Study of the role of the minister's wife

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A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER'S WIFE

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Idea of the Study

The research reported here was an investigation of the role of the minister's wife. The author's original interest in the role stemmed from a broader interest in role conflict, a concept used to refer to difficulty in conforming to role expectations.¹

After interviewing several ministers' wives, it became apparent that there are many interesting and unique sociological dimensions of the role. The religious role influences the minister's wife's behavior in the community and the home as well as in the church and the concept of role conflict is inadequate to describe the extent of this influence. For this reason, it was decided to undertake a more general and descriptive study of the role, which approaches it as a quasi-occupation and emphasizes the social and psychological limitations imposed by it.

Three aspects of the role of the minister's wife were particularly of interest to the author:

First, it is a stereotyped role. There are many beliefs and assumptions about the individual who occupies the role of the minister's wife. Descriptions of the minister's wife which depict her as an unassuming, reserved woman with a saintlike manner and a vital commitment to her husband's work abound in popular literature.

What is the relationship between the stereotype and the person who actually occupies the role? In what ways is her life circumscribed by the stereotype? What effect does it have on her self-concept?

Secondly, the occupational aspect of her role includes responsibilities for which she is psychologically and educationally unprepared. It is an "accidental role," a kind of ascribed status which she must accept when she marries a clergyman. It is generally not a position she has aspired to nor does her experience prepare her for its demands. How does the young minister's wife cope with these responsibilities? How does she define them and does her definition differ from that of the congregation she serves?

A third aspect of the role of the minister's wife is that the expectations for her behavior are ambiguous. They may be clear to the parishioners but they remain
undefined. Also, expectations vary from community to community and among church members themselves. Unless she is in a very large church, the minister's wife occupies a unique position and lacks a supportive group of role-sharers to encourage and guide her. How does she approach the task of satisfying church members with differing expectations? What recourse does she have when their expectations are unrealistic?

The purpose of this report is to answer these and related questions by examining personal interview data which was obtained from ministers' wives.

**Related Research**

Although there has been a recent surge of interest in the sociology of religion (as indicated by the establishment of a new social science journal, *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*), surprisingly little has been written on the role of the religious leader.

Robert Fulton studies the dissonance in role expectations of funeral directors and clergymen upon the death of a church member.² The conflict between religious and military orientations of chaplains in the Armed Services

is investigated by Waldo W. Burchard.3

In an account of the role of the minister in the community, Chapman makes an observation about the minister's background which is a source of problems for both him and his wife:

Paragraph by paragraph these findings mean that the ministers who prepare for their work in professional schools are (for urban areas like New Haven or larger centers) unaccustomed to the life patterns of the communities in which they expect to serve as leaders.4

The minister who is beginning his career finds himself, with few exceptions, in a small town or rural community where he must serve a congregation of little educational achievement. The abrupt change from textbooks to tractors calls for a tremendous adjustment.

The particular history and theology of the Pentecostalist movement gives rise to problems in role definition for its ministers which are not applicable to all denominations. However, an article describing the conflicts of the pentecostalist minister observes that ministers' wives of all denominations are required to share


their spouses' religious role:

In few if any other professions are the wives of ordinary practitioners committed to their husbands' work as are the wives of ministers—a consequence, perhaps, of the diffuse and affective character of the ministerial role.\(^5\)

The author adds that such affective occupational roles require total allegiance to the institution.

Discussing religious leadership in general, Glenn Vernon points out two aspects of the leadership role which cause strain. The first is the access of the minister to personal information about his followers.\(^6\) This knowledge can lead to various problems for the minister and his wife: they must maintain some social distance in order to gain the confidence of their parishioners and serve successfully as counselors, and they must exercise some self-restraint in keeping what they do know confidential.

Vernon continues with this observation on the life of the religious leader:

His house is open in many respects. His life and work are distinctly fused. He works, after all, in a calling and, as such, in a "free" profession. For these reasons he is almost never

\(^{5}\text{Bryan R. Wilson, "The Pentecostalist Minister: Role Conflicts and Status Contradictions," American Journal of Sociology, LXIV, No. 5 (March, 1959), 502.}\)

free, though he may not be burdened with a nine-to-five routine.  

While popular and religious magazines have offered advice and consolation to the minister's wife, there are virtually no sociological treatments of her role. The only sociological comment on the minister's wife known to the author is an address given by Raymond Gold to the Pacific Sociological Association in 1962, "The Minister's Wife: A Case of Structurally Induced Ethnicity." In this report Dr. Gold suggests that by virtue of her position the minister's wife personifies an out-category to church members and that this is an inhibiting factor in her relationships with them.

In 1950, *Time* reported that a psychologist at Boston University School of Theology was conducting a study of the minister's wife. Attempts to locate any information on this project have been unsuccessful.

Wallace Denton, a minister himself, has written what is probably the most comprehensive work on the minister's wife. Though it is entitled *The Role of the Minister's*  

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8 L. Freeman, "Hidden Heartaches of Ministers' Wives," *Coronet* (September, 1961), pp. 19-26; and the entire issue of *Pastoral Psychology* (December, 1961).

Wife, it is not a sociological study but a historical sketch of the minister's wife from Biblical times. Also, Reverend Denton attempts to advise the minister's wife in maintaining her own mental health.

Sources of Data

During the years 1959-1961, under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Raymond Gold and Mr. Benjamin Wright of the department of sociology of the University of Montana interviewed ministers and their wives throughout Montana to determine the role of the clergy in community mental health.

In the course of these interviews, many aspects of the role of the minister's wife were brought to light. The texts of these interviews were made available to the author and, encouraged by this data, she interviewed several ministers' wives in the Missoula area. An interview guide was used but it was readily departed from at the suggestion of the interviewer or the respondent.

Despite the time difference of five years and more, the data gathered by the author were remarkably consistent with Gold's and Wright's. It was decided to

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11See the Appendix for a description of the respondents in this study, a sample of interview questions, and two interview texts.
use a combination of the two sources of data in the present analysis of the role of the minister's wife for these reasons:

First, Gold and Wright's respondents represented a wider distribution of both religious affiliation and geographic location than the author's resources would allow.

Second, except for Gold's report to the Pacific Sociological Association, their data had not been analyzed or reported.

Since the interviews from both sources were tape-recorded and transcribed, there can be no question as to the reliability of the data. All of the statements used to illustrate and substantiate the findings of this paper are verbatim accounts of conversations between the interviewers and ministers' wives.

The spectrum of age, background and religious affiliation represented by the thirty-one ministers' wives interviewed would seem broad enough to provide a valid and comprehensive description of the minister's wife in Western Montana. Respondents vary from a young wife in her first pastorate to a grandmother who had occupied the role for fifty years.

In all, fifteen religious denominations are represented in this study. Geographical locations vary from
agricultural communities of a few hundred people to the largest metropolitan areas of Montana.

**Justification for the Study**

This report describes the role of the minister's wife from her point of view. Its purpose is to record the attitudes and experiences of a group of persons occupying a particular position in the social sphere. The study explores the relationship between social stereotypes and individuals who occupy stereotyped roles. It reports the behavioral limitations imposed by the stereotype and the role occupant's adjustments to these limitations. Everett C. Hughes' statement that "Part of the duty of even the news-telling social scientist is to be the ethnologist of his own time and place, illuminating the less obvious aspects of his own culture"\(^1\)\(^2\) is a leading sociologist's justification for a study of the sort reported here.

The concept of stereotype has not been widely used in the social sciences. Investigations that have been conducted usually concern the sources and consequences of racial types. S. I. Hayakawa, a pioneer in the field of general semantics, was one of the first to specify thought processes that produce stereotypes:

... Suppose that we were to give the extensional meaning of the word "Korean." We would have to point to all "Koreans" living at a particular moment and say, "The word 'Korean' denotes at the present moment these persons: $A_1, A_2, A_3, \ldots, A_n$." Now let us say a child, whom we shall designate as $Z$, is born among these "Koreans." The extensional meaning of the word "Korean," determined prior to the existence of $Z$, does not include $Z$. $Z$ is a new individual belonging to no classification since all classifications were made without taking $Z$ into account. Why then is $Z$ also a "Korean"? BECAUSE WE SAY SO. And saying so--fixing the classification--we have determined to a considerable extent future attitudes toward $Z$.13

As Hayakawa suggests, rigid classification of groups of people influences attitudes and behavior toward individuals in these groups. People expect those in certain

---

categories to behave in certain typical ways, and they structure interaction so that their expectations will be fulfilled.

A social psychologist, Roger Brown, makes the distinction between role and stereotype in this way:

Prescription, expectancy and performance all converge in the social role but, in the social stereotype, we have categorical expectancies without prescriptions and it is a matter of controversy whether or not the category performs in such a way as to confirm the expectancy.14

A stereotype, then, is a widely held characterization of a category of persons.

This chapter introduces the social stereotype of the minister's wife and discusses the effect it has on the community's behavior towards her and on her own actions.

The Stereotype of the Minister's Wife

Stereotypes are rarely articulated. Rather they are rigid attitudes acquired by people through the meanings they give to their own experiences and to what they hear and read. The stereotype of the minister's wife could be determined by a careful reading of the descriptions of her in literature. Even such recent novels as

James Michener's *Hawaii* and Pearl Buck's *The Time Is Noon* provide ample material for such a project. The stereotype of the minister's wife is even more clearly delineated in a satirical book of advice on *How to Become a Bishop without Being Religious*, by Charles Merrill Smith.

In this humorous book about how to succeed in the religious profession, there is more fact than fancy. The chapter "Selecting the Clerical Wife" advises the young minister who is contemplating marriage. Smith talks about women who are the "right type" for the clerical life and, in doing so, artfully describes the stereotype. First, she should be willing and capable of sharing the work of the ministry. About her duties in the church, Smith says:

> Most girls are piano players of sorts and anyone can learn to operate a typewriter or mimeograph. Add to these accomplishments the intellectually untaxing duties of Sunday School teaching, choir singing and ladies aid work and a miscellany of other small parish chores all of which your wife will be expected in your first small churches to perform (it's part of the tradition) and you have a job analysis which, were it filled by a salaried employee, would require no small addition to the annual budget. 15

According to Smith, the minister's wife should have a conservative appearance because an attractive and fashionable type might be perceived as a threat by the women of the church. He summarizes: "To cover the rule in a

sentence, she must not be beautiful, stylish or sexy."\textsuperscript{16}

Data from the present study give supportive evidence to Mr. Smith's contentions. Minister's Wife No. 16 confirms the idea that she is supposed to be very capable: "I know there is sort of a stereotype; you're supposed to play the piano and be a gracious hostess and all that."

Concerning the appearance of the minister's wife, Respondent No. 17 said, "It's just taboo to wear shorts, slacks, jeans--anything around here." She added that she violated this rule sometimes around the house and hoped the parishioners wouldn't find out. When asked to describe the ideal minister's wife, No. 7 replied: "She would be rather nondescript, but why? Christ doesn't mean for a person to be like that."

The Stereotype and Social Reality

Respondents in this study were acutely aware of a stereotype of the minister's wife. As revealed in this comment by Minister's Wife No. 16, people think of them categorically rather than individually:

They assume before they have even met you that they know what you are like. This means that you are going to be left out of social activities because you are stereotyped as a killjoy. You almost would have to dye your hair red and take to drinking and walking the streets before they would assume you are not like the stereotype.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 39. 
The stereotype of the appearance of the minister's wife is so well embedded that she encounters it even among well-educated, professional people. Respondent No. 7, a very attractive woman, documents this fact when she recalled the following incident:

When I went to the doctor, a strange doctor, and told him I was a clergyman's wife, he made this statement: "You know, if I were asked what would be a typical minister's wife, I wouldn't say that you would meet any of them." My answer was, "Is there a typical one?" And he said, "No, I don't think so, but it wouldn't be what I see now." I presume he was speaking about that which you mentioned earlier /her appearance/. I had just come back from a vacation deeply tanned and that might have had something to do with it. I don't know.

Besides these expectancies that the minister's wife will have a conservative appearance and assume church responsibilities, the stereotype indicates that her behavior will be flawless. Perhaps because of the religious nature of her role, she is expected to serve as an example to the community. Her husband's religious vocation is extended to her and they are both supposed to be saintlike in their conduct. Minister's Wife No. 19 dramatizes this expectancy in her report of her doctor's reaction to the fact that she was not immune to average problems:

I was surprised at my doctor, a very able and sensitive man, who, when I had the "baby blues" after my second baby, said, "Not you--a minister's wife!" I looked up at him and said, "From all I can gather this is a physical thing due
to the changes the body goes through in childbirth. Why do you think that pastors' wives are made differently chemically?" This stopped him but it showed his mind was set on the subject.

The minister's family is faced with the challenging task of illustrating his sermons through their daily life. Church members seem to feel that, if anyone follows his advice, his family certainly should. Minister's Wife No. 11 commented on the expectations of church members:

I know many of them think you should be better. You should, as I say, be better and do better in all ways than your husband even preached about and teaches about. Such as your house should always be spic and span and should be spotless and you should be dressed to the teeth always ready to have visitors and be ready to go out at a moment's notice, and everything should be just so. And you should always say the right thing. You should never make a mistake. You should be discrete in every situation.

The minister's wife is often called on to settle disputes among the parishioners because her judgment carries somewhat of a Christian sanction. Respondent No. 13 said, "All I ever hear is, 'Isn't this right Mrs. ____?'' She added that she disliked being the negotiator in church affairs because it forced her to alienate some of the church members.

What the minister's wife says and does carries a lot of weight. She becomes aware of her personal tastes and habits because they are the norms followed by church
members. Respondent No. 14 gave an example of the effects of her choice of dress:

We went to some kind of party and I was new here and I didn't wear a hat. Now I don't often wear hats—I'm a little young yet and I just don't care about it—but some of the other ladies did and one of them remarked to me, "Well, if I had known you weren't going to wear a hat, I certainly wouldn't have either."

