Ministry Experiences of First-Career Seminarians: In the Middle of a Life World

Timothy D. Lincoln

Theological educators are aware that students enter seminary with distinctive life experiences. Many enter seminary after age 30; others are younger and begin theological studies more or less directly after finishing a bachelor's degree. It has long been recognized that field education has significant effects on seminarians of any age, such as assisting students in vocational discernment.[1] Less has been reported on how field education fits with the rest of a student's lived experience while in school, because data about field education are often reported as tallies of forced-choice items on a survey.[2] Increased understanding of how students conceptualize their field education experiences within their life worlds will benefit those who supervise students directly, as well as other faculty members and the churches that call or appoint graduates to ministry positions.

This article[3] reports on how first-career seminarians at one school understood their ministry experiences. The data are taken from a phenomenological study at a mainline Protestant seminary, New Creation Theological Seminary (NCTS).[4] After briefly discussing the concept of life world, I present a graphical representation of a typical first-career student's life world. I then interpret the mindmap using ecological theory and the concept of emerging

Timothy D. Lincoln, BA, MDiv, MS, PhD, Associate Dean for Seminary Assessment, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 100 East 27th St., Austin, TX 78705-5797 (Email: tlincoln@austinseminary.edu).

adulthood, drawing attention to the complex relationships that respondents reported between ministry experiences and other aspects of their lives as students. Finally, I suggest how these findings might influence the work of those responsible for field education in seminaries.

What is a Life World?

The concept of a life world comes from phenomenology as practiced in the social sciences. Life world "refers to the commonsense interpretive frames and logic by which individuals prereflectively conceptually organize their perceptions of everyday life."[5] A life world is the way that things appear to an individual, as shaped by cultural and social forces. For some, the passing of a comet is an interesting astronomical event explained exhaustively by the laws of physics. For others, the passing of the same comet may be fraught with religious significance. Closely associated with the concept of life world is its correlate, lived experience.[6] Lived experience is the way things are for me but may not be for you, even though you and I root for Texas Tech, both consistently vote for Republicans, and belong to the same church. Two students in a seminary lecture hall may hear a talk on Karl Barth. For one the hour drags; for the other, the hour flies by. The same event spawns distinctive lived experiences for different individuals. Cultures and microcultures give birth to diverse life worlds. Ethnographies of seminary students show that theological schools shape distinct life worlds for their students, encouraging them to take on new identities and theological commitments.[7]

In the NCTS study, the life worlds of first- and second-career students were studied using interactive qualitative analysis (IQA).[8] In IQA, elements of the phenomenon being studied are discovered by a combination of group and individual interviews. Participants identify key themes and—crucially—relationships of influence between themes. The results of an IQA study include examples of discourse about themes (reports of lived experience) and a *mindmap*, a graphical depiction of the relationships between themes as experienced by a typical study participant.[9] In the research reported here, seminarians were asked to speak about their experience of being students at NCTS. Thus, the resulting mindmap describes the life world of students. Another element in IQA is the researcher's assessment of the dominant *timbre* for each theme discovered. Timbre is a way of characterizing the discourse of participants in this study. IQA, like other qualitative research, strives to discover the full range of viewpoints, experiences, or moods of participants

in this study. Judgments about timbre parallel a wine connoisseur's observations about a given sample of wine (dry versus sweet, flavor notes, etc.).

The Life World of First-Career Seminarians

In the NCTS study, first-career participants were enrolled in the Masters of Divinity (MDiv) program. Each had begun seminary study when less than 30-years-old and had completed at least one-third of the credits needed for the degree. I selected age 30 as the cutoff point because previous studies of "younger" and "older" theological students had used this age as the line of demarcation between first- and second-career students.[10] Using focus groups, the researcher discovered 12 key themes of student experience. IQA procedures give rules for the naming of themes. For instance, rather than having two or more themes about emotions (e.g., positive emotions and negative emotions), a single theme is used. Table 1 reports the themes and their definitions. Eight first-career students and nine second-career were interviewed individually for approximately 90 minutes about the 12 themes. They spoke about their experience of the themes and then told the researcher about how themes exerted influence on other themes. For example, in response to the theme Ministry influenced Transformation, students said: "Doing Clinical Pastoral Education, suddenly you're given this ministry, and you have to transform yourself into a minister. When you are in there really doing ministry, sometimes you learn what you didn't expect, and that can have transformative properties."[11]

