

The Family Font: Family Backgrounds and Life Before Seminary

I was born in Iowa . . . an only child. My father was an inventor who placed an enormous amount of value on taking initiative . . . and always treated me as if I had good sense. . . . I think I was absolutely unsocialized in what most women my age were taught about domesticity. As I look back . . . I almost feel remorse that my mother played a very constrained role, very confined. . . . There was an undercurrent of feminism then that dealt with the male world by taking care of it and getting rid of it. And I remember feeling so close to my father that I made a very conscious decision that I wasn't going to do that, I wasn't going to make that kind of separatist covert proclamation. . . . I went to a very fancy girls' school, and I was president of everything . . . and I went to a university . . . and again I was leader. . . . My real conversion experience [to becoming an ordained minister] took place when [my parish minister] said, 'Well, it doesn't matter what women do and say anyway. Women are of no importance as far as the church and society are concerned.' He said that! . . . I had a special ministry at that point. . . . I wanted to be ordained, because to be so would perhaps change the Church in the way it treated women, because the authority still rests with the ordained person. . . . So to bring some integrity to the Church itself . . . was what I was all about, and that was absolutely clear to me at the time or I would never have gone to seminary.—CLERGYWOMAN

I was born in Hartford. . . . My parents were Welsh. My father didn't believe in educating women. Although he was very able to send me to school, he didn't feel that women should be educated for anything but home. He has his own business and he worked nights, so I was able to sneak out of the house to go to school. . . . I was in college for three years before he realized it. . . . Even though my parents weren't churchy, they

insisted that we be brought up in the church. . . . My mother attended church with me and my sister. The person who has had the most meaning to me in my entire life was the pastor. . . . He was already forty when I was a very little girl. I really learned to rely on him, and he was the person in my life I could talk to. I don't think I would have made it as a human being if it were not for him. Sometimes other women say that what we need are female models, but as far as I am concerned, he was the best model I could have had. I knew that I wanted to be a person just like him, and even when I was a little girl I wanted to become a full-time church worker.—CLERGYWOMAN

Who are the women entering parish ministry today? What kinds of influences have led them to choose this traditionally male profession? In this chapter, we look at the social origins of women who have become ordained ministers, comparing them with our sample of clergymen. We look at parental influences, including parents' relationships to the church, the clergy's prior religious involvement, their college experience, and the decision to enter seminary.

Parental Influence and Upbringing

The two women, quoted above, were among the first to enter their seminaries; although they are from quite different backgrounds, it is evident that, as children, each knew a man who modeled in both his behavior and life style the kind of person she wished to become, and gave her personal encouragement in following in his footsteps. Frequently for other women, this man was a relative (for example, several women reported that it was a grandfather, and for one a living great-grandfather, a Baptist preacher). Mothers were less often mentioned as influential role models, probably because they were strictly involved in the domestic scene. This is a confinement many of these clergywomen volunteered in interviews that they had rejected for themselves as a life style at an early age. A 1980 study of 183 women M.Div. students of the Boston Theological Institute member seminaries indicated that similar findings about the importance of a childhood male role model hold even for those women who are entering seminary now. Often, these women became dissatisfied after immersing themselves for some years in the housewife and mother routines. Carole R. Bohn, who conducted this 1980 study of women seminarians, drew up a composite portrait from her data of the typical woman seminarian, a composite she calls "Ellen":

. . . By the time her second child was born, Ellen was comfortably at home with her various jobs of wife, mother and active churchwoman. As

*she passed her thirtieth birthday, Ellen began to feel restless. She was always busy, but never seemed to have enough to do. . . . Her mother, who had also been a teacher and homemaker, sympathized with Ellen's feeling, but told her it would pass. Ellen's mother had always been a strong source of emotional support, but now as she looked at her family origin, it seemed to her that it was her father's attitude toward life that she wanted to emulate. He was an active, aggressive businessman, who had always seemed to know what he wanted and how to get it. Why couldn't she approach life that way? . . .*¹

For women clergy and present seminarians, it does not appear to have been crucial that the male model during their growing-up years specifically encouraged these women to enter the ordained ministry. What was important was only that he stressed the importance to the woman of being her own person, making her own decisions, even if these were very different from those her friends made. Or, to put it another way, clergywomen were not specifically pushed toward the ministry by their fathers or father surrogates; rather, these men held the door open for the women to enter this vocation if they chose.

Having a clergyman as father was the experience of a number of women and men in our sample. Equal proportions of both men and women ordained before 1975 and after had clergy fathers. Before 1975, 15 percent of the women had clergy fathers compared to 14 percent of the men. For those ordained in 1975 or after, 12 percent of both of the women and the men had clergy fathers. These findings strongly suggest that pastor fathers modeled an occupational role and commitment just as compelling to their daughters as to their sons (perhaps regardless of whether such fathers were approving or appalled at the idea of their daughters following in their footsteps).

An important difference between the parental backgrounds of these women and men pastors is that the women were somewhat more likely than the men to be born to upper-middle class parents. One of the attributes of persons that sociologists regularly take into account is their social class. Social class is generally defined as the level or stratum which an individual (or group) occupies in a given society by virtue of his or her (or its) occupation, income, education, power, and prestige. In modern society, an individual's position on each of these attributes may very well not be consistent. For example, people of great wealth do not necessarily have a high level of education nor much prestige; or, to take a more mundane example, the pastor with the Master of Divinity or the Doctor of Ministry degree may not be making as high an annual salary as the parishioner with the high school education who is a union truck driver. Nevertheless, while the boundaries between social

classes are unclear, social class background and present social position have been found regularly to be correlated with political values, lifestyles, types of mental illness, differences in patterns of friendship, participation in voluntary organizations, child rearing practices, and a host of other behaviors including occupational choice.² The linkages between social class indicators—typically income, education, and occupation—together or separately, and the various attitudes and behaviors is not always clear; nevertheless, the fact that these links are often present makes attention to these social class attributes important in sociological analysis.