Living with the Stereotype

The self is a social product and individuals' self-conceptions are shaped by the ways others take them into account. An individual in a stereotyped role, which circumscribes life in many ways, finds it difficult to maintain viability of self. Minister's Wife No. 7 said, "It's very hard to maintain one's own self. Unless you have a sense of your own personality, you can't do it." Parishioners control sanctions affecting nearly all areas of her life so the minister's wife must be responsive to their expectations. Because expectations are so ill-defined, she behaves cautiously in all situations. Minister's Wife No. 12 said she was in a perpetual state of confusion and commented on the self-conscious nature of the role:

I never feel completely free. I always feel a certain amount is expected of me and am I fulfilling it? Are they disappointed in me? Am I saying the right things? Am I having the right people over?

The minister's wife must always act guardedly because she is constantly under observation. Her freedom is limited by the restraint she must use in trying not to offend anyone. She knows what she is but is unsure about how to present herself to the parishioners. These points were made when Minister's Wife No. 22 talked about the problem of social drinking:

Just this noon I attended a luncheon and they all began by ordering a mixed drink. Well, I feel as though I belong and yet I feel there is a barrier I cannot step beyond. Some wouldn't care and yet some one might be offended, so I feel that I shouldn't.

Respondents said their relationships with others are inhibited by the religious role. They receive differential treatment because of the social stereotype. Minister's Wife No. 5 reported her reception at her first church:

No one came near you and, if they did, they didn't know how to talk with you or I didn't know how to talk to them I guess. They expected me not to be like a human being--a group apart.

The religious role is an obstacle in establishing friendships. The minister's wife can never really relax because church members never forget she is "the minister's
wife." When asked if there were opportunities for her to really "let her hair down" and be one of the group, Respondent No. 20 answered:

I would honestly say that there aren't really. I mean, not that it stands out in capital letters but you are aware that you have a very strong responsibility.

Ministers' wives reported that it is impossible to have a confidante to whom they can express their own frustrations and problems. Church members are disappointed if she reveals her own frailties. The minister's wife cannot risk disillusioning anyone about her own moral strength because it might reflect on her husband's ministry. Respondent No. 23 said she had to "draw the line":

I will admit to problems in raising children. I will admit to problems in keeping house and cooking and sewing. I will admit to all of these problems but I cannot admit to spiritual problems.

The reaction of the minister's wife to her "looking-glass self"\(^\text{18}\) varies. Most express a strong desire to escape the stereotype: they want to secularize the role, but parishioners make this difficult. A few, however, are committed to upholding the stereotype: they feel, like Minister's Wife No. 27, that the congregation "needs someone to look up to." In her opinion, the minister's wife

has an obligation to provide a model for the congregation's emulation. She said:

Like a man might look up to the minister, a lady would look up to the minister's wife. We have to keep our lives above reproach so that it won't spoil their idol of us.

The majority of ministers' wives are anxious to have the "idol" spoiled. They are dissatisfied with the stereotype and the kind of behavior it implies and make conscious attempts to destroy it. To accomplish this, they often participate in purely secular activities to convince the community that they, too, can enjoy life.

Minister's Wife No. 2 was a square-dancer:

We met a lot of new people who seemed to be startled that a minister and his wife went square-dancing. Now we are in the advanced class and enjoy it and they kind of find out you are human too.

Unfortunately, the few ministers' wives who succeed in convincing people they are "human" cannot do much to dispel the stereotype. As Brown noted, stereotypes are a result of what people read and hear and they survive in confidential conversations and discriminatory behavior even when experience tells a different story.19 When a church member encounters a "human" minister's wife, she is only the exception that proves the rule. This point is illustrated in the following statement:

19Brown, op. cit., p. 176.
In fact, I had someone say to me, when she was introducing me as the pastor's wife, "We like her because she's just like the rest of us." I guess that's supposed to be unusual.\footnote{Minister's Wife No. 5.}
CHAPTER III

THE JOB: ASSISTANT PASTOR

In most churches the minister's wife serves as an "assistant pastor." Her responsibilities extend to every area of church life and she is unprepared for many of them.

This chapter is concerned with the occupational aspects of the role of the minister's wife: the duties she assumes in the church and her attitudes toward sharing the ministerial leadership.

Preparation

Initial Attitudes

The initial attitudes of the young wife toward her husband's selection of a religious career partially determine the extent of her participation in his work. The woman who is pleased with her husband's religious profession has usually been active in church work before her marriage and views the ministry as an opportunity to fulfill her own religious commitment. Minister's Wife No. 10 was very frank about her enthusiasm for a clergy marriage:

Well, I set out to marry a minister. As a young person, I was very influenced by several ministers and spent a great deal of time babysitting in their homes as well as being an officer in the youth group.
This woman took an active part in her husband's work and reported that her personal needs and goals were satisfied by participation in her husband's ministry.

Women with negative attitudes toward the ministry have a more difficult time in the role of the minister's wife. When a man decides to enter the profession after marriage, he may meet opposition from his wife. Minister's Wife No. 3, who participated only reluctantly in her husband's work, described her reaction to his decision after three years of marriage:

I don't make any bones about not wanting to do it. I didn't want to and I told the man he counseled with in private, "No sir, that will never happen in our house." I said, "A lot of things might happen but that isn't going to."

Women who object to their husbands' decision may feel apprehensive about their own adequacy in the role of the minister's wife. Like Minister's Wife No. 9, they may feel educationally unprepared: "I didn't like the idea because I knew that I didn't have college education like Bible school." Their observations on the life of ministers and their families may discourage them or give them some second thoughts. Minister's Wife No. 4 reported the thoughts provoked by her experiences in the church:

I thought, "How can the minister and his wife stand the criticism that they get?" Because I've grown up as a lay member of the church
and I know exactly what goes on and it ranges from the wash on the line to the preaching on Sunday. That was one of the things I thought about when I started dating a minister-to-be.

When a young woman has not been active in the church, her parents may doubt her ability to perform in the role of a minister's wife. The mother of one prospective minister's wife (No. 23) questioned her aptitude for the life:

When I told my mother I was going to marry a minister, she thought it was the funniest thing she had ever heard. She said, "May I remind you as to your talents: to my knowledge you have won awards in tennis, skating, and ballroom dancing. I cannot figure out how these things are going to help you in the parsonage." I had to agree that my qualifications were--well, I didn't even attend church and I wouldn't have been caught dead at a young people's meeting.

The new minister's wife does not receive a handbook or list of instructions for appropriate behavior. Her own observations in the church guide her but, according to Minister's Wife No. 15, active experience is the only reliable teacher: "It's not something you can learn from books. You're going to have to learn for yourself through trial and error--more error than trial."

The Parsonage and the Seminary

Being a minister's daughter seems to be the best preparation for being a minister's wife. Nine of the ministers' wives in this study had grown up in the parsonage
and recommended it as a good training ground. One of them (No. 7) said: "I think maybe clergy daughters make the best clergy wives because they know the situation--how real it is and abnormal." Certainly this experience is invaluable for a prospective minister's wife. She has first-hand knowledge of the demands on the minister's wife's time, the prescriptions for her dress and behavior, and the intrusions on family life: she can weigh the advantages and disadvantages. Unlike the uninitiated, she can realistically assess her own ability to assume the role. It seems inexplicable when a woman who has negative feelings about her own childhood in the parsonage elects to marry a minister. A reason for such contradictory behavior may be that she too is caught up in romantic love cult of Western society which does so much to mask the reality of marriage.

The woman who has been married while her husband was in the seminary has a distinct advantage. Some seminaries recognize the responsibility to train the minister's wife as well as the minister and establish classes or informal meetings for this purpose. All the ministers' wives in this study admitted that the need for such training was great and those that had participated said it was helpful,

though inadequate. Respondent No. 13 told about the practical advice given by the President of the seminary her husband attended:

He got all the wives together and spoke to us, told us what was expected of a minister's wife: How to treat your husband, how to get your meals on time, how to keep your home clean, how to advise your husband on suits to buy that will last a long time--don't let him get what he wants--and a lot to things like that.

Seminary students and their wives often take summer pastorates for vacationing clergymen. This is an economical way of replacing the minister and gives the couple a chance to get a realistic idea of their lives' work. It is a form of "trial marriage" which softens the blow of their first pastorate: it is a boot camp where the minister and his wife can make mistakes and learn by them.

Her Work in the Church

Participation in Pastoral Activities

The work of the minister comprises preaching and, what he refers to as, pastoral duties. The wife does not generally participate in preaching\textsuperscript{22} except perhaps to preview the sermon. Pastoral activities include calling on church members, especially the aged and ill, and counseling.

\textsuperscript{22}Minister's Wife No. 31 was an exception to this rule. Herself an ordained minister, she did preach on occasion.
During the pastoral calls to members' homes, the minister and his wife have a chance to really get to know the parishioners. Most women enjoy such socializing and accompany their husbands whenever possible. When the pastor calls on a woman alone, even a widow, it is the policy to take his wife along for appearance's sake.

Church members often seek out their minister as counselor for personal problems. When he isn't available, they look to his wife. Minister's Wife No. 18 told of an incident when she substituted for her husband:

I mean, in a case of serious illness, he may be away and they know it perfectly well but still they call. They are at a loss, they need someone. They should have called an elder but they called me and, in desperation, I said, "Would you like me to come?" They said, "Would you?" and that was that.

The fact that, in such instances, church members call on the minister's wife and not an elder of the church suggests the extent to which they perceive her as a sharer of her husband's pastoral role. Also, in Protestant churches, where there is no devotion to the Virgin Mary or the female saints of the Roman Catholic church, the pastor's wife is the highest representation of Christian motherhood.

Occasionally a parishioner will come directly to the minister's wife for counsel, not even approaching her husband. Most of these cases are women with marital
problems, who feel more comfortable discussing their personal lives with other women. Minister's Wife No. 18 told about reluctantly assuming the role of counselor:

We had one case of mental illness and she said very flatly, "I want to speak with Mrs. ___." It wasn't easy, believe me, because she was one of those cases that there was a constant temptation to set aside. It was a case of disturbance during the menopause and perhaps she thought I could be more understanding. I don't know but she definitely came to me instead of my husband.

Participation in the Church Program

Typically the minister's wife will assume responsibility for either the church music program or the Sunday School. Some do both. Six of the respondents in this study do all the accounting and secretarial work for the church. Also, there are Altar Guilds, youth groups, Mission Societies and women's associations. Concerning the latter, Minister's Wife No. 5 expressed a viewpoint shared by many of the respondents: "I go to the women's meetings, which I could live the rest of my life without going to, but do because I am the pastor's wife." Ministers' wives resent having to attend these meetings because they tend to become strictly social. They are disappointed in some of the church women who turn what is supposed to be a religious activity into "a gossip-mongering session."23

23Minister's Wife No. 22.
Many ministers' wives lead church organizations. Some of them prefer not to but find they are the only members qualified for leadership. Respondent No. 1 found herself in this situation:

I hoped not to be in any leadership responsibility but, for example in the women's guild, I am one of the few people who can read this material through and understand it just in terms of educational background.

Church members expect the minister's wife to lead because, as Respondent No. 2 said, "They assume you went through seminary with your husband."

Some ministers' wives reject leadership roles because they want to develop leadership among the laity. At the very least, they want to give church members a voice in the church program and this means the minister and his wife must restrain themselves from taking over when things are not running smoothly. Another reason the minister's wife may not wish to be a leader is that she knows through experience that the limelight brings criticism as well as appreciation. Minister's Wife No. 5 discussed one of the risks of leadership:

Sooner or later you are the scapegoat and I notice, even in our own church group, certain people who want to take the lead think it's wonderful at first and then pretty soon it isn't wonderful any more.

Many women suggest that the best way for a minister's wife to lead is through encouragement and example, not by being
chairman of every other church organization. Most of them agree that they are not, by virtue of being the minister's wife, obliged to lead and so expend their time and energy in the home or other pursuits.

When asked about their work in the church, ministers' wives often mention entertaining. Informal entertaining of the church members is considered part of the pastoral duties, getting to know people and gaining their confidence. This kind of entertaining is especially burdensome for the minister's wife. First she has the problem of whom to ask (or whose turn is it now?) and then there is the matter of money. Minister's Wife No. 12, a minister's daughter too, said that her mother didn't entertain at all for these reasons.

In addition to informal entertaining, the minister's wife acts as hostess to visiting church dignitaries or officials. Also, her husband may hold meetings of church organizations in the home. Minister's Wife No. 10 told of her husband's attitude toward the home atmosphere:

My husband feels that a great deal can be accomplished through the fellowship of a cup of coffee. Tensions build up and you bring out the coffee and everyone seems to relax a little bit. In our first parish, we held most of the meetings in our living room.

"I've done everything from clean the lavatories to pour the tea," said Wife No. 6, and it is true that some of the
more menial duties of church work are left to the minister's wife. Along with her other responsibilities she may be the janitor too and wind up doing those menial tasks that church members either aren't aware of or ignore. Respondent No. 22 summed up the attitude of ministers' wives towards persuading someone else to do it: "I would rather get to work and get the job done than remind someone else to do it and have them complain it was So-and-So's job."

Summary

For an outgoing and capable woman who has a strong religious commitment and a sense of responsibility to the parishioners, taking a dominant role in the church can be very satisfying. These women relish the opportunity to perform in many capacities and almost completely share their husbands' ministries. When asked what role she had in the church, Minister's Wife No. 11 answered vigorously with such a list of responsibilities that one wondered what her husband did. Even though she declined leadership positions, she is definitely, as her response illustrated, a leader:

Well, more or less we do things together except his preaching. That's on his own, I mean. But visitation we do almost entirely together and we plan things together and just about every phase of his work we do together. I attend all the meetings always; I feel it's
my responsibility. At the present time, I'm the youth leader and I play an active part in the women's association. We call it the Women's Missionary Council and Missionettes. All the branches of the church I am connected in and active in. I teach Sunday School, I sing in the choir. I have refused to be an officer except in the youth group but I am advisor in all of our meetings and they do not go ahead with anything unless they check with me first. If for some reason, someone resigns their office, it's usually my responsibility to take over and see that it's carried on.

