

Clergy Effectiveness and Church Stability: A Different Equation for Men and Women?

In my opinion, for my pastor to do his or her job successfully, it takes cooperation from members of the congregation. When 95 percent of a congregation puts church and church work at the bottom of their list of priorities, the church will not grow as it should. . . . We have had and still have many inspiring and well written sermons delivered from our lady pastor and yet it doesn't sink in. . . . As for myself, I will serve, if able, no matter who the pastor is, but I will say a handsome, outgoing, friendly, energetic, magnetic-type man is what it takes to get the hard-to-get people to participate. Whether the pastor is a handsome, appealing man should not affect people's feelings. After all, it is wrong to worship the pastor. However, people do this.—PARISH LAY LEADER

Maintaining the Parish Organization: Implications for Hiring and Deployment

One of the major reasons women encounter difficulty in getting as good job placements as men after the first couple of parishes is opposition to having a woman pastor from laypersons in parishes, according to clergywomen, women seminary faculty, and denominational executives. Some of this resistance is a manifest and blatant expression of sexist attitudes; some more latent and subtle. Examples include: "Woman's place is in the home, not the pulpit"; "Women are temperamentally unsuited for ministry"; "I simply can't conceive of having a woman as a minister"; "I believe that religious leadership has been given by God to men and therefore would not favor a woman as a pastor of a church"; "Of course, women are subordinate to men and therefore cannot rule over men in the church." Whether manifest or

latent, blatant or subtle, such statements often reflect unexamined, taken-for-granted definitions of the situation that become real in their consequences for women as they encounter the job market for clergy.

Lay leaders also may be reluctant to hire a woman simply because they believe that the majority of their congregation opposes women in the pulpit. In fact, Lehman postulates that a major block to parish hiring of women ministers is not lay leaders' personal sexism or opposition to women pastors, but rather their fear that hiring a woman might upset other parishioners, with ensuing, deleterious effects on the whole congregation.¹

People who have a high degree of investment in the church, whether clergy or lay leaders, are likely to perceive this era as a precarious time, particularly if their loyalties and membership lie within the so-called mainline denominations. These denominations have experienced sharp declines in membership in recent years—so much so that some within them fear for their survival. Dean Kelley, a staff member of the National Council of Churches and generally sympathetic to the mainline churches, wrote *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*. The book became a religious best-seller, in part because of mainline church leaders' anxiety over their own declines and their concern to discover the secret of conservative church growth. It is into this threatened organization that the great influx of women clergy has been pushing, and some of the reaction to them must be seen in this context.

There are a number of reasons why some women clergy may be perceived as an institutional threat. The primary one concerns the tension between tradition and change in which all organizations exist in modern society. This situation is exacerbated in the churches by the strong tie in the minds of most people between religion and tradition on the one hand, and on the other by continuing organizational precariousness of American churches as voluntary organizations. That is, they are dependent upon the loyalty and support of members; but these members receive little social disapproval in modern culture if they simply walk away from church conflict or problems. Given a strongly male-oriented clergy pattern in the Christian tradition, a woman in the pulpit may be expected to arouse concern among traditionalists and perhaps threaten an already shaky organization.

Another concern often only half-articulated comes from the observation that churches seem to have a large percentage of women as their regular clientele. While it thus seems particularly appropriate that these organizations should have female leadership, it also raises the issue of the public image of the church becoming that of a woman's organization. For all these reasons, lay leaders, despite their personal beliefs, may fear hiring a woman in the pulpit because, as Lehman postulates,

it will hurt the stability of their church.² Similarly, some lay leaders may fear that having a woman minister will alter the kind of church that they now have, in its particular style of programs and types of parishioners, into "something else." They may not want their church to change—even should it become larger and more financially stable in the process.³

In this chapter, we will investigate to what extent Lehman's findings are replicated in this cross-denominational sample through questions such as: do clergy and laity differ by sex in how they perceive the clergypersons' effectiveness in various pastoral roles?; and do lay persons prefer that some activities be done pastorally by men or by women? We will also examine the extent to which clergy and laypersons' beliefs about hiring clergywomen and promoting women generally within the denomination and parish have a bearing on actual practices and other predispositions relevant to the future of women in ministry.