Although there is a wide range in educational and occupational attainments of the parents of these men and women pastors, 33 percent of the clergymen had fathers who had not finished high school, compared to only 16 percent of the clergywomen. To be sure, at least part of this is due to the fact that the clergywomen in the sample are younger on the average than the men. Given the rise in the proportion of persons finishing high school over the decades, one would expect their fathers to be better educated. When we control for age, women are slightly more likely to come from families where the father was better educated than are the men. Also, women are more likely to have had fathers in professional or business executive careers than clergymen. This is especially true for those ordained in 1975 or later. Almost one-third of the women as compared with one-tenth of the men had professional or executive fathers. Having a father who is pursuing a professional or business career may be more important to women than to men in becoming parish ministers, partly since women, unlike men, are entering a non-traditional occupation for them. Because of this, women may have a greater need for a father model who is or was himself engaged in pursuing a top-level job involving considerable initiative and risk taking.

There are also alternative or additional explanations for the fact that women parish ministers tend to come from higher status family backgrounds than their male counterparts. One is that the ministry is seen as a path toward upward social mobility for the sons of lower-middle class and working class families.³ Daughters of such families, however, would probably be actively discouraged from the ministry as a vocation, due to the tendency for lower social classes to be more theologically fundamentalist in orientation to the Bible and to women's place in religious leadership.⁴ While upper-middle class parents also wish their sons to attain a high occupational and educational status, they are more likely to push their male offspring to be doctors, lawyers, or business executives like themselves. If sons of such higher socio-economic families do go into the ministry, they are more likely to aspire to positions

of greater influence in the denomination or special ministries, rather than the parish.⁵ Daughters in these business executive and professional families have two advantages over daughters of office workers, shopkeepers, civil service, and blue collar breadwinners. First, their families are more likely to have sufficient income to educate both sons and daughters through college and beyond. Second, parents in such families also are probably sufficiently liberal (theologically, socially, and politically) and sufficiently indulgent to support their daughters attending seminary, and even take some pride in the fact that their daughters are doing something relatively unique for women.

These general findings and associated explanations may not, however, hold for all mainline Protestant denominations ordaining women. That there are differences among denominations in the social and economic characteristics of members is a fairly well-researched phenomenon.⁶ It would seem that such differences might similarly distinguish the clergy in one denomination from those in another, insofar as family background is concerned. Clergy in this present study do indeed differ in their social class origins according to denomination, as can be seen in Table 3.1. Episcopalian, Lutheran Church in America, and United Presbyterian clergy have better educated parents and fathers who are more likely to have been business executives or professionals than, for example, American Baptist, Disciples of Christ, and American Lutheran clergy.⁷

It is still true, however, that within each denomination, clergywomen are more likely to have better educated parents and fathers in higher status occupations than clergymen. Some denominations show more or less differences between the two groups than others. For example, there is little if any significant difference between the sexes in the United Church of Christ in relation to parental background, whereas the differences between the sexes in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. are quite large.

These last two findings may bear out the place of high family status in overcoming cultural impediments to women's choice of clergy as a future occupation, since the Presbyterian Church U.S. is primarily located in the South, where greater traditionalism still applies to the role of women. It is also interesting to note that mothers of PCUS women clergy were most likely of all the denominational clergy mothers to be business executives or professionals themselves (29 percent) and have attained at least a four-year college degree (48 percent). In contrast, the more urban and northeastern geographical base of the United Church of Christ would indicate less need for women to overcome barriers to enter professions in the church or elsewhere.

The preceding analysis of why a greater proportion of clergywomen

Table 3.1 Parental Background of Clergymen and Clergymen

A. Father's Occupation	Present Denomination																			
	ABC		CC(D)		EC		LCA		ALC		PCUS		UPC		UMC		UCC			
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M		
Clergy	17	11	17	8	7	13	4	11	3	14	5	15	12	12	13	14	22	22	22	
Bus. exec. or professional	14	5	17	8	42	28	40	11	26	9	57	4	39	23	22	7	25	25	20	
Middle mgmt., small business, civil servant, clerical worker	35	39	28	30	39	33	30	32	33	25	24	54	43	32	31	31	26	26	28	
Blue collar or farm worker, unemployed	34	45	38	54	12	26	26	46	38	52	14	29	15	33	34	48	27	30	30	
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
	(66)	(62)	(47)	(64)	(77)	(99)	(54)	(44)	(39)	(65)	(21)	(24)	(73)	(111)	(127)	(137)	(90)	(90)	(90)	
B. Father's Highest Level of Education																				
Less than high school	27	43	26	33	6	17	14	34	17	46	10	40	11	30	20	40	12	26	26	
High school graduate	25	18	16	36	19	13	27	28	33	24	14	8	17	19	24	21	19	19	25	
Technical training or some college	15	22	16	14	20	28	13	17	21	3	33	24	15	12	15	22	19	10	10	
College graduate	10	0	22	8	24	13	18	4	10	9	5	12	15	16	17	6	13	13	8	
Post-graduate education	23	17	20	9	31	29	28	17	19	18	38	16	42	23	24	11	37	31	31	
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
	(67)	(63)	(50)	(66)	(80)	(103)	(55)	(47)	(42)	(46)	(21)	(25)	(74)	(116)	(133)	(146)	(93)	(93)	(93)	

