

Women in Ministry: An Introduction

Census data provide little evidence for the increased professionalization of clergywomen, greater acceptance of women as clergy, [or] more use of the clergy by women as an occupational outlet. . . . In fact, the data may be interpreted to question attributing the very label of "profession" to these females. In some characteristics (e.g., educational attainment), they are more like the general labor force than like other professionals. The differences between male and female clergy in age, educational attainment, and marital status are quite conspicuous, and these distinctions suggest that clergy roles are different for females than for males or are differentially experienced by the two sexes. The opportunities for females to act as clergy are more limited than for males, and these limitations have produced a composite picture of the female clergy that at least suggests professional marginality.¹

This assessment of the status and role of clergywomen was made by sociologist Wilbur Bock in 1967, using trend data from the U.S. Census from 1900 to 1960. We believe it to be a generally accurate assessment of the situation existing up to that time; yet, reading it in the early 1980s we become strikingly aware of changes that have occurred since he wrote.

When the history of American Protestantism during the 1970s is written, surely one of the important developments to be chronicled will be the entry of large numbers of women into the ranks of the ordained clergy, with the attendant conflicts and changes surrounding their entry. For some denominations, this dramatic increase in women clergy built on a previous history of ordaining women to the ministry. (We use the terms *clergy*, *ordained ministry*, and *pastor* interchangeably.) For others, notably the Episcopal Church, the decision to ordain women came only in 1977, and was preceded and followed by bitter contro-

versy. In either case, the large-scale entry of women into this traditionally male profession is an important phenomenon, one that many applaud and others decry. This growth in the number of clergywomen has created a new situation in the ministerial profession and the churches. The assessment made by Bock in 1967 needs to be updated in light of the trends of the seventies. Who are these women? Why have they chosen to become clergy? What have their experiences been in seminary? In the job market? How are they functioning in the various roles which ministers perform? How do they differ from their male counterparts? How are they accepted by laity and male clergy? Are they still marginal? What changes are they likely to bring to the ministry and to the church? These are questions asked by many who view the entry of women either with hope or alarm. These also are among the questions that we attempt to answer in the following pages. We do so in the conviction, as the title of this book suggests, that these "women of the cloth" present "a new opportunity for the churches."

Our focus is on parish ministry in nine Protestant denominations in the United States. The denominations include the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., the American Lutheran Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. These denominations are not the only ones to ordain women, nor do they necessarily include the earliest incidence of ordaining women among American Protestants, as we note in Chapter 2. They are, however, the mainline Protestant denominations with the largest number of women clergy. By "mainline," we follow Martin Marty's definition implying religious groups that represent "the traditional, inherited, normative, or median style of American spirituality and organization."² Among the denominations with significant numbers of women clergy, these denominations also have more formal requirements and processes for ordaining and deploying clergy. The Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches do not ordain women to be priests, and therefore we do not focus on those churches in our study. The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, is not included here because, while it has no stated rule against ordaining women, in practice very few women are ordained as pastors by its congregations.

We have chosen to limit our analysis to parish ministry, not only for the sake of manageability, but because the parish is the principal and most visible context in which clergy work. While ordained clergy, including women, work in other contexts and positions—for example, in

denominational staff positions, as campus ministers, and as chaplains and pastoral counselors—half to two-thirds of all active clergy in these denominations are in parish ministry positions. Thus the parish is the context in which clergy most frequently relate to laity and the public at large and are, thereby, the most visible.

Numbers of Women Clergy and Women Professionals

The large-scale entry of women into the ordained ministry is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part and parcel of broader changes in the attitudes and structure of American society regarding "woman's place," including her place in the work force. In 1950, for example, 29.6 percent of the American labor force was female; by 1980, the percentage increased to 42.5.³ This growth reflects the entry of women into a variety of traditionally male occupations, including the professions. Several professions, notably nursing and elementary-school teaching, have long been regarded as "suitable" for women (requiring affective and nurturing qualities typically associated with the family and women); however, women have only recently begun to enter traditionally male-dominated professions in significant numbers. Table 1.1 shows the fifty-year trend for the percentages of clergywomen, based on the total number of clergy, men and women, in *all* religious bodies in the U.S., as reported by the Bureau of the Census and the U.S. Department of Labor. The figures include those religious traditions which do not ordain women, such as the Roman Catholic Church. This fact affects the figures for women as a percentage of total clergy and, as we shall see, somewhat obscures the sharp increases in the proportions of clergywomen in the nine Protestant denominations included in our research. This limitation notwithstanding, Table 1.1 shows a number of interesting trends.