Another area we will examine in this chapter is the degree to which clergywomen and men feel they are effective in their ministry, not just to compare lay and clergy assessments of clergy competence, but as an issue in its own right. While clergy's assessments of their own competence partially reflect feedback from others they are presently working with or ministering to, self-assessments of competence are also based on standards the individual has internalized from his or her youth or other prior experiences.⁴ A person's sense of competence in the core activities associated with a professional status (such as doctor, lawyer, social worker, teacher, or pastor) is the central ingredient of what has been termed "professional self-concept"—the extent to which one thinks of one's self as a full-fledged member of an occupation rather than a novice or layperson. The higher one's feelings of competence in the core activities of his or her professional work, the higher the individual's professional self-concept. The stronger the professional self-concept, the better able the individual will be to deal effectively with difficult aspects of the work, withstand strain, seek out new experiences, and maintain commitments to remaining in the profession.⁵ This last consequence of a strong professional self-concept has been hypothesized by Jud, Mills, and Burch to be important to clergy in maintaining their commitment to the parish ministry in times of stress and frustration.⁶ For these reasons, it is important to understand how clergy evaluate their own professional competence in a variety of ministerial activities, and how they assess their accomplishment in their ministry within the last year.

We will first look at the lay leaders' conceptions of how competent their pastor(s) are in a variety of ministerial activities, as it has been

found that the way the professional's "clients" or audience react to the way he or she performs in the professional role is very important in the development of a professional self-concept, especially among beginning practitioners of medicine, law, music,⁷ and probably parish ministers as well.

Stereotypes and Preferences of Lay Leaders

Not only may professionals have their own internalized ideas about competency in the professional task, but their clients and audiences may have their particularistic ideas as well of what competent professional behavior should be. Stereotypes people hold about the behavior and appearance of the ideal professional may affect the evaluations people give about the competency of a particular professional.

Three-fourths of these lay leaders questioned are in churches which have had a woman in a clergy position during the past ten years (70 percent of the men and 75 percent of the women lay leaders).⁸ Therefore, it may well be that these laity are less inclined to stereotypical thinking about clergywomen than the majority of laity in parish leadership positions. It is also likely that because of their leadership positions they are better able than most parishioners to observe accurately their pastor's work and be cognizant of how he or she is perceived by other members of the congregation. However, the top lay leaders of any church may not be typical of the average member of that congregation in certain key aspects. Indeed, a number of lay leaders wrote comments on their questionnaires that their opinions would not be shared by all members of their churches. This possibility is further underscored in that 31 percent of the women and 42 percent of the men lay leaders indicated that they were "theologically more liberal" than the majority of their congregations, especially, it can be inferred, in their openness to ordained women in the pulpit.

Fortunately, the responses in this study can be compared to those in other studies. A number of items used in this study indicating lay attitudes toward women clergy were taken from Lehman's S.W.I.M. study of American Baptist clergy⁹ and also appear in the United Presbyterian Church Panel in identical or similar form. These items appear in Table 6.1 for our study, with responses divided by denomination and sex of layperson.

Three-fourths of Lehman's American Baptist sample in 1977 perceived that, for most persons, there was a general incompatibility between the image of minister and that of woman. Our 1981 data, as can be seen, replicates this proportion generally, not only for American Baptists, but for all other denominations as well. If these lay leaders are correct about what most church members think, then it indeed seems

Table 6.1 Selected Attitudes of Lay Leaders Regarding Women Ministers*

	Denomination																	
	ABC W M %	CC(D) W M %	EC W M %	LCA W M %	ALC W M %	PCUS W M %	UPC W M %	UMC W M %	UCC W M %									
1. There is a general incompatibility between the image of a "minister" and the image of a "woman" in the minds of church members	74	61	73	81	74	74	69	63	77	75	83	83	72	60	71	66	65	47
2. When a church has more than one minister on its staff, all things considered today, the senior minister should really be a man	45	48	41	62	37	48	35	32	50	36	52	58	27	43	31	49	18	35
3. Women who try to be both full-time ministers and wives and mothers are likely to have emotional problems due to all the demands placed on them by both jobs	35	59	41	47	29	36	31	38	32	36	41	67	38	24	39	50	31	49
(N)	(22)	(23)	(27)	(32)	(51)	(50)	(49)	(47)	(22)	(28)	(23)	(12)	(52)	(42)	(72)	(71)	(51)	(46)

*% = percent agreeing with statement.

that women ministers may have difficulty in their parish ministry—or at least that lay leaders fear that a clergywoman may be disruptive, even if they personally may have no objection to a woman minister.

There is no significant difference in the total sample between laywomen and laymen in their perceptions, with 72 percent of the women and 66 percent of the men believing that “clergywoman” is a difficult concept for church members to assimilate readily. In several instances across denominations, *men* were more inclined than women lay leaders to feel that church members would not have too difficult a time accepting the idea of a woman pastor. This is especially true of the United Church of Christ, where laywomen were 18 percent more likely than laymen to feel church members would have trouble accepting the idea of an ordained woman in their pulpit, and only slightly less true of the Baptist and the United Presbyterian laywomen and men. Overall, it could be said that the Presbyterian Church U.S. lay leaders anticipated the most negative reaction to having a woman pastor, particularly in the senior position, from the majority of churchgoers in their denomination, while the United Church of Christ laity anticipated the least.

