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Entering the Male Citadel: Women Come to Seminary

The year that I began seminary, 1956, there were two other women students in the whole school. I was the only woman in my graduating class. We were not allowed to serve on the seminary council because the men students on it all went on retreats and there were no accommodations for women at campouts. I took a preaching class, and I think preached in a church once locally, but not in the seminary chapel. There was definitely that discrimination. We got along pretty well with our male colleagues, but now as we look back on it, we were kidded and teased a lot. . . . When my friend and I both walked into class, the students stood up for us. . . . Kind of stupid . . . but then it didn't seem stupid. . . . This was in the fifties . . . when a man stands up when a woman comes into a room.—CLERGYWOMAN

When I started seminary in 1970 there were three other women, and about twelve of us when I graduated. The three of us considered ourselves as the scouts for the feminist approach to theology. We were seriously considering ordination, and we wanted to go for the Master of Divinity rather than the Master of Religious Education. We were serious about that, and we let them know we were serious about that. We got the jokes—we got the stereotypes. Women had been at this seminary for many long years before, but nobody ever took them seriously, or saw them as the beginning of a potential threat. They were accepted as an abnormality. In some respects we three felt we were very pathetic and very much scouting out new territory, having more or less to chop down the trees and move the brush out of the way. . . . Most of the faculty reacted to me pretty well . . . but they would still make comments such as, "Well, if there wasn't a lady in the room, I could tell you fellows this joke!" Evidently our response and our willingness to hang in there affected some of the professors. The dean of this seminary told me a year ago that I and another woman who had come in a year or two after me had really challenged the faculty quite a bit. . . .

The idea of being a pioneer is sometimes pretty good. Kind of an adventurous thing . . . and a high morale in so far as we felt we were really scouts. . . . At least on my part, and I think on the part of the other two women, there was a tension between a sense of excitement at seeing other women coming in and a sense of "you're moving in on my territory, stay away!" Part of the reason we were troubled at seeing all these women come in is that we would say "be prepared when you go to seminary because these things are going to happen." But they didn't happen. We had already paved the way, and they didn't have to put up with some of this stuff that we had to put up with. And they could not comprehend what we had gone through and why we were so hostile and angry at certain times.—CLERGYWOMAN

What were the seminary experiences of women pastors as compared with men? Did women who entered seminaries as one of several of their sex in the whole institution encounter different treatment from faculty and others than did women entering seminaries when women students were in a definitely visible minority? What is it like for women students in seminaries now where in many institutions women comprise half the M.Div. student body? What kinds of seminary experiences are important to women seminarians who later become pastors? In this chapter, we look at the seminary experiences of women who entered the parish ministry, comparing them with the sample of ordained men who became parish ministers. We examine their reasons for selection of particular seminaries, their motivations for going to seminary, their experiences in seminary, and the influences on their decisions to become ordained.

The Seminary Scene Over the Last Decade and a Half

The two clergywomen quoted above started seminary about a generation apart. Although clearly the two women encountered quite different environments, the seminary environment for women students would change more in the five years subsequent to 1970 than it had in the fifteen years preceding this date. During the fifties and sixties some seminaries, especially interdenominational ones and those which trained missionaries, allowed women in the Bachelor of Divinity programs (precursor to the M.Div.), typically with the expectation they would teach or work along side their missionary husbands in foreign lands. Religious music and drama departments of some of the interdenominational, university-related seminaries also tended to attract women students, as did of course Christian Education programs leading to Master of Religious Education degrees or certificates in a variety of denominational seminaries. However, until the late 1960s, not only

were there few women enrolled in degree programs leading to ordination, but the women who were enrolled typically were not expected to become pastors. Although the radical mood of the late 1960s and the beginnings of the women's movement brought more women into seminaries intending ordination, it was not until the early 1970s that women enrolling in the Master of Divinity program increased exponentially (for example, in the years from 1972 to 1974 the proportion of women increased 75 percent).[1] Between 1972 and 1981, as reported in Chapter 1, women's enrollment in professional degree programs had increased 340.8 percent, thirteen times the percentage for men.

Rapidly changing sex distributions in professional degree programs were accompanied by women's demands in the early seventies that, not only should seminaries admit more women, but these institutions should alter their curricular offerings and counseling procedures for women. Especially at the interdenominational, university-associated seminaries in the early seventies, seminarians pushed for more power in governance and more input into the curricular and other seminary policy decisions. Women seminarians pushed for (and typically got) courses as well as other resources (space, funds) devoted to their interests. Courses on "Women in the Church," "Women in the Bible," and the like began to be offered at many schools. Alternative approaches to theological education—for example, infusing feminist perspectives on theology and the ministry into courses, support and counseling for women seminarians including dealing with the male establishment in job seeking, advocacy for the use of inclusive language, and hiring of more women faculty—were pursued by women's coalitions inside the seminaries. Although these coalitions generally remained marginal to the total seminary program and curriculum, they nonetheless were highly visible and effective in providing support for many women seminarians and affirmation of women's right to question and overhaul the male-dominated theological perspectives that had been regnant. A recent history of the number of women's centers and coalitions; the issues they addressed; and their experiences, problems, and successes in the seventies has been written collaboratively by representatives of these programs under the name of the Cornwall Collective.[2]

Neither all the seminaries of these nine Protestant denominations nor the interdenominational seminaries where some of their students attended were equally open to women in the early 1970s. Though some substantially increased their enrollment and support of women in the latter part of this decade (notably certain of the Episcopal, LCA and ALC seminaries), a number of denominational seminaries appear to be in a kind of "culture lag" as far as acceptance of women and women's issues are concerned. As noted, those interdenominational seminaries,

close to or associated with universities, were among the first to accept women in M.Div. programs and establish courses, programs, and centers especially for women. They were also centers of active feminist concerns. Union Theological Seminary in New York City, one of this group, made headlines in 1972 by its "constituency" resolution to work toward having one-half of its student body be women. This step may be one reason that, while women pastors in this present study attended over seventy different seminaries, Union Seminary was represented by more M.Div. graduates than any other: a total of 36 women. The next most frequently mentioned seminaries by women pastors, Yale Divinity School and Princeton Theological Seminary (a denominational school), were named by 29 women each. The pluralism in types of students in university related schools, their diversity in curricula,[3] and their heritage of theological and social liberalism, predisposed them to accept women into the professional degree program and provide a forum for feminist concerns. However, as will be considered below, these interdenominational, university seminaries have become less attractive to all students planning to be pastors, as denominations have begun to put pressure on their students to attend seminaries of their own denomination. Also, by the latter part of the 1970s, many of the denominational seminaries were openly recruiting women and taking some care to insure that women seminarians had good experiences, or at least as good an experience overall as did men among the student body. To be sure, this openness to admitting ever increasing numbers of women in the M.Div. programs indicates some degree of value change toward the benefits of having women in the ordained ministry. There are cynics, however, who suggest that acceptance of women by these seminaries was occasioned to considerable degree by their drive to survive falling enrollments of academically qualified men.

Although the number of full-time women faculty in mainline Protestant seminaries has increased very slowly over the last decade—from about seventy in 1971 to a little over one hundred in 1981—the use of adjunct and part-time women lecturers and tutors has helped increase the number of women faculty. The sexism of some tenured male faculty may be a factor behind the relatively few women in tenured faculty positions or even in full-time seminary faculty positions at all; however, it is also the case that there are very few tenured positions opening each year for anyone, and the projections for creating many new faculty positions in the near future are dismal.[4]

Overall, then, the climate of most seminaries with reference to women is better reflected in their provision for women students than in their record of hiring women as faculty. Interviews with the eighty women seminary faculty and administrators, conducted for this study

in 1981, indicate that the climate for women seminarians is comfortable in at least two-thirds of the seminaries (and in the opinion of three-fourths of the women faculty). Inclusive language is the norm, and faculty treat women and their concerns seriously. Too, in most of these seminaries nearly half of the student body are women. Of the remaining schools, several denominational seminaries not on the east coast or above the Mason-Dixon line may be comfortable for women with traditional or professional orientations, but are either too paternalistic or too male dominated in structure and perspective to be comfortable for students who are active feminists. A half-dozen seminaries were generally comfortable for women, but had one or two male professors in key positions who were antagonistic to women and their concerns. Yet, in the main, by 1981 the seminaries serving these nine mainline Protestant denominations had become pleasant and stimulating institutions of higher education for women students, which represents a rather dramatic change within these institutions in the last decade.