<i>C. Mother's Occupation</i> Bus. exec. or professional (includes clergy) Middle mgmt., small business, civil servant, clerical worker Farm or factory worker, waitress, salesperson (clerk) Housewife	11	4	16	5	15	15	17	7	14	14	29	10	18	9	16	6	14	7
	31	20	26	14	14	14	35	17	31	21	9	8	20	12	24	19	20	10
	5	3	8	6	5	4	5	11	5	8	0	8	4	3	6	10	3	8
	53	71	50	75	66	67	43	65	50	66	62	64	58	76	54	65	63	75
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Total</i> (N)	(66)	(65)	(50)	(64)	(79)	(102)	(54)	(46)	(42)	(64)	(21)	(25)	(71)	(45)	(137)	(140)	(93)	(88)
<i>D. Mother's Highest Level of Education</i> Less than high school High school graduate Technical training or some college College graduate Post-graduate education <i>Total</i> (N)	19	23	15	23	7	19	14	23	9	47	9	24	9	24	13	30	12	21
	29	38	27	36	30	26	33	38	33	14	24	12	20	29	28	29	26	31
	30	34	33	32	26	25	25	24	38	21	19	36	35	29	34	23	29	26
	12	3	19	6	28	17	20	15	10	7	33	16	23	12	15	9	21	12
	10	2	6	3	9	13	8	0	10	11	15	12	13	6	10	9	12	10
100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Total</i> (N)	(67)	(65)	(52)	(66)	(80)	(106)	(55)	(47)	(42)	(66)	(21)	(25)	(74)	(116)	(137)	(143)	(93)	(92)

Fuchs Epstein reports that, compared to men in this profession, women tended to come from the better educated and wealthier families, who were both willing to encourage and financially support their daughters in law school. Not only were women lawyers somewhat more likely to have mothers who worked outside the home than men, but women lawyers' mothers who worked were more apt to be in professional occupations than working mothers of men lawyers. However, most mothers of women lawyers did not work in professional occupations, and Epstein reports that for many women lawyers:

Their mothers were negative role models in some ways. They felt that their mothers' lives had been frustrating and unfulfilling, and their talents had been subordinated to their roles as wives and mothers. Further, many mothers encouraged their daughters not to follow in their footsteps.⁸

The similarities between the backgrounds of women pastors and women lawyers are close enough that a further question has to be raised: why did these women choose the ministry over some other career? A partial answer may lie in the religious socialization of the future clergyperson.

Parental Church-Going and the Clergy's Denominational Backgrounds

Less than ten percent of the parents of these clergy were unchurched or inactive in a church when these future pastors were growing up, and about two-thirds of both these men and women had at least one parent who was active or very active in a church when the clergy were children. This is perhaps a major reason why there was very little denominational switching by the clergy. That is, 69 percent of the clergywomen and 72 percent of the clergymen were ordained in the denomination in which they were raised. Another 9 percent of both sexes were not raised in any one denomination, and eventually settled on the one in which they were ordained. About a fifth of these men and women (22 percent and 20 percent respectively) changed denominations from the one in which they were brought up. Table 3.2 shows patterns of denominational stability or switching by denomination.

The denominations which have the highest percentage of clergy who switched into another denomination are the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ. The Lutherans, both LCA and ALC, in contrast were the denominations most likely to have clergy who were born into them. A number of factors could account for these differences. Parental socialization may have been important; certainly the Episcopal clergy were the ones (both men and women) least likely among the

Table 3.2 Original Denomination, Present Denomination, and Sex of Clergy

Original Denomination	Present Denomination											
	ABC W M %	CC(D) W M %	EC W M %	LCA W M %	ALC W M %	PCUS W M %	UPC W M %	UMC W M %	UCC W M %			
Same	78	72	52	91	84	71	68	66	62	58		
Different	22	28	48	9	16	29	32	34	38	42		
Total (N)	100 (65)	100 (50)	100 (79)	100 (56)	100 (38)	100 (21)	100 (72)	100 (137)	100 (86)	100 (92)		

denominations to report that their parents were active in church when they were growing up. Episcopal clergy, therefore, may have felt freer to choose a denomination different from their parents than clergy whose parents had been very active in or committed to the denomination. Further, both the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ are typified as being upper-middle class. Some clergy may have transferred into either of them as a means of upward social mobility. Although analysis indicates that Episcopal men and women in particular who had switched from another denomination were less likely to have college-educated fathers than if they had been consistently Episcopalians, it is *generally* the case that those who switched denominations came from less well-educated families. However, this may be more due to lack of consistent parental religious socialization than any desire for upward social mobility. Correlations show that the lower the education and occupation of these clergy's parents, the more likely they were to be relatively inactive in the church when their children were growing up.