The difference here seems to reflect directly the influence of local culture, since the PCUS is located almost entirely in the South, with many churches in rural or small-town settings, while the UCC is more dominant in northeastern, urban areas. Southern culture is still strongly male dominated, with a premodern understanding of “women’s place” that puts a higher value on women in traditional roles than is true in most other sections of the country.

Overall, 45 percent of the laymen and 34 percent of the laywomen thought that the senior minister should be a man. Much of this attitude appears traceable to the desire for congregational stability or for a stronger public voice for the church. The proportion in this study is slightly less both overall and for the American Baptists specifically than that which Lehman found, probably because this present study uses lay *leaders* rather than churchgoers in general. Lack of personal bias against clergywomen was also indicated in Lehman’s study by 71 percent of laity who thought that a “woman’s temperament is just as suited for the pastoral ministry as a man’s.” Our study shows even more in agreement with the statement, with 88 percent of the men, and 92 percent of the women lay leaders giving this response. Those who disagreed tended to be among those who believed that it was at least probably correct that “women who try to be both full-time ministers and wives and mothers are likely to have emotional problems due to all the demands placed on them by both jobs” (44 percent of the men and 35 percent of the women lay leaders in the present study).

These figures, compared with the 1977 American Baptist study,

where 57 percent of the laity agreed with the statement, and the 1980 Presbyterian 50 percent figure, conceivably reflect a change in social climate; however, it is much more likely that fewer laity in our 1981 sample perceive severe role conflict for a pastor who is also a wife and mother, because these laity are leaders in the congregation, and hence in a better position to observe how women clergy handle these roles. Some laity in our sample did, however, specifically comment on the difficulty they perceived their woman pastor to be having in juggling motherhood and ministry:

We had a female pastor for three years. Her husband was also a pastor. She was well accepted but with two children their home life suffered. They left and do not both serve as pastors.

While our congregation has been very pleased in having a woman minister, she has been under stress with three children and a husband still in seminary, so we are looking forward to an even better ministry when they both become our co-pastors within a few months.

The only question I have about younger women in the ministry is the extreme psychological and physical demand put upon them when they have children. The demands of their ministry and the demands upon them as new mothers seem to be almost irreconcilable. My heart aches when I see how exhausted our assistant looks after a sleepless night with a small baby.

Concerns about the image of the local church, whether within its membership or in the community at large, seem apparent in responses about particular positions lay leaders found acceptable for women clergy. While there was some slight preference, as we shall discuss in greater detail later, for some "balancing" of pastoral leadership by having a man *and* a woman minister, the majority of lay leaders expressed a preference to have a man in the senior position rather than as an associate or co-minister with a woman. The majority of these lay leaders, 85 to 86 percent, say they do not have a preference as to the sex of the assistant or associate minister, though very few (less than 8 percent) would *prefer* a woman. American Baptist laymen were most adamant across the denominations in saying they preferred a man even for the associate position (36 percent). It was only in two positions or tasks that preferences for women clergy in particular reached over 8 percent of the total sample (with again the vast majority saying that sex made no difference)—minister of education and minister of music. Since these are roles frequently held in past years by lay professional women, it seems evident that what is at stake here is not the ordination of women, per se, but the familiarity of the public functions they perform in the

parish. This theme is repeated in a number of ways. For example, men clergy were preferred by the highest proportions of laity in those activities considered socially "masculine," especially "working with a contractor to renovate the church," where 50 percent of the men and 33 percent of the women lay leaders expressed preference for a man.

When it comes to more private clergy functions, the distinction blurs. Correspondence of clergy sex with that of the lay person seems the most important explanatory variable, since the greatest difference in preference among laymen and women was found in "advising about a personal problem." In the total sample 31 percent of the men preferred the man compared with only 9 percent of the women. Thirteen percent of the women to 2 percent of the men, however, preferred a woman minister to advise them about a personal problem, the remainder claiming that sex of the minister was not important (67 to 77 percent). Over 90 percent of both the men and the women did not feel that the sex of their minister was important in either leading a pastoral prayer or reading the Scripture lesson. Nearly 90 percent of both laymen and women also felt that it was irrelevant whether a clergyman or woman visited them in the hospital or developed programs for the church.

It was generally true across denominations that laywomen were less likely than laymen to express a preference for a male pastor in any parish slot or performing any pastoral activity or role. This is in direct contradiction to many statements that laywomen, particularly those in leadership roles in the church, are likely to perceive clergywomen as threats to their positions of influence, and so to prefer men in the clergy role. Differences between the sexes in laity-expressed preferences for a man or woman pastor were most pronounced among the Lutheran Church in America, and then the Episcopal, laity. The lack of difference between laywomen and laymen in these two denominations may seem surprising, due to the very short time women have been ordained to full ministerial status in their organizations. Perhaps it is the very novelty of having women ministers at all that predisposes laity in these denominations to have little or no preference as to sex of the minister fulfilling various church tasks, especially since laity in this study are relatively unique in having had women clergy as ministers. One may expect that persons in denominations with little experience of women in pastoral roles would be less ready than others to make the fine distinctions about functions within the larger role.