Selection of Particular Seminary and Motivations for Attending Seminary

Although the interdenominational, university-related seminaries were among the first to enroll women, the distribution of women and men pastors in this present study indicates quite clearly that the great majority of persons who are now parish ministers graduated from denominational seminaries. Only 13 percent of the women (a total of 83) and 9 percent of the men (a total of 66) got their first professional degrees from one of the interdenominational, university seminaries. While these seminaries have enrolled women, they have not concentrated on training for parish ministry to the same extent as denominational seminaries and are typically not considered by denominational officials as offering as good a preparation for the parish ministry as denominational schools.[5] Studies in 1964 and 1974 of Union Seminary in New York City, one of the university seminaries most dedicated to educating students for the parish ministry, show that only about a third of the students in the M.Div. program both enter and leave with the firm intention of being a parish minister.[6] The data for this present study also indicate that there is a decline overall in the proportion of women and men graduates of university schools who became pastors. In the period from 1961-65, 27 percent of the women and 9 percent of the men in our study attended university seminaries for their first professional degree (B.D. or M.Div.), but only 12 percent of the women and 5 percent of the men who had attended seminary since 1973 attended a university seminary for this degree.

Results from a Presbyterian study of seminary selection showed that

the candidates (men and women) who had chosen to go to these university-related seminaries were different from those who chose a denominational seminary in that they were more interested in teaching and counseling than in preaching, not as sure of what kind of ministry they would like to do, and more liberal ideologically and theologically. They were more interested in the academic reputation of the seminary than those students who chose denominational seminaries, and more likely to travel far from home to attend one of these interdenominational, university seminaries.[7] Although probably a third of these students attending university seminaries will go into and remain in the parish ministry, it suggests that there may be a difference between students who chose to attend them and those choosing denominational seminaries, as well as differences students may encounter between the schools themselves.

Among the parish ministers in our study, it appears in Table 4.1 that those who went to interdenominational, university-related seminaries tended to come from higher social class families than those who went to the denominational seminaries. Both women and men clergy from families where their fathers were well educated and/or held professional or executive positions were more likely to be an interdenominational, university seminary graduates than graduates of a denominational seminary. However, because there were proportionately more women than men whose fathers had been well educated and were employed in high level occupations, the women at university seminaries were also more likely than the men at these seminaries to come from higher social class families.

Clergy were asked why they had gone to their particular seminary. Twenty-two different types of reasons for seminary selection were coded from their open-ended responses. Geographical location was the most frequently given kind of reason for choosing to go to a particular seminary, though this was slightly more often given by women. For example, 22 percent of the women to 18 percent of the men chose their seminary at least partly because it was near where they or their family lived. Another 20 percent of the women compared with 16 percent of the men chose the seminary because of the area of the country it was in (which may or may not have been near their family), but was where they wanted to live for graduate work. For example, "I like an urban setting"; "I love California"; "I'd always wanted to go East."

There were a few denominational differences in these reasons given. The American Lutheran women were most likely of all clergy to choose a seminary because it was near home (41 percent). They are also the youngest clergywomen on average of all the denominations (43 percent of the ALC women compared to 20 percent of the total women were

Table 4.1 Parental Background and Type of Seminary Attended

	Interdenominational University Seminary		*All Other*	
	W	*M*	*W*	*M*
	%		%	
A. *Father's Education* (Highest Level Attained)				
High school graduation and technical school	25	42	45	61
Some college and college graduation	32	29	28	20
Graduate education or graduate degree	43	29	27	19
Total	100	100	100	100
(N)	(82)	(66)	(533)	(659)
Tau Beta correlation between father's education and whether clergy went to a university seminary or other: women, −.14 (sig. .0002); men, −.11 (sig. .001)				
B. *Father's Occupation*				
Clergy	17	16	12	13
Professionals and business executives	43	32	27	13
Middle-management, shop owners, salespersons, clerical, civil service	24	27	33	33
Farm workers and blue collar, waiters, barbers, skilled workers	16	25	28	41
Total	100	100	100	100
(N)	(79)	(63)	(515)	(633)
Tau Beta correlation between father's occupation and whether clergy went to a university seminary or not: women, .12 (sig. .0006); men, .11 (sig. .001)				

under thirty-one at the time of this study), and somewhat more likely to be married (63 percent of the ALC women to a 55 percent of all clergywomen in this study). Possibly these two factors made a nearby seminary attractive. ALC women (as well as ALC men to some extent) were also more likely than clergy in other denominations to cite a third generally popular reason for choice of seminary: the seminary was denominational.

ALC clergy were no more likely than any other, however, to mention another related reason for going to a particular seminary: that it had

been attended or recommended by their home pastor or their denominational executive. Among the total sample, 15 percent of the women and 21 percent of the men pastors gave this as one reason for going to a particular seminary. Other characteristics of a seminary were also important reasons why clergy selected one or another, such as the kind of curriculum offered, the academic soundness of the program, and the whole tone of the seminary. As might be expected, while going to a university-associated seminary was not often mentioned as a reason in itself for attending a particular seminary, those who chose university seminaries were somewhat more likely to cite the academic reputation and well-known faculty than those who chose denominational seminaries.

Type of seminary attended was not related in the present study to what these pastors' motivations were for attending seminary when they first arrived on campus. There were, however, major differences between men and women clergy regarding their motivations for attending seminary. Clergy were asked whether each of three possible motivations was "primary," "secondary," or "not a reason" for their being at seminary. The three were: "personal spiritual growth and faith development," "discovering in which ways to best serve Christ in the church and world," and "preparing to be a parish minister." Looking at those clergy who selected each as a "primary" reason for entering a seminary degree program (see Table 4.2), it is clear that men were considerably more likely than women to have entered seminary because they wanted to be parish ministers, while women were more likely than men to come to seminary to develop spiritually and/or to find out how they might best use their faith and abilities in the work of the church.

Table 4.2 shows clearly that, while all three motivations were at least a secondary reason for most of the clergymen, for nearly two-fifths of the clergywomen, preparing to be a parish minister was not a reason at all for attending seminary. Proportionately, twice as many clergymen as women were primarily motivated on entering seminary to prepare for the parish ministry. In other words, not only were women who eventually became parish ministers more likely to make a later decision to enter seminary than men who entered the pastorate, and actually enter seminary at a later age than men; they were also more likely to take longer than men to decide finally on the ministerial specialty of parish ministry. This makes sense in light of the discussion in the preceding chapter of the lack of cultural and personal support for women to enter seminary as reason for their generally later decisions than men to pursue a seminary degree.