Religious socialization by parents and others during childhood further seems the most appropriate explanation of the relative stability of denominational commitment among the Lutheran clergy. Although approximately two-thirds of the Lutheran pastors' parents were active in the church when their children were growing up, they were not more active than parents of clergy in other denominations (with the exception of the Episcopalians). The greater stability here may have something to do not only with the fact that the Lutherans tend to have stronger ethnic ties than most other Protestant denominations; but there also may be a theological factor involved, in that the Lutheran commitment to a particular confessional or doctrinal stance may inhibit denominational change.⁹

Denominations also differ in the amount of discrepancy between men and women clergy in their degree of denominational switching. Women, as shown in Table 3.1, were 20 percent more likely than men to have switched into the Presbyterian Church, U.S., and 15 percent more likely than men to have switched into the Episcopal Church before ordination. Since the switchers in both these denominations came originally from a range of denominations and seemed to be equally divergent in other characteristics, it is probably the case that many of them were those who changed to their husbands' denomination. Men were slightly more likely than women to switch into the Lutheran Church in America, a factor which may or may not be influenced by recent unrest in a sister denomination. But overall it must be underlined again that the predominant pattern for these clergy is one of consistent and active religious socialization in one denomination.

These findings accord with earlier studies of clergy which have indicated that most were set on the path toward that profession early in life, usually in families where religion and religious practice were taken seriously.¹⁰ The active involvement of parents in churches when these clergy were children was an important factor. Correlation analysis reveals that the more active the parents were, the more active these future clergy were in church during their young adult or college years. All told, fully 63 percent of the women and 72 percent of the men reported being active in the church as young adults, and of these, slightly under half (45 percent) of both sexes indicated that they were very active in a church between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two.

These percentages also suggest that the clergy's own involvement in a church during the college years was more important than the degree of parental activity during their childhood in predisposing them to make early decisions to enter seminary. Although by definition almost all the clergy in our sample eventually went to seminary, there is a high probability that potentially promising students who might have made good pastors decided not to because they were not involved in church during college. The college years open up many opportunities to young people; and for good students of both sexes, there are professional and academic career possibilities in occupations which are more remunerative and often have higher social prestige than ministry. Being heavily involved in a church during college would seem to be some inoculation against being lured into other professions.

College and Other Experiences Prior to Entering Seminary

Educational requirements are high for clergy in the mainline Protestant churches, and all but 3 percent of the women and 4 percent of the men earned a four-year college degree. The favorite major for both women and men was religion and/or philosophy, with 27 percent of the women and 25 percent of the men opting for this major. English and journalism followed, along with the social and behavioral sciences—anthropology, sociology, and psychology—for both men and women. It is only after these most popular majors that a division can be seen between the interests of women and men, with the women preferring speech, arts, music, and education, and men history, political science, economics, physical sciences, and mathematics.

Clergywomen and men attended different types of colleges about equally. Around half—45 percent of the women to 57 percent of the men—went to religious or church-related colleges. Private secular colleges enrolled a minority of these clergy—16 percent of the women to 15 percent of the men. Public colleges are the alma maters of about a third—39 percent of the women clergy, 28 percent of the men. Overall,

it can be seen that men were more likely than women to go to denominational colleges, whereas women were more likely to go to public colleges than men. Most of this difference between sexes in types of colleges attended is probably due to the relatively younger age of the clergywomen and concomitant later date of attendance. Not only were there more church-related colleges earlier in this century, but also there have been marked increases both in tuition costs at private institutions and in the quality of education available at a more moderate cost at state institutions.

Denominational differences in kinds of colleges attended by men and women clergy indicate that Episcopal, United Presbyterian and United Church of Christ men and women clergy were most likely (between one-fifth and two-fifths) to attend private secular colleges. Unlike the situation in other denominations, where more men than women attended church-related colleges, Presbyterian Church U.S. clergywomen were more likely to attend such schools than PCUS men, 61 percent to 43 percent. This is probably due to the fact that, in the South, private colleges are for the most part church related, and it is to private colleges that the PCUS business executive and professional fathers are more likely to send their daughters.¹¹ Disciples women were also very likely to attend church-related colleges in equal proportions to the men (63 percent of the women, 64 percent of the men). This may be due to the recruiting efforts of these Disciples denominational colleges for both women and men, as well as other factors.¹² For Disciples clergy, as well as those in all other denominations, type of college attended has changed over the last generation and certainly in the past decade, with those clergy (both men and women) who went to college in the sixties much more likely to have gone to a public college than those who received their college educations earlier than this. (Indeed among clergy who began seminary after 1970, there is no difference between men and women in the percent who went to public colleges—42 percent of the women and 40 percent of the men.)

One would expect to find more future clergy who were unchurched or nominally church-related during their college years at public and private secular colleges, and more clergy who were active and leaders in churches as young adults at religious colleges. There is probably both greater opportunity and social pressure for those at the latter institutions to be active in churches; in addition, those who attend religious colleges are already likely to be active churchgoers. One study showed that students who attended church-related colleges were as religiously oriented as seniors as they had been as freshmen, whereas those who attended public and private secular colleges became more secular. The authors of this study term this the "anchoring effect" that religious

Table 3.3 Church Activity During the Ages 18 to 22
(by Type of College Attended and Sex)

<i>Church Activity During College Years</i>	<i>Type of College</i>					
	<i>Public</i>		<i>Secular Private</i>		<i>Church Related</i>	
	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>
	%		%		%	
a. Unchurched to nominally church related	22	20	37	26	20	12
b. Average to active church relationship	33	34	26	34	33	41
c. Very active and a leader in a church	45	46	37	40	4	47
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(215)	(189)	(89)	(101)	(248)	(381)

colleges can have on students' religious beliefs "in an increasingly secularized society."¹³ Religious colleges might be expected, then, to better maintain student's religious values and practices. In Table 3.3 we examine this issue for the clergymen and women in our study.