The previous respondent, in reality an assistant pastor, may cause some problems for the minister's wife who succeeds her in that church. Some women do not share her enthusiasm for church activities. They reject the role of assistant pastor like Minister's Wife No. 5 who said, "I just do what any normal lay woman should do. After all, he's the one called to be pastor."

Most women take a position between these two extremes. They do not attempt a very wide influence in the church and do not attend all the services and meetings. They admit a responsibility to participate in those activities for which they are particularly qualified but feel their greatest responsibility is in the home. Respondent No. 17 said, "People don't realize it but just keeping the pastor going is a full time job."

Minister's Wife No. 7 expressed a typical attitude and noted that the woman who overdoes it, does herself a
I do not believe that any clergyman's wife should be involved in everything that goes on in the church. If she does, it should be to use whatever talent she has been given—just like anyone else. My talent would be in the area of teaching and not in scrubbing floors and things like that. I think I made a mistake in trying to do those things which were physically beyond me and then disliking it and acting accordingly.
CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH: PLEASING THE PARISHIONERS

Individuals in service occupations must endeavor to satisfy those they serve by giving evidence of a sincere attempt to please. Otherwise, they jeopardize the appeal and even the survival of the service they sell. When consumers are unhappy about any aspect of the service, they spread the word to others and public opinion requires that the service change or disappear. In the final analysis, the customer is always right.

The ministry is essentially a service. The customer, in this case the parishioner, can reject the service by changing to another church or, in congregationally governed churches, by replacing the minister. The church members have the power to determine the terms of successful ministerial practice and whether or not the minister is meeting them. This aspect of power handicaps the minister's wife in her dealings with them.

This chapter will explore the church members' expectations for the minister's wife and the nature of her relationships with them.
Comparisons

Church members think of the minister's wife categorically rather than individually so it takes a while for it to register in their minds that another person is now "the minister's wife." Upon arrival, the new minister's wife will find that she is confused with the last one as reported by Respondent No. 25:

In one location—a small community—for the first year I was called "Marlyss," the name of the last pastor's wife. My only consolation was that the next pastor's wife would be called "Nancy" for a year.

The new minister's wife receives many clues about church members' expectations from what they say about the previous wife. She doesn't hear much about herself but feels sure that her successor will. Minister's Wife No. 4 discussed this phenomenon:

I feel that I have known all my predecessors just by what I have heard said. But of course, I never hear what they think of me. I can imagine sometimes but I'm sure the next minister's wife will hear about that.

If the last minister's wife was unpopular with the parishioners, the new woman has a better chance for survival. On the other hand, if the former minister's wife was well-liked, her successor may be forced to try to follow in her sainted footsteps. Minister's Wife No. 1 felt the previous wife was not well-received in the church and decided to reverse the role she had chosen. She said:
The role that she chose was not a creative thing for the church at all. She assumed a leadership responsibility in all the things in which her husband did not and left the church without any leaders. This is one reason why I feel very strongly I don't want to assume that role. Personally, I don't want it and I don't think it's good for the church either.

The Church Members' Expectations

What the church members expect of the minister's wife may be quite clear to them but, unfortunately, they do not readily verbalize these expectations. She is somehow expected to perform her duties without being informed of their nature. This lack of direction is illustrated in the following incident, reported by Minister's Wife No. 20:

One of the first guild meetings I attended was a good example of this. They are used to saying a prayer before the luncheon. I wasn't aware of this. We sat around the table for awhile with our heads bowed and there was complete silence and then one of them said, "Well, aren't you going to say grace?" I said, "Yes, if someone asked me to, I suppose I would be glad to." My reaction to this kind of expectation is anger, which makes it hard to cope with for me.

Church members do not easily communicate their expectations to each other either. Problematic for the minister's wife is the consequent lack of uniformity in their conception of her responsibilities. Minister's Wife No. 20 said:
Some people will think you are doing too much and others will think you're not doing enough so it's a constant job to find the middle that pleases the most people.

One thing church members do agree upon is that the minister's wife should be available to them at all times. She's constantly answering the phone and doorbell to find parishioner who wants to talk. Minister's Wife No. 5 especially resented the phone interruptions:

I think the telephone is my bloodbearer. You have the people who forget that if everyone demanded the time they do, that's all you would get done. To me it's a waste of time and, if I were not a pastor's wife, I would tell them I just don't have the time.

Ministers' wives accept the role of counselor only reluctantly. They say all the parishioner really wants is to talk and they don't like the uncomfortable feeling of knowing all the details of the individual's personal life. Respondent No. 6 said that if you concede to listen, it will have consequences on the individual's behavior towards you later.

I don't like to do it because I'm not a psychologist but I just listen--that's all they really want--to their problems with their husband or an uncontrollable child. Often when they see you after that, they won't talk to you because you know all about them. Of course, they told you!

Church members expect the minister's wife to be knowledgeable about religious affairs, including the finer theological points. Respondent No. 6 said a woman called her from a
beauty parlor to settle a dispute about the Book of Ruth. Of course, the wife is usually not trained in theology and Minister's Wife No. 10 said, "I know one minister's wife who won't join the Bible class because she doesn't want the congregation to know how illiterate she is in the Bible."

The minister's wife must serve the entire congregation. Church members resent it when she shows favoritism by selecting special friends. Ministers' wives are aware of the jealousies caused by socializing with one family more than another and take steps to prevent it. Respondent No. 11 told how she and her husband handled the matter of pastoral calling. "We visit them regularly and keep a record of this because it's so easy to visit one family more often than another and that could cause jealousy."

Lols in the Church

One only need attend a church service to realize that women are better church members than men. For elderly women, the church is often their only social activity. With time on their hands, these little old

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**24**For a more complete discussion, see Chapter VI, infra.

**25**"Lol" is a term bestowed by workers in various services on their most annoying clients. It is an acronym for "little old ladies."
ladies focus their attention on the church and take a consuming interest in church affairs and the personalities of the minister and his wife. As a result, they are some of the most troublesome parishioners.

According to respondents in this study, it is the lols who are always on the telephone. They fill the minister's wife in on what is happening in the community and check up on the family. The lol considers herself one of the minister's employers and can become quite indignant when she feels she isn't getting her money's worth. Such women have a highly personalized notion of Christian behavior. This is apparent in the following report made by Minister's Wife No. 23:

On occasion my husband has been up all night with an alcoholic or a potential suicide. Then, some little old lady of the congregation will call up at some sprightly hour and infer that anyone who isn't up and doing at 7:15 simply isn't leading a good Christian life!

The lol is apt to be quite possessive about her church and parsonage. She is the one who asks why the carpet is worn. (It's probably worn by the daily parade of lols in the parsonage.) Minister's Wife No. 4 said that a lol had called her to tell her she didn't like the new tile on the church floor.

Since the lol sometimes serves as a news hotline for the whole neighborhood, she is in a position to harm
the reputation of the minister's wife. The wise minister's wife treads carefully with the lols because she knows that every gesture is taken personally. Respondent No. 3 told of a lol's misinterpretation of her behavior:

We have a little old lady down the street who doesn't think just right. We hadn't been here very long when she got the idea that I wouldn't sit with her at church. Actually I had gone out to teach Sunday School class.

Because they are so easily offended and so quick to broadcast the minister's wife's behavior, lols are a constant source of annoyance to the minister's wife. Many ministers' wives dislike dealing with the hoboes who frequent the parsonage but one, in the acquaintance of Respondent No. 14, said, "At least they're more interesting than the old ladies." Less a trial of patience too.

The Wife's Response

The minister's wife's attitudes toward church members are generally quite positive. She may wish they were more generous with their time and money or more willing to assume leadership positions, but she does not expect them to be perfect and so is satisfied. Especially during a crisis affecting the minister's family, parishioners are apt to seize the opportunity to show that they are "friends in need." Minister's Wife No. 2 discussed this aspect of clergy life:
Just in normal conversation it comes up that you are moving or that you are going to put up a fence and, all of a sudden, you have a lot of people helping you. That is one of the most wonderful, satisfying things about the ministry. It seems like you always have a friend who is willing to do something for you.

Of course, the minister and his wife are sometimes dissatisfied with the congregation. They readily admit times of disappointment and frustration. Respondent No. 15 said, "You see members who can be so kind and Christian at one time and, at another, so hateful and unthinking that it can be heartbreaking." Early in the game the minister's wife learns not to become disillusioned by these members and not to take things personally. Respondent No. 22 said,

I think you need some kind of coat or shell that people can't penetrate with some of these things that, these petty things, that upset a younger pastor's wife.

The minister's wife can develop such a protective "shell" as insulation against the demands of the church membership in four ways:

(1) by verbally rejecting the religious role.
(2) by maintaining a job in the community.
(3) by having a large family.
(4) by persuading her husband to leave the ministry.

Some women attempt to educate the parishioners to their own conception of the role by remaining aloof. In
their conversations they can imply they do not feel obligated to the church. Though it is difficult, they can try to defer all responsibility to their husbands like Minister's Wife No. 5 who said, "I try to make it a point, if someone does talk to me, of saying, 'Well, why don't you talk to my husband about it?'"

Another means of insulation from the pressures of the church is to take a job outside the church. Ministers' wives find that church members often object to this but some manage anyway. Respondent No. 22 was not employed but was a full-time college student. She commented on her approach:

I have my own method of being too busy really with the family and going to school. They are educated now to where they don't expect a great deal and I think that's important.

Ministers' wives understand that family responsibilities are one insulator the church members can't argue with. This is probably the best means of insulation because it coincides with the middle class value that the woman's place is in the home. Minister's Wife No. 24 reported:

I was given some wise advice by a minister's wife from Connecticut when we were first married. She said that the best way to make your own decisions and find your own place in the church was to have a small child or two around. They make a wonderful excuse.

Several respondents admitted that they had given some
thought to this approach. One had nine children and knew it worked.

The husbands of two of the respondents in this study were not pastors but assistant pastors. Both of these wives said that this situational factor allowed them more freedom than the pastor's wife. Minister's Wife No. said, "There is a full time minister's wife so people don't focus their attention on me as the pastor's wife which is quite a relief."

When all else fails and a husband and wife are completely disheartened, they have the final alternative of leaving the ministry. Such decisions are not arrived at easily for, though there are no perpetual vows in the Protestant ministry, they are bound by their consciences and sometimes by the conviction they have been "called of God" to the ministry. Minister's Wife No. 13 told about her experience with this alternative:

I might say that there was a time in our life that we got so fed up with it, we decided we couldn't carry on and we went to work, but we were so miserable we had to come back.
THE COMMUNITY: PINOCHLE AND POLITICS

The social relationships of the minister's wife extend beyond the church into the community. In varying degrees ministers' wives participate in community activities which provide the outlet so many of them verbalize for self-expression outside the church. Community organizations give them the opportunity to develop friendships with people of other denominations who do not, hopefully, conceptualize them as "ministers' wives." The minister's wife finds, however, that she cannot leave her religious role at the church door, that church members somehow find it relevant to her choice of pinochle partners and her political preferences.

This chapter explores the nature of the minister's wife's participation in community affairs and the limitations imposed on her by church members.

The Rural Community

Since most of the respondents in this study live in small, essentially rural, communities, it is necessary to comment on some unique aspects of the rural ministry.
Religious schools and seminaries are generally located in urban areas and, commonly, in the Eastern part of the United States. For this reason, most of Montana's clergy are not native. In addition to adjusting to a particular church membership, the Montana minister and his wife often face an adjustment to an entirely new lifestyle.

Church members have come to accept this and expect to help socialize the new minister and his wife to Western ways. Indeed, Minister's Wife No. 20 commented, "One rancher couldn't believe that I knew where milk came from!"

Several denominations refer to their churches in Montana and other Western states as "pioneer missions." Ministers' wives of these denominations consider a Montana pastorate as much of a challenge as an assignment to the foreign mission fields. Some have said that they were less than anxious to come to Montana but found, upon arriving, that their pre-conceptions were outdated.

Minister's Wife No. 2 reported that her parents particularly objected to their accepting a pastorship in Montana because of the "danger":

Out East they don't realize the kind of life you live here. They have an entirely different idea of North Dakota, where we went first. They thought, you know, that you have Indians running around and so forth. They thought that I was going to such an uncivilized country!

Minister's Wife No. 4 said that the experience had been
most enlightening for her family especially hearing stories about cattle rustling and homesteading, which they have previously only read about in history books. She commented on a rural Montana parish:

We find a type of frontier attitude in a lot of people here, especially the men. They are still the rough and ready type of person, you know, who like to settle their disputes with a gun and that type of thing. We found that quite interesting, unexpected.

Overcoming the initial attitudes of the local gentry towards "Easterners" can be a major hurdle for the minister. Some of them have kept their churches going for long intervals without a minister and are fearful that the minister will not accept what they have been doing or will find fault with their uneducated ways. Respondent No. 2 talked about this resistance:

These country people especially don't let their guard down for quite a while. They have to know first that you like them and that you are going to accept them like they are, that you are not going to correct their English, that you don't care how they talk, that you like them.

Ministers and their wives have discovered that the best way to minimize the difference in background between themselves and the church members is to participate as much as possible in their activities. The minister goes out to help at branding time; his wife joins the sewing circle and they both become sensitive to attitudes towards the Farmer's Union and the economic consequences of the
weather. Minister's Wife No. 4 said that she and her husband were clued in by what was said about other ministers who had served there in the past: "The ones that really rated were the ones that dropped in often, who liked to go out in the fields and liked to ride the tractor." Other ministers and their wives are unable or unwilling to fit into the pattern of rural life; they joyfully anticipate a "call" to an urban area. One woman (No. 11), now in an urban area, spoke sadly of her problems in a very small community: "If I were asked to name the overall atmosphere, it would be one of rejection—a certain feeling of hostility you could never overcome."