For one thing, it shows that the long-term trend has been one of increases in women entrants into each of the three traditionally male professions. When the change in the number of women in each profession is computed, the fifty-year figures show increases of 240 percent in the overall number of clergywomen, 574 percent for women physicians, and a phenomenal 1,986 percent for women lawyers. In spite of these striking growth rates, the table reveals that women as a percentage of the total in the three professions is still rather small, more so for clergy than for the other two professions. Each is still male dominated. The table also shows the sharp increase in women entrants that occurred in each profession during the 1970s; although this rapid increase began for physicians somewhat earlier in the 1960s. The increase for women lawyers during the 1970s—over 400 percent—is especially notable. It reflects an overall substantial increase in the number of lawyers, male and

Table 1.1 Women in Selected Professions, 1930-1980
(Number and Percent of Total)

Profession	1930		1940		1950		1960		1970		1980	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Clergy	3,276	2.2	3,148	2.3	6,777	4.1	4,272	2.3	6,314	2.9	11,130	4.2
Lawyers, judges	3,385	2.1	4,187	2.4	6,256	3.5	7,543	3.5	13,406	4.9	70,016	12.8
Physicians, surgeons, osteopaths	6,825	4.6	7,608	4.6	11,714	6.1	16,150	7.0	26,084	9.3	46,008	10.8

SOURCES: Constant H. Jaquet, Jr., *Women Ministers in 1977*, New York: Office of Research, Evaluation and Planning, National Council of Churches, March 1978, p. 5; and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Unemployment: A Report on 1980*, Special Labor Force Report 244, April 1981.

female, during the decade as the demand for legal services grew sharply and salaries for lawyers increased accordingly.⁴

The data on clergywomen in Table 1.1 include all denominations. What, more specifically, have been the trends in the mainline denominations included in this research? Unfortunately, no long-term trend data are available; however, we have figures for 1977 and 1981, a four-year trend, summarized in Table 1.2. Several points may be made.

First, only in three of the nine denominations—Disciples, United Church of Christ, and United Presbyterian—does the percentage of women clergy as a total of all clergy exceed the 4.2 percent figure for all religious bodies reported in Table 1.1. The U.C.C. with 7.8 percent has the largest proportion of clergywomen relative to total clergy. The American Lutheran Church has both the smallest number of clergywomen of the nine denominations and the lowest proportion relative to total clergy. These figures reveal that mainline denominations still have a relatively low proportion of clergywomen.

Yet, to concentrate only on the relatively small proportions of clergywomen in the nine denominations is to ignore the considerable growth, shown in Table 1.2, that has occurred in the absolute number in each denomination. (The figures for Disciples are somewhat misleading because of the way in which the denomination counts its ministers.)⁵ In all of the other denominations there has been a sharp increase in the number of women clergy from 1977 to 1981. Computing the percentage change from Table 1.2, column A, we discover that the American Lutherans, who still have relatively few women clergy, nevertheless have experienced an increase of 416 percent; the number of Episcopal women priests has grown by 352 percent; and the United Methodist Church, with the largest number of clergywomen, has experienced a 312 percent increase. Not all of these women are in parish ministry; the majority no doubt are, however, and the sharp increase will continue, as seminary trends also make clear.

The number of women enrolled in seminaries in the 1980–1981 school year (the latest figures available at the time of this writing) indicates that women will make up an increasingly larger proportion of ordained ministers. In 1972, the first year for which figures on women seminarians are available, there were 1,077 women enrolled, or 4.7 percent of total seminary enrollment, in three- or four-year professional degree programs (those typically leading to ordination). In 1980–1981, there were 4,747 women in these programs, or 14.7 percent of the total. The percentage increase for women during this period was 340.8 percent, while male enrollment in the same programs grew by 25.0 percent. Thus, the rate of increase of women seminarians was over thirteen times that for men.⁶

Table 1.3 shows the 1980–1981 enrollment of women in the Master

Table 1.2 Women Clergy in Selected Denominations, 1977 and 1981
(Number and Percent of Total)