As can be seen from the table, religious colleges do *not* seem to have had a significantly greater impact on the church activity of future clergy than any other type of college. There were no consistent differences in activity attributable to college type. Possibly family background is the more important factor in predicting future clergy's involvement in a church during their college years as another study suggested.¹⁴ However, the amount of father's education had absolutely no relationship to church involvement during college of clergymen, whether they were in public, private secular, or religious colleges. It had only a slight effect on the church involvement of clergywomen, regardless of what kind of college they attended. Women from families where the father had only a high school education or less were slightly more likely to be very active in church during college.

Church activity in college should also be associated with the time of decision to enter seminary. Table 3.4 shows this relationship. It reveals that the greater amount of church activity during college, the more likely both men and women were to make an early decision to attend seminary. The clergy who were relatively unchurched during their college years were more likely to decide after college graduation to enter seminary. This was especially true for men. Women, however, tend to make a later decision to enter seminary than men at each level of church participation during their college years.

**Table 3.4 Percent Making a Late Decision to Enter Seminary
(by Church Activity During College)**

<i>Church Activity During College</i>	<i>W</i> %	<i>M</i> %
Unchurched to nominally church related	68 (of 148)	41 (of 112)
Average to active church relationship	44 (of 192)	30 (of 276)
Very active in church	42 (of 273)	14 (of 327)
Tau Beta correlations between church activity during college and whether decision to enter seminary was made before, during, or after college	-.17 (sig. .001)	-.20 (sig. .0001)

Although the type of college attended may not have had much effect on how active future clergy were in church during their college years, it does seem to have had an effect on the timing of their decision to enter seminary, as can be observed in Table 3.5. Both clergywomen and men were most likely to decide to enter seminary before they finished college if they attended a church-related college, less likely if they attended a secular private college, and least likely if they attended a public college.

Actually, it would seem from Table 3.6 that both the amount of

**Table 3.5 Timing of Decision to Enter Seminary
(by Type of College Attended and Sex)**

<i>Decision to Attend Seminary</i>	<i>Type of College</i>					
	<i>Public</i>		<i>Secular Private</i>		<i>Church Related</i>	
	<i>W</i> %	<i>M</i> %	<i>W</i> %	<i>M</i> %	<i>W</i> %	<i>M</i> %
Before college	10	25	8	20	12	44
During college	30	46	47	53	49	42
After college	60	29	45	27	39	14
<i>Total</i> (N)	100 (122)	100 (188)	100 (88)	100 (100)	100 (246)	100 (380)

church activity during college and the type of college attended have a somewhat independent, additive effect on men and women's decisions to enter seminary. Both men and women who go to public colleges and are relatively unchurched during their college years are least likely to decide before or during college to enter seminary; whereas, men and women who go to a religious college and are active in church during their college years are more likely to decide to enter seminary before college graduation. Consistently, and in both of these cases, women are significantly less likely than men to decide to enter seminary before they have finished college. For example, among those who had attended religious colleges and were very active in church, women were still 24 percent more likely than men to decide after college graduation to attend seminary; and among those who attended public colleges and were relatively unchurched, women were 31 percent more likely than men to decide after college graduation to attend seminary. Whatever "anchoring" effect attendance at a religious college and/or high involvement in a local church during college has on men's commitment to a ministerial vocation, it is much weaker for women. Perhaps highly religious women in *some* denominational colleges were discouraged from translating their church commitment into seminary attendance by faculty and other students at these colleges. Such women might have done better in terms of their seminary aspirations if they attended a secular college, where faculty and students would have been more indifferent to their plans to go to seminary and pursue a ministerial career. On the whole, however, as observed in Table 3.5, the atmosphere, curriculum, and people at religious colleges are conducive to both women and men making a relatively early decision to attend seminary.

Indeed, the differences between men and women in their career paths to the ministry are probably most visible in the factor of their time of decision to enter seminary. Of the total sample, only 10 percent of the women as compared to 35 percent of the men decided before college to enter seminary, and 49 percent of the women compared to only 21 percent of the men decided after college graduation. Further, this general trend holds true across denominations; women are more likely to decide to enter seminary after college than are men in every denomination. However, the strength of the relationship between church activity, type of college attended and time of decision to enter seminary varies somewhat among the denominations. For example, Disciples women were both most likely of all clergywomen to go to church-related colleges and most likely to be very active in a church during the college years, and there were no significant differences between Disciples men and women clergy in these ways (approximately

**Table 3.6 Percentage of Late Deciders* to Enter Seminary
(by Amount of Church Activity During College)**

<i>Amount of Church Activity During College Years</i>	<i>Type of College Attended</i>					
	<i>Public</i>		<i>Secular Private</i>		<i>Church Related</i>	
	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>
	%		%		%	
Unchurched or nominally church related	77 (of 47)	46 (of 35)	73 (of 33)	44 (of 25)	57 (of 49)	28 (of 43)
Average to active church relationship	57 (of 70)	39 (of 64)	26 (of 23)	18 (of 34)	35 (of 82)	14 (of 155)
Very active in a church	54 (of 93)	15 (of 87)	31 (of 32)	24 (of 41)	34 (of 115)	10 (of 180)
Tau Beta correlations between time of decision to enter seminary and clergy's church participation during college	-.15 (sig. .006)	-.22 (.0005)	-.38 (.001)	-.16 (.04)	-.13 (.01)	-.20 (.001)

*Late deciders are those deciding after college graduation to attend seminary.

63 to 65 percent of Disciples men and women went to denominational colleges and were very active in churches during these years). In short, religious colleges proved to be an "anchoring" influence on Disciples youth of either sex. Yet the difference between Disciples women and men clergy in the time of decision to attend seminary was insignificantly different from the difference between men and women in five other denominations. For example, Disciples women were 40 percent less likely than Disciples men to decide to go to seminary before college, and 21 percent more likely than Disciples men to decide only after college graduation to attend seminary.