The farming and ranching activities of church members are an important influence on the church calendar. Church programs vary according to the seasons. In autumn services are sometimes suspended so that the parishioners are free to attend to the work of harvesting. Some ministers take this opportunity for a vacation while others, concerned about sharing the rural life, go out in the fields to lend a hand.

Since there are few organized cultural and social activities in rural areas, the church is often the only source of community life. Also, rural church members have more conservative religious attitudes than their urban
brethren and the tradition of "church every Sunday" is still strong. Minister's Wife No. 22 described the rural attitude in this statement:

The attitude of the people is different. In a rural community, especially in Minnesota, where the Scandinavians have been Lutherans way back in church history, the church is the center of their life. If there is anything going on at the church, they're there. That's all there is to it.

Religious associations for women provide one of the few opportunities for the rural wife to come into town. The activities of these organizations are chiefly social so meetings are well attended—sometimes, as Respondent No. 14 suggested, by women of different denominations and women with no church ties:

All the women come, whether they belong to the church or not. It's just another club to go out to in the country. You know, something else to get away from the ranch. And it's really a community where they go together from one club to another although some of them have absolutely no religious interest at all.

Historically, women attend church more frequently than their husbands, but in rural churches the absence of men is especially noticeable. Minister's Wife No. 2 pointed out some reasons for this:

Very many of the men won't come. We've been told that they don't have anything against the church, they just can't see any particular reason for hurrying up to get their chores done to get to church. It's inconvenient for a farmer or a rancher to get to church sometimes
and when they do, you know they've made a special effort.

The educational level of rural church membership is low and because they are cognizant of the fact that the minister's wife has at least a high school education and probably some further training, they expect her to have all the answers. Clergymen in these areas must develop leadership within the church among members who feel inadequate for the job. Initially, though, the pastor and his wife are forced to take strong leadership roles. Respondent No. 19 dramatized this point:

In a small town it's different because they are all waiting to see what the priest's wife is going to be like. After all, she is going to be the head of the Altar Guild, she is going to lead the women's auxiliary, be president of this and that, also the superintendent of church schools and she is going to sing in the choir. Man, I walked in here and they just fired them at me.

The Minister's Wife in the Community

"Church, church, church," said Respondent No. 2, "ever since I've been a minister's wife, I've been crushed by the fact that everything is church!" All of the ministers' wives in this study echo these feelings. They want to relate to people who do not see them as ministers' wives, to get a new perspective on themselves. They express the desire for self-expression outside church channels and a general need just to relax. Minister's Wife
No. 2 continued:

I have always made it a practice of doing something once a week that doesn't have anything to do with the church where I meet an entirely new group of people. Ice-skating, square dancing, something entirely different, you know. And I meet people and it's refreshing and you need it because they are people who don't consider you as a minister's wife.

Ministers' wives participate in a variety of activities outside the church. Most of the organizations they belong to are education or child-oriented: the PTA, the Friends of the Library, the Girl Scouts. Some of them do substitute teaching and three of the respondents in this study are part-time college students, preparing to be teachers. The minister's wife who is trained in a professional capacity finds that part-time work, in addition to augmenting the family's income, provides a refreshing change of pace. Respondent No. 1, a speech therapist, discussed her work:

What I have done is to work in speech therapy in the community and it's interesting for someone who has had the training. It's very necessary to find some kind of expression of it so that you aren't just following along in the husband's quite glorified role in the community.

The pastor and his wife are not generally very active in politics. Expressing their political preferences in public might alienate some of the church members and, of course, the pastor would want to avoid that. Respondent
No. 6 said, "The last minister's wife was quite active in politics and the parishioners resented it. They didn't want the League of Women Voters meeting in 'their' parlor!"

Some ministers' wives feel that they have an obligation to be active in community service. No. 11 said, although she believed she has a responsibility in the community as well as the church, "How many clergy wives do? They stay within their own church boundary." That does seem to be the general trend. For one reason, the demands of the church on the minister's wife's time are great. Respondent No. 11 summarized a more typical attitude toward community service:

Well I'm not too much as far as the community is concerned because I feel that most of my time is taken with our church and the time I can spare, I like to spend at home with the boys, to be here when they come home from school.

Minister's Wife No. 5 added another reason. She felt that her responsibility of service to church members required her to give all her energy to church affairs: "If you don't, you feel guilty." Church responsibilities are so exhausting that the added physical drain of community activities may be another reason for the minister's wife's reluctance to participate. As No. 6 said, "If I ever did have time, I think I'd just sit home and stare into space."
The Church Vs. The Community

The minister's wife who is very active in the community discovers shortly that such activity is resented by elements of the church membership who interpret it in these ways:

(1) She doesn't have enough to do in the church.
(2) She feels she must go outside the church for friends.
(3) She, especially when she is politically oriented, endangers the community's conception of their church.

The first attitude is reflected in the experience of Minister's Wife No. 6 who wished to become a librarian. She planned to obtain a degree in library science when her husband's church was near a large university. In a smaller town she had the opportunity to work in a library part-time, but she soon found that the church members did not approve. In her words, "it really discombobulated some of them." The pastor and his wife are servants of the church and no one is more aware of this than the church members. When the pastor's wife goes to work or even participates in community affairs, they feel they are not getting their due. "Your time is our time" seems to be their motto and, though a few clergy families have tried
to ignore it, most of them conform and limit themselves to church work.

Church members sometimes feel it is inappropriate for their minister to seek friendships outside the church circle. If the minister and his wife belong to purely social groups outside the church, church members are slighted. Minister's Wife No. 20 told of this attitude and its consequences:

I was thinking of our first experience here. There is quite an active pinochle club in town and so my husband and I were invited to a pinochle party. I had the good fortune to win high prize the first night we played and it made the local paper. There were a few parishioners who looked a little bit askance at that so it's only with the couples of the church that we play pinochle now.

Church members do not want their pastors to be associated with any particular political leaning and, when the minister's wife is active politically, there are apt to be repercussions: Respondent No. 14 reported, "There are a few who don't like my politics and tell my husband that I should be helping him instead of hurting him."

While most ministers' wives, ever conscious that their behavior can influence their husbands' ministries, forego such entanglements, this lady remained undaunted;

One time I invited this speaker with political connotations to a UN dinner and they thought it was terrible. Of course, if it had been their party, it would have been OK. My daughter and
I marched in the Peace March last year and that really upset them.

She summarized her husband's attitude towards all this: "He didn't approve of the March, but he approves of me doing what I want to do." 26

Attitudes of the church members towards the minister's wife's participation in community activities impose certain restraints. Some women, like the one just mentioned, are unaffected but the majority abide by their wishes. Young ministers' wives who perhaps feel that their husbands have more to lose accept these limitations more readily than older women.

Summary

Community activities appeal to the minister's wife because they give her the opportunity for self-expression and a chance to have fun and relax. She treasures the opportunity to be perceived as an individual without the prescriptions of "the minister's wife." Unfortunately for her mental health, she finds her parishioners' expectations and prescriptions extend beyond the

26 It may be of interest to note that this respondent impressed the interviewer as a very "liberated" minister's wife. Unlike many, she seemed completely at ease during the interview and showed no reticence about answering any question. Rejecting the stereotype completely, she appeared for the interview with her hair in rollers.
church. Even in purely social organizations she will encounter church members who insist on bringing her religious role to the fore. Minister's Wife No. 13 illustrated the problem with the following incident:

I go to a Home Demonstration Club here in town and they've made me President of it. I feel this isn't a religious organization but this girl, who belongs to the church, figured I should open the session with prayer. She really put the pressure on. She says, "Well, they expect it of you." I don't think so. I feel I'd be pushing myself on them. It's not a church thing at all.
CHAPTER VI

THE FAMILY: LIFE IN THE FISHBOWL

The nature of the minister's work makes it impossible for him to separate his occupation from his home life. At home the phone constantly rings for him: perhaps he does counseling in the home or he may even hold church meetings there. His responsibilities often interrupt family plans and, since his wife is typically knee-deep in his work, it is natural that the children are influenced by his profession. Unlike most American children, they have a bird's-eye view of their father's work.

This chapter examines family relationships and the consequences of the religious profession for family life.

The Marital Relationship

As indicated in Chapter III, ministers' wives' conceptions of their part in the ministry vary greatly. However, there do seem to be at least two constants in their attitudes: first, a responsibility to maintain an exceptional home atmosphere and second, a realization that the wife's own behavior has a direct effect on her
on her husband's tenure in a particular community.

The minister's wife feels a strong responsibility to her home because of its importance to her husband's mental health. Sharing the sentiments of many ministers' wives, Respondent No. 29 spoke of her home and family orientation:

Well, to me, I think the most important part a woman has in the role of the minister's wife is that of being concerned for her family. There are many demands on the time of the man of the house and I think it's quite important that the woman is concerned with the home and making it a place where he can relax, if there are minutes to relax.

Sometimes church members do not agree that the minister's wife's first duty is in the home. Respondent No. 2 sensed this attitude among church members but tried not to be affected by it:

I just refuse to give up my family and what I think is most important for whatever they think I should be doing. I'm kind of bull-headed about this but that's the way I feel.

The minister's wife cannot afford to forget that her behavior has some bearing on people's attitudes toward her husband and his work. This is reflected in a statement by Respondent No. 4 that a minister's wife can "either make or break the minister." She added, "I've seen it happen." The most significant aspect of this responsibility is keeping confidences. In another reference to the similarities between the medical and religious professions,
Minister's Wife No. 22 said:

If I were even to violate one confidence, that would be the end of it in a town of this size. Well, in any town. I do think that being a pastor's wife is like being a doctor's wife: if you can't keep your mouth shut, you shouldn't be there. If you don't have this one talent, you are in bad shape.

Another informal function of the minister's wife is being what Respondent No. 6 called a "good social ear for her husband." In the church and the community she can develop a sensitivity to those conversations which might have implications for her husband's ministry. She finds too that she is sometimes used as a go-between for her husband and church members. Church members evidently feel that if it comes from her, rather than them, they might get some action. Sometimes they use her for a sounding board--testing her reaction to a suggestion before they bring it to her husband's attention.

Because of the restraints imposed upon the minister, he cannot easily discuss his problems with church members. Ministers' wives feel that their relationships with their husbands should be especially close so that they can provide such an outlet. Respondent No. 18 remarked:

There are times when he can find relief, release or expression of his own feelings nowhere else. And he's also human.

Unfortunately for the minister's wife, she may not find a
reciprocal outlet in her husband. She may feel he has enough to think about without assuming her problems or, he simply may not be available. When asked about her own need for discussing personal problems, Respondent No. 5 lamented: "A pastor's wife just doesn't get the help from her husband she should. He just isn't there." Episcopalians, of course, have another outlet, their confessor. The three Episcopalian women in this study reported that they found comfort in discussing their anxieties with him. An immediate reaction might be: "Does she ever go to her husband as confessor?" Minister's Wife No. 19 responded very quickly in the negative: "No. Never. She always goes to somebody else because her sins might include him and this would not be good."

Most ministers' wives agree that their marriages are strengthened as a result of sharing their husbands' work. Indeed, this is one of the unique aspects of the clergyman's marriage.

With few exceptions, American women do not have the opportunity to share their husbands' careers. More often than not, they have only a vague idea of his responsibilities at work. Minister's Wife No. 18 commented on the privilege of sharing in her husband's work:

When he rejoices, his wife rejoices with him. When he suffers, she suffers with him. When
he has difficulties, she labors through them with him. It adds a richness to the experience of a pastor and his wife.

Another respondent (No. 23) had something to say for the opposite point of view. Her observations concern the family life of a woman who shared her husband's work to a great extent:

I find that these homes become almost intolerable because they both have the identical set of tensions. They are both agonizing over the Sunday school teacher who quit and they are both agonizing over the organist who had her feelings hurt.

This woman felt that a complete sharing had a detrimental effect on family life.

It should be noted that none of the ministers' wives in this study expressed any real dissatisfaction with their mates. Naturally, the word "divorce" was never mentioned. There is the possibility that clergy marriages, because of the exceptional religious orientation of the partners, are very harmonious. More likely, however, is the possibility that the minister's wife does not feel free to discuss such problems. It would be dangerous for her husband. She may be conforming to Smith's advice that "... you will find it expedient to pretend that you dwell in a state of marital bliss the calm waters of which are never rippled by a cross word, let alone a quarrel."

27Smith, op. cit., p. 37.
Family Life

When questioned about the disadvantages of the religious profession, the minister's wife is apt to mention first the problem of money. Another complaint, which runs a close second, concerns the effect of his work on family life. Three aspects of his profession seem to be at work here:

(1) The demands on the minister's time are so great that he is absent from the home as much as eighty-three hours a week. (This, according to Minister's Wife No. 23, who keeps track.)

(2) The characteristic geographical mobility of the clergyman.

(3) The church members' prescriptions for the family's life.

More than one minister's wife feels that, due to her husband's time-consuming responsibilities, she must be both father and mother to her children. This was a particular complaint of one respondent who indicated it was her husband's fault and not simply an occupational hazard. Respondent No. 14 explained her point of view:

This is one thing I've resented. Maybe it's just him. I mean, you have to make a choice

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28See Chapter VII, infra, for a discussion of the economic problems of the pastor's family.
between home and church and I guess he feels
the church is more important. I wish he
would spend more time with the youngest boy.
He's at the age when he really needs a father.

When the children are home weekends, their father is
busiest. When they are out of school for holidays, he's
tied up with the extra effort of seasonal services. Even
when everyone is at home, he may be on the telephone with
a distraught parishioner. Minister's Wife No. 23 described
a typical day in the parsonage:

Usually he is probably gone before they see
him in the morning. They see him at meals
maybe, except when he is on the telephone.
If he is on the telephone, we are through
eating and the kids have gone outdoors
again before he even starts his dinner.