Analyzing interviews, I found subthemes for each of the twelve key themes. For instance, the theme of Ministry had five subthemes: (1) the importance of fit between a student and her ministry setting, (2) the variety of ministry tasks that students took part in, (3) the importance of experiential or hands-on learning, (4) how ministry experiences clarified an individual's call to ministry, and (5) new discoveries that students made about themselves. Both first- and second-career students spoke about these subthemes. Both first- and second-career students were generally positive about their experience of ministry while students.

Theme	Definition
Community	The relationships that NCTS students have with other NCTS students
Emotions	The feelings of students in school
Spirituality	The quest to sense the presence of God
Life management	A student's life beyond NCTS
Academic program	The curriculum taught at NCTS
School bureaucracy	The official administrative procedures associated w/school
Call to ministry	One's perception that God is leading them to a particular form of Christian service
Transformation	Changes that students may undergo while in seminary
Facilities	The spaces and physical resources provided by NCTS
Faculty and staff	NCTS professors, administrators, and other employees
Church requirements	Processes and expectations that church bodies have for those seeking ordination
Ministry	Pastoral work that seminarians do in congregations and hospitals, including Clinical Pastoral Education and Ministry Practicum

Table 1. Definitions of Themes, New Creation Theological Seminary Study

In interviews, first-career students reported that Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and another hospital-based course were valuable, in part, because they allowed them to deal directly with patients:

> It was like tossing you in the fire to see if you survive. After orientation, the next day I had my first referral to a schizophrenic who believed that Satan was after him. You can't teach from a book. You have to experience it. I took the hospital chaplaincy course. It was a blessing from God. You had orientation, and they told you to go and do your thing. That's how you learn.

Students also reported learning things that they had not imagined that they would learn:

> I learned in my Ministry Practicum that a lot of ministry is behind the scenes, like folding the bulletins and planning. You do a lot in the office and in the evening in people's houses. If you only see the public view of the pastors, you don't see the late nights working on sermons because you did four pastoral care conferences during the day. That's a new discovery for me.
>
> My CPE in Mountain City wasn't exactly what I expected. I was expecting hard-core blood and guts. Instead, I was in the emergency room where

> they treat the baby who has strep throat. You had to go find ministry in the wards with patients who weren't in the emergency room.

Participants reported that the work done by the director of the Ministry Practicum was valuable because he thoughtfully matched students and supervisors. First-year seminarians said:

> My practicum was fabulous. The director was guiding me. He made phone calls to get a placement for me. This summer was the best in my 24 years of life. He really cares about the practicum. He gets to know you before you discuss placements. It's important to be matched with the right supervisor.

Students frequently said that the benefit of a given ministry assignment depended on the quality of the relationship between the student and her supervisor. Students said:

> A bad supervisor can kill your internship and close down your feeling of call. I was placed at a wonderful congregation with a great pastor to learn from, a great leader. I tried to pick his brain.

> I did my Ministry Practicum for ten weeks in West Hamlet. I chose it because it was a new development and because it had a female pastor. I wanted to see what life was like as a female pastor.

In addition to analyzing the discourse of participants for themes and subthemes, I conducted an analysis of the dominant timbre of each of the twelve themes. The dominant timbre for first-career students for the theme Life Management (life outside of school) was positive to neutral. However, the dominant timbre voiced by second-career students was negative. This result did not neatly track as a difference between students with young children and students without children. As another example, the dominant timbre for first-career students for the theme Emotions was volatile. Students reported that their emotional state varied enormously depending on which part of the academic term they were in. By contrast, the dominant timbre for this theme for second-career students was negative.

By aggregating participant responses about the relationships between themes, and following IQA procedures for building group mindmaps, I derived the mindmap depicted in Figure 1. The figure depicts how a typical first-career seminarian in this study understood her life world. An IQA mindmap is conceptually a closed system of influences. The arrows depict the flow of influence between themes. All social science models tell stories that emphasize some things and hide others. Figure 1 shows a simplified version of the flows of relationship (shown by arrows) between themes. In reality, participants reported that School Bureaucracy exerted influence on

virtually every other theme. IQA procedures remove most arrows, leaving a topographically compact figure. The justification for this procedure is to create mindmaps that have explanatory power by focusing on the overall patterns of relationships between elements in the system.