To take another denominational example, American Lutheran men were most likely of all clergy to attend denominational colleges (74 percent), and though a substantial number of ALC women also attended denominational colleges (54 percent), they have done so less than men. Nevertheless, slightly more ALC clergywomen than men (45 percent to 37 percent) were very active in a church during college; however, proportionately fewer ALC women than men decided before college graduation that they would go to seminary (60 percent to 74 percent). American Baptist and United Methodist men and women

clergy findings closely parallel these reported for the American Lutheran.

One explanation for the finding that clergywomen overall and in each denomination were significantly more likely than men to make a late decision to enter seminary (that is, after college graduation), is surely that women receive less support from family, friends, and clergy for embarking on a seminary and ministerial career. Even though women's decisions to enter seminary were less likely than men's to be identical with decisions to enter the ordained ministry, they faced more negative and hostile reactions to this educational direction than did men. The extra time it took women to reach a firm decision to enter seminary reflects a lack of support from close associates as well as a greater uncertainty concerning how they would or could use their seminary education. Men were 17 percent more likely to feel supported by their family in their decision to enter seminary (80 percent to 63 percent of the men and women reported family support), while more women than men (24 percent to 11 percent) reported that their families were antagonistic or divided in response to the news that they intended to go to seminary. Similarly, men reported more support from their pastors (93 percent) for their intention to go to seminary than women (77 percent). However, best friends' support was more nearly equally recalled by both men (71 percent) and women (69 percent).

This discrepancy *between* sexes in the support of family members for their decision to go to seminary reported was particularly high in the United Church of Christ, United Methodist, American Baptist and the Lutheran Church in America (over 20 percentage points difference between women and men.) Little difference between the sexes was found in amount of family support reported in the Disciples of Christ and the Episcopal denominations, mainly because the clergymen in these denominations did not report as much support from family members as did the men in the other denominations. Yet, it should be noted that at least a slight majority of women in every denomination reported support from their family and from their pastors for their decision to attend seminary.

While over 90 percent of the men in all denominations except PCUS reported that their pastors supported their intentions, in no denomination were percentages of women reporting this source of support as high. Women consistently reported less support than men from pastors—particularly in the Lutheran Church in America—except in the Presbyterian Church U.S., where men and women are nearly equal in reported support from pastors (81 percent to 83 percent).

Lack of support from family and pastors may be partially compensated for by obtaining support from best friends for the decision to attend seminary. In two denominations, the Episcopal and the United Presby-

terian Churches, women were ten to twelve percentage points more likely to say their best friends supported their decision. In three other denominations, however—the American Baptist, the American Lutheran and the United Methodist—men were between eleven and eighteen percentage points also more likely to say their best friends were supportive. In the remaining denominations—Disciples, Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church U.S., and the United Church of Christ—there were no significant differences between clergymen and women. It may be of interest to note that higher percentages of both men and women clergy in the Presbyterian Church U.S. reported support from best friends in their intention to enter seminary than did clergy in any other denomination (86 percent of the women and 87 percent of the PCUS men).

One may choose one's friends or switch pastors, but find it more difficult to withdraw physically or psychologically from one's family. Receiving antagonistic reactions from their families when it occurred was very painful for the women, as evinced by the following women's comments on their families' reactions to their decision to enter a seminary program:

My family was horrified. My mother said, "The church is no place for a woman!"

My father said, "Everyone has the prerogative to wreck their lives."

My father said, "Ministry is a dead-end career"; my mother said she was afraid I would never marry.

My family thought it was the most asinine thing a girl could do.

Even the so-called supportive parents of future clergywomen were often a bit bewildered as to why their daughters should be choosing this type of graduate education.

Timing of Decision and Age on Entering Seminary: Trends for Men and Women

Another reason for the generally later decision of women to enter seminary than men may have more to do with the whole culture and place of ministry within this culture at the time women were in college, as compared to men. It seems that both men and women have been making later decisions to enter seminary in recent years. For example, among clergy ordained after 1978, compared to those ordained before 1957, women ordained more recently were considerably more likely to have made a later decision than those ordained earlier (60 percent to 23 percent). This is also true of men (31 percent of the men ordained after

1978 decided after college to attend seminary compared to 13 percent of the men ordained before 1957). Women still made later decisions in the more recent period than did men, but the difference between the sexes in time of decision making is diminishing.

This trend is also visible across denominations. In all denominations, but in varying degrees, men ordained after 1975 were more likely to have decided after college to attend seminary than men ordained before 1975 (although numbers of men in each denomination in the sample ordained after 1974 are often too few to be statistically reliable). Given the general factor of modernization, particularly its secularizing trend, it may well be that men as well as women receive less social support for a decision to enter the clergy profession. Some of this comes, not necessarily from family, friends, or church personnel, but from the broader society.

There is some indication that professions, or other occupations which have higher social prestige, have a higher proportion of students making an early decision to attend graduate professional school in the particular discipline than a profession with lower social ranking.¹⁵ Higher social prestige makes the occupation appear more visible and attractive to youth. To assess respondents' attitudes toward the social prestige of the professional ministry, we asked them their degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement: "The ordained ministry still carries a prestige and dignity which no other profession shares." Clergywomen are 21 percent more likely than clergymen to *disagree* with the statement. Further, there is a slight but significant tendency for men to disagree with this statement the younger they are (in particular) and the later they have been ordained. (Correlations for age and year of ordination are not significant for women, probably since they are more clustered together in date of birth or ordination than are men.)