Monday is the traditional day off for the minister.
But, as Respondent No. 6 said, "That's a joke. If you're
home, you're busy." For a real day off, the minister
must disconnect the phone or leave town.

Vacations seem to be as much a myth as days off.
Because of his commitment to service, especially in times
of personal crisis, the minister must cancel family plans
so that he's available to church members who need his
guidance. Minister's Wife No. 6 reported two such
instances:

Oh, you know, you're supposed to have a month
off every year but, if you plan something, you
can count on somebody dying. One time we
stayed home because "pop" was dying and he
didn't die for five years! Another time we had rented a cabin and, just as we were ready to leave, we made the mistake of answering the phone: someone had died.

The mobility so characteristic of a religious career is another disruptive factor in family life. For one thing, it is a physically taxing undertaking for everyone. More important, it means taking the children out of school and the corresponding traumas of their adjustment to a new community. Minister's Wife No. 19 said that one of her children became physically ill each time they moved. A very colorful conversationalist, she said of moving:

It's absolutely ghastly. If I just didn't have to go through the chore of moving. And the kids get all shook up, you know. We counted up: we've been married eleven years and we've moved sixteen times. Let's face it--that's icky!

Church members look to the minister's home as a model of Christian family life. Their expectancies extend to every family member: they even anthropomorphize the minister's family dog, expecting it to be "Christian" too. Minister's Wife No. 22 reported:

We had to have him put to sleep because he was too much of a puppy. Some children were afraid of him and he used to tear around the neighborhood so he wasn't a very well-mannered dog. And pastor's dogs really have to be well-mannered.

Respondent No. 10 said that having a female dog presented such a problem that they finally had her "fixed."

Paradoxically, while church members demand so much
of the couple's time away from the home, they are sometimes critical of the minister and his wife as parents. One such woman, who came to see the minister at his home during the day, was aghast at the fact that he didn't know where his sons were at the moment. Parishioners observe the children's behavior in the same way as they do their parents' and are quick to bring any deviations to the attention of the minister. Minister's Wife No. No. 6 told of such an occurrence:

Our son is a football player and, depending on what he does, over the weekend, my husband hears about it on Sunday morning. Once he was thrown out of a game and somebody said to my husband, "You should be ashamed—a minister's son being thrown out of the game!"

The children are expected to be in church every time the doors are open and, as Respondent No. 22 said, "Everyone has their eyes open to see what the minister's little boy is doing." Minister's Wife No. 24 had no complaints about church members' expecting too much of her children; she perceived a different problem:

Since my children are so young, I think that, if anything, the only problem is that they do get an awfully lot of attention. You know, "Isn't she cute?" and I think too much of that is not good.

29 Reported by Respondent No. 11.
The Children

As noted in the previous section, the behavior of the minister's children is expected to be as exemplary as that of their parents. This makes their moral training especially troublesome to the minister and his wife because, as Respondent No. 5 suggested, the children may develop a feeling that they are playing to an audience:

It isn't always easy to bring up your children with the idea that, if it's right, it's right and if it's wrong, it's wrong. It isn't because you're a pastor's son that you shouldn't do it.

Church attendance of ministers' children is not always voluntary. They have to go because their father and the church members expect that they will. These children, who may be labeled "PKs" (Preacher's Kids) by their schoolmates, sometimes attempt to reject this categorization by exhibiting loud and rebellious behavior in the classroom. Several respondents expressed the fear that their children were growing up to be "other-" rather than "inner-directed" because of their fathers' profession.30

One wonders if the children themselves feel the

30The inner-directed individual is more resilient than the other-directed type "... whose conformity rests not so much on the incorporation of adult authority as on sensitive attention to the expectations of contemporaries." David Riesman, Faces in the Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 6.
pressure of church members' expectations or if these are only unfounded observations of the parents who, because of their own relationships with church members, may suffer from a form of "pastoral paranoia." No children were interviewed in this study but many of the respondents had grown up in the parsonage and told how they felt about being a minister's daughter. Minister's Wife No. 15 recalled her childhood, citing problems of the parent and the child:

You were always expected to set the sample and be the one they could look up to. I think parents put a lot of pressure on their children to be examples. I know a lot of it comes from church members but I think the pastor feels the weight of this and makes it even harder for them. I know my father did.

Parents in the church point to the minister's children and encourage their children to emulate their behavior. This can be a real handicap for the minister's child. Respondent No. 14 said her daughters felt that they didn't get any dates because they were "the minister's kids."

Respondent No. 29 felt this was a definite factor in the attitude of her children's friends. She mentioned the following incident:

Our eleven-year-old had heard from another little friend: "I know this girl likes you pretty well but, being you're a minister's daughter, you can't do everything."

If it is true that the minister's child suffers a stigma
among children of church members, perhaps he should seek friendships outside the church. When this was suggested to ministers' wives, they responded that this only leads to different problems with the church members: namely, they feel it's inappropriate for the minister's children to socialize outside the church membership. Even within the church, jealousies sometimes arise about the minister's children's choice of friends. Minister's Wife No. 11 commented:

They like to cultivate their own friendships and sometimes this can create jealousy because the parents feel that they favor one family more than another. That is something you have to be careful of when you're a pastor.

When the minister's wife takes an active part in church work, she too is frequently absent from the home. She can share in his work, but the children are usually excluded. One mother (No. 10) seemed guilt-ridden about her own practices in this regard. She was afraid it was not good for her children:

I'm afraid that I have been more willing to leave my children with sitters when they were younger and take an active part. And this has an effect where the children feel they can get away with murder with a sitter.

Most men's workday does not include the opportunity for very much really personal communication. The minister, on the other hand, finds most of his duties
involve primary contacts with church members. His pastoral calls bring him face to face with human problems every day so he may not feel the need for companionship in the home, a need which might help him to be a better father. Minister's Wife No. 7 said she didn't realize the extent of this problem until her children were grown. In the interview she talked freely about it:

During their teen age it is very hard on them. The older children have stated very emphatically that they missed very much the parental companionship their friends had with their parents.

The experiences of a minister's child must lead him to certain conclusions about the religious profession. Much of the behavior he observes must seem an act presented for the benefit of church members. Though he is by no means indoctrinated against the ministry, surely he can sense negative attitudes in his parents. An example of such a blatantly negative attitude is the response of Minister's Wife No. 9 when asked how she would react to her son's decision to enter the ministry:

Right at this time I think I would turn him away from it as much as I could because you have to take too much. And I don't even have half the problems some of them have. If I did, I don't know how I'd take it.

Even very young children develop attitudes about their father's career. Minister's Wife No. 15, the mother of three pre-schoolers, thought they had already begun to
resent it. "When we start out to go somewhere," she said, "they complain, 'another 'ole meeting tonight?'" The same respondent felt that her brothers and sisters had left the church because of their experiences as minister's children. Suggesting that such experiences have a lasting effect, she mentioned the problems of her sister in a parental role:

My older sister especially was very bitter and then she married a minister, which she never should have done, because she couldn't fit the pattern as a pastor's daughter. Now she keeps running to the psychiatrist with her own youngster. I'm a strong believer in psychiatrists but I feel a lot of the problem is right back in being a minister's daughter, when she thought she had to conform and couldn't.

Discussing the child's perception of his father's occupation, Bruno Bettelheim contends that it assures personal meaning for the child

... only as it acquires direct bearing on the child's immediate welfare—whether as a source of livelihood, as the cause of the parents absence from home, or as a feature which makes the parent's image more awesome or more powerful.31

With reference to Bettelheim's findings, then, the occupation of the clergyman must have particular meaning for his child. The ministerial occupation qualifies under all three conditions:

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(1) The minister's child is keenly aware of the family's source of income. Respondent No. 5 said that her brothers had left the church and she attributed this to their awareness of economic problems in the parsonage: "I think they were just fed up with being so poor--kind of handouts, you know."

(2) As noted earlier in this chapter, the child is aware that his father's frequent absence from the home is a result of his occupation.

(3) Finally, if any child would feel that his father's occupation had an awesome aspect of the supernatural about it, it would be the minister's child.

32See Chapter VII infra for a discussion of this aspect of the minister's child's socialization.
CHAPTER VII

MONEY

Most men, who have spent years preparing for their profession, can expect to live comfortably, enjoy a few luxuries and provide for a secure retirement. The professional man of the church is an exception.

The "man of God" is drawn to his profession for reasons other than economic ones, but his wife soon discovers that the cost of living is the same for a pastor's family as for others; and keeping the budget in the black is a big job.

Sources of Strain

Though the established minister in a large church may find his salary sufficient for his needs, most of the ministers' wives in this study reported that salaries are inadequate. Their discussions of economic problems indicate three sources of financial strain peculiar to the minister's family.

First, there is the necessity for the minister to maintain the standard of living enjoyed by his congregation. Church members' sensibilities are offended if he
does not at least appear to share their socio-economic class. Two reasons are offered for their feelings:

(1) If the community senses that the pastor is struggling to make ends meet, it reflects on the church members as unfair employers. At times parishioners are generous and benevolent but, even when they are not, they wish to be perceived as such by the community.

(2) The minister is a respected figure to whom the church member goes for guidance and counsel. They would lose face if they sought such services from an individual who did not belong to a "respectable" socio-economic class.

These pressures force the minister to attempt to lead a middle-class life on a lower-class income. The dilemma is illustrated in this statement made by Minister's Wife No. 15:

In most cases pastors are underpaid in comparison to other members of the church, yet the pastor is expected to be on the level--in his everyday living--with others in the church. They don't want to have to look down on their pastor. They want to be on the same level as him materially speaking. And he is expected to help those who are down and out as much as any other member of the church. I don't think people realize, when they're making three or four thousand dollars more than we are, what they expect of the pastor.

A second source of strain, briefly mentioned in the previous comment, is the pastor's responsibility to help church members who are experiencing financial problems.
In accordance with the Christian ethic and as an example to other church members, the pastor must offer what help he can. Respondent No. 27, commenting on what she would do differently if she were to start again her career as a minister's wife, made this statement:

Oh, I imagine it would be mostly bills we'd try to do differently because a minister's life often involves helping other people and, that is, financially too. A lot of times we've been called on to help someone when we've been pretty close ourselves. If we had budgeted differently or something, we might have been able to have helped some of them better and still not have hurt our own budget.

Entertainment is the third source of strain for the pastor's budget. The church members expect the pastor's family to entertain often and, though most ministers' wives said that they enjoyed entertaining, they felt their finances didn't allow it. The following statements made by Ministers' Wives Nos. 19 and 25 typify their feelings about entertaining:

I don't think it's because I don't like to entertain because, when I do decide to have a party and have it, I have a wonderful time. It's just deciding now where am I going to get the capital for the food?

Most of all it's a matter of money because it does take extra money to feed people and most of our entertaining is impromptu. People who drop in and people on their way somewhere--I always have extra people at the table.

Respondent No. 15, when asked what courses would be helpful for a minister's wife replied, "Well, she should learn how
Sources of Income

In a small church where pastoral responsibilities are not great enough to require the pastor's full-time attention, he may be employed in the community. Two of the women interviewed in this study reported that their husbands worked full-time (one for a saw mill and the other in a logging firm).

The minister's wife herself may be employed in the community, but this is unusual, and the range of occupations considered "respectable" enough for a minister's wife is small. Two of the women worked as substitute teachers and one served as girls' counselor in the local high school. Minister's Wife No. 6 illuminated the parishioners' feelings about her seeking employment outside the church when she told of this situation:

Once, when I was trying to find a job for someone, I found one in a library and she didn't have the qualifications but I did. So I decided to work half days, which really discommodulated some of the parishioners.

In Montana the pattern, regardless of religious denomination, is for the church to provide a home for the minister. This practice makes his income hard to assess and has at least one real advantage for the pastor: he doesn't have to pay Montana property taxes! It also
means that he doesn't have to spend weeks searching for a house to rent in each new location. One minister's wife thought that, when the church provided a home, the members felt more of a stake in it and were more aware of the financial needs of the family. She reported the following happy situation:

Once they /the women of the church/ came over to help prepare tea for a reception. I was late so they put the pot on to heat and the stove didn't heat up fast enough for them. So in sixty days I had a new stove--that was wonderful!

Preacher's discounts also ease the strain on the pastor's budget. Many department stores have such discounts, usually ten per cent. In one case, a woman said her hairdresser gave her a discount. Often doctors and dentists do not charge ministers' families.

Church members remember the minister and his family with financial gifts on Christmas and other holidays. Contributions of goods and money are common and when the family has a real crisis, they can usually count on their parishioners. Minister's Wife No. 20, who had nine children, was especially grateful for this practice:

We are given food all the time. Our locker was kept pretty well full through the winter with meat. We had lots of financial gifts at Christmas, say with a check in each card, you see and lots of times--one huge hospital bill that we had was paid by a collection taken up by the parishioners.

The optimal arrangement for the pastor is to marry
a woman with some money of her own. During one interview in a home in a new suburban area, the author was puzzled by the well-appointed home and the style of living of the minister's family: it seemed out of proportion to the size of his church and the income level of the church members. When asked about the adequacy of her husband's salary, his wife replied that she wouldn't want this to be "public information" but she had a sizable sum of money from an inheritance. Another woman reported that the family had been forced to rely on her parents for financial help when, in her words, "the Lord didn't provide."

"They Own You"

Most ministers' wives feel their husbands are underpaid and harbor some strong feelings about economic inequities.

The status-income dilemma faced by workers in low status occupations, such as janitors and other manual laborers, who earn comparatively high salaries is a common one in American society. The minister experiences the opposite problem. His education and the nature of his work qualify him for high status, but his salary does not. Minister's Wife No. 25 rationalized the problem in this way:
Of course, we don't live up to the standards of other people we knew in college—with our education. But, being Christian about it, I guess we're better off than some other people.