A number of these women further explained, as other reasons or motivations for attending seminary, that they had couched their ambi-

Table 4.2 Motivations for Attending Seminary

	Women %	*Men* %
1. Personal Spiritual Growth and Faith Development		
Primary reason	60	40
Secondary reason	30	47
Not a reason	10	13
Total	100	100
(N)	(613)	(693)
2. Discovering in Which Ways to Best Serve Christ in the Church or World		
Primary reason	64	51
Secondary reason	26	38
Not a reason	10	11
Total	100	100
(N)	(613)	(690)
3. Preparing to Be a Parish Minister		
Primary reason	35	73
Secondary reason	26	19
Not a reason	39	8
Total	100	100
(N)	(612)	(696)

tions to others and themselves in more acceptable terms for women. As one woman said, "I told others that my ambition is to prepare for Christian Education work. I would have liked to be preparing to be a pastor, but I didn't have the guts." More volunteered that they explicitly came to seminary to learn theology, whether that was true because of a theological and intellectual "curiosity"; to be "able to have a theological basis for what I was doing"; to "gain a better understanding of my faith through academic biblical and theological studies"; or to teach theology in a college. Most of the women who said they came initially primarily to study theology also indicated that they hoped this study would give some direction to their lives; for example, "Theology was always a major interest, but I also wanted to discover what my gifts were for ministry and how I could use them in a church vocation."

Several women, especially those who entered seminary when only a few women of their denomination were enrolled in professional degree programs, indicated they did so to support the ministry of their hus-

Table 4.3 Clergy Motivations for Being in Seminary*
(by Year Entered Seminary and Sex)

Year Began Seminary	*Women*	%	*Men*
Before 1960	30 (of 59)		79 (of 358)
1960 – 1969	31 (of 100)		68 (of 195)
1970 – 1973	25 (of 191)		61 (of 71)
1974 and later	45 (of 242)		65 (of 55)

*% = percent saying "preparing to be a parish minister" as a primary motivation on first entering seminary.

bands; for example, "I entered seminary intending to be a better pastor's wife, to polish up my skills, and to be supportive of his ministry." Several men and women indicated that a primary reason they came to seminary was to test whether their own faith, values, and social commitments could be fulfilled though the institutional church, or, as one put it: "[I had] a post–World War II humanitarian urge to work for a better world through the church."

With the greater prevalence and acceptance of women parish ministers, one might expect that there to be a parallel increase in the proportion of women who enter seminary primarily because they want to be pastors rather than for the other kinds of reasons described. Indeed, this seems to be the case, as Table 4.3 shows. After the 50 percent increase in women in seminaries between 1972 and 1974, a higher proportion of women entered seminary with the firm intention of being a parish minister.

Time of decision to enter seminary and age on actually entering seminary are also important in whether or not clergy had primary commitment to preparing for the parish ministry on first entering seminary. It may be recalled that time of decision to enter seminary (before, during, and after college) and age on first entering seminary are positively and significantly correlated (.30 for women and .21 for men). Both men and women who made an early decision (before college) to enter seminary were more likely than those who made a later decision to have decided, at the time of entering seminary, to be a parish minister. But women who actually entered seminary at an older age than the majority were more likely to have had parish ministry as a priority than those who entered young. (Age on entering seminary was not related to desire to study for the parish ministry among clergymen.) Among clergywomen,

for example, 56 percent of the 62 women who decided before entering college to attend seminary, compared to only 31 percent of those 298 who decided after college to attend, actually entered seminary with the priority goal of preparing for the parish ministry. But 33 percent of those 155 who entered seminary at age twenty-nine or older entered primarily because they wanted to prepare for the parish ministry. These data indicate the existence of two patterns through which women decide on parish ministry as a ministerial specialty. First, for any combination of reasons, there are some women who, in their teens or earlier, develop a conviction that they are called to be pastors and pursue this goal with a single-minded devotion. Second, there are other women who may or may not have decided before they were adults that they wanted to specialize in parish ministry, but probably did look at other forms of ministry and other careers (including marriage and beginning a family). In the course of doing this, they became convinced that they should and could become good pastors and then entered seminary to prepare themselves for this vocation.

Obviously, since so many of these women entered seminary without much or any intention of becoming pastors, there is at least another pattern of women's decision-making that leads them to the parish ministry. Although a few will enter the pastorate after some years as a denominational staff member, chaplain, professor, and the like, the bulk of the remainder will probably, like these present women pastors, come to the decision that they want to be pastors as a result of experiences they have while they are seminarians.

Seminary Experiences of Women and Men Pastors

In the last chapter, we noted the importance of "anticipatory socialization"—knowing something about what the requirements, life style, and expectations for a pastor are before an individual comes to seminary—in aiding the student in actively seeking out those educational experiences which best meet his or her vocational goals. But, as also suggested, having experienced a high degree of anticipatory socialization for seminary or parish ministry may not be sufficient for the seminarian to obtain these desired opportunities and experiences. There may, for example, be a lack of opportunity to take the kinds of courses or field work experiences that the student feels he or she needs. Also, faculty members' values and preferences may lead them to interact differently with various kinds of students. One socialization theorist points out that it may be as much what the student "learns about the values and competencies he/she is defined as having that is most important in terms of individual level socialization consequences, rather than his/her own values or own feelings of competence."[8] Don-

ald Ploch's 1971 study of faculty values concerning desired emphases for Protestant seminaries indicated that there were no "generally agreed on norms to legitimate the content of the curriculum as a whole. . . . Education is individualized because no one vision of seminary education is strong enough to master the field."[9]

This situation makes it important to investigate how faculty are in fact communicating their own particular values to different kinds of students, and what impact (if any) faculty have on seminarians' attitudinal change about themselves, their faith, and the kind of ministerial career they should enter. "Individualized" curricula and faculty treatment of seminarians carry with them the strong possibility that, within a single seminary program in a single year (let alone over time), seminarians encounter quite different experiences.

Nevertheless, as previously noted, most seminary faculty and environments have changed positively and drastically within the last ten to fifteen years with respect to women seminarians. Can it be inferred from recollections of their seminary experience how these present clergywomen and clergymen assess their treatment by faculty and recall how influential faculty were (or tried to be) on their decisions to be ordained and enter the parish ministry?

First, it appears that these clergy have relatively pleasant memories of their seminary years. Despite the fact that 75 percent of the women attended seminary after 1968, in contrast to an equal proportion of men who began seminary before 1968, there is surprisingly little difference between the sexes. Both men and women pastors generally enjoyed their seminary years. Further, two-thirds of both sexes reported that they have since found their seminary education "quite valuable" for their work in parish ministry. Three other denominational studies done in 1978 with UCC, Lutheran, and United Presbyterian clergywomen also report a majority of women remembering their seminary experiences as pleasant and attributing value to their M.Div. education in preparing them for ministry.[10]

While the majority of both men and women pastors recall being treated either warmly or "like any other student" by faculty when they were seminarians, women were slightly more likely to note warm treatment from faculty. Nonetheless, women were also more likely than men to recall faculty treating them as a "curiosity," holding them at arm's length, pretending that they did not exist (for example, by addressing all students as "gentlemen"), or worse, refusing to recognize women when calling on students in classroom discussion. About 10 percent of the women clergy remember faculty members as being friendly toward them, but not taking them seriously as students or as candidates for ordained ministry. Apparently, a number of faculty pre-

sumed that the women seminarians were "there to marry a future clergyman," as one woman pastor recalled who entered seminary in 1973. And another entering about that time similarly reported that faculty "treated us with care because they saw us as 'preparing' to be ministers' wives."

But what if they were already minister's wives and did not appear content to confine themselves to that ministerial role, or what if they were older than the general run of women in seminaries? Some clergywomen's descriptions paint a rather hostile or awkward reaction from their seminary professors under these circumstances. One clergywoman, who entered seminary at age forty-one, recalled that her faculty:

> *treated me very peculiarly, partly due to my age, partly due to the fact that I was female. Not many faculty were at ease with me, able to hold a common conversation with me. Some thought I was looking for a man. In general—awkward!*

Another second-career woman entering seminary in 1972 gave in the following description of her reception:

> *Because of my age and sex, faculty were both polite and indifferent, acting as if they hoped I would disappear. Several actively tried to discourage me from entering the parish ministry, saying I had "the best of all possible worlds—as a pastor's wife!"*

A few women noted that their older age was an advantage, especially perhaps when combined with experiences in a professional status, as indicated by the following reflections: "I was a thirty-five year old college professor when I went to seminary. The faculty treated me like a peer."