In this mindmap, School Bureaucracy and Church Requirements are *drivers*. Participants in this study distinguished between the expectations of church bodies and what NCTS expected from students. Both of these themes influenced many other elements or themes in the system. At the other end of the system (the lower right section of the figure), Call to Ministry, Life Management, Emotions, and Transformations form a cluster of *outcomes*. That is, many elements in the system exert influence on them, but they exert relatively little influence on other elements. As understood in IQA, outcomes are not less important than other themes. Outcomes are simply elements that find their relative position due to the influence of most other elements in the system. In this mindmap, for instance, one of the outcomes was Transformation. Students reported that the seminary experience changed them, often significantly. Students learned new theological knowledge, acquired pastoral skills, and often focused their call to ministry because of being in school. These are the sorts of important changes that theological educators want students to experience.[12]

The Figure 1 mindmap contains several elements of recursion, or feedback, between parts of the system. For instance, Spirituality is influenced by many elements including Academic Program. But Spirituality also exerts influence on Church Requirements, a driver in the system, as well as influencing Ministry. Understood as a system, the mindmap shows the complexity of relationships experienced by typical first-career students in their life worlds.

For purposes of this discussion, I want to call attention to the location of the theme Ministry in the mindmap. Ministry sits roughly in the middle of the system. Seven themes exert influence on Ministry, including Academic Program. However, students reported that Ministry was a hub of influence towards both the driver side and the outcome side of the system. Ministry exerted influence on relationships with other students (Community), but also exerted influence on the driver, School Bureaucracy.

Ministry in the Middle of the Life World

As depicted in Figure 1, the theme Ministry sits in the middle of the life world of first-career seminarians. It receives influence from drivers (e.g., Church Requirements) and exerts influence both forwards and backwards in the system.