Denomination	Number of Women Clergy		Women Clergy as % of Total Clergy	
	1977	1981	1977	1981
American Baptist Churches	157	NA	1.8	NA
American Lutheran Church	18	93	0.3	1.3
Christian Church (Disciples)	388	317	5.7	4.8
Episcopal Church	94	425	0.8	3.4
Lutheran Church in America	55	210	0.7	2.6
Presbyterian Church, U.S.	75	180	1.4	3.3
United Church of Christ	400	757	4.1	7.8
United Methodist Church	319	1316	0.8	3.6
United Presbyterian Church, USA	295	630	2.1	4.5

SOURCES: 1977 data from Constant H. Jacquet, Jr., *Women Ministers in 1977*, Office of Research, Evaluation and Planning, National Council of Churches, March 1978, pp. 9-13; 1981 data supplied by the denominations listed. Data on total clergy on which percentages are computed from 1981 are from the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1981*.

**Table 1.3 Women Enrolled in Master of Divinity Programs
in Seminaries of Selected Denominations, Fall 1980**

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Number of Women Enrolled</i>	<i>Women as % of Total</i>
American Baptist Churches	137	24
American Lutheran Church	NA	NA
Christian Church (Disciples)	117	26
Episcopal Church	192	27
Lutheran Church in America	173	24
Presbyterian Church, U.S.	43	21
United Church of Christ	275	45
United Methodist Church	736	29
United Presbyterian Church, USA	376	32
Inter- or Nondenominational Seminaries	678	16

SOURCE: Marvin J. Taylor, ed., *Fact Book on Theological Education, 1980-81* (Vandalia, Ohio: Association of Theological Schools, 1981), pp. 72, 74.

of Divinity degree program. The figures probably underrepresent the actual number of women seminarians in most denominations because they are based on the denominational affiliation of the school rather than that of individual students. Many students from these denominations attend inter- or nondenominational schools and are not included in the denominational figures. Nevertheless, in 1980-1981, almost one-fourth or more of the M.Div. students in seminaries of all denominations included in the table, except the Presbyterian Church U.S., were women. The United Church of Christ topped the list with 45 percent. According to a subsequent denominational news release, the U.C.C. figure has reached 52 percent in 1981-1982.⁷

The seminary enrollment data for these denominations make clear that the numbers of women in the ranks of parish ministry will increase even more dramatically in the years ahead. If for no other reason, the sheer fact of numbers will introduce a new dynamic into this traditionally all-male profession with which both male clergy and congregations will have to deal.

Why Now?

Why are so many women choosing to enter the ordained ministry as well as other traditionally male occupations? In Chapter 2, we deal with these questions in some detail; however, several points may be made here. Considering the ordained ministry specifically, deciding to enter typically involves a sense of being called by God, whether as a special, distinctive experience or a more gradual, natural leading towards a

decision. It is hard to believe that only in the 1970s did significant numbers of women feel that they were called by God to be ordained; or, even more unlikely, that God only chose to call women in the seventies. More likely, many women down through the years have experienced a call to the ministry but have found the opportunity to respond by becoming ordained blocked to them. When ordination was not possible, many of these women expressed their calling to ministry as lay volunteers or in the church-related occupations which permitted women to participate, such as deaconess programs or the religious education profession. Others perhaps did so vicariously as wives of ordained clergymen.

What made the 1970s watershed years was the occurrence of major social and cultural shifts following World War II, especially during the 1960s, making it possible for women to consider (or press for) ordained ministerial status as a way of responding to God's call. These shifts are well known and will only be briefly mentioned here.⁸ For one thing, there was the existence of a strong and vocal feminist movement pushing for changes, not only in the broader society, but also within the churches. Within the broader society the success of the feminist movement was aided by the passage of a number of federal laws regarding equality of opportunity, including the 1964 Civil Rights Act's Title VII, outlawing discrimination on the basis of sex. Sex discrimination was originally included in the legislation by opponents of civil rights for black Americans in an effort to increase opposition to the entire Act. Their efforts failed and the Act was passed with considerable consequences for women's employment in traditionally male occupations. While the legislation did not extend to churches, it no doubt helped change perceptions about what constitute appropriate professions for women to enter, including the ordained ministry.