From numerous other comments made by women it is clear that seminary faculty were more inclined to treat women seriously (at least as students) if such women were in fact academically superior. Eleven percent of the women to 8 percent of the men noted that they actually received "preferential treatment" from faculty. Most of these women explained that this was because they were indeed outstanding students, and that, as one put it, the faculty "liked my brain!" Some women also attributed their preferential treatment by seminary faculty to the fact that they were so unique at the time; for example, "I was spoiled rotten because of being the only woman."

The women who began in visible numbers to go into professional degree programs leading to ordination at seminaries in the early 1970s were typically academically superior to many of their male classmates. There is some indication that this situation led at the time to an alter-

nating, ambivalent treatment of women seminarians by faculty: valuing them as students but still uncomfortable with the thought that they might try to be ordained. A study of Lutheran women seminarians in M.Div. programs in 1975 (only five years after it was "legal" for Lutheran women to be ordained in the LCA and ALC denominations) depicted faculty as often very aware that their women seminary students were highly motivated to do well academically and trying to adjust their language to include women and their ears to hear the women's perspective; however, they were exceedingly slow to act on women seminarians' suggestions for change in curriculum and programs, if they acted at all.[11] Another study of an interdenominational university seminary in 1973 also showed a faculty quite aware of women's academic competence. Most professors were attempting on some level to teach well the growing number of women students. However, it was similarly the case that professors tended to treat men, both in and outside of class, as junior colleagues or at least as potentially promising parish ministers if the students were academically above average. They did not, however, appear to be able at that time (with minor exceptions) to extend this treatment to academically above average women.[12]

Recall of their interaction with seminary professors by clergywomen who attended seminary at different times indicates that, the later they began seminary, the better experiences they had with seminary faculty. For example, among the clergy who attended seminary between 1961 and 1965, 61 percent of the women to 92 percent of the men reported that the faculty gave them preferential, warm, or at least impartial treatment. But among those who began seminary in 1974 or later, the difference between sexes disappears, as 83 percent of the women and 88 percent of the men reported that faculty treated them well in this fashion. Furthermore, the data suggest that, while this increase was true for women pastors who attended both interdenominational and denominational seminaries, the increase over time was even greater in the interdenominational university schools.

One of the reasons given by our respondents for this last finding is that the university seminaries began to increase the proportion of women seminarians and women faculty more rapidly than did the denominational seminaries. As indicated in the opening section of this chapter, this is probably an accurate depiction. Comparing men and women pastors who began seminary before and after 1970, it seems from their recall that university seminaries not only had more women students earlier than the denominational and independent seminaries, but increased the proportion of women in their student bodies faster than did the other seminaries. For example, among those attending

minary before 1970, 20 percent of the women at university seminaries mpared to 9 percent of those at denominational seminaries reported ere had been over thirty women seminarians at their seminary at that me. Among clergywomen who attended seminary after 1970, 64 per-nt of those attending university seminaries compared to 27 percent of ose attending denominational seminaries reported there were thirty more other women there at the time. (Men who attended these dif-rent types of seminaries confirm this relatively greater number of omen and growth in numbers of women at the university seminaries.)

Similar findings obtain for numbers of women faculty. For a third of ie women pastors who attended interdenominational university semi-aries before 1970, there were no women faculty, compared to 50 per-ent of the women who attended denominational seminaries reporting his absence of female professors. But after 1970, only one woman and o men pastors who attended an interdenominational university semi-ary reported that women faculty were nonexistent on campus, com-pared to about 40 percent of both sexes who reported this was the case t the denominational seminaries they had attended. Fully 50 percent f the women pastors who attended university seminaries after 1970 said they had three or more women professors at their seminary, com-pared to only 10 percent of the clergywomen who attended denomina-tional seminaries after 1970. The presence of women professors may indicate why women students at university seminaries had a better chance on the average of being treated seriously as students, though this factor may not necessarily have led faculty to encourage them to be pastors. Indeed, the far greater faculty emphasis on preparation for parish ministry at denominational seminaries[13] indicates that there may be little relationship at the university seminaries between faculty accep-tance of women as serious students and encouragement for them to enter the parish ministry.

Among the total sample, there was no significant difference between men and women pastors in their recollection of whether seminary faculty had "clearly encouraged" them to enter the parish ministry. Fifty-three percent of the women and 51 percent of the men indicated that they had received such vocational encouragement. Similarly, there was little difference between men and women in their recall of whether any professors had discouraged them from entering the parish ministry. A minority of both, 16 percent of the women and 8 percent of the men, said that some professors had tried to dissuade them from becoming pastors. Although we cannot tell from our survey of present parish ministers how many seminarians of either sex were successfully turned away from pursuing a career in parish ministry, those that attended interdenominational, university seminaries and became pastors were no

more likely to report that faculty tried to discourage or encourage them to enter the parish ministry than those who went to denominational seminaries. Women who entered seminary before 1970 were even slightly *less* likely to report attempts by faculty to discourage them from becoming parish ministers if they attended university, interdenominational seminaries than if they attended a denominational or independent seminary—11 percent at the university related to 21 percent at the other seminaries. No significant difference is found between women attending the two different types of seminary after that date. This data accords with previous description of the university seminaries as being early leaders in openness of their doors and programs to women.

Lehman's 1978–79 study of American Baptist men and women third-year seminarians and those already ordained and in ministry,[14] from whose study the questions of faculty encouragement/discouragement were derived, suggests that there may well be some denominational differences in this regard. This proved to be the case. Generally the American Baptist, Episcopal, LCA, and United Presbyterian samples were the highest in proportion of women indicating that some faculty had attempted to discourage them from entering the parish ministry when they were seminarians. These were a minority of about 20 percent in each of these denominations. However, there were really no significant differences among denominations on this question and hardly any on the question of faculty encouragement to enter the parish ministry. Most faculty encouragement was reported by American Lutheran women pastors (63 percent) and least by United Presbyterian women pastors (43 percent).

Whether or not faculty were remembered as specifically encouraging or discouraging these pastors' aspirations as seminarians to become parish ministers, not all pastors remembered faculty as actually being of much influence on their decisions to be ordained. While only about a fourth of these men and women pastors could say definitely that their seminary faculty and other seminary personnel were *not* important in their own decision to be ordained, at the same time, no more than 37 percent of the women and 25 percent of the men said that these seminary faculty and administrators were as much as "quite important." For both men and women, there was a significant positive correlation (.34 for women, .30 for men) between their attribution of influence on ordination by seminary professors and their reports that some seminary faculty had encouraged them specifically to go into the parish ministry. However, it is also obvious from these correlations that there were many clergy of both sexes who were encouraged by faculty to enter the parish ministry, but really do not feel faculty at the seminary had much influence on their decision to be ordained. Of course, some of these

men and women entered seminary already firmly intending to be ordained and become parish ministers. Hence, their early decision precluded much, if any, later influence from in-seminary persons or experiences.