Despite the several advantages to living in a parsonage or home provided by the church, pointed out earlier in this chapter, there are some distinct disadvantages. The attitudes of the church members towards the parsonage may cause the pastor's family to feel more like visitors than occupants. The parishioners who contribute the money for the upkeep of the house can become very possessive about "their" house and, as Respondent No. 7 commented, the visits of these members are like house inspection:

Your home, for example, goes with the job, so to speak. At least in ours it does: the rectory is provided. In some cases, not so much in our church as in others, they are furnished. Parishioners are very generous at times. Organizations tend to be very generous at times but there is a price for it— they own you.

Almost all of the interviewees demonstrated some resentment towards church members who made them feel as if they were on welfare. Minister's Wife No. 7 said, "They give things with the idea, 'Isn't this good of us?"

When the church members provide the home for the pastor's family, they feel a financial stake in the condition of the home. This attitude is impressed upon the family as reported by Minister's Wife No. 4:
They really don't mean anything by it, I'm sure, but they are a little bit possessive. They'll look things over and say, "That wall really needs a paint job," you know, and that sort of thing and "Where did that crack in the ceiling come from? I wonder who caused that?" You feel kind of funny having them talk about your home that way.

Parishioners who feel that they own the parsonage treat the pastor's family as sociological strangers just passing through: they come and go as they please and this further limits family privacy. One woman referred to her home as "the Grand Central Station" of the neighborhood. The impossibility of finding time for personal pursuits when there are constant interruptions is illustrated in this account by Minister's Wife No. 19:

She \textit{the minister's wife} is somehow expected to give up her time when anyone wants anything. It's just your time is their time--even though you're not on salary. I used to feel it when we lived in the old parsonage right next to the church. In fact, it had gotten to the point that, when the doorbell rang, I thought I'd just about had it. When you're answering the doorbell fifteen, twenty times a day, you get to feeling that way.

This respondent's feelings about "not being on salary" were echoed by others. Many ministers' wives felt that they were being taken advantage of when church members expected them to perform duties for which others would be paid. Minister's Wife No. 9 mentioned this twice in the course of the interview: "I give more advice on wedding
etiquette than the consultant at the local department store and I don't get paid for it." Later, she said, "I had to direct the choir for seven months and, of course, they didn't pay me like they do the choir director."

Church members know that the minister is dependent on them financially and are in a position to use this to their own advantage. Minister's Wife No. 15 said that she had sensed this as she grew up in the parsonage:

It was just like, "If you do what we want you to do and we like you, why we'll take care of you. And if we don't, it's just too bad." I know that there was so much of that with my parents--always so poor.

The idea that church members expect the pastor to be "hard-up" and realize that his salary is inadequate is a possibility suggested by many incidents. The following situation, reported by Minister's Wife No. 19, dramatizes the idea and points out some of her feelings about the people she serves:

I had just had my two little ones--eighteen months apart--and I did not get to church because I had no one to stay with them. I had no place to put them. I was just swamped to be truthful. I couldn't go. And I thought well, when this is over ... well, this is just part of being a mother. This is my job now and when the day comes, I will get there. I always pray at home anyway but I didn't get to church and I didn't go to any of the meetings or any of this sort of thing. And then it came back to me that one parishioner decided to take up a collection because I didn't go to church because I didn't have anything to
wear. This absolutely stopped me. This coming from a seemingly Christian woman. It just stopped me because I thought, if the day ever came when I didn't have anything to wear to church, I quit. Because, as far as I'm concerned, I would go in my jeans if I didn't have a skirt. The idea is that you go because God wants you there. It's not what you have on. As long as your body is covered, you are all right. This stopped me. It really did. I just sort of went "uhhhh," just gasped. Really, she was being very kind. She really was because her heart went out to me. "Oh, that poor woman, she has all those little kids and they haven't got enough money. Oh, can't we take up a collection and buy her a dress?" This is what she was going to do but I let this woman know that all was well. It was just a matter of the children growing up a little.

As noted earlier in this chapter, parishioners occasionally send gifts of money to the minister and his family. The fact that the donors are sometimes those least able to give puts a real burden on the receiver. Respondent No. 29 said that learning to receive graciously is something every minister's wife must learn:

I can remember one instance of a blind lady and every Easter and Christmas she would give an envelope of five or six dollars for our family to go out to dinner. I would so much rather that she had kept it and probably purchased something she needed very much for herself or her home. What we often did was to put that money in the radio fund because she did hear our services on the radio.

Children can certainly become sensitive to family financial predicaments and their reactions are unpredictable. The following two incidents, related by Respondents
No. 23 and No. 5, illustrate the different attitudes:

Perhaps I can show you the attitude of the children by telling you that one time when our younger girl was five years old, she said her prayers in the evening and she said, "Please God, make me poor when I grow up." I was struck by that but I didn't say anything right then. Later on I said, "Janie, why did you ask God to make you poor when you grow up?" "Why so I can live like we do." So, the thing was that she felt that we had something exceptionally nice because we were poor.

I feel that's one reason why none of my brothers went into the ministry and for a long time had nothing to do with the church. I think they were just fed up with being so poor--kind of handouts, you know, and yet my father was better educated than anyone around.

Different socialization in the family probably accounts for these strikingly different attitudes.

Summary

The strains of entertaining, helping the poor, and living up to middle-class standards on a lower-class income exhaust the resources of the pastor's family. The minister's wife finds that she must rely on gifts from church members and sometimes her own parents to help keep the books in the black. She resents the economic situation, especially in light of her husband's lengthy and expensive education and the hours they both spend in church work.

From her point of view the attitudes of the church members towards her home and spending are unrealistic.
Dealing with the parishioners in these matters is difficult for her.

In a society which values highly the virtues of economic independence, she finds herself in a position of dependency. Even though traditionally financial matters are a private affair, the minister's wife must live with the fact that everyone knows just how much her husband earns and, probably, how it is spent.

Many ministers' wives report that there is a trend to provide the pastor with a fixed income, regardless of the size or economic nature of the church membership. Also, some denominations now provide housing allowances so that the pastor may rent or buy a home according to his family's needs and the length of his pastorate. Both these departures from tradition are welcomed by the minister's wife. Her desire for changes in the pastor's economic situation is typified in this statement made by Respondent No. 25: "I'd rather they'd just give you a living wage and let you budget it like anyone else."
CHAPTER VIII
SOCIAL ISOLATION

Church services, counseling sessions, pastoral visits, meetings—these things fill the life of a minister's wife. She has many social contacts through her activities in the church and community and entertaining in the home. A casual observer might well think she would never want for companionship. The fact is, however, that the minister's wife is, in a very real sense, a social isolate. Nearly all the respondents in this study mentioned the problem of social isolation. Some typical comments are:

You have a lot of friends and no friends.33

For someone who is used to having close women friends, it's a lonely role really.34

I think basically the main problem of being a pastor's wife is loneliness.35

This chapter will discuss the nature of the minister's wife's social relationships and reasons for the

33Minister's Wife No. 17.
34Minister's Wife No. 15.
35Minister's Wife No. 23.
loneliness she experiences.

Situational Factors

Two of the factors which influence the minister's wife's social relationships can be labeled "situational." They are:

(1) The transiency required by her husband's profession.

(2) Her own background.

In rural Montana the length of the average pastorate is two or three years. About the time the minister and the congregation have established a working agreement as to their mutual expectations, he leaves for another church. When ministers have a longer time to develop friendships, they can overcome some of the initial barriers. One of the ministers' wives in this study had been in the same location for eleven years and, as a result, said she was not as keenly aware of social isolation.

The minister and his wife are always newcomers. None of the respondents in this study was indigenous to the area she served. Small communities are often united by kinship so the minister and his family are automatically excluded. Respondent No. 4 said that she thought church members simply forgot that she and her husband had no family ties in Montana:
We were visiting one family last week and she said, "You should come over oftener. We don't always think of asking you." She said, "We have our family and our friends and we just don't think about it." I think it's sometimes true that you are just left out. At first sometimes, I used to just sit down and cry because I felt so lonesome.

Typically the minister and his wife have urban backgrounds and rural ways are alien to them. Though they try to familiarize themselves with rural life, their backgrounds remain a factor in social isolation. Minister's Wife No. 2 talked about her husband's attempts to overcome the differences:

When we first came here last summer, Bob went working in the fields with the different men to learn exactly what their work is and just what conditions they work under—to feel a part of them. But there is no kidding ourselves. We can't be one of them. We just are not.

In a rural community the minister and his wife are among the few who have been educated beyond high school. There are no cultural activities in the community and, as Respondent No. 24 said, "You can only survive on books and records for so long." If the minister's wife has a college education, it is difficult for her to find people who share her interests. Minister's Wife No. 1 said the difference in interests was hard to accept:

It took me a long time to get used to this. You know, everybody talks about babies and canning. Some of these things are just the
topics of conversation and it took me a long time to appreciate the fact that this is the central part of most of these women's lives.

**Friendships in the Church**

Ministers' wives do not develop close relationships with members of the church because:

1. It causes jealousies within the church.
2. There is a temptation to say things that could be harmful to her husband's ministry.
3. Church members may discourage friendships because they view her stereotypically.

When a minister's wife has close friends within the church, other women may be slighted. Many of the respondents in this study commented on the jealousies caused in these cases. Minister's Wife No. 4 recommended that such friendships be avoided:

*A minister is really everybody's pastor in the church and although you feel the need for personal friends—we do here—it would be a mistake to find them among your parishioners. It would hurt people because you are sort of picking and choosing and I don't think you have that privilege.*

Church members are critical of those who seem to be close to the pastor and his wife and inhibit such friendships with their own means of social control. Minister's Wife No. 4 reported:
It's a strange thing but people seem to be a little bit concerned that, if they are too friendly with you, others will say, "Well, see, they are just trying to get in good with the minister."

Through her husband's counseling the minister's wife has access to personal information about the parishioners. She realizes the confidential nature of the information and is hesitant to establish close friendships with those who might be interested. Respondent No. 21 told how this factor influences her relationships with church members:

You shouldn't get real close to just a couple people. It just isn't wise: there's the temptation to unload personal opinions and gossip a little, and the pastor and his wife do have to be careful about that.

A third factor which inhibits friendships between the congregation and the minister and his wife is that church members think of them in a religious context. Without wanting to, the minister's wife makes people uncomfortable in social situations. The minister's wife finds she is not accepted as "one of the girls" in an informal group because the girls are afraid she will be shocked by their behavior. Minister's Wife No. 1 commented on the way people behave in her presence:

A pastor's wife is treated as if it were necessary to protect her from being contaminated by everyday life. I have noticed that if people are talking about something to be heard only by
worldly people, they will change the subject. Or, if you are visiting a woman and her husband enters the house swearing as men around here seem to do, the woman will stiffen up and the husband will apologize profusely.

The friendships of a minister's wife are one-way affairs because church members are disappointed when she reveals her own problems. Respondent No. 23 commented on her friendships:

I have very good friends and I know all their problems but I can't go the other way and I've tried. It's not that I want to appear spiritually perfect. This is not my motivation for not speaking but, rather, I have seen their eyes when I have.

Sometimes the minister and his wife are ostracized because church members feel they would disapprove of certain behavior. Respondent No. 23 said she and her husband were rarely asked to a party because "people are sure that we will dampen a party even though they would be the first to admit we are good company." Minister's Wife No. 6 added, "You have to know when to leave discreetly so they can have their fun. Sometimes you know you're spoiling the party."

One minister's wife consciously maintained a degree of social distance between herself and the parishioners. Respondent No. 11 said:

There is danger when they call you by your first names for children to become disrespectful and there is also a danger of them forgetting that you are the pastor and his wife.
She is one of the few who are, for some reason, committed to upholding the stereotype. Most ministers' wives suggested that they would be very happy if church members would forget they were "the pastor's wife."

**Friendships Outside the Church**

Because of the limitations inherent in relationships within the church, ministers' wives look outside the church for friendships with people of different denominations, other professional people and other ministers' wives.

Respondent No. 26 said:

*I have a much easier, freer friendship with my neighbors, who are of another denomination, than I would with a parishioner. I have never had a real close friendship with any parishioner I can think of.*

Most ministers' wives find this true—that it is easier to be accepted by people they do not serve in the ministry. However, Respondent No. 22 said people of other denominations were "very careful and tread lightly in the area of religion because of me." Many respondents reported that their most enjoyable friendships were with Roman Catholics who, because of the tradition of the celibate priesthood, have no conception of a "minister's wife." Respondent No. 23 told about being invited to a Catholic neighbor's party:

*She said, "I hope you won't mind being the only Protestants." I said, "For goodness sakes No,*
we would love to come." First party we had been invited to in a year and a half--by a bunch of Catholics. And so we went and everybody drank beer and we drank Cokes and nobody got excited. Our own parishioners would never do that but this group of Catholics were not about to be distressed by the presence of a Lutheran pastor and, whether we were going to approve of their drinking or not, could not matter to them. We had a wonderful time.

A doctor or lawyer in a small town may share with the minister and his wife the cultural isolation which their professional roles foster. The minister's family and the doctor's family readily develop close friendships because of similarities in their backgrounds. They are usually from urban areas and, of course, are better educated than most of the community. Another reason for these friendships is that both couples have access to personal information about the townspeople and realize the obligation to keep it confidential. Minister's Wife No. 18 said:

We have been fortunate because we have a doctor friend and his wife who live here and we have been very close to them. In fact, the doctor was the physician here at the time we were married so, in a sense, the confidences have been between us and the doctor and his wife. It works both ways because there are few professional people in a small community.

When there are several churches in the community, ministers' wives often establish close friendships with each other. These women share the same life and can talk about it without shocking each other. Respondent No. 4 said, "When you meet another minister's wife who has the
same situation, you feel 'Now I can really let my hair down.' These women have in common a unique perspective which might not be accepted by the church members. They can talk freely about life in the church and encourage each other to cope with it. Minister's Wife No. 13 talked about the nature of her conversations with other ministers' wives:

We kind of relax after a service and tell some funny thing that happened. I mean, we see it from a different viewpoint than maybe someone else would and we get a big laugh out of it. Or a problem, we can discuss and help each other.