Not only has the climate changed to make it possible for women to consider these traditionally all-male professions, but there has also been a major shift in attitudes about the female role. Prior to the 1970s, especially in the fifties and sixties, a woman's role was to be a good wife and mother. As pollster Daniel Yankelovich puts it, "In the 1950s, most married women rated the housewife's job as an important, interesting and challenging task. A majority of women . . . now state that the woman who is truly fulfilling herself manages a career as well as a home."⁹

Women particularly endorsing this new perspective are those with college educations, and the increase of college-educated women has been another of the major shifts that has made it possible for women to respond to a call to the ministry and to enter other traditionally male occupations and professions. In 1950, women constituted less than 30

percent of the recipients of B.A. degrees. By 1960 the proportion rose to 35 percent, and by 1972, women constituted 45 percent of the bachelor's graduates.¹⁰ Thus the number of persons with a requisite educational background available to become ordained clergy increased dramatically.

A final, major social shift has been the sharply declining birthrate since the early 1960s, partly reflecting the revolution in birth control methods. This decline has greatly increased the number of women with freedom to explore career options that childrearing responsibilities previously precluded. Additionally, among women who have chosen to have children, many have already fulfilled these responsibilities and have chosen to pursue a career outside the home. Indeed, many women are entering seminary to prepare for the ministry as a second career, the first career having been as mother and homemaker. A 1977 survey of Protestant seminarians probably reflects this in its finding that 19 percent of women seminarians were over thirty-five years of age as compared with 10 percent of the men.¹¹ A 1980 study of women seminarians in the Northeast found the *median* age of the respondents to be thirty-five.¹²

These are among the major social shifts that have affected the entry of women into the job market in traditionally male occupations, including the ordained ministry. As a result, therefore, women have been able to respond to a sense of calling into the ministry by pursuing ordination or pressing for it when it has been denied by denominational polity.

Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status

The shift that has allowed women to respond to a call to ordained ministry does not guarantee that women will be accepted into the profession by other clergy or by laity in the churches. In the quotation from Bock with which we began this chapter, women clergy were described as marginal to the profession. A central question of the research is whether professional marginality is still the case for clergywomen in light of the sharp increase in numbers. If not, why not, and what does this mean for their functioning and for the churches?

Why should women be marginal to the ministerial profession; that is, why should they not be fully accepted and integrated into it? Bock suggested that it was due to the association of maleness with the status of ministry. (Status is used here to refer to an officially defined social position.) According to Bock, the ministry "has not only been defined as masculine, but as 'sacredly' masculine. The father figure, a prominent feature of Christianity, is also a prominent ingredient in the image of the clergy."¹³

Some traditions within the Christian church uphold this sacred mas-

culinity on theological grounds, maintaining that, since Jesus and his twelve disciples were male, so also must his priests be male. Further, some argue that the apostle Paul ruled that women should have a subordinate role in the church (1 Cor. 11:1-16) and that this biblical injunction should be observed. In a more sociological vein, one might also point to the patriarchal society in which early Christianity developed and in which woman's status was inferior to that of man. Thus, it was unlikely that a chief leadership role in the churches would be given to women. These and other factors have played important roles in the identification of the clergy status with maleness and the consequent exclusion of, or resistance to, women clergy.

This identification has nevertheless been challenged, also on both theological and sociological grounds. For one thing there is a strong strain within the Christian ethic itself that challenges and relativizes ascribed distinctions (that is, distinctions defined by a person's birth), including gender. The apostle Paul can be cited in this connection as well: "There is no such thing as Jew or Greek, slave and freeman, male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:38, NEB). This emphasis on freedom from bondage to traditions, including the tradition of the inferiority of women, that oppress individuals or groups is a strong one in the Christian ethic, and it provides the basis for challenge to the "sacred" masculinity of the ordained ministry. From a sociological perspective, we also note that modern professionalism (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2) stresses norms of achievement rather than ascription. Thus, *in principle*, the capacity to perform well in a profession—an achievement norm—has superseded distinctions based on ascribed characteristics such as sex or social class. Therefore, for both theological and sociological reasons, a strong case can be made—and has been in those denominations that ordain women—that gender is not a determining criterion of the status of ordained ministry. Ministry is not an exclusively male status. There is nothing sacred about masculinity when it comes to ordained ministry. To make sex a criterion for entry into the profession is not only irrelevant and misguided, it is also inherently wrong.