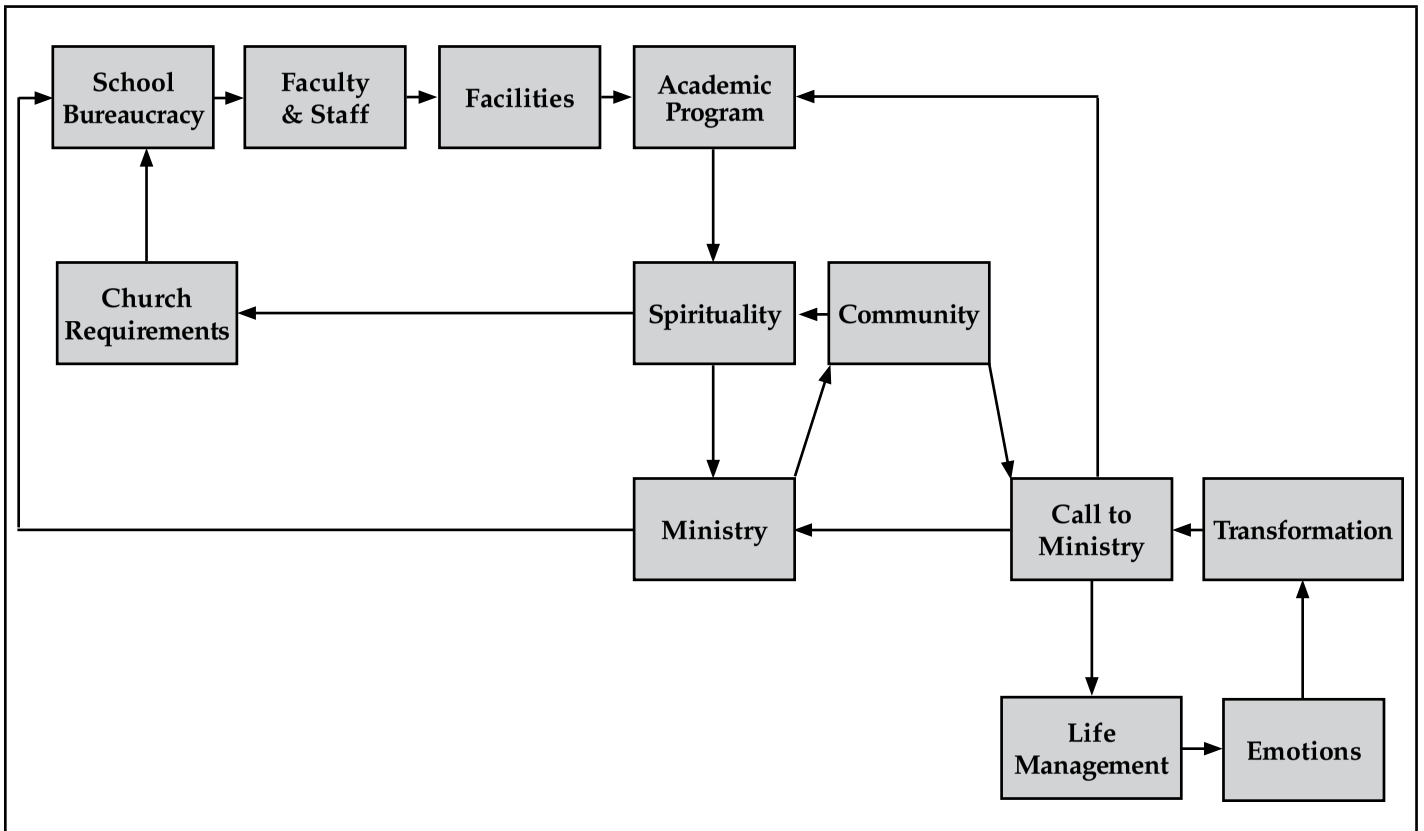

Figure 1. Mindmap, First-Career Seminarians

Ministry is involved in two loops in the mindmap. The first loop consists of Ministry/Community/Spirituality. These three themes exert influence upon one another. It is difficult to determine which element has "the most" influence, because they form a loop. This loop suggests a close connection, in the minds of students, between their personal quest for God (Spirituality), their diverse leanings in ministry activities (Ministry), and their relationships with other students (Community). First-career students generally reported that the NCTS community was caring and supportive. They also reported that their experiences of Spirituality were neutral or positive. Both first- and second-career students noted that time constrained their participation in worship and individual devotions. One first-career student said: "Spirituality is easy to let slide while you're in seminary. Sometimes I've been so focused on studying or getting papers in on time that I haven't spent time with God, or praying, or reading scripture. That's something that I'm constantly working on."

At the same time, the theme Ministry is part of a second loop consisting of Ministry/Call to Ministry/Community. Again, because this trio of themes forms a loop, it is difficult to argue that one is more influential than the others. This loop highlights the close relationship between ministry experiences, student relationships, and an individual's ongoing sense of vocational identity. Students reported that Call to Ministry was a work-in-progress throughout their seminary education. For instance, one student reported:

> Your call changes when you're here. You come in thinking, 'In three years. I'm going to be a solo pastor.' In my CPE this summer I did a lot of discernment. I worked with psychiatric patients and loved it. I believe I'm being called to hospital chaplaincy. My call changed because of doing CPE. So, I'm still discerning, always discerning.

As depicted in Figure 1, the mindmap suggests that ministry experiences sit in the middle of the life worlds of first-career seminarians, both shaping and being shaped by other themes.

The location of Ministry was different in the mindmap for second-career students (Figure 2). The theme of Ministry was an outcome in the mindmap of second-career students. The theme forms a four-part loop along with Life Management, Transformation, and Emotions. The location of Ministry in the second-career mindmap suggests that, compared to first-career students, more themes exerted influence on student understanding of ministry experiences. The mindmap for second-career students has fewer elements of recursion than the mindmap for first-career students. There are no lines of feedback from elements in the middle of the system referring back to drivers, as was the