Some indication of the potential conflict accompanying the appointment of a woman pastor may be seen in the greater congruence of theological position perceived by male pastors concerning their own and their congregation's stance, as compared with women clergy. (The

tau beta correlation of perceived positions was .20 for men, .12 for clergywomen.) A slight majority of both sexes, but more clergywomen than men, considered their own theological position to be more liberal than that of the majority of their congregations (69 percent of the clergywomen to 51 percent of the clergymen saying their own position was more liberal).

This finding suggests that greater acceptance of women clergy will be expedited by a strong orientation toward what we have termed "church feminism," or the openness to having women in leadership positions within the church and attention to using inclusive language.

The Feminist Issue in the Parish and Denomination

While clergywomen may be as competent and as temperamentally suited to the parish ministry as are men, there is not any very strong majority among clergy or laity who feel that women should be preferred to men as ministers or in a variety of pastoral roles. Neither do many respondents believe that affirmative action should be taken to ensure that women are placed in pastoral roles in their own congregations.

A majority of clergy and laity of both sexes agreed that "more women should be ordained to full ministerial status in my denomination" (81 percent of the clergywomen and 59 percent of the men; 71 percent of the laywomen and 62 percent of the men). Only a minority of either group, however, agreed that "if a ministerial vacancy should occur in my congregation (or finances permit an additional minister to be hired) the search committee should actively seek a woman candidate" (thirty-four percent women clergy to 40 percent of the men in their profession; 34 percent laywomen to 20 percent laymen).

Comments by clergy and lay respondents on the latter statement offer a variety of explanations. Primarily, all respondents express a distaste for using sex as a factor in choosing a minister, either negatively or positively. Rather they prefer to consider professional qualifications regardless of sex.

The following comments on this point were made by laity from a number of denominations:

I do not think women, minorities, etc., should be selected for a position simply because they fit a characteristic. Similarly they should not be prevented from equal chances. There are very few positions that are filled by men or women best.

I feel the time has come when people should be awarded positions by how well qualified they are for the job and stop worrying about their sex.

Women are people. Let them not be given positions because they are women!

A number of these lay leaders further commented that having a woman minister has changed opinions in their congregations as to whether a woman can be as qualified as a man for pastoral leadership. But as illustrated in the following quote, most lay leaders would still not approve of seeking a woman specifically:

We are so pleased with our woman minister, and the growth her efforts have brought our church, that this position in the future would be open equally to male and female candidates—choice based solely on competency.

A major catch, however, is that a number of lay leaders, though believing that sex should not be a criterion in selecting a minister, nevertheless want a man, especially as senior pastor. The following remarks indicate degrees of awareness or discomfort that lay leaders experience with their own ambivalence on this issue:

Our married co-pastors are doing an excellent job in shepherding our congregation, with their youthful exuberance and Christian devotion. They share equally in the work and are accepted equally. Still, personally, I would prefer a man if there was to be only one pastor, even though I know a woman would be as able.

While I have no strong feelings personally and my Pastor is one of the few successful female ministers, . . . experience leads me to admit men are superior local pastors. . . .

I believe sex or race should not be a factor in seeking a new minister; however, all other qualifications being equal, and having experienced both men and women's effectiveness as pastor, I would prefer the men.

Even though I am a modern, moderately liberal, extremely active grandmother, who feels women are capable of doing anything in the church as well as men, I prefer a male senior minister. I do not even know why!

An additional reason some laity and clergy advanced for not hiring a woman specifically to fill a position is their belief that it is beneficial to the church to have a balance of sexes, either in replacing the present minister or balancing the pastoral leadership between the sexes. Interestingly, clergywomen also tended to agree with this "principle of alternation," as one clergywomen put it. Only a third of the clergywomen agreed that a woman should replace them or, as more interpreted the question, join them in the pastoral leadership of their present parishes. The general feeling seems to be that it is important that a church not be typecast as one that only has women clergy, and that on multiple staffs,

ministry is more effective if "there is a balance in the male/female emphasis." Since multiple staffs are relatively limited in number, considering the total number of churches, alternation between men and women pastors appear to be the best compromise, even for more liberal laypersons.