Quite apart from cultural images of ministry as a profession and personal support available for students contemplating attending a graduate level seminary, financing of a college and a seminary education may have been more problematic in the last decade than it was previously. It is possible for a young person to decide to enter seminary in high school or college without having any idea about whether or not he or she would have sufficient funds to pursue a seminary education; however, whether individuals actually enter a seminary at a relatively early age may be as much dependent on money available to them as anything else.

For whatever combination of reasons, as might be expected from the later time of women's decision to enter seminary, they do in fact enter seminary at an older age than do clergymen, with 13 percent more men

Table 3.7 Age Entered Seminary and Time of Decision to Enter Seminary

Decision to Attend Seminary	Early Vocationals (Ages 20 to 22)		Delayed Vocationals (Ages 23 to 28)		Second Careerers (Age 29 and Over)	
	W	M	W	M	W	M
	%		%		%	
Before college	14	40	8	28	8	33
During college	74	53	23	42	13	21
After college	12	7	69	30	79	46
<i>Total</i> (N)	100 (227)	100 (361)	100 (213)	100 (247)	100 (151)	100 (87)

entering seminary by age twenty-two (39 percent of the women, 52 percent of the men), and twice as large a proportion of women (26 percent of the women, 13 percent of the men) entering seminary at age twenty-nine or older.

While there is certainly a rough association for both men and women between the time they decide definitely to enter seminary and when they actually begin their seminary program, as Table 3.7 depicts, men are considerably more likely than women to have made a decision to enter seminary they are not able to put into effect immediately (because of finances, the draft, or some other reason). Most of the women who in fact did not enter seminary by age twenty-two did not make a decision to embark on a seminary program until sometime after they finished college.

Table 3.7 depicts a somewhat arbitrary grouping of clergy based on the ages they began seminary. Those who entered seminary by the age of 22, termed the Early Vocationals, are likely to have finished college in four years and gone directly or almost directly into seminary. Students who began seminary between the ages of 23 and 28 either took longer than four years to complete college or began seminary several years after college graduation, perhaps after working full time or trying out another field of study. At any rate, those persons, here termed the Delayed Vocationals, had probably more work and obviously more life experience before they began seminary. Students who began seminary at age 29 or later are most likely to have immersed themselves briefly or extensively in other occupations and disciplines or, in the case of many women, in the major role of full-time homemaker.

Among clergy who entered seminary before age 22, it appears that 41 percent of the women and 31 percent of the men had worked full time

prior to ordination. Among those who entered seminary a little later, between the ages of 23 and 28, 72 percent of the women and 70 percent of the men had worked full time. A higher and identical proportion of men and women who entered seminary at age 29 or older had worked full time prior to ordination—86 percent of both sexes.

Although probably many of these clergy worked during seminary (as well as during and after college) the following table gives a rough indication of what other kinds of occupations clergy who entered seminary at different ages might have pursued. It shows that, of those clergy who worked full time prior to ordination and specified what this occupation was, women who worked outside the home were in higher status occupations than men who worked prior to ordination. It should be stressed that these figures are for women and men who are *now* in the parish ministry. Interviews with faculty members suggest that an increasing number of older women have not only been coming into seminary in recent years, but tend to come from a "first career" as a homemaker. However, the data on the present clergy suggest that women actually did try other occupations (often teacher, nurse, social worker, or librarian, as well as secretary—the more culturally stereotyped

Table 3.8 Type of Full-Time Occupation of Clergy Prior to Ordination
(by Age of Entering Seminary and Sex)

<i>Type of Full-Time Occupation</i>	<i>Early Vocationals (Ages 20–22)</i>		<i>Delayed Vocationals (Ages 23–28)</i>		<i>Second Careerers (Age 29 and Over)</i>	
	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>
	%		%		%	
Professional business executives	37	14	48	22	59	15
Middle management, semi or paraprofessionals, civil service, technicians	24	25	24	24	26	47
Clerical workers, sales, owners of small businesses, police officers, military (non-officers), postal clerks	30	26	24	25	14	18
Farmers, firemen, machinists, hairstylists, skilled manual laborers	9	35	4	28	1	20
<i>Total (N)</i>	100 (90)	100 (103)	100 (151)	100 (164)	100 (126)	100 (73)

"women's" occupations) before deciding to go to seminary. In spite of the influence of religious families and long activity in the church, women give evidence here of interrupted career paths toward the ministry as toward other professions.

This tendency holds across denominational lines. Only among the Disciples is there a variation from a consistent pattern of more women than men in "second careers" as clergy. There are, however, differences among the denominations. The Episcopal Church has the highest proportion of "second career" women now serving as priests than any other denomination (45 percent), with Baptists and Disciples having the lowest proportion of "second career" women among their parish clergy (15 percent). The Presbyterians, particularly the United Prebyterians, have the lowest proportion of "second career" men (5 percent). However, in none of the denominations does the number of clergymen who started seminary after age twenty-eight exceed 20 percent. Other data further indicates that there has been an increase over time, particularly in some denominations, such as the Episcopal Church and to some extent the UCC, in the proportions of both men and women who are entering seminary at age twenty-nine or older.