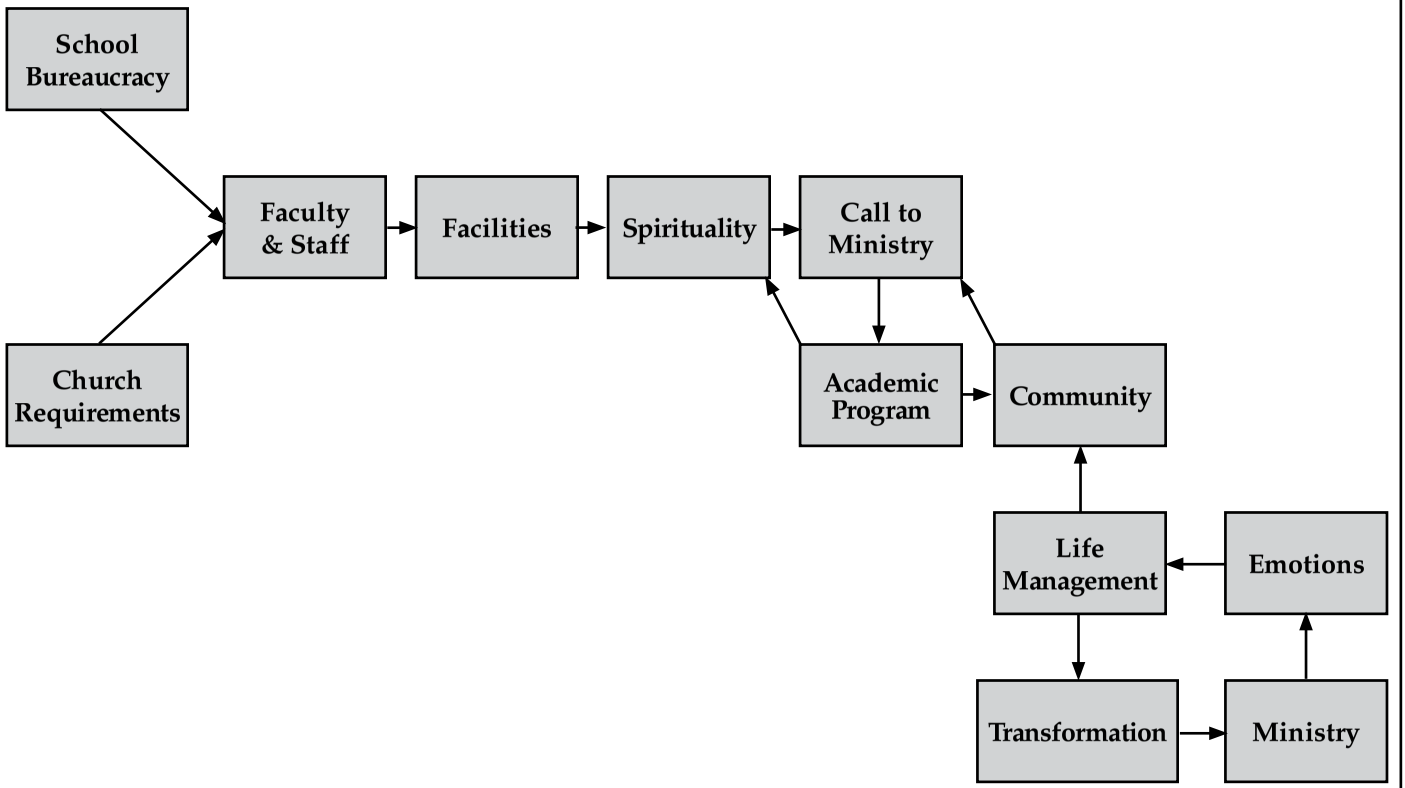

Figure 2. Mindmap, Second-Career Seminarians

case in the first-career mindmap. This difference suggests that the processing of experience going on in the minds of first-career students is more complex and dynamic than for second-career students. In phenomenological terms, such processing entails an analytical move that supersedes the natural attitude and pregivenness of the life world. Processing experience through the use of a Christian imagination is another way of describing theological reflection.[13]

Why should this processing be more complex for first-career students than for second-career students? I think that ecological theory and Arnett's research on emerging adulthood help to interpret this finding. To be clear, I am not arguing that second-career students do not seek to make sense of their life worlds, nor am I arguing that first-career students are "better" at making sense than their older classmates. Nevertheless, the mindmaps for each group do not have the same flow of relationships. So, one intriguing question is how to account for the two different configurations of relationships that I discovered.