Our purpose here is not to debate the merits of either side. While we personally strongly agree with the latter position, we nevertheless acknowledge that ancient traditions endure; that stereotypes of the ministry as a masculine profession persist; and that they cannot be ignored in their consequences for all concerned. The sociologist Everett C. Hughes saw this persistence of traditions and stereotypes as creating "dilemmas and contradictions of status" for professions such as the ministry.¹⁴

A characteristic such as gender, which may be auxiliary to a status

such as the ministry, becomes confused with determining characteristics—those essential to the status. Hughes specifically cites the ordained ministry as an example where maleness (an auxiliary characteristic) has become confused with specifically determining traits necessary for ministerial performance. This confusion creates dilemmas and contradictions for those entering the status who lack the auxiliary characteristic (women), for those already occupying the status (clergymen), and for those who interact with clergy as “clients” (lay parishioners). Therefore, even when one argues that gender ought not, in principle, to be a relevant factor in ordained ministry, in practice it may be.

Like one's occupation, one's sex or gender also defines a particular status that one occupies. There are female and male statuses, with certain accompanying characteristics that people carry in their minds as being distinctively appropriate for one or the other status. Male and female are such powerful statuses that, even when one tries to do otherwise, it is often difficult to avoid relating to an individual as if it does not matter whether the person is male or female. Since the ordained ministry is also a powerful status, and since, in the minds of many, it is associated with masculinity, a clash of expectations may occur when a person encounters a woman minister. Should the person relate to her as a woman? Or should the person relate to her as a minister without regard to gender? That dilemma occurs for laity or clergy who operate with these contradictory stereotypes in mind. A rather dramatic and, it is hoped, dated example of this contradictory situation is contained in an argument against ordaining women made in 1849 by a seminary professor at Oberlin Theological School. The professor argued that, since women are “emotional, physically delicate, illogical, weak-voiced, vain, dependent, and most important, divinely ordained to be homemakers,” they should not be ordained.¹⁵ While extreme in his stereotypes from today's perspective, the professor's comments illustrate well the conflict of stereotypes that some laity and clergymen may experience. Furthermore, we suspect that, even for some women, a part of socialization into the status of ordained ministry involves having to come to terms with their own ambivalence about occupying two statuses that have traditionally been kept separate. How is she to relate to others in this or that situation? Primarily as a woman? Or primarily as a minister? Or if she has no ambivalence herself, she will have to learn how to deal with the ambivalence of others towards her.¹⁶

Let us be clear that we are not attempting to justify traditional stereotypes of feminine traits. Nor do we wish to justify a masculine stereotype of ministry. We are simply pointing to the dilemmas and contradictions created by powerful and persisting traditions that are

part of the social fabric, in spite of efforts to declare them no longer relevant. And, as we have noted, they contribute to the professional marginality that women have often experienced in relation to ordained ministry.

But has the increased number of clergywomen begun to reduce the dilemmas and contradictions of status and also, therefore, to reduce marginality? At least two hypotheses may be put forward in this regard that receive a partial test in the chapters that follow.

One, based on the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, is that numbers make a difference in promoting or reducing marginality.¹⁷ Kanter identifies four types of groups based on different proportional representation of kinds of people: (1) *uniform* groups with only one significant social type; (2) *skewed* groups in which there is a large preponderance of one type or another—for example, a ratio of 85:15; (3) *tilted* groups, with less extreme distributions—for example, 65:35; and (4) *balanced* groups with roughly proportional representation. She hypothesizes that these differences in proportion affect the attitudes and behavior of group members and their interaction with one another. Specifically, the proportion of men and women in a group or organization will affect the degree to which traditional gender stereotypes are operative and the degree of acceptance of the minority by the majority. Without going further into Kanter's theory at this point, we would hypothesize that, as the proportion of women increases in such traditionally male settings as theological seminaries and regional judicatories (regional denominational units such as presbyteries, dioceses, conferences, or synods) where clergy interact, there will be a reduction in status dilemmas and ambivalence due to contradictory stereotypes. Further, the marginality of women to the clergy profession will be reduced and eventually eliminated.