An equally equivocal response, but for somewhat different reasons, emerged as to whether respondents thought their "congregation should appoint or elect an equal number of laywomen to that of laymen on the parish governing board." Although most agreed, with clergywomen assenting 75 percent of the time, clergymen 59 percent, laywomen 64 percent, and laymen 61 percent, comments given indicated some confusion about the meaning of the question. What happens if the governing board is already predominantly women? Having an equal number of laymen would entail reducing the number of laywomen to make up the required ratio in a number of parishes. Here, too, the question of selecting on the basis of sex rather than competence emerges. Yet there is obviously more support for the concept of giving laywomen more power within the formal structure of the parish than there is for affirmative action in hiring women to fill the clergy slots.

Part of this may be the difference in the minds of the respondents between temporary and voluntary positions like those on church boards and the more permanent status of professional church leadership. Apart from permanency, the main reason is probably the theological or personal preference for men in the pulpit indicated by those lay leaders who feel that tasks carried out in the church by laity should be allocated regardless of sex. Furthermore, there are a number of Anglo-Catholic Episcopal parishes in the U.S.A. which would not tolerate a woman priest, but nevertheless have the vestry (parish governing board) scrupulously made up of equal numbers of laymen and women.

The importance of inclusive language varies greatly within the churches, with clergywomen most strongly advocating its usage and laymen least enthusiastic. Agreeing with the item, "inclusive language should be used in church publications and services," were 88 percent of the clergywomen, 53 percent of the clergymen, 44 percent of the laywomen, and 36 percent of the laymen. A number, especially laity, indicated "mixed feelings" here, because although they wanted inclusive language used in sermons and prayers, they were opposed to changing biblical language, as well as "going too far" in employing awkward constructions.

The following are some representative comments from laypersons on the "inclusive language" issue:

If inclusive means changing wording in texts to "humankind" from

"mankind" and eliminating the word "chairman" even when referring to males, I disagree.

The "inclusive language" disturbs my continuity in worship service. I feel included in mankind and do not need a term for women or feel the necessity to change Father to Mother God. Too much emphasis is disturbing.

I feel compelled to say a word about the "inclusive language." Please leave the Bible as it is. These changes will only divide us more, and we have enough problems.

However, for the bulk of clergywomen coming out of seminary in the mid-seventies, the use of inclusive language in services is personally very important. Nonetheless, as a number indicated, they would take care as to how they introduced inclusive language into their worship services, and not force it on their congregations.

Clergywomen were also far more likely than clergymen or laity of either sex to agree that "there should be more women in executive staff positions in regional and national offices of my denomination." Eighty-five percent of the women clergy agreed with this statement, as compared with 53 percent of the clergymen, 58 percent of the laywomen, and 48 percent of the laymen. Some may have disagreed or had mixed feelings here because they did not feel that women had the competency, experience, or predisposition to do this effectively. Others, however, of both sexes among the clergy tended to interpret this question as "kicking the women upstairs," as has in fact been the case with many women who were ordained in earlier years. To quote one man in illustration:

This is not a simple question. Women tend to gravitate toward judicatory staff positions because they are blocked from moving up the pastoral ladder to the larger parishes. I would rather see more women in the parish to complement women in staff positions.

Some clergy, especially women, interpreted going into the judicatory staff positions as "copping out" in facing the difficulties and challenges in the parish. As one woman minister commented: "No! They should be in the parish! They should be out there on the front lines."

All in all, however, most of those who agreed with this item were concerned that some clergywomen, at least, should actively seek the judicatory and national power positions in their denominations, so that the cause of women clergy might better be advanced and women provided visible role models in the denominational hierarchy.

Although these general findings hold across denominations in most cases, there are denominational variations in espousal of various items and in the differences between clergy and lay, men and women. In

most cases it is the clergywomen who stand out as being the most different from any of the other three categories of respondents.

Fewer differences among men and women were found in their perceptions of discrimination against women. Although clergy were overall more likely to agree than laity that "Women, whether lay or clergy, do not hold positions of influence in this area comparable to lay and clergymen of my denomination," the overall difference between the sexes in each group was not significant. (The percent agreeing with the statement is as follows: clergy—61 percent women, 53 percent men; laity—43 percent women, 41 percent men.)

The more lay leaders espoused the perspectives indicated by the index of Organizational Church Feminism (Chapter 4, p. 31), the more likely they were also to indicate that they at least did not care whether the minister was a man or woman, or whether various ministerial activities were carried out by a man or woman minister. Their response as feminists was not so much advocacy for women clergy as a kind of gender-blindness regarding the occupants of clergy roles.

In the majority of instances, women lay leaders' degree of espousal of feminist perspectives did not relate to how they actually evaluated their ministers' effectiveness in the variety of activities listed, with a few exceptions. However, men among these lay leaders who scored high on the feminism scale tended to be slightly more positive in their evaluation of the role performance of women clergy in various activities than men lay leaders who scored low on this scale of feminism.

