From the beginning the Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (FAEC) agreed to sponsor this study and gave its permission to use its logo in the survey instrument. This helped to give credibility to the study and assurance to the pastors that the information gathered would be kept confidential. Contact was also made with many church and mission leaders in Costa Rica who helped in carrying out this study.

Procedures of Implementation

As indicated above, the investigation presented in this paper is known as descriptive research. Descriptive research is defined as research that investigates human experience through surveys, case studies, and ethnographies with the desire to order experience and formulate theory.

This study used a survey instrument and interviews to gather information about the lives and ministries of Costa Rican pastors. All research questions were addressed through the use of a forty-five question survey instrument. The development and use of the survey instrument has already been described above (see Appendix C).

The survey instrument was used to collect data from evangelical pastors from the ten largest evangelical associations in Costa Rica recognized by the Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (FAEC). These ten associations were determined from the 1986 *Directory of the Protestant Movement* published by IMDELA. The study also tried to maintain a proportional balance between pastors serving in rural areas and those serving in the grand metropolitan area of San Jose, Costa Rica.

Based on the data collected through the survey, interviews were conducted with 30 of

the respondents. The pastors selected for this interview were not any of the 48 pastors used to prepare the first two drafts of the survey instrument. Based on the number of pastors responding from their respective associations a sample of at least 5% were selected to be interviewed.

The purpose of these interviews was to gather more information on research questions 5, 6, 9 & 10. These are as follows:

RQ5 What do pastors identify as their greatest areas of need?

RQ6 What obstacles does the pastor face in trying to achieve church growth in terms of the believers, his ministry vision and the community?

RQ 9 How would the pastor describe his community and is there a community profile that dominates the viewpoint of the pastors?

RQ10 What is the impact of the evangelical church in the lives of its members, and outsiders?

A list of the questions used for each of these research questions is found in Appendix D. By including interviews with pastors as a part of the study, the data gathered from the survey instrument was validated and refined to provide a better idea of the ministry context of the pastors lives and work.

Variables of Interest

There were two variables of interest that grew out of the need to know more about the Costa Rican evangelical pastors. These two variables were:

1. The worldview of the Costa Rican pastors. Identifying factors in their backgrounds and their priorities in listing their needs will be considered as highly indicative of their ministry posture.
2. The application of the pastors' worldview to the communities through their

ministries. Interviews and questions that dealt with descriptions of their communities and the problems of those communities served as one indicator of how they do this. A second indicator was how the pastors choose to appropriate their resources in the programs they promote in their ministries.

From the need to understand more about the world-view and its application in the lives of Costa Rican evangelical pastors, four areas of investigation were identified:

1. *Background information.* Those factors which have played key roles in the background development of the pastor as a person and as a professional. Interviews and responses from pastors in the areas of family, conversion, finances and academics helped to generate a background profile of the pastors.
2. *Needs.* Using background material from within the evangelical community as well as material from Costa Rican culture itself, a list of areas of possible needs for churches, the communities, and pastors was identified. Confirmation of these areas came from having the pastors prioritize those lists.
3. *Church profile.* Pivotal to understanding the pastors better was understanding more about their working environment. Here earlier studies conducted in Costa Rica (Halls and Gómez) were reviewed to make this study congruent with these previous efforts and thus amplify the base of knowledge about the Costa Rican evangelical church environment.
4. *Church - community interactions.* Those qualities that govern the interaction of

the church with the community and vice versa, in both positive and negative ways, formed an important part of understanding the ministry variables present in the lives of the pastors. The survey instrument and interviews were the principal mechanisms to gather the information used to form this part of the study. The next step was to define sampling methodology.

Participant Selection

Pastors from the ten largest evangelical church associations that are members of the Costa Rican Evangelical Alliance (FAEC) were targeted for this study. In the early stages, the methodology to carry out the study focused on disseminating and gathering the survey instruments during local Alliance groups meetings. After two months of trying this methodology it became apparent that not enough surveys were being returned to provide a valid body of information. It was at this time that a new methodology was proposed which involved approaching the ten largest evangelical associations and using their hierarchical structures to disseminate and collect the survey instruments. This change met with great success and in a matter of a couple of months 431 survey instruments were returned.

To help the pastors, as well as maintain the integrity of the information gathered, a assistant was trained who guided the pastors in completing the survey instruments. Survey instruments that contained more than eight un-answered questions (18%) were not considered valid for the purposes of this study. In the end, all of the 431 survey instruments returned qualified for use in forming the database for this study.

Instrumentation of the Survey

The survey instrument used to form this study included a total of forty-five questions. Eight were yes/no, eighteen were multiple-choice and checklist items for a total of twenty-six forced-choice items. In Chapter IV the data from these items will be presented as response frequencies. To allow more latitude and depth, eight open-ended items were included. These were strategically placed to allow pastors to elaborate responses to the forced-choice items. The instrument also included ten open-ended items that required the respondent to supply a numerical response (Appendix C).

Interpretation of the Data

It was anticipated that this study would gather and analyze three kinds of data.

1. *Document Research Data* - Information and data derived from the background research were subjected to analysis concurrent with its background.
2. *Survey Data* - Consists of three types of questions that were analyzed as follows:
 - a. *Forced-choice responses* were tabulated according to the frequency of choice by the pastors. These are listed in order of importance throughout Chapter IV. Proper perspective was maintained by taking into consideration the other questions of the survey and the opportunities given for amplification of an opinion through items utilizing the open-response format.
 - b. *Open-response data* - Open responses were context analyzed and tallied. When appropriate, graphs are constructed to facilitate information assimilation.
3. *Interviews* - From the total number of respondents to the survey instrument, 30

were chosen for formal interviews. These interviews were carried out using an interview schedule (Appendix D).

Data and information gathered through these methods are presented in text, tables, graphs, and charts in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

In the interpretation of data for comparison between rural and urban pastors it was necessary to present the findings in a proportional format. To do this, the general database was divided into two categories. Those survey instruments that came from the greater metropolitan San José were considered “urban” while those outside the area were considered “rural.” Once data were thus classified, the frequencies of responses were divided by the number of pastors in each category. This gave a percentage figure that represented each group equally and served as the basis for making comparisons.

This chapter has dealt with how the research strategy was carried out for this study down to how the data was interpreted. Chapter IV will present the findings of the data that was gathered from the survey instrument and interviews with the pastors.