Interpreting Ministry in the First-Career Life World

Bronfenbrenner put forward an ecological model of the life course that emphasized how the social environment shaped an individual. He envisioned five systems that surround individuals:

1. An individual's immediate environment is a set of *microsystems* such as family, friends, and colleagues at work.
2. Microsystems interact to form an individual's *mesosystem*, "the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life."[14] Thus, a mesosystem is a way of thinking about the interactions that take place in the life of a child, who relates simultaneously to members of his immediate family, other children at school, and neighbors. Adults may live in a mesosystem containing such microsystems as the workplace, a congregation, and the home. The analytic point is that these microsystems exert various kinds of influence upon an individual, and the interactions need to be given serious attention.[15]
3. The third level of analysis is the *exosystem*. The social structures in the exosystem influence an individual but are not part of her immediate context. Examples include government agencies and the Internet. Although many people get through their days without thinking about the effects of tax law or how email is delivered, the exosystem comprised of these factors (and many others) profoundly shapes individuals.

4. Bronfenbrenner's fourth level of analysis is the *macrosystem*. Macrosystems are cultural prototypes, "the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture"[16] that convey information, custom, and ideology.
5. The final level of analysis takes into account the ebb and flow of time. Attention to *chronosystems* highlight "the impact of prior life events and experiences, singly or sequentially, on subsequent development."[17] For example, the death of a parent may profoundly affect a child for the rest of her life.

Ecological theory suggests that both first- and second-career students are broadly shaped by similar exosystems and macrosystems. Participants in this study were also shaped profoundly by the NCTS microculture, and individuals came to seminary with diverse backgrounds. However, younger students had not been shaped by as many previous life experiences as older students. In the NCTS study, they were less distressed by the demands of seminary than the second-career students. First-career students spoke eloquently about the need to be open to new experiences and ideas in seminary:

> Seminary is a time for you to grow and transform as an individual, to learn what works for you and what doesn't work. When you give it a chance, there is a difference.

First-career students also were more comfortable than second-career students with the fact that engagement in seminary and relationships with other students ate up most of their time. As one student put it:

> It's not that I don't get off campus. We do stuff in the city. We don't just study all day long, but relationally speaking, I don't have a life outside of the seminary.

It may be the case that relative lack of life experience combined with immersion in the seminary microculture pushes first-career students to work harder than older students to integrate the wealth of new experiences they undergo in seminary, including experiences in ministry. Exploration of this claim would require further research.

A similar conclusion results when the position of the theme Ministry in the middle of the life world is viewed through the lens of emerging adulthood. Arnett[18] describes the period between ages 18 and 30 in many developed countries as an unprecedented time of emerging adulthood. During these years, he argues, emerging adults explore jobs, relationships, and identities through repeated improvisation. If first-career seminary students are commonly in the midst of such improvisations, then it also makes sense that they are actively thinking about the meaning of lived experience rather than simply piling one experience on another. Most participants in this study reported undergoing profound changes at seminary. These changed

perceptions are the result of reflection on experience. To point to one example, students frequently reported that they encountered historical-critical approaches to the Bible for the first time at seminary. Students had to make sense of new ways of reading scripture. Not everyone claimed that seminary changed them. One first-career participant stated that he had managed to attend seminary while retaining virtually all of his pre-seminary ideas about God and ministry intact:

> I got new information, but in regard to spiritual transformation or transformation in character, none of that came through the academic program. I'm just reading, writing essays, and taking tests.

According to Arnett, emerging adults want to become more mature in thought and action. The mindmap showing active relationships between Ministry and other themes of student experience, I think, shows emerging adults at work. The flows of influence to and from this theme suggest that students find ministry experiences important enough to reshape how they experience School Bureaucracy (the line of recursion back to the driver side of the system) as well as influencing discussions of what it means to sense God's presence (the Ministry/Community/Spirituality loop), what it means to have relationships with other students (the Ministry/Community/Spirituality loop and the Ministry/Community/Call to Ministry loop) and how they perceive their specific call to Christian service. Put in terms of a constructionist view of knowledge, students actively make meaningful sense out of their experiences in seminary. One second-career student said, for instance:

> My fall and spring courses were well combined, one thing led to another and made sense. *That happened to me every semester* [my italics].