Clergy's own degree of feminism was far less related to their self-evaluation of ministerial effectiveness. There was a slight tendency for men clergy to feel they did better work stimulating parishioners to minister to those outside the church if they were inclined to be feminist, whereas this relationship did not hold for women. This may obtain because those who scored feminist, on this scale, clergy or lay, male or female, tended to be more likely than their less feminist counterparts to stress values of the church relating to the community, advocating that the church become involved in the community in social justice issues, and the like. The correlations between a strong feminist orientation and advocacy of the church's involvement in the community and social issues was stronger for clergymen than for clergywomen, and higher for clergymen on all items to do with church and community. These findings reinforce the expectations that for men, feminism is logically part of a larger package of social justice issues, since it involves a concern for rights and recognition of persons other than themselves. For clergywomen, however, feminism of this type measured here may involve personal job security and advancement, with or without a wider social justice orientation. Clergymen of a feminist

orientation hence are likely to pastor churches where they also stress that parishioners and the church become involved in social concerns. They are also probably more successful in achieving such an outcome than those male pastors who are less feminist and less advocates of church involvement in social issues. There is a slightly less significant correlation between feminism and advocacy for church involvement in community issues for clergywomen. It is also true that clergywomen are less likely than clergymen to be sole or senior pastors, and hence to be in a position to push the church and parishioners very effectively into becoming involved with the community.

Clergywomen were slightly less likely to rate themselves as very effective in recruiting new members to the church if they were feminist. This relationship, however, was slight, and there was no relationship between espousal of feminist values and self-evaluation of clergymen as effective in this activity. What interrelationship there is on this item is most likely due to the relationship of feminism to a liberal designation, where conservatism often is linked to a greater emphasis on evangelism.

It is clearly better for clergywomen if top lay leaders in churches espouse feminist values. The data indicate that, while they may not be preferred over men as ministers, neither will their sex be a deterrent to being hired and accepted by these lay leaders whose values are feminist. The one area of concern is that the lay leaders may very well not be typical of the majority in their churches. Indeed, the more feminist lay leaders of both sexes were also those most likely to report that their own theological position was more liberal than the majority in their churches. The question that must be asked concerns the extent of their leadership in the churches. Would these more feminist leaders be able or even want to influence the other members of their congregations to accept their openness to the appointment of a woman pastor?

Another question that becomes important at this juncture is, which comes first, the clergywomen or feminism among lay leaders?

The Impact of Having a Woman Pastor on Lay Attitudes

Though this study cannot compare lay attitudes before and after having a woman pastor for the first time, it can compare the responses of lay leaders who have experienced a woman pastor in the last ten years and those who have not. A recent study by Edward Lehman, however, indicates that individual parishioners do change their initial attitudes of resistance to women pastors to acceptance of an ordained woman in their pulpit after the actual experience of having a woman minister.¹⁰ Dividing the laity in this study into those who have had a clergywoman in the past ten years and those who have not, it may be recalled

that only about a fourth of the laity had never been members of a church pastored by a woman. Yet these latter lay leaders, correlations indicated, were significantly more likely to want their minister to be a man—in the sole, or assistant, position—but especially as the senior pastor. Further, no matter what the pastoral activity, they are far more likely to say they would prefer a man than lay leaders who have been or are in churches pastored by women. However, for lay leaders there was no relationship between whether they were in churches served by clergywomen and strong endorsement of having women in leadership positions within the church, or a high score on the scale of church feminism. So, to answer an earlier question, it would seem that the feminism of lay leaders comes before the clergywoman.

Although the evidence here is not direct, it seems that lay leaders are likely to oppose clergywomen as pastors of their church not just on the basis of their own prejudices, but on whether they feel their churches would be positively or adversely affected if the minister were a woman. As church leaders, their primary concern is the welfare of the congregations rather than the advancement of their privately held values. In short, though it undoubtedly helps if lay leaders are of a feminist orientation as they deal with hiring or facilitating the ministerial role of clergywomen, it will hardly be sufficient. Lay leaders are going to have to be convinced that clergywomen will not shatter the extant stability of their church organization.

Lay leaders at any rate seem more likely to view women as pastors positively after experiencing a woman in this status. It may also be that with a change to a pastor of a different gender, different individuals within a congregation become the top lay leaders. Since previous studies suggest that many lay leaders (as well as clergywomen and men) do not feel that a church should be typecast as one that just hires women ministers, what happens to the attitudes of lay leaders about women ministers if they are in a church where a man replaced a woman as sole pastor? While again, this study cannot look at real attitude *change* among lay leaders, Table 6.2, looking only at clergy in sole pastorate positions, is suggestive, although the numbers are small and the data are not over time.

Assuming the lay leaders remain the same in the change of pastors, the data suggest that a switch from a woman pastor to a man may exacerbate the differences in attitudes toward women in church leadership positions among men and women lay leaders. Both men and women lay leaders become more inclined toward a man in the pastoral role, with men lay leaders particularly so. From Table 6.2, it can also be seen that both women and men lay leaders are very strongly less

Table 6.2 Lay Leader Responses According to Whether They Are in a Church with a Sole Pastor Which . . .