Actually, it is generally true that both men and women are entering seminary at later ages, although women have rather consistently made the decision to enter seminary later than men, even over time, as Table 3.9 shows. The percentage of women entering seminary by age twenty-two exceeds that of men only during the 1957 to 1969 period. This was the period immediately following the opening of ordination to women in two of the larger denominations, the United Methodist and the United Presbyterian. It was also the period following the end of the Korean War, in which veterans completed college and may have gone on to seminary. As a time of significant campus unrest, it disrupted college completion schedules of some, and probably reduced the interest in a ministerial career among other, young men. All told, however, it would seem that only under unusual circumstances are women more likely than men to enter seminary directly after college.

Because of, or despite, the greater acceptance of women in seminary, greater proportions of women have been entering seminaries at later ages than they had been. Quite probably, the greater visibility of seminaries' acceptance of women has encouraged women who had been housewives and/or in other occupations to consider a seminary education and a possible career in the ordained ministry. However, the same explanation obviously cannot be advanced to explain why men as well have been entering seminary at older ages than previously. Here, other explanations previously suggested may be apt, such as the need for work, full or part time, in a secular job to finance a seminary education,

Table 3.9 Age Upon Entering Seminary
(by Year Ordained and Sex of Clergy)

Age on First Entering Seminary	Pre-1957		1957-69		1970-74		1975-78		1979-81	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
	%		%		%		%		%	
Early vocational (ages 20-22)	31	53	56	49	53	63	40	51	24	37
Delayed vocational (ages 23-28)	50	44	28	32	25	25	36	34	42	43
Second careerers (age 29 and over)	19	3	16	19	22	14	24	15	34	20
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(16)	(234)	(34)	(278)	(85)	(92)	(278)	(68)	(182)	(35)

as well as the lessening attractiveness of the parish ministry as a promising vocation for young men in comparison with other professions.

The influx of more mature people into seminary training will have significant consequences for the seminaries and the churches. This new development in the ages of seminary students and potential outcomes will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Summary

The current women clergy are somewhat more likely than the men to have had working mothers. But typically most clergy mothers were homemakers. For this reason, mothers, though perhaps a source of general support, were probably not as important as fathers and father surrogates for women in modeling the kind of initiative and risk-taking behavior necessary for these women to have entered seminary and parish ministry. Clergywomen were more likely than their male counterparts to be born into families where the fathers (and often mothers) were well educated, and the father was a business executive or professional. Better financial resources of higher socio-economic class families no doubt played a large role in their willingness to underwrite in part or in full graduate education of their daughters as well as their sons. However, it is also likely that these higher social class parents are often more open to their daughters' aspiring to graduate education and an unconventional career for a woman than lower social class parents are apt to be. Too, fathers in such families would be more likely to exhibit the initiative and drive that their daughters could emulate. But, it is also true that nearly a third of these clergywomen could be described as coming from lower-middle class and working class backgrounds. It

would seem that their own drive and abilities, coupled with encouragement from parents or other significant adults, obviously well compensated for whatever they lacked in the way of familial financial resources and encouragement of their ambitions.

Why these women chose the ministry over some other top professional career, such as medicine or law, may lie partially in the fact that they were typically raised in families where at least one of the parents was active in a church when they were growing up. Also, though some clergy switched denominations, the greater majority were ordained in the one in which they were raised, indicating a pattern of consistent and active religious socialization (that is, the learning of values, roles, competencies, and perspectives of a particular society, social group, or organization). The more active the parents were in a church while the clergy were growing up, the more likely the clergy were to have been active themselves in a church during their college years. Clergy who were more active in a church during their college years (because of parental upbringing, attending a religious college, or other factors) were more likely to make an early decision to enter seminary. While these findings hold true for both men and women, women were still more likely to make a later decision than men to enter seminary.

A general culture unsupportive of women attempting to enter the male-dominated vocation of parish ministry, and family and pastors less supportive of individual women's aspirations to enter ministry than they are of men's, account for the fact that women both decide to enter seminary later and in fact do enter at older ages than do men. However, men as well have been entering seminary later in more recent years than in previous ones (but still not as late as women). Perhaps this is because the attractiveness of ministry as a vocation in terms of salary, opportunities for advancement, and social prestige has been decreasing while the costs of obtaining a graduate theological degree have been increasing.

In describing effects that others—people and organizations—have had on future clergy's life before seminary and on their motivation to enter the ministry, we have undoubtedly given insufficient attention to the individual's own abilities, motivation, call, and spiritual growth which are pivotal in directing him or her to the ordained ministry. Several theorists have in fact argued that "self-initiated" socialization is more important in the long run than what the individual learns or experiences from other people. But this does not mean that other people and organizations are not also crucial in whether or not a woman or a man progresses through college and other life experiences to seminary. The sociologist Orville Brim, who, among others, argues that "in many cases the self-initiated socialization is a greater source of personal-

ity change than are the demands of other persons” is quick to point out that even in self-initiated socialization, influence of other people is not absent. He further asserts that for an individual to achieve what he or she wants, the individual “must find a supportive relationship.”¹⁶

What the individual primarily learns from others is some idea of what to expect and how to behave as a member of the occupation or group to which he or she aspires. This is often referred to as “anticipatory socialization.” Those entering any professional school—for example, a medical school, school of social work, or a seminary—come into the school with various levels of understanding and experience as to what kind of education they will be receiving at the school and what they will be doing as future practitioners. The better the fit there is between what the student expects and what the school teaches, the easier time the students will have in acquiring additional learning, as evidenced in a number of studies on professional schools.¹⁷ While people the student knows before entering a professional school are important in anticipatory socialization, other persons in the school or in practice settings often become equally or more important in the student’s continuing adaptation to the profession. In the next chapter, we examine these experiences of clergywomen and men in seminary.