The student constructed meaning out of the suite of courses that she took each term. Meaning is not a silver dollar lying in plain sight by the side of the road.[19]

Implications for Theological Educators

This article has reported on the way that first-career students at one mainline seminary experienced ministry as part of their lives as students. I have argued that the place of ministry in their life worlds differs from its place in the life worlds of second-career students, in part, because students have had fewer life experiences and were more thoroughly socialized into the student microculture of their seminary.

I conclude with a brief discussion of three implications of this study for theological educators. First, I doubt that any reader of these pages has been surprised that students report that ministry experiences are important to seminarians. My findings are consistent with data from the *Graduating Student Questionnaire* (GSQ) report. The GSQ is a standard instrument administered by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and widely used by seminaries. In the 2008–2009 report (based on more than 5,000 graduates from 148 schools), 79 percent of respondents stated that required field education or an internship was either important or very important.[20] However, the same report also asks students about the three most important influences on their educational experience. The highest scoring category was faculty (chosen by 22.2 percent). The second most frequently chosen category was interactions with fellow students (9.6 percent). Field education/internship was chosen by 6.6 percent, and experiences in ministry by 6.2 percent.[21]

It is possible to read the GSQ data and conclude (wrongly, in my view), that what faculty do is about twice as important as other parts of the process of theological education. From the perspective of the student life world, *all* of the parts of the seminary experience fit into a dynamic system. Students in seminary are changed through a complex process that involves new information, experiential learning, and skill development. The findings of this study support Eisner's view that students learn both from the explicit curriculum documented in catalogues, syllabi, and lectures and from the implicit curriculum of unspoken expectations and unplanned experience.[22] Quantitative data alone do not do justice to the complexity of lived student experience. Theological educators would do well to keep in mind the primary goal of MDiv education, which is training for ministry. Training for ministry—according to seminarians—is not so much a linear process of learning basic knowledge and then moving on to more advanced knowledge as it is an iterative web of sense-making. Students bring ministry experiences into the classroom, just as they take new ideas from the classroom to their ministries in the hospital ward, the pulpit, or Sunday school.[23] To put it another way, the experience of theological education is less like a car chassis moving along an assembly line than it is like being a novice musician contributing her own interpretations as part of a jazz ensemble. Over time, she becomes more polished in playing.

A second implication of the results of this study relates to the value that first-career students placed on experiential learning in their formation as apprentice pastors. Participants spoke glowingly of the transformation that they

underwent through require field placement, Clinical Pastoral Education (not a required part of the NCTS program, but often expected by denominational oversight committees), and optional year-long internships in congregations. Theological schools who wish to train competent ministers need to continue to provide for high quality experiential learning, even in a time when fiscal constraints might be pushing school leaders to consider ways to shorten degree programs or opt for hybrid-programs that combine online and classroom learning.[24] If the purpose of theological education is to form skillful practitioners, it would be false economy to trim experiential learning out of the curriculum.

A third implication for theological educators relates to the differences in the mindmaps between first- and second-career students. I have argued that the mindmap for first-career students has more elements of recursion because younger students have had fewer life experiences than older students and that they are, relatively speaking, more actively involved in trying to make sense of what is happening to them in seminary. If my analysis is correct, then theological educators would do well to provide robust mentoring and advising to first-career students. Specifically, first-career students need structured opportunities to talk about the meaning of their ministry experiences to complement the informal conversations that they have with their peers. In the NCTS study, participants did not speak in any length about how faculty members (other than the director of field education) assisted them in active reflection on ministry experiences. The ATS' *Profiles of Ministry* assessment tool may usefully assist educators in speaking about ministry experiences with students.[25]

Conclusion

Richard Osmer relates how he was caught flat-footed as a young pastor when the church treasurer announced that she was quitting and would not be talked out of it. "I wish that at least one class in my theological education had given me the knowledge and skills to make sense of what I was experiencing. I realize, in ministry, experience is one of our most important teachers."[26] His feelings of bafflement are part of the cycle of learning that seminarians and ministers undergo on the road from novice to skilled practitioner. According to the study reported here, seminarians begin making sense of ministry experiences while in seminary. Good theological schools understand the complexity involved in student experience, and find ways to

help students integrate the academic program, relationships with students, life outside of school, and ministry experiences.