As indicated in the above percentages, somewhat more women (about 12 percent more) than men cited faculty in seminary as being influential on their decision to be ordained. This may be because, as noted, women pastors on entering seminary were more likely than men to be unsure of what their eventual career in ministry might be. They were also more inclined to see seminary as a place where they might grow spiritually. In short, it is likely that women seminarians in the 1970s were more open to in-seminary influences than were men. Indeed, women were considerably more likely than men to mention their clergy field work or intern supervisors as quite important influences on their decisions to be ordained (34 percent of the women to 19 percent of the men); they were also more likely to mention other in-seminary or seminary-associated learning experiences that would particularly prepare them for the practice of ministry, such as field work and interns (70 percent of the women to 57 percent of the men saying this was quite important in their decisions to be ordained). Also, more women than men said their friends (who were typically classmates in seminary) were quite important in their decisions to be ordained (48 percent of the women to 25 percent of the men). Men, on the other hand, were more inclined to say that clergy of churches they attended were quite important in their decision to be ordained (51 percent of the men to 40 percent of the women); but for most of these men, this influence came prior to entering seminary. Just a third of the clergywomen said that other women pastors were quite important in their own decisions to be ordained. But most women, when they were seminarians, knew no clergywomen (34 percent) or did not know them well enough to obtain modeling clues or even support from women pastors.

The presence of other women students on campus provided perhaps a greater opportunity for women to make friends and share their experiences with other women undergoing the same kind of educational experience; however, the absolute numbers of women students on campus at the time these women clergy were there had no effect on how much influence they attributed to friends or professors on their decision to be ordained. Although there have been greater numbers of women present in seminary in recent years, both women and men in this study were not likely to have attended seminary when even a third of the student body were women, as is evident in Table 4.4.

Interview data of a qualitative variety suggests that women pastors who entered seminary when the number of women had increased had a

Table 4.4 Year of Enrollment in Seminary and the Number of Women in Student Body at That Time

Number of Women in Student Body	*Before 1961*		*1961 – 1965*		*1966 – 1969*		*1970 – 1973*		*1974 – 1979*	
	W	*M*	*W*	*M*	*W*	*M*	*W*	*M*	*W*	*M*
	%		%		%		%		%	
0 – 3	29	44	24	36	6	23	10	8	4	5
4 – 10	25	27	20	29	31	57	33	36	18	26
11 – 30	36	22	46	29	51	13	40	40	39	40
31 and more	10	7	10	6	12	7	17	16	39	29
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(48)	(299)	(41)	(100)	(51)	(74)	(161)	(62)	(191)	(42)

more comfortable experience than those who attended when women students comprised a handful in the entire institution. Nevertheless, the actual numbers of women seminarians present when these pastors attended had no relationship to other in-seminary experiences and influences with one exception—motivation to be ordained. As noted in the first chapter, the proportional representation of women in a group has at least to get toward a "tilted" distribution (say perhaps 65 percent men to 35 percent women), according to Kanter's theory, before their "token" status is reduced. Although there was certainly an increase over time in women's enrollments, and although they were a decided presence in the classrooms, never or seldom does the proportion of women get out of Kanter's "skewed" category where women are apt to be treated as tokens.[15]

Although sheer numbers of other women students present appeared to have little discernible effect on the ministry of these women pastors after leaving seminary, this was not true for men. We asked how many clergywomen our respondents talked with regularly in an average month. The year in which men (or women) attended seminary had no relationship to how many women clergy they were now talking with regularly. However, for clergymen (but not clergywomen), the more women in the student body when they attended seminary, the more likely they are now to talk to more clergywomen regularly. For example, 49 percent of the 177 clergymen who went to a seminary where there were no more than three women in the total student body said they presently talked to no clergywomen regularly. But only 22 percent of those clergymen who went to seminary when there were over thirty women seminarians said they did not talk regularly to any clergywomen now. So men seem to have learned something from having women around them as fellow seminarians: the value of continuing collegial relationships with women clergy after ordination.

Motivations for Being Ordained

Why do clergy, both men and women, seek ordination, or official authorization to enter the clergy status, and engage in its functions? Do men and women differ in their motivation? The most important reason that these clergy, especially women, wanted to be ordained was simply that they felt called by God to ordained ministry. Seventy seven percent of the women to 67 percent of the men said this was "quite important" in their decision to be ordained. Less than 10 percent of these clergy said that a "conviction that God wished you to be ordained" was unimportant in their own decision to seek ordination. Among them was one iconoclastic clergyman who said, "Niebuhr taught me to be more modest about what God wanted me to do!"

Clearly less important for most clergy, but still of some importance for three-fourths as a motivation for being ordained, were: (1) "greater acceptance of my ministry by having official church legitimation as an ordained person"; and (2) a "desire to administer the sacraments and perform other priestly acts." Both reasons were somewhat more important to women pastors for ordination. For the first, 58 percent of the women to 47 percent of the men said this was "quite important." Or they said that that ordained status gave them a legitimacy with laypersons, hospital personnel and others which facilitated their entry into difficult situations as well as their attempts to engage in ministry.

To some extent being ordained to full ministerial status is parallel to licensing in the professions of law, medicine, and other service professions. By passing exams after completing graduate professional school, the would-be practitioner is certified by the licensing board of the particular profession as having the requisite moral character, basic knowledge of the discipline, and skills to help clients effectively. The more prestigious professions have acquired the legal right to control entry into the occupation, to accredit schools of the profession, and to certify practitioners or revoke their certification. They are granted this right because they successfully pressed their claim that extended training of practitioners is essential for the good of society, and the corollary claim that the professional governing body alone can judge the appropriateness of the standards it sets and the degree to which they are met.[16] An individual who needs help in solving a problem can go to the appropriate certified practitioner and be relatively confident that professional is competent and ethical. Similarly, individuals who are ordained by their denomination as having the requisite moral character, commitment, knowledge, and skills to be clergy will be seen by lay officials as having the legitimate right to be in places not open to the general public (for example, in hospitals and prisons after visiting hours); they are also more likely than laity to be viewed by parishioners and non-parishioners as official representatives of the church. Also, because they are ordained, they will be more readily accepted than lay members by those who do not know them personally as competent to counsel, advise, and otherwise aid them.

In Chapter 1, we referred to the traditional image of the clergy status as "sacredly masculine." Because of this, women are likely to have more difficulty in being seen as legitimate representatives of the church or as having the skills to minister to others by many public officials and parishioners. Indeed, a good number of women may have tried to minister as laypersons with notable lack of success in having these attempts accepted. For this reason, it is not surprising that slightly more women than men cite their desire "to have official church legitimation as an

ordained minister" as an important reason for their being ordained. A number of the women were very aware that, as laywomen, they would have little authority within congregations or denominational structures, and their reasons for getting ordained were quite honestly to get the respect and "clout" they saw the ordained men in their denomination as having. This point is clear in the following quotations from clergywomen:

The knowledge that I couldn't work in the church as a first class citizen if I weren't ordained was the major reason. [It was] pragmatic.

First and most important in my seeking ordination was that I did not want to be a second class citizen.

In Chapter 2, we suggested at least three orientations to ministry held by clergywomen. Several of the statements regarding motivation for ordination to which women were asked to respond reflect these orientations. For example, a good proportion of both clergywomen and men who cited their desire for official church legitimation as a reason for seeking ordination may be those who have the "professional orientation" to ministry. Those with this orientation see ministry as partly an occupational role which requires that the practitioner have certain levels of competence in specified areas. This orientation does not exclude a feeling of divine call; rather it also includes an emphasis on having psychological, academic, and skill qualifications as important.

Clergywomen are even more likely than men to say they got ordained at least partly so thay they could "administer the sacraments and perform other priestly acts." Fifty-six of the women cited this as a quite important reason compared to 35 percent of the men. In part, responses to this item are denominationally related, since denominations vary in their sacramental emphases and practices. For example, there are relatively few sacramental and priestly acts restricted to clergy in the American Baptist Churches, but a relatively large number of activities are restricted to clergy in the Episcopal and Lutheran denominations. Accordingly, less than a third of the American Baptists (31 percent of the women and 17 percent of the men) said "desire to administer the sacraments and perform other priestly acts" was quite important in their decision to be ordained, while approximately three-fourths of the Episcopal and Lutheran clergywomen and half the men said this factor was "quite important."