A. was pastored by a woman (in the last ten years) but now has a man

B. has had a man continually in the last ten years

C. is now pastored by a woman

(Sex of Lay Leaders)	A		B		C	
	W %	M %	W %	M %	W %	M %
1. Percent saying would prefer a man as senior pastor	31	69	55	60	11	18
2. Percent saying "definitely correct" that women are as suited for ministry as men	68	23	69	33	71	58
3. Percent strong feminists (score 4 on scale of church feminism)	44	22	37	25	21	19
(N)	(16)	(13)	(55)	(62)	(135)	(19)

insistent on having a man as senior pastor. They are also more likely to feel that a woman's temperament is just as suited to the parish ministry as a man's in churches now pastored by a woman than in churches pastored by a man consistently. However, in churches that had a woman but did not have a man as the sole pastor, it seems that *men* lay leaders become most likely to want a man in the senior pastoral position and are more inclined toward stereotypical thinking about a woman's temperament and ministry. Laywomen do not show anywhere near the same percentage increase in desiring a man as pastor or in stereotyping.

In fact, as far as negative stereotypical thinking about clergywomen is concerned, it seems that men lay leaders are more likely to engage in this in churches that switched from a woman pastor to a man than in churches that had a man pastor all along. The fact that women do not show any significant change in stereotypical thinking from one kind of church to another suggests that it is not actual negative experience with a woman pastor that makes the men less open toward women clergy, but that the switch from a woman to a man pastor has exacerbated sex rivalries among the laity—men thinking a man is best, and women opting for the woman. This interpretation may also be adduced to explain the finding that the most strongly feminist (on the church feminism scale) of the lay women leaders are those in churches which had a woman but now have a man, and the least feminist are those women in churches which now have a woman. The feminist orientation of men lay leaders, however, does not seem affected by the type of church.

Having a woman minister presently appears to be a depressant on women lay leaders *strongly* endorsing women in leadership positions in the church and non-sexist language in services. But the fact of once having a woman minister who has now been replaced by a man may anger the women lay leaders. Hence, they become strong advocates of church feminism—significantly different from men lay leaders in such churches. At the very least, these findings suggest that the effect of women ministers on attitudes toward women in leadership positions within the church, women clergy in general, and use of inclusive language in church services, needs to be looked at over time to see how stable any attitude change here is, especially if the woman minister is replaced by a man, as she is likely to be.

Clergy's Perception of Their Effectiveness in Various Pastoral Activities

A strong professional self-concept is very important to clergy in performance of their pastoral duties and commitment to the ministry as a vocation. One of the major components of a strong professional self-concept, as discussed, is a feeling that one is competent in carrying out the core tasks of the professional status. On this indicator, it can be said that on the whole these clergy are in good shape. On a series of items asking clergy to assess their "effectiveness" in a number of ministerial tasks and roles, few evaluated themselves as even "somewhat ineffective" in any task, distinctions being made more between whether they were "very effective" or "quite effective."

It is evident from Table 6.3 that on the whole most clergy felt they were effective in the core and most visible aspects of their pastoral job; that is, preaching, planning, and leading worship. The only areas where a fourth or more thought they were "somewhat ineffective" were in "organizing and motivating paid staff and volunteers to do the work of the parish," "stimulating parishioners to engage in service to others outside the parish," and "recruiting new members for the church." In the first of these, both in self-perception and lay ratings, women scored consistently higher than men.

Women clergy, as can be seen from this table, felt that they were somewhat more effective than men did in the core and visible aspects of their pastoral position, such as preaching sermons and planning and leading worship. Clergywomen were less likely, however, than clergymen to feel they were particularly competent in managing the church budget, though they were more likely to feel they were effective in teaching children. Thus even in the strictly professional performance of clergy roles, standard sex role expectancies emerged. There were no other differences of any magnitude between clergymen and women's

Table 6.3 Ratings of Ministerial Effectiveness*

Task Area	Clergy Self-Ratings		Lay Leader Ratings	
	Sole/Senior Pastor Clergywomen %	Assistant/Associate Pastor Clergywomen %	Sole/Senior Pastor Clergywomen %	Assistant/Associate Minister Clergywomen %
Preaching sermons	55	54	48	27
Planning and leading worship	67	59	62	46
Managing the church budget	13	8	20	7
Teaching adults	39	41	41	36
Teaching children	34	40	48	45
Presiding over a meeting or a large group	34	30	51	26
Crisis ministry	48	40	50	41
Pastoral counseling	32	32	48	39
Parish/home/hospital visitation	43	41	50	48
Organizing/motivating staff/volunteers to do work of church	19	25	36	24
Stimulating parishioners to serve others outside church	9	13	18	17
Recruiting new members	17	11	21	23

*% = percent saying minister is "very effective" in task area.

self-rating of effectiveness, even controlling for whether they were in a sole-senior pastor position or an associate or assistant.