The second hypothesis is more difficult to test, at least from our data, but it also relates to the reduction of status dilemmas and contradictions and thereby also of professional marginality for women. In interviews with women seminarians, Joy Charlton found that the women were attempting to redefine the status and role of minister by adding feminine characteristics to the role definition. In contrast to a "male model of ministry," women "see themselves as bringing into the ministry 'a real affect element, a real feeling, a real nurturing element.' They are characterized as more compassionate, more sensitive, more caring. . . . In fact, those kinds of qualities are described as not only appropriate but as constituting a 'special gift' that women can bring."¹⁸ In particular, Charlton points out, women believe they bring to the ordained ministry a style of leadership that emphasizes equalitarian rather than hierarchical patterns of decision making and exercise of

authority. There was only limited support in Charlton's data for this hypothesis. However, the hypothesis supports a reduction of status contradictions between woman's status and that of clergy through a replacement of the masculine traits associated with the clergy status with feminine ones. If that were to occur, accompanied by the growing numbers of clergywomen, the professional marginality of clergywomen would also be reduced or eliminated. It is interesting to speculate whether or not this trend would lead to the professional marginality of clergymen.

Our data do not allow full tests of either of the two hypotheses; however, we are able to consider the effect of numbers in an examination of the seminary experiences of women (Chapter 4) and the relation of men and women clergy in judicatory structures (Chapter 7). The hypothesis regarding a more feminine style of ministry, especially with reference to leadership styles, is further discussed in the following chapter and tested to a limited degree in Chapter 7.

Research Design and Sample

The design of our research on clergywomen has been guided by several objectives. First and foremost is our concern to provide accurate descriptive data regarding the population of clergywomen in the nine mainline Protestant denominations. Since ours is the first major cross-denominational study of clergywomen, careful description is important. Further, we view this as a baseline study from which subsequent studies can make comparisons. Therefore, not only was a careful sample of clergywomen needed, but we have also tried to gather a broad spectrum of data on clergywomen, including their social origins and factors leading to the choice of the ministry, experiences in seminary, experiences in the clergy job market, functioning in parish ministry, and balancing career with other roles and responsibilities. This broad focus meant that we could not probe as deeply into specific areas as we would have liked. Where possible, however, we draw on findings from previous research on specific aspects of the experiences of clergywomen.

A second objective has been to provide several kinds of comparative data. In particular we wish to compare the careers of clergywomen with those of clergymen. This not only aids and sharpens our descriptive intent, but it also allows tests of hypotheses regarding differences and similarities of style, functioning, and acceptance of clergywomen. To accomplish this objective, it was necessary to sample clergymen in the nine denominations as well as clergywomen.

Denominational comparisons also were believed to be important, since denominations differ in polity and in their understanding of ministry. Therefore, denominations were selected, not only on the basis of

having significant numbers of clergywomen, but also because they potentially differ in the way women are deployed, accepted, and supported within the parish ministry. In general, we have chosen to make comparisons among the nine denominations without grouping them into subtypes based on similarities of polity; however, we deal at some length with the polity subtypes in Chapter 5 in discussing the job market for clergy.

A third objective has been to view clergywomen in relation to other persons and groups within the church system who are significant to their acceptance, functioning, and support. These include not only clergymen, but also laity, seminary faculty, and denominational officials. Limits of time and research funds kept us from gathering detailed information from all of these categories of persons or from other significant persons such as spouses of married clergy. Nevertheless, in addition to the samples of clergywomen and men, we also gathered data from a sample of lay leaders nominated by a subset of the clergywomen and men from the larger sample. We also conducted interviews with women seminary faculty. Additionally, but less systematically, we interviewed denominational officials, national and regional, who relate directly to clergywomen. Several of these persons served on the project advisory committee. Data from these sources provide perspectives on clergywomen and men from those with whom they interact in their functioning in parish ministry.

A fourth objective has been to provide data that have policy relevance. That is, in our design we tried to be aware of issues of practical significance to those concerned with the recruitment, education, deployment, and support of clergy, both women and men. Some of these implications are considered in the final chapter as well as alluded to elsewhere in the book.

In designing the interview schedules and questionnaires used in the research, we drew on the work of a number of others who have engaged in studies of ministry and other professions.¹⁹ Additionally, as a means of developing the structured interview schedule for clergywomen, we conducted two-hour, unstructured interviews with ten clergywomen from several denominations. The women were attending an international conference of clergywomen. Their responses not only helped to shape the final interview guide, but they are also included, where pertinent, in ensuing chapters.

The four primary sources of data and information regarding sampling can be briefly summarized.