NOTES

1. Students consistently report that field education/internship was an important influence on their educational experience. Francis A. Lonsway, *The Graduating Student Questionnaire: A Study of Five Years of Use, 1996–97 through 2000–01* (Pittsburgh, PA: Association of Theological Schools, 2002).

2. The most wisely used instrument for capturing data about student perceptions of graduate theological education is the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), *Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ)*. Some scales in the GSQ ask students to pick three responses from a set list.

3. I wish to thank my colleague Dr. David W. Johnson, Director of Ministry Formation at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, for allowing me to present a draft of this paper to a class of MDiv students. Their critique sharpened my thinking about what schools might do to assist students in reflecting on their ministry experiences.

4. Timothy D. Lincoln, *The Seminary Experience: Conceptual Worlds of First-Career and Second-Career Seminarians* (PhD dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2009. AAT 3372630).

5. W. Fincher, "Lifeworld," in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology,* G. Ritzer, ed. (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2007)—retrieved from Blackwell Reference Online. Ultimately, the concept of the life world goes back to Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, David Carr, trans. from German 1954 ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970). Alfred Schutz, Husserl's student, brought phenomenology to the social sciences as an interpretive framework. See Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert, trans. from 1932 German ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

6. Schutz, ibid., 45–96, for an extended discussion of lived experience.

7. Sherryl Kleinman, *Equals Before God: Seminarians as Humanistic Professionals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

8. Norvell Northcutt and Danny McCoy, *Interactive Qualitative Analysis: A Systems Method for Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004).

9. Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) is concerned with the shared meanings of microcultures and therefore emphasizes common themes in the group or groups studied. IQA procedures also can map one person's flow of relationships in a mindmap.

10. For instance, see Ellis L. Larsen and James M. Shopshire, "A Profile of Contemporary Seminarians," *Theological Education* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 10–136.

11. All quotations of participants in this study are taken from the interviews underlying Lincoln, *The Seminary Experience*, 2009. Quotations are edited to reduce redundancy and preserve sense.

12. For a model of theological education that focuses on such transformation, see Timothy D. Lincoln, "How Master of Divinity Education Changes Students: A Research-Based Model." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 13, no. 3 (2010): 208–222.

13. See John Patton, *From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action & Reflection* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

14. Uri Bronfenbrenner. "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development," *American Psychologist* 32, no. 7 (July 1977): 515.

15. Today there is widespread suspicion about theories that assert epigenetic development throughout a person's life course. See, for instance, Donald Capps, *Young Clergy: A Biographical Developmental Study* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2005), 235–243. To put it another way, ecological theory makes it possible to understand how persons may become older but not wiser.

16. Bronfenbrenner, *American Psychologist*, 515.

17. Uri Bronfenbrenner, *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 83.

18. Jeffrey J. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).

19. On the constructionist viewpoint, see John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938) or, more recently, Ference Marton and Shirley Booth, *Learning and Awareness* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

20. ATS, *GSQ 2008–2009, Profile of Participants*, Table 16. Available from www.ats.org. The table documents some gender differences. Women chose "very important" 61 percent of the time, while men chose "very important" 48.4 percent of the time.

21. Ibid., Table 15.

22. On the concepts of the explicit, implicit, and null curricula for a school, see Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).

23. P. Alice Rogers and Robert Winstead argue that students who work as pastors while in seminary are a gift to theological education. See P. Alice Rogers and Robert Winstead, "Pedagogical Lessons from Students in Ecclesial Contexts" in *Contextualizing Theological Education*, Theodore Brelsford and P. Alice Rogers, eds. (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 56–66.

24. For a discussion of such a program, see Meri MacLeod, "Distance Hybrid Master of Divinity: A Course-blended Program Developed by Western Theological Seminary," *Theological Education* 43, no. 2 (2008):, 79–92.

25. ATS *Profiles of Ministry* assessment tool is available from ATS and a description is available online at www.ats.edu.

26. Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 3.