With others in her position the minister's wife can really relax in ways that are impossible with church members. Respondent No. 12 said that she didn't feel self-conscious talking to other ministers' wives:

I can freely say what comes into my mind but, when I'm talking to a parishioner, I feel that I might be misunderstood. If I say anything bad about anyone—a thing that might be taken the wrong way.

Minister's Wife No. 23 said that, before moving to her present location, she had cherished the friendships she had developed with other ministers' wives. She was disappointed when, in the new community, she was not accepted by them:

I have had them over for picnics. I have had them for coffee and I have had success in every other social relationships that I have attempted. But I have not gotten to first base with them.
She explained that the reason she had not been accepted was a status problem:

Ours is one of the larger churches here and the other wives are older than I am and they resent it when a younger pastor is in a larger church. This was a revelation to me.

Ministers' wives develop friendships with each other because they can relax and enjoy themselves. Occasionally they encounter a minister's wife who only wants to complain about her problems. Respondent No. 8 reported her feelings about such women:

I can really gripe about these pastors' wives who think they're the only ones who have any problems. Some of them think they are martyrs and I have a good friend who has done this. I think perhaps it's because she's not basically happy with herself--not basically happy with her husband's profession.

Ministers' wives discourage friendships with these women because they must play the role of counselor and this defeats the purpose of such friendships, which is to provide an outlet for self-expression.

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36"... because Protestant churches are typically class-oriented, the pastor of an upper-class church enjoys a community status quite different from that of the minister of a lower-class church." W. Seward Salisbury, Religion in American Culture (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1964), p. 277.
CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings of the Study

The minister's wife occupies a stereotyped role which has ramifications for nearly every aspect of her life. The stereotype prescribes that she be discreet in her behavior and have a vital commitment to her husband's work. The ascribed status that she receives upon marrying a minister is that of an assistant pastor. Like her husband, she is a servant of the congregation and must be at their beck and call at all times.

The minister's wife represents the community's ideals of virtue, orderliness, and Christian motherhood and she is constantly reminded that she serves as an exemplar to the community. Church members expect her to be free of spiritual problems and immune to materialistic and competitive elements of society. So that she can fulfill their expectations, they protect her from profane and worldly things and treat her categorically rather than personally.

The self derives from social interaction and since the minister's wife's interaction is restrained by the
prescriptions of the stereotype, she suffers from a role-self imbalance. She has a responsibility to conform to expectations and develop a self-concept which is compatible with them because her behavior affects her husband's ministry. She is inclined to be religiously inner-directed but must be other-directed to the extent that she is sensitive to parishioners' cues for her behavior. The minister's wife wishes to secularize her role but church members do not allow this.

Older ministers' wives report less difficulty in maintaining a viability of self than do younger women. Two reasons can be offered for this.

(1) The older minister's wife, whose children are grown, can devote more time to church work. She does not face the conflicting demands between home and church experienced by a young mother.

(2) The woman with long experience in the role has learned to communicate her own role definition to the congregation and to develop a self-concept which is compatible with her role. Or, perhaps she has accepted the community's definition of her role and incorporated the generalized other.37

37"It is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behavior of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, i.e., that the community exercises control over the conduct of its
One of the greatest indignities suffered by the minister and his family is that their income and budget, normally private matters, are open to the scrutiny of others. The tyrannical demands of the congregation that the minister live up to middle-class standards on a lower-class income typify what happens when the sacred and secular come together in society. Their problems are the problems of accommodating these two aspects of life in the United States.

In one way the minister and his wife are like miners or millhands in a company-owned town. They share the lack of privacy and self-determination that results from living in a company-owned house. Employees who have a sense of having "sold out" to the company feel the same bitterness as the minister's wife, who said of the church members, "They own you." Such paternalistic situations breed dissatisfaction and cynicism because the individuals in them, whether ministers or miners, cannot achieve independence.

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individual members; for it is in this form that the social process or community enters as a determining factor into the individual's thinking. In abstract thought the individual takes the attitude of the generalized other toward himself, without reference to its expression in any particular other individuals; and in concrete thought he takes that attitude in so far as it is expressed in the attitudes toward his behavior of other individuals with whom he is involved in the given social situation or act." Mead, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.
In *Men and Their Work*, Everett C. Hughes says that many occupations include an aspect of "guilty knowledge":

The lawyer, the policeman, the physician, the newspaper reporter, the scientist, the diplomat, the scholar, the private secretary, all of them must have license to get—and, in some degree, to keep secret—some order of guilty or at least potentially embarrassing and dangerous knowledge.\(^38\)

The minister's wife too carries the burden of guilty knowledge. She must, of course, keep such information confidential because she is in a position to do damage to people's reputations and, consequently, to her husband's ministry. She cannot give in to the human tendency to gossip. Her self-restraint in these matters causes her to be self-conscious and guarded in social relationships.

Hughes continues: "One of the major professional deviations of mind, a form of guilty knowledge, is the objective and relative attitude . . . of the professional person.\(^39\) Because of this attitude, the minister's wife evaluates things differently from the parishioners. While maintaining a front of concern and interest in a parishioner's problem, she may personally think it trivial or even humorous. However, she expresses these feelings only when confiding in other professional people who share her


\(^{39}\)Ibid., p. 83.
objective and relative attitude.

The minister's wife experiences role conflict or difficulty in conforming to expectations because:

(1) Expectations are not clearly defined.
(2) Expectations vary from church to church.
(3) Expectations may not coincide with her own definition of the role and she lacks a group of role-sharers in the work environment to help define which expectations are legitimate.

To control such conflicts the minister's wife may either reject the religious role, thereby jeopardizing her husband's ministry, or use her family as justification for neglecting what the congregation perceives as her responsibility in the church. In doing the latter, she appeals to what one sociologist calls the hierarchy of role expectations: "It is an approved technique for avoiding sanctions by asserting that an equally high or higher claim prevented the individual from fulfilling his obligation." 40

When she uses her family responsibilities as insulation from elusive and unacceptable demands, the minister's wife is really manipulating the parishioners. Attempts at manipulating social relationships are probably made by

40 Jackson Toby, "Some Variables in Role Conflict Analysis," Social Forces, XXX, No. 3 (March, 1952), 324.
people in other occupations who find their total role obligations over-demanding. The mobility of professional people in America subjects them to role conflict because of variation in local expectations. Much more systematically collected data is needed if we are to understand social manipulation as a means of making work tolerable.

Ideal types are useful tools of analysis in the social sciences. They do not describe the particular behavior of any one person but they represent a continuum along which an individual might be placed. Data from this study indicate a tentative typology of ministers' wives:

(1) The Assistant Pastor

This type is a real partner in the ministry. Like Minister's Wife No. 10, she may have "set out to marry a minister" in order to fulfill her own religious commitment. She most frequently appears in fundamental churches and feels that she too is "called by God" to the ministry. The Assistant Pastor is a leader and intensely involved in church activities. She enjoys the authority of the role and sees that "they do not go ahead with anything unless they check with me first."\(^{11}\) For her, the role is self-enhancing rather than threatening. Because of her complete involvement in the church, the Assistant

\[^{11}\text{Minister's Wife No. 11.}\]
Pastor is not likely to sense loneliness or social isolation.

(2) **The Supporter**

The Supporter participates through her husband rather than on her own initiative in church activities. Her major contribution is in the home, providing a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere for the minister. She is more a help-mate than a partner and attends meetings and services but does not assume leadership in the church. This type manages to cope with the role and does not have particular difficulty maintaining her self-identity.

(3) **The Repudiator**

This type rejects the role of the minister's wife. She married the man and not the job and may have discouraged her husband from entering the ministry. She participates only reluctantly in the ministry and is keenly aware of criticism. Her response to queries from church members is, "Ask my husband, he's the one called to be pastor."\(^4^2\) The Repudiator finds it especially painful to live up to the congregation's expectations and feels depersonalized by the role. She resents being treated categorically and, for her, loneliness is a real problem.

\(^4^2\)Minister's Wife No. 5.
Incidental Findings

It is a fairly common experience in social research to obtain information about society and social relationships which is outside the original scope of the study. Merton terms this the serendipity component of research, "... the discovery, by chance or sagacity, of valid results which were not sought for."\(^{43}\)

Since many of the ministers' wives in this study serve rural communities, the data carry implications for the field of rural sociology. Some tentative observations are as follows:

The rural community is characterized by a large number of primary relationships made possible by the low density of population and the fact that everyone farms or ranches or is employed in a related occupation. Kinship is an important aspect of social cohesion since farming is a family business and land is inherited and retained by family members. The resultant reluctance to accept newcomers is documented by the ministers' wives of this study.

It might also be postulated that these same factors are the reasons for conservative attitudes and resistance to social change. Because the composition of the

population is homogeneous and stable, traditional ideas are not challenged by people with different backgrounds, occupations, and life styles.

A distinct relationship between the church program and the occupation of the rural church members is revealed by the respondents in this study. The church activities are as influenced by seasonal changes as is the agricultural work of the congregation. Also, because of the lack of organized cultural and social activities in rural communities, the church assumes a proportionately greater degree of importance in the life of the members. The church meetings provide an opportunity for socializing which draws even nonmembers.

Many things about the relationship between secular and religious elements of society are suggested by the data of this study. The relationship between the minister and the congregation is riddled with inconsistencies.

Church members want a qualified, intelligent, and responsive man in the pulpit, yet they make the ministry a ludicrously unattractive profession. They want a personable, down-to-earth man as pastor, but they treat him as an occupational type rather than an individual. Their prescriptions for his behavior make it impossible for him to be a real friend who can have a one-to-one relationship
with them. He becomes a special victim of the disparity between norms and reality because he is expected to be a perfect embodiment of the norms.

The congregation expects the minister to be pastor, preacher, and administrator and to be educationally prepared for these responsibilities. Salisbury reports:

The usual standard for the major denominations is four years of undergraduate study, preferably with a degree in the Liberal Arts, followed by three to four years of postgraduate work—usually including a year of internship—in a theological school.\(^4^4\)

At the conclusion of his education, the minister begins a career which offers no economic security. From that time on, he exhausts himself physically and spiritually for a salary figure "... below which the congregation cannot go and maintain its conviction, however illusory, that it is a humane institution..."\(^4^5\)

The minister is forced to take an ingratiating role in his negotiations with his employers. He is in the uncomfortable position of asking for funds to meet the needs of his family and church while trying to maintain the impression of immunity from materialism.\(^4^6\) Church members

\(^{4^4}\)Salisbury, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 214.

\(^{4^5}\)Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 38.

\(^{4^6}\)The author is reminded of a cartoon depicting the congregation listening to a sermon while rain pours through holes in the roof of the church. The minister is
must certainly be aware of the economic injustices of
the religious profession and it might be suggested that
they uphold these as a source of justification for their
own choice of secular lives.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study did not attempt to explain the reasons
for the divergent attitudes and behavior of ministers'
wives. The data do suggest, however, a relationship be­
tween (a) the degree of a minister's wife's religious
commitment and (b) her reported satisfaction with her hus­
band's career and participation in it. With a large sample
and an instrument for measuring religious commitment, and
attitudes toward the ministry, the relationship between
these variables could be clarified. Social psychologists
might study personality traits of the minister's wife to
determine their effect on her role definition. It would
also be interesting to know if attitudes of ministers'
wives are more consistent within a specific denomination.

Access to information of a personal nature and ex­
cessive demands on time are patterns common to the lives
of those involved in the professions of medicine and reli­
gion. An investigation of the consequences of the medical

using an umbrella to keep his notes dry and one well-dressed
parishioner nudges another and says, "What do you want to
bet he's going to hit us up for a new roof?"
career on family life and the attitudes and adjustments of the doctor's wife would yield interesting comparative data.

The teacher in a rural community shares with the minister's wife prescriptions for her behavior outside the work environment. Her personal habits are of interest to the students and the parents and, if ostentatious enough, eventually to the school board. A comparison of the ways the teacher's and the minister's wife's relationships are influenced by community prescriptions and the ways in which they protect themselves from excessive demands is feasible.

Data from this study indicate several areas of research for the sociology of the family. The influence of the father's occupation on the child could be illuminated by a study of socialization processes in the minister's family and the consequent religious attitudes of the minister's children in adult life. The tendency for ministers' children to become ministers or marry within the ministry might be investigated. It would also be interesting to determine if the belief that the minister's children go through a stage of rebellion in young adulthood can be substantiated.

Finally, ministers' wives express a need for
professional preparation for their role. The kinds of inadequacies they report in meeting the demands of church responsibilities might be surveyed to suggest a specific curriculum for ministers' wives in seminaries and Bible schools. Perhaps such a program would provide the educational background and inservice training that would help fulfill the minister's wife's wish to adjust to a role she now survives through sheer perseverance.
APPENDIX

The ministers' wives in this study were affiliated with fifteen different religious denominations. Twelve were members of fundamental churches such as Assembly of God and United Pentecostal. Eight belonged to liberal churches such as Episcopal and Congregational. Eleven of the respondents were affiliated with less easily classified churches such as Lutheran and Methodist.

The age distribution of the respondents was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
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<td>36-40</td>
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<td>41-45</td>
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<td>51-55</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>56 and over</td>
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The following is a sample of the kinds of questions used in the interviews:

How does being a minister's wife fit in with your aspirations for yourself as you were growing up?

Do you feel your husband's pastoral income is adequate for the type of life you feel you should live in a town of this size?
What do you do in terms of pastoral activities?

Do you take a leading role in church activities?

What involvement do you have in community activities? Do you belong to any clubs or associations outside the church?

Do people come to you for counseling when they have problems of some kind? What kind of problems?