It is especially in those denominations with a strong sacramental emphasis that the difference between clergywomen and men is most pronounced. The Episcopal and the two Lutheran denominations are also those which were the latest to ordain women; hence, women had longer

to observe men alone leading key parts of the worship service and to dream of also being permitted to do so. On the other hand, American Baptists were the first to ordain women. This denomination also has less of a sacramental tradition; thus, administering the sacraments and leading worship are not as likely to be the same male-stereotyped activities as in the former denominations. Therefore, participation in them is not as strong a motivating factor for American Baptist women in seeking ordination.

Apart from these denominational differences regarding a sacramental emphasis, some clergywomen and men in all denominations may desire ordination in order to act as a priest liturgically because of a nontraditional orientation to ministry as a "calling." In this orientation, preaching and sacramental acts are central expressions of the worship of God who has called them and set them apart for this.

A third orientation to ministry discussed in Chapter 2 is a desire to transform the church, a desire often rooted in feminism of one kind or another. Of the three orientations, this was clearly less important for the clergywomen in this study than other reasons mentioned for becoming ordained. Over a third of the women pastors (36 percent) said that "a desire to change the sexist nature of the church" was not important in their decision to seek ordination. Only 27 percent said it was "quite important." The United Church of Christ women were most apt to see this as quite important (38 percent) and the Lutheran Church in America clergywomen least likely (18 percent indicating quite important). Apart from these two extremes, denominational differences were slight.

Women who attended university, interdenominational seminaries were slightly more likely than those who attended denominational and independent seminaries to wish to become ordained in order to change the sexist nature of the church (36 percent of the women attending university seminaries to 26 percent at all other seminaries). This difference occurs in large part because university seminaries were first to enroll larger numbers of women seminarians; and the more women seminarians at a seminary when these clergywomen attended, the more likely they were to give changing the sexist nature of their denomination as an important reason for seeking ordination, as Table 4.5 indicates.

Although there has been a rise over time in the proportion of women seminarians who say that a desire to change the sexist nature of the church was of at least some importance in their decision to be ordained, it is also clear from Table 4.5 that the number of other women in the seminary was helpful in raising or maintaining a consciousness about the prevalence of sexism in the church. Earlier, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the culture on many campuses, including some seminaries,

Table 4.5 Degree to Which a Desire to Change the Sexist Nature of the Church Was Important in Clergywomen's Decision to Be Ordained* (by the Number of Women Seminarians When Clergywomen Began Seminary and the Year of Enrollment)

Year Enrolled in Seminary	*Number of Women in Student Body When Clergywomen Began Seminary*			
	0–3 %	*4–10* %	*11–30* %	*31 and more* %
1960 and before Tau beta −.22, sig. .04	15 (of 13)	36 (of 11)	31 (of 16)	40 (of 5)
1961 to 1965 Tau beta −.19, not sig.	44 (of 9)	72 (of 7)	48 (of 19)	100 (of 4)
1966 to 1969 Tau beta −.07, not sig.	33 (of 3)	40 (of 15)	52 (of 26)	50 (of 6)
1970 to 1973 Tau beta −.02, not sig.	69 (of 16)	63 (of 54)	52 (of 64)	65 (of 27)
1974 and later Tau beta −.19, sig. .001	43 (of 7)	38 (of 34)	58 (of 74)	64 (of 75)

*% = percent saying "desire to change the sexist nature of the church" at least somewhat important in their decision to be ordained.

was sufficiently supportive of working for racial and sexual justice, that support from other women seminarians was not necessary in order to convince many women seminarians that church attitudes toward women needed changing, and that they might help do this by entering the ordained ministry. When campus radicalism began to die down after 1973, the presence of women seminarians in sufficient number became increasingly important in supporting a desire to change the sexist nature of the church through ordained ministry.

It is important to reiterate that of all three orientations toward the ordained ministry, the feminist one, as reflected in a desire to transform the church, was least important. Further, even for those to whom it was of some or major importance, a conviction that God wanted them to be ordained was of at least equal importance. Also, while definitely contributing to opening seminaries and ordained ministry to women, the feminist movement was not the perceived reason that most women gave for entering seminary or the ordained ministry. Once in seminary or the parish, women became more aware of the degree to which women have been discriminated against within church structures, including the clergy job market and attitudes of laity and male clergy. A good number of the women clergy in this study who entered seminary

when there were few women in their seminaries (or in any seminary) are also likely to have developed a feminist orientation regarding church structures and other aspects of church life. A recent UCC study of clergywomen and another of United Methodist clergywomen make a similar point,[17] as does a study of the clergy job market in general.[18] Similar findings probably obtain for women studying for the rabbinate. One interviewer reports the comments of a woman rabbi to the effect that she did not enter seminary *because* she was feminist, but became so during her study of the Jewish heritage and the way in which it had kept women as second-class citizens.[19]

Decision to seek ordination is not the same as getting ordained, especially for clergywomen who attempted this feat in places and times when ordination of women was frowned upon by local powers-that-be in their denominations. In the total sample, although slightly over half the women (54 percent) said it was quite easy for them to get ordained to full ministerial status after seminary, over three-fourths (78 percent) of the men indicated that getting ordained had been easy for them. Denominational differences do occur here, Episcopal and United Presbyterian women note the most difficulty; Disciples and United Church of Christ women note the least.

Although a feminist concern to change church structures was not a primary reason for the majority of women seeking ordination, feminist concerns are important to many clergywomen. We turn now to a consideration of these concerns in relation to church structures.

Feminism in Seminaries and the Formation of the Church Feminism Scale

The history of feminism in denominations and of the response of churches to the women's movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is in one sense an account of how churches subverted the radical feminist vision of full equality with men into an emphasis on the "special virtue" of women. Beverly Harrison has documented this point forcefully.[20] Although the churches were not successful in destroying the spirit of feminism, they were able to channel it. As Harrison expresses it, "To stay in the church, one had to become a 'soft feminist,' one who accepted woman's 'special virtue.' "[21]

The feminist movement, which grew in the late 1960s and 1970s outside the churches, initially took on a harder or more radical feminist thrust, that is, attempting to change structures to incorporate women fully and equally in positions of authority. After the initial phase, it became more inclusive in its emphasis, stressing the liberation of men as well as women by denying the status of gender as a determinant either of activities or of occupations.[22] Also, elements of the "soft femi-

nism" orientation were present—not surprisingly, since ideologies of social movements as rapidly ascendant as the women's movement was in the early seventies often tend to incorporate contradictory elements. They become differentiated, as various groups within the movement emphasize different aspects of the ideology. In the secular feminist movement, a kind of "soft feminism," which emphasized feminine strengths that women alone could bring to organizations and activities, tended to lead away from a focus on changing structures. These feminists who stressed the "particular gifts of women" were often in ideological if not actual conflict with other feminists who stressed androgynous abilities needed for successful performance in occupations.[23]

By the mid 1970s, the feminist movement in religious organizations (congregations, seminaries, and denominational headquarters), also exhibited these various emphases and strains. Elements of the "soft feminism" were present, but the focus on changing church structures also was emphasized. Questions of who was included and excluded from the feminist movement; issues of power, race, and sexuality; and the concern of what should be the primary focuses of feminist attention arose among the women's groups and centers at many Protestant seminaries.[24] Although the same kinds of diverse focuses which were manifesting themselves in the secular feminist movement also appeared in the feminist movement in the seminaries and denominations, there seemed to be a convergence of opinion among feminist seminarians, faculty, clergy, and lay leaders, as Zikmund expressed it, that women should have "not only equality of opportunity and the right to compete with men for ecclesiastical power . . . but the right to think differently about the Christian faith itself . . . and translate the tradition into non sexist words and concepts."[25]

As a legacy of the activist, secular feminist movement, the goals of equal access to positions of power and professional occupations, equal pay for equal work, and inclusive language, though not fully realized in practice, have come to be accepted by most socially and politically liberal persons as just and necessary to pursue. Ideological success perhaps is indicated in that both women and men can generally espouse all major goals of the women's movement without considering themselves "feminists."[26] This situation, along with the varying focuses among self-defined feminists, however, does create ambiguities in what the term "feminist" means in any given situation.