First, we conducted hour-long telephone interviews with 636 clergywomen from the nine denominations included in the study. Attempts were made to secure one hundred interviews each from randomly se-

lected clergywomen from American Baptist Churches, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Episcopal Church, and United Church of Christ. From the United Methodists, who have the largest number of clergywomen, we attempted to secure two hundred interviews. From the two Lutheran (ALC and LCA) and two Presbyterian (PCUS and UPCUSA) denominations, we sought one hundred interviews total from each denominational family. This gave a total of eight hundred possible interviews; however, when each denomination selected its samples for us, they frequently included several additional names, which we used. This gave a total of 907 women contacted to request interviews. From the 907 contacted by letter (including a letter from the researchers and one from an official from the denomination of the respondent), we were able to complete 636 interviews, or a 70 percent completion rate. Approximately fifteen women declined to be interviewed; some we were unable to reach due to faulty addresses; the remainder responded too late to be included. Table 1.4 contains the distribution of responses by denomination. They range from a low of 53 percent for the Disciples to a high of 82 percent of UCC clergywomen.

As a second data source, we wanted a sample with equal numbers of clergymen for comparison with the women. Each denomination was asked to draw random samples of clergymen, according to numbers requested by the researchers. To keep costs within budget, we used mailed questionnaires rather than telephone interviews for a majority of men. The questionnaires were identical to the interview schedule. Two hundred telephone interviews with men were also attempted to enable

Table 1.4 Completion Rates for the Sample of Clergywomen

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Interviews</i>		
	<i>Requested</i>	<i>Number Completed</i>	<i>% Completed</i>
American Baptist Churches	97	67	69
American Lutheran Church	54	43	80
Christian Church (Disciples)	103	55	53
Episcopal Church	124	81	65
Lutheran Church in America	76	59	77
Presbyterian Church, U.S.	30	21	70
United Church of Christ	113	93	82
United Methodist Church	200	140	70
United Presbyterian Church, USA	110	77	70
<i>Total</i>	907	636	70

us to secure names of laity to be contacted and to provide a basis for comparing the quality of data gathered by telephone with that from the mailed questionnaire. The major difference in data quality seems to have been that the telephone interviews allowed for probes where necessary. The remaining men were mailed the questionnaires. The questionnaires did not ask for the respondent's name, and no follow-up reminders were sent.

Telephone interviews were completed with 120 clergymen, or 60 percent of the total. Mailed questionnaires were returned by 679 clergymen, or 59 percent of the 1,048 to whom they were mailed. We oversampled among men to ensure a sufficient return from the mailed questionnaires to make comparisons possible with clergywomen. The distribution of responses by denomination is shown in Table 1.5.

Overall responses of clergywomen and men to all interview/questionnaire items are summarized in the Appendix.²⁰

The response rates for both clergywomen and men are quite good, and we believe that they allow considerable confidence to be placed in the samples. One difficulty in comparability should be mentioned. It resulted from an inability to stratify the sample by age of clergy. Since most clergywomen have entered the ministry relatively recently, they are either considerably younger overall than clergymen, or tend to have significantly fewer years of experience as an ordained minister. Our samples reflect these age and experience differences. This necessitates controlling for age, years of experience, or the number of parishes served to make more accurate comparisons between women and men.

Characteristics of the clergywomen and men in the samples will be described in some detail later; therefore, we will forego doing so at this stage except to make one point. Because our samples of clergywomen and men were drawn on a random basis, they included too small a percentage of minority clergy to make analysis by race meaningful.

A third data source is a sample of laity. Approximately 350 clergywomen and 125 clergymen agreed to distribute questionnaires to three key lay leaders in their parishes, with instructions to include both men and women. The laity were asked to return the questionnaires directly to us. This allowed them to respond freely without concern that their pastor would see their responses; however, since we did not have the laity's names, follow-up to increase the return rate was impossible. Of the 1,383 questionnaires distributed, 737 were returned, for a return rate of 53 percent. The lay leaders are almost evenly divided by sex (52 percent are women). Also, approximately 50 percent have been members of their present congregation for fifteen or more years. Forty percent of the men and 21 percent of the women hold the position of chief lay leader in their congregations. The remainder are spread over vari-