Laity generally agreed with the clergy's self-estimation in that the laity rated the clergywomen as slightly (but statistically insignificant) better than clergymen in preaching and leading worship, and were 10 percent more likely to rate clergymen more effective than clergywomen in managing the budget of the church. This factor, linked with the information in the previous chapter about the placement of clergywomen as senior pastors of churches that are financially struggling, continues to beg the question of whether their ability to manage financial affairs or the situations into which they have been called is the primary explanatory variable.

Though it is generally true that laywomen tend to give higher ratings to clergy than do laymen in all areas, the nearly equal distribution by sex of our lay leader sample should avoid any imbalance because of this factor. Overall, these findings accord with Lehman's prediction that lay leaders would not differ perceptibly in their ratings of clergywomen's ministerial effectiveness as compared to that of clergymen.

The generally high professional self-concept of clergy is evinced also in their responses to an item asking them in the last year whether they "usually," "sometimes," "never or almost never" felt they were "really accomplishing things" in their ministry. Less than 5 percent said "never or almost never," and fully 64 percent of the women and 53 percent of the men said they "usually" felt they were really accomplishing things in their ministry last year.

In this feeling of current accomplishment, however, the type of church the clergy are in did affect ratings. One of the working hypotheses of this study was that clergy from backgrounds which are discrepant from those of most of their parishioners would be less likely to feel a sense of accomplishment.¹¹ However, as can be seen in Table 6.4, the preponderance of lower-middle or working class parishioners in the church was more important than a match with the social class of pastor's family of origin in the pastor's feeling of accomplishment. Whatever the social class origin of the clergy, it appears that most feel they are somewhat more able to accomplish things in their ministry if they are *not* at churches where most of the parishioners are lower-middle and working class. In other words, it is more the social class orientation that clergy have achieved through their education than their parents' social class that affects the way they get along with laity in their congregations. But what may be most important to note here is that clergywomen equal or excel clergymen in feeling they have accomplished something in their ministry, whatever the social class characteristics of their parishioners.

Table 6.4 Social Class and Clergy Feelings of Accomplishment

<i>Amount of Clergy Fathers' Education</i>	<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>			
	<i>Proportion of Parishioners Middle and Upper-Middle Class</i>		<i>Proportion of Parishioners Middle and Upper-Middle Class</i>			
	<i>Two-Thirds Plus</i>	<i>Divided as to class</i>	<i>One-Third or less</i>	<i>Two-Thirds Plus</i>	<i>Divided as to Class</i>	<i>One-Third or Less</i>
High school, one year technical school, or less	69% (of 140)	61% (of 44)	53% (of 70)	51% (of 255)	45% (of 93)	45% (of 71)
Some college and college graduation	67% (of 111)	56% (of 18)	49% (of 39)	61% (of 89)	62% (of 34)	46% (of 24)
Graduate education	69% (of 102)	80% (of 25)	54% (of 41)	63% (of 92)	68% (of 34)	29% (of 14)

Summary

Clergy feel competent in their ministries and are indeed rated as quite competent by their lay leaders. Although women pastors are not evaluated by themselves or their lay leaders as highly in managing the budget of the church, in all other role activities they typically equal or excel clergymen in self and lay evaluations.

However, the fact that lay leaders perceive their own woman pastor as competent in these various ministerial tasks does not necessarily mean that they want their next minister, and particularly a senior minister, to be a woman. The best that can be said is that lay leaders claim they would not care if their next minister were a woman or a man. However, the typical feeling is that churches should not specifically try to hire a woman, or that it is best for the church if women and men clergy are alternated (even among those favorable to women clergy). This attitude does not bode well for a fast expansion in hiring of women to occur in the numbers of churches open to women pastors, though the data are suggestive that having a woman minister leads laity to change negative attitudes toward clergywomen into positive ones. (The stability of such change, if the woman is followed by a man again in the pastoral position, is open to question.)

Lay leaders, regardless of their own approval or disapproval of clergywomen, may fear that having a woman pastor will upset the stability of their churches. However, as more and more women serve effectively as pastors of churches, lay leaders may be increasingly open to considering women. But this rate of progress may be far slower than the rate at which women are completing seminary M. Div. programs. Also, actual competence in ministerial tasks and perception of clergy's competence by lay persons may not be as important as is how the clergywomen actually get along with various types of lay people. This area that will be examined in the following chapter dealing particularly with clergy's role relationships with types of laity as well as other ordained persons in their professional status as parish ministers.