In this study, our interest was to determine to what extent individuals, both male and female, lay and clergy, espoused values specifically relating to the right of women to enter ordained and nonordained church leadership positions and the use of inclusive language in

churches and church-related publications. We were not so much concerned whether or not these individuals would label themselves as "feminists." Accordingly, a number of questionnaire/interview items were examined as possible indicators of advocacy of these positions. Statistically, we found that the following four items fit together best in this regard:[27]

(1) More women should be ordained to full ministerial status in denomination.
(2) There should be more women in executive staff positions in regional and national offices of my denomination.
(3) My congregation should appoint or elect an equal number of laywomen to laymen on the parish governing board.
(4) Inclusive language should be used in church publications and services.

These items, asked of all clergy and lay leaders in this study, were combined to create an index of what we call Organizational Church Feminism. The individual items will be given greater discussion in Chapter 6, especially in terms of lay leaders' responses. Those who agreed with each question were given a score of one; those with mixed responses a score of two; and those who disagreed a score of three. When responses for the four items are summed, it is possible to achieve a score ranging from four to twelve. It should be pointed out that secular radical feminists without any church leaning probably would not find ready identification with this scale because of its church focus and relative "mildness." Nevertheless, clergy and lay leaders of both sexes who agree with the items are defined here as "strong church feminists," regardless of whether they would define themselves as "feminists" or whether they put their private convictions into practice in decision making or advocacy. The distribution of female and male lay leaders and clergy on the scale of Organizational Church Feminism can be seen in Table 4.6.

We have labelled a score of 4 on this scale as indicating a "strong feminist" orientation. If the respondent has given more negative than ambivalent responses he or she has been labelled "anti-feminist." However, in this analysis we will typically use the scale without reference to particular arbitrary dividing points, with the exception of the "strong feminists" who are sometimes highlighted in their positions on other items of interest.

From Table 4.6, it can be seen that slightly over half the clergywomen (56 percent) and slightly under a fourth of the clergymen (24 percent) are "strong feminists" according to the scale. Proportionately fewer of the lay leaders, but still more women than men, are classified

Table 4.6 Distribution of Scores on the Organizational Church Feminism Scale Among Women and Men Clergy and Lay Respondents

	Clergy		*Lay*	
	W	*M*	*W*	*M*
	%		%	
Strong feminists (score 4)	56	24	27	17
Feminist (score 5)	19	17	21	23
Moderate feminists (score 6)	13	17	19	14
Nonfeminist (score 7 and 8)	9	24	19	29
Antifeminist (score 9 to 12)	3	18	14	17
Total	100	100	100	100
(N)	(615)	(704)	(334)	(332)

as "strong feminist." While a minority of both clergy and laity are in the "non-feminist" or "anti-feminist" categories, it follows popular thinking that laity are more likely to fall into these categories than clergy (laymen being the most likely to be "non" or "anti-feminist" and clergywomen the least). This last finding holds across all denominations, except Episcopal and American Lutheran Churches, where clergymen, especially, are more likely to be "anti-feminist" than laity. But as might be expected, among clergy within each denomination, clergywomen were more likely to be "strong feminists" than clergymen. Interestingly, when we take into account the approximate date in which women were first ordained to full ministerial status in the denomination (see Table 4.7), it appears that the longer women have been ordained, the greater the proportion of strong feminists among male clergy. This suggests a favorable prognosis for the eventual elimination of this divergence of opinion between the sexes on women's place in ecclesiastical structures.

Until this perspective changes, however, clergywomen are likely to perceive a sexist orientation among many of their male colleagues and denominational officials. Women who said they became ordained partly to change the sexist nature of the church are also, overall, likely to be strong feminists by the Organizational Church Feminism Scale. However, this correlation is only statistically significant for those women who began seminary since 1970, especially for those who began since

Table 4.7 Approximate Dates When Women Were First Ordained and Percentage of Strong Feminists Among Male Clergy

Denomination	*Approximate Date Women First Ordained*	*% Strong Feminists Among Clergy*
United Church of Christ	1853	39
American Baptist Churches	(100 plus years)	29
Disciples of Christ	1888	30
United Presbyterian	1956	29
United Methodist	1956	19
Presbyterian, US	1964	21
Lutheran Church in America	1970	20
American Lutheran Church	1970	16
Episcopal	1977	15

1973. In other words, many of the women ordained in the 1960s, who did not initially pursue ordination to change the sexist nature of the church, have nonetheless come to espouse eradicating sexist barriers to women's entry into power positions in the church *after* having some experience in ministry. For example, two-thirds of the fifteen women who began seminary in the period of 1961–65 and said they did not become ordained to change the sexist nature of the church are now "strong feminists" by the Church Feminism Scale. By contrast, only a third of those seventy-eight women who began seminary in 1974 or later and said they did not become ordained to change the sexist nature of the church have since become "strong feminists." The experience of their predecessors however, indicates that another few years in the ministry may change their opinion. As noted previously, those women pastors attending seminary most recently were more likely than those attending in earlier years to seek to be ordained in order to change the sexist nature of the church. More recent graduates (since 1970) are also now likely to be "strong feminists" in their endorsement of the items making up the Church Feminism Scale. For example, almost 85 percent of those beginning seminary in the 1970s are affirmative on all items.

Since the time that most of our respondents graduated from seminary, the proportion of women has doubled and tripled at many of the seminaries they attended. Furthermore, the average age of the student body in the M.Div. programs has typically risen. What effect might these developments have on women's experience in seminaries, on their motivations to get ordained, on their endorsement of feminist concerns in changing church structures and language, and on their ministry in the parishes? In order to get some idea of how women seminarians now

differ from those women who went through seminary three, five, and ten years ago, we asked approximately eighty women seminary faculty and administrators to describe the current situation.

Characteristics of Current Women Seminarians According to Women Faculty

The rise in the average age of all students entering seminary, and especially women, which we noted in the last chapter, was commented on by most of the faculty women interviewed. Although we were not able to get hard statistics, it seems that, in many seminaries, half or more of the student body is age twenty nine or older, and several reported an *average* age of thirty-five in their entering M.Div. classes.

Most of the women seminary faculty interviewed noted clear differences between second-career women and those women coming right out of college or seminary. Faculty women most often noted that the older women tended to be more dedicated to studying in seminary and becoming pastors than were first-career women. However, the older women were also likely to be far less self-confident about their academic abilities than were the younger women. Faculty members typically enjoyed working with second-career women, not only because they eventually turned out to be very good students on the whole, but also because they tended to be much more realistic about life in general and particularly about the parish ministry than most first-career women.

Within this broad generalization about second-career women, especially those at seminaries with a large proportion of older women seminarians, faculty women found they could discern different types of second career students. One obvious difference is that some second-career women seminarians have had a first career of housewife-mother, while others have worked as professionals or in the business world. According to many faculty, the former full-time homemaker who comes to seminary typically takes a little longer to adjust to the seminary academic routine and may need more personal support from faculty for the first year or so than do those women who have worked outside the home. There also appears now to be a group of second-career women who are coming to seminary more for personal and spiritual "healing" than with the clear vocational goals that are more characteristic of older women students.

The faculty women did not typically know nearly as many second-career men as they did women, partly because there simply were not as many second-career men in the seminaries and partly because they did not have as much contact with these students as they did with the women. The few faculty women who felt they could comment on the differences between second-career women and men had divergent im-

pressions of what the average second-career man was like. Some characterized them as "losers" who, unlike the second-career women, could not make it in their first career. Others characterized them in the opposite fashion as self-confident and devout Christians who, though successful in their first careers, felt that something was missing in their lives. It may of course be that different types of seminaries attract different types of second-career men and women.