Table 1.5 Completion Rates for the Sample of Clergymen

Denomination	Interviews		Questionnaires	
	Requested	Number Completed	Requested	Number Completed
American Baptist Churches	19	10	90	56
American Lutheran Church	15	10	59	57
Christian Church (Disciples)	24	16	105	50
Episcopal Church	25	19	152	91
Lutheran Church in America	19	14	38	32
Presbyterian Church, U.S.	10	7	23	18
United Church of Christ	26	12	168	83
United Methodist Church	33	14	251	133
United Presbyterian Church, USA	28	18	162	99
<i>Total</i>	199	120	1048	619
				<i>% Completed</i>
				62
				97
				48
				60
				84
				78
				49
				53
				61
				59

ous other key leadership positions, including chairpersons of the administrative boards of congregations. Just under 50 percent of both men and women are 50 years or older, with another 25 percent in the forty to fifty age bracket. Sixty-one percent of the men and 46 percent of the women have at least a four-year college degree—a generally high level of education.

Probably the major bias of this sample is that it is a sample of lay leaders (e.g., official board chairpersons, women's organization presidents, etc.), not rank and file laity. Also, we deliberately oversampled among laity who had experienced a woman as pastor. Thus, the bias is in favor of those lay leaders with direct experience of clergywomen.

The final data source included telephone interviews with women faculty teaching full-time at forty major Protestant and interdenominational seminaries. We asked the women faculty to reflect on the seminary experiences of women students, possible changes in the kinds of women entering seminaries in recent years, and possible changes in the students' orientations to feminist issues. Additionally, we asked faculty about parish ministry experiences of women graduates with whom they may have kept in touch.

Approximately one hundred faculty women were identified by telephone calls to the seminaries. The list also included several women who have administrative responsibilities for programs or services particularly related to women seminarians. Eighty interviews were completed and transcribed for content analysis.

Among the women faculty interviewed, 44 percent had been at their present seminaries three years or less, and 35 percent had been at the seminaries six years or more. Of the seventy-two women who were considered full-time faculty, 22 percent were full professors, 38 percent associate professors, 34 assistant professors, and the remaining 6 percent instructors. The other seminary women interviewed, though they worked full time at the seminary, were not considered fulltime faculty though they usually taught a course or two in addition to their administrative duties. Of all interviewed, approximately 42 percent were ordained, and 22 percent had served at least a year as parish ministers. Another 11 percent had served briefly as supply or interim clergy in parishes or as directors of music or Christian Education.

Among the seventy-five interviewed who at least taught one course a year on a regular basis, about 16 percent taught Bible, 16 percent taught church history, 19 percent taught theology or ethics, 19 percent were professors of religious education, and 18 percent taught either pastoral care or field work. Another 8 percent taught sociology or psychology of religion. The remaining three to four percent taught sacred music or Christian formation.

With the exception of about 17 percent of those interviewed, who had been at the seminaries too short a time to know graduates, the remainder were fairly active in keeping up with former women students. A fourth are very active in this regard. Such contacts primarily serve a pleasurable social function, but are also helpful to the ex-students in being able to unburden themselves on both personal or parish problems and keep abreast of new job possibilities. They are also useful to the seminary professor in knowing how helpful her teaching actually is for the ministry of her former students. Not only were these faculty and administrator seminary women able to describe the current cohort of women seminarians in various ways, but they were in most cases able to comment rather pointedly on what they perceived as important issues affecting the present and future of women in the parish ministry.

These four major samples plus the preliminary interviews constitute the principal sources of data for the report.

In the following chapters, we begin first with a look at some historical background concerning women's place in American churches, including the variety of nonordained roles played by women as well as the movement towards ordained status. Chapter 3 begins the presentation of the data collected specifically for the study and focuses on the social origins of clergywomen and men and the paths that led them into the ministry. Experiences in seminary constitute the concern of Chapter 4, including a consideration of the orientations towards feminism held by the respondents using both clergy and seminary faculty data. Chapter 5 analyzes experiences of clergymen and women in the job market: in particular, how respondents got their first and subsequent parish positions, as well as the kinds of positions and salaries received. The sixth chapter contains a description of the roles engaged in by clergymen and women in parish ministry, their assessment of their effectiveness in these roles, and a comparative assessment of their performance by lay leaders. In Chapter 7, other aspects of life in the parish are examined, using both clergy and lay leader data. There is also a consideration of how clergymen and women relate their parish ministry roles to their other roles and responsibilities. A final chapter draws together conclusions and implications that are suggested by the research.