The most outstanding and frequently mentioned characteristic of current second-career women in seminaries was that they tend to have been actively involved in parishes as lay persons for some years before entering seminary. To quote one woman faculty member who expressed the feelings of a number of others:

> *The second-career students are the most exciting population of seminary students . . . and this is because most of the women have been deeply involved as volunteers and laypersons in their congregations. . . . Never before in the history of the church have we had leadership of people who have come out of the rank and file in such numbers. . . . We have never had pastors who have been in the pew for twenty or thirty years!*

Faculty women had different opinions on whether or not the second-career women tended to be more or less feminist than the first-career women. Again, this may indicate two different groups at least of second-career women self-selecting themselves into different seminaries in varying proportion. In the present sample of clergywomen, for example, there is *no* relationship between the age at which women entered seminary and whether a desire to change the sexist nature of their denomination was important in their decision to be ordained, or whether they are strong feminists now (on the scale of Church Feminism).

Another change among current women seminarians noted by half of the women faculty is, however, a decrease in women students actively espousing feminist causes and concerns. Varying definitions of feminism are to some extent operative here, in that these women faculty do differ among themselves in how they define feminism. For example, some stress the "unique gifts that women bring to ministry" and others emphasize more women's equality with men and the need for correcting structural oppression and organizational sexism. But most were in accord that women students are less aware of, or interested in, women's struggles for recognition and position in church and society historically. Perhaps worse, the students are perceived as lacking any apprehension that they themselves might encounter problems in pursuing an ordained ministry in parishes and chaplaincies because they are women.

Just over half (51 percent) of the faculty women interviewed believed that feminism had declined among women seminarians. Nineteen percent believed feminism instead has changed its nature and form of expression but not actually declined. Only 7 percent believed feminism had increased among women students at their seminaries in the last few years. The remaining faculty women described women seminarians as being heterogeneous in response to feminism—a mixture of pro, con, and ambivalent—or unchanged. Some faculty women could not answer the question.

Those who noted a decline in expression of feminist concerns among women students on campus attributed it to two main factors: the increase of women to the point where they are no longer a small minority in the student body (or a minority at all); and the substantial gains women have made in being accepted and well-treated at seminaries, hearing inclusive language used by most professors and male students, and seeing more women in parish positions. Women students are also aware that graduating M.Div. women are getting first parishes with relative ease. These gains are feared by some faculty as lulling women seminarians to sleep, assuming the problems of sexism in the ministry to have disappeared.

Another factor for a decrease in the expression of feminist concerns on seminary campuses is that increased numbers of women bring greater diversity among the women and an accompanying lack of cohesiveness. It becomes more difficult to form groups that speak with one voice. Additionally, 10 percent of the faculty mentioned the generally greater conservative mood of the country and of the families from which these women seminarians were being recruited. A few felt that the quality of women seminarians had declined, that they were neither as bright nor as given to taking initiative as women in previous seminary classes have been. The following quotes are illustrative of some of these points made by faculty women:

> *The gains of the feminists have been enough so that the inequities are not as salient. Also, there has been a swing to the right. There is still so much resistance from men to women in ministry, and women are scared of asserting themselves. In the middle to late sixties, very bright and adventurous women went into seminary and tried to get ordained. Now, a more average kind of woman goes to seminary.*

> *Women students don't recognize the struggle that went on to get them here, do not align themselves primarily with women or with the concerns of women. They are much more highly individualistic now. All of these students who come in today see women faculty, see language that is inclusive, see at least surface openings for them, and so they assume that the*

problem isn't there anymore. I also think this generation of students reflects a general movement toward highly indiviualistic satisfactions for themselves.

Those one-fifth or so of the women faculty who felt feminism had changed in nature rather than actually decreased, gave some of the following explanations:

Women are about as feminist as they were a few years ago. Any changes in feminism are in the direction of it becoming more complex, that is, people are realizing that the issues are more complicated and less simplistic black-white as first supposed.

Feminism has changed among the women students. They are not as militant or strident. They are more settled down and determined to make it. But they are willing to speak up when they see a problem.

The comfortable climate for most women seminarians in these mainline Protestant seminaries currently noted by the faculty women may indeed be an unrealistic preparation for what confronts the new woman graduate once she arrives in the parish. As one faculty woman put it, although "the official church structure has been shamed into being less overtly sexist, oppression is coming out in much more subtle forms," and the women students' naivete will work against their being able to confront this sexism effectively.

However, it may also be that women seminarians are increasingly coming into seminaries and the parish ministry with a professional orientation, incorporating the feminist objectives of increasing women's entry into ecclesiastial power structures and the clergy, but focusing more on acquiring and exercising professional expertise and spiritual insight in the practice of ministry.

Summary

Seminary environments for women students have changed more in the last ten years than they changed during the preceding twenty years. Women who entered the degree program typically leading to ordination in the fifties and sixties would seldom have seen more than one or two other women students, if that, and no women faculty. By the turn of the decade, two or three women were beginning to appear in most seminary classes of the mainline Protestant seminaries, but particularly those interdenominational seminaries associated with universities. In the early 1970s the numbers of women began to double and triple at most seminaries every year, until by the mid-seventies they had become at least a fourth of most entering junior classes. By the end of the 1970s, this proportion had increased until women made up about half

of the seminarians in the M.Div. programs at most of the mainline Protestant seminaries.

The women who eventually became pastors in this study were not, however, as likely as were the men to enter seminary with any firm plan to prepare themselves for the parish ministry. Nearly two-fifths of the women had no intention on entering seminary of becoming pastors. Women entering seminary more recently were more likely than those who entered seminary earlier to have come intending to be parish ministers. Women enjoyed their seminary experiences and have found the education they received valuable for their ministry, even though they may have had a few disagreeable experiences with some male professors or students. Seminary environments improved steadily for women over the decade, and recent women graduates are more likely to report good treatment by faculty than those who graduated earlier.

Probably because women are less likely than men to have come to seminary already firmly committed to the parish ministry, they were more open to in-seminary influences. Women were particularly apt to say their thinking about ordination and a ministerial career were influenced by their field work or intern experiences and their friends on campus. The strongest factor in women's decisions to be ordained was their belief that they had a call from God to the ordained ministry, similar to men. Among other reasons, over half the women also were motivated to seek ordination because they perceived that this official recognition from the church would facilitate their ministries. Approximately the same percentage of women desired ordination because they wanted to be able "legally" to perform certain sacramental functions reserved for clergy (possibly reflecting a more traditional orientation to ministry as a calling reserved for those set apart by ordination). Less than a third of the women were seeking ordination in order to change the sexist nature of their denominations, although overall this reason was at least somewhat important to about half of the women who became pastors. Evidently, the third orientation leading women to ordination—a desire to transform the church from a feminist perspective —was not as important for present women pastors as the other two orientations, although it certainly played a part. Interviews with current faculty women in seminaries indicate that fewer women on campus desire to enter the ordained ministry in order to transform the church. Rather they seem more interested in acquiring professional competencies which would enable them to be successful in the parish.

Women pastors typically came to espouse original feminist goals of inclusive language, as well as increasing the proportion of women in the clergy and of all women in the local church and denominational power structures. On a scale of Organizational Church Feminism formed from

question items used in this present study, women and men clergy and laity were classified according to their agreement with these goals.

More women than men experienced difficulty in becoming ordained. Although ordination is now more open to women, in most denominations ease in getting ordained is tied very closely to whether or not the seminary graduate is able to get a first parish call. We will explore this question and other aspects of the clergy job situation in the next chapter.