Do you think that there should be special schools, institutes, or even seminaries for pastors' wives to prepare them or assist them in their role as pastor's wife? What kinds of training would be helpful?

Looking back on your experience as a minister's wife, what mistakes did you make as you went along? How could they have been avoided?

Who are your close friends? What kinds of people do you associate with informally?

What is the greatest advantage of being a minister's wife? What are the disadvantages?

If your daughter were to marry a minister, how would you advise her?

Two interview texts are included in this Appendix.

In the first interview, conducted by Mr. Benjamin Wright, the respondent (No. 11) is in her late thirties, the mother of two children, and lives in a small Northwestern Montana community where her husband is the pastor of a fundamental church.

The respondent in the second interview (No. 6), conducted by the author, is in her early forties, the mother of three children. Her husband is the pastor of
a liberal church in an urban area of Eastern Montana.
Interview with Minister's Wife No. 11

Interviewer: Are you employed now? (No.) Have you been employed at any time during your husband's ministry? (No.) He had been pastoring had he for a period of time before you were married or . . . (Evangelistic work.) In Evangelistic work. Do you think of having your own particular career line for yourself?

Respondent: No, I feel that I have my hands full as a pastor's wife and helping him with the work and raising my two boys.

Interviewer: How does this fit in with the aspirations you had for yourself as you were growing up?

Respondent: Well, I'm happy. I'm very satisfied and very happy.

Interviewer: What aspirations do you have for your husband?

Respondent: Well, anything that he wants is all right with me. That's the way I've felt. I don't feel that I need to push him or anything. (No, but don't you have an ideal? Sometimes don't you think if he was just in such and such a situation wouldn't that be ideal for us?) I don't know, I guess I've never too much thought about it. I've never had a desire as far as wealth is concerned. I've never had a desire even when I was a child, I don't know why, but I just always--I remember I used to make remarks that I wished
I would never be wealthy and why I said that I don't know, but that was the desire of my heart to never be wealthy. Of course, I see advantages now, with a little more finances but it has never been uppermost in my mind at any times.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel that your husband's pastoral income here, now I'm speaking of his pastoral income only, not his income from outside sources. Do you feel that that is adequate for the type of life that you feel you should live in a town of this size?

**Respondent:** No, I don't feel it is. (There is still something to be desired insofar as making the salary adequate?) Well the demands, social demands for dress and everything, it wouldn't be enough just in pastoring what we get.

**Interviewer:** I wonder if you'd describe for me what you do in terms of pastoral activities.

**Respondent:** Well more or less we do things together, except, of course, his preaching. That's on his own, I mean, but visitation we almost entirely do it together and we plan things together and just about every phase of the work we do together and so in the meetings and all. I attend all of the meetings, always. I feel that it's my responsibility and at the present time I'm the youth leader here in our church and I play an active part in the women's
group that we have, we call it the Women's Missionary Council, and Missionettes. All of the branches of the church I am connected with and am active in. I teach Sunday School class.

**Interviewer:** Is your role quite often a leading role in these activities, and not the directly pastoral activities?

**Respondent:** What do you mean a leading role? (Are you often an officer or pretty much, sometimes you have to just move in and sort of run the organization?) Well, I do. I have refused to be an officer except in the youth group now, but I am an advisor in all of our meetings and usually they do not go ahead with anything unless they check with me first. If for some reason someone resigns their office it's usually my responsibility to take over and see that it's carried on.

**Interviewer:** What involvement do you have in terms of your husband's non-pastoral activities, you might say his community activities as such?

**Respondent:** Well, I'm not too much as far as the community is concerned because I feel that most of my time is taken up with our church work and the time I can spare I like to have with our boys and to be home when they come home from school and so forth to be there.

**Interviewer:** Do you yourself belong to any associations,
clubs or anything else outside of the church?

Respondent: No, I really don’t.

Interviewer: Do you have any part in community affairs generally?

Respondent: Well it would be a small part. If I’m asked to do anything I would be willing to do it, but anything that involves a lot of time I just don’t feel that I have that much time. We go to the different community functions in the town and all, but I have no responsibility in it.

Interviewer: Do people occasionally come to you for counseling when they have a problem of some kind? Now this probably would refer more to adult, female members of the congregation than anybody else.

Respondent: Well, they do. We haven’t had as much of it here in this church as we have at other times, but I have had in our pastoral work different ones come to me and I have had to work with them.

Interviewer: At times when people come to you is it a sort of intermediate step in going to your husband. They tell you something hoping that you’ll pass it on to your husband, or are they afraid to approach him with a certain problem and they need a little encouragement to go ahead and talk to him?

Respondent: Well, I think that sometimes they trust that we will discuss it and be of help to them together. Many
times especially, I had an experience in our last pastorate where this woman definitely was on the verge of a nervous breakdown and she desired my help entirely and I prayed with her and I gave her special attention and worked with her every day and for a good share of the day until she seemingly got over this time that she had in her life.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that there should be special schools, institutes or even seminaries for pastors' wives, to prepare them or to assist them in their role as pastor's wife?

**Respondent:** Very definitely. It would help us an awful lot. (Having had the additional schooling yourself, I mean, you're in a better position to see.) Yes, but we aren't, we still are not prepared for the things that a pastor's wife puts up with, if she's active at all with her husband.

**Interviewer:** Do you think it would be desirable to have additional institutes that pastors' wives could attend, oh, at some convenient place for a few weeks or something like that?

**Respondent:** I think it would be very helpful myself.

**Interviewer:** Somehow or other unless you've been raised completely in a pastor's family you don't know quite what you're going to . . .
Respondent: No, that's true. There are many things that you are not prepared for and especially when you start in your pastoral work. It's all very new to you and you make so many mistakes that possibly could be avoided.

Interviewer: On that subject, I'm very interested in that particular subject. Looking back on it now in terms of the experience that you have, what mistakes did you make as you went along that could have been avoided?

Respondent: Well, sometimes you don't think a problem through or what someone has told you, and, of course, I'm of that nature anyhow to speak sometimes without thinking things through. That's a fault that I endeavor to correct. (Aren't we all.) Well, my husband isn't like that. He doesn't speak before he thinks. He usually thinks first and so that is something that one could be a little more prepared for. I can't think just offhand, but I've always endeavored to keep confidence. That's one thing we have been very careful, but many times that is something that is not guarded like it should be and it causes quite a little unhappiness and trouble just in plain words.

Interviewer: Do you ever feel that you're being used as a sounding board by parishioners who want to get a reaction sometimes, official reaction?

Respondent: Oh definitely so, but you learn through years of experience and, of course, you don't always, some people
are quite smooth in their ways and you don't realize it until it's too late, but generally after a few years' experience you learn to be on your guard.

Interviewer: A minute ago when we were talking about your role in the various activities in the church--How can you avoid having to take the limelight in the activities? How do you avoid having to play a leading role in some of them?  
Respondent: Well I merely have told them here that there were people capable of doing the job and so I was willing to help them in any way and I help in their planning and anything else and in the work that there is to be done, but as far as the office itself is concerned I refuse to take it unless, as in our youth group now, because we have the younger set, I was asked to be the youth leader. I took it because there was a need, there was no one to fill it. Otherwise if there are capable men and women to fill the job I refuse to take it.

Interviewer: And with responsibility goes the possibility that if something goes wrong you're going to be the scapegoat. How can you avoid that?
Respondent: Well you just learn to grin and bear it so to speak. Generally speaking the people are quite considerate and it's usually some of us working together and it isn't entirely my responsibility or my decision. It's the work of several of us together so we endeavor to work it out to the
Interviewer: How did your family feel in terms of your marrying a minister?
Respondent: Well my brother really was the only one that wasn't too favorable, my oldest brother, but that was because he has never been converted. Out East they don't realize the kind of life that you live here. They have an entirely different idea of, North Dakota is where we first went. They thought it was uncivilized you know, that you have Indians running around and so forth and so they thought that I was going to such an uncivilized country. As far as my marrying a minister they didn't object to that at all, the rest of them. In fact my mother and dad were happy.

Interviewer: If you had a daughter would you want her to be a minister's wife in terms of . . .
Respondent: Well, if she were happily married I'm sure that she wouldn't mind being a minister's wife. There are sacrifices to make, although I don't feel that, I mean I just take them as they come and I feel I have a happy home and I'm in the center of God's will and so I just am happy, that's all. I would never discourage my daughter if I had one in any way along that line.

Interviewer: Are there what you feel are possibly special compensations in terms of being a pastor's wife?
Respondent: Well, there are. Many times you have the satisfaction of being a help and of use to different ones in their hour of need. We get called out day or night and there are many times people that are in real anguish and upset and they need help desperately and if you're able to help them with the help of God there is a satisfaction there that nothing else will replace.

Interviewer: I understand that when the need is there you may even go calling yourself if your husband isn't available and so forth?

Respondent: Oh, yes, I have and especially if it's women, why many times he doesn't go at all. He just has me do the visiting alone and it depends upon the circumstances of course. But I enjoy people and I enjoy working with people so that may be a reason for it, I don't know. (There are some disadvantages that go along with that too.) Oh, there would be. Yes, there are. (Salary for one thing.)

Interviewer: How about if one of your boys decided to go into the ministry? How do you feel about that?

Respondent: I would encourage him if he really felt, but I would want him to be sure he had a call. (He'd have to feel a call.) That's right, the way we understand it and, in fact, I have endeavored to prepare my boys in different things, in our conversation and our everyday living, I have
endeavored to prepare them that if the Lord would ever want them in the ministry and call them, that they would have background and knowledge of the Bible, together with my husband we have taught them to learn the scriptures and all to help them in their spiritual walk.

Interviewer: How about the role of Caesar's wife? How does that apply to the minister's wife. She must be above fault, above any mortal taint and that sort of thing. Is that pretty true?

Respondent: Well, people many times expect that you be without fault, but I'm afraid I'm not one of those. I have many faults and I find that people more or less take you as yourself, if you're sincere and people can sense true sincerity and the mistakes you make, they overlook them many times if you do your best, for the most part. (I was just wondering how this role of Caesar's wife exists today, or whether--maybe it doesn't. Maybe this concept is gone.) Well, in your community, it depends upon your community many times and sometimes with individuals, but as a group I don't feel, at least not here, that they feel that way. (How about the boys? Do they have a role as Caesar's children?) Yes, more so. They have to be examples and much more is expected of them. Whether people realize that they expect more of them or not I don't know,
but there is quite a little expected of them and they don't really live a normal life as much as children do in many respects because of the ministry. We try to make it as normal as possible for them, but they, our children aren't perfect. They're just normal boys. We endeavor to have them be friendly with all the boys and girls in the church and in the community and so forth and be good examples in every way.

Interviewer: Are there things that the other children can do that they can't do that they feel pretty strongly about?  
Respondent: Well, there are at times, but the boys, themselves, do not feel that they have had to sacrifice too much along this line. We let them play in sports and different things like that. I suppose there will be things that arise as they grow older that will be a little more difficult possibly. (Socialization process becomes more--) Yes, but as yet it isn't, they don't feel that they have to give up anything. (So it's been more a feeling of yours and your husband's than it has been theirs so far,) I think so. We notice it more than they do. There is one thing though that I'm sure that we will have to put up with in a greater measure with our children as they grow up and that is, they like to cultivate their own friendships and sometimes that can create jealousy because the
parents feel that they favor the children of one family more than another and that is something that you have to be very careful of when you pastor.

Interviewer: That's a very real problem and that's something that hasn't come up before in these interviews.

Respondent: Well we didn't notice it when the children were smaller, but we are beginning now to notice it and it is a problem that is quite touchy to handle I think. (Yes, I imagine it would be.) I like to have the children have their own personality and their own likes and dislikes even among other people, other boys and girls and so I want them to be friendly with all, but I think that if they want to have a special friend that they should have a special friend, but I think that it's a problem that is working out fine here now. There was a little feeling there for a little bit, but it was explained as we talked with the parents and it's worked out.

Interviewer: What would you generally say are your relationships with the parishioners? Are you one of them, or are you definitely the pastor's wife or are you somewhere inbetween?

Respondent: Well, we try to be friendly with them all pretty much the same and their cares and their problems become ours and when they present them to us we try to
feel that it is our problem and we want to take it upon ourselves in any way that we can be of help just as if it were our own care and problem, burden, and I think the people sense that when we do, whether you do or not. We try to visit them regularly and we keep a record of these things because it's easy to visit one family more than the other and that could cause jealousy so we endeavor to be a part of them and yet we try not to show partiality.

Interviewer: Is there any change in the type of relationship that you maintain towards your parishioners now than when you were first married, in your husband's first pastorate?

Respondent: No, I think we have always tried to keep this same feeling in our, in every church that we've been in and working with the people we have tried to maintain this at all times.

Interviewer: One minister that I talked to used his concept of his role as all things to all men. To what extent is this true of the minister's wife?

Respondent: Well, if you're not careful, people will take advantage of you in that respect and they'll be calling you up for everything and they'll tell you what you should do without meaning to. They don't realize that they're taking all of your time. They many times forget that a pastor's wife has a family and a husband and a home to take
care of and that is why I do not take too much part in the
community affairs, because I feel as active as I am in the
church work I do not have that much time, as much as I
would like to and so when the people will call and ask me
to do these things I weigh it carefully before I accept,
because I feel if I accept then I must devote a good share
of my time to that thing.

**Interviewer:** Does it create a definite problem if you're
too near to the parishioners?

**Respondent:** Well, it can if you show partiality, but other­
wise we have always more or less been close to our people,
our regular people. (Heard it phrased once as being
friendly but not intimate.) Well, that's it, you have to
and here, in some of our churches, they have called us by
our first names, but they do not here and there is a danger
when they call you by your first name for children to be­
come disrespectful and it is also a danger of them forget­
ting that you are the pastor and wife, but it depends upon
the pastor and his wife just how this is done and it de­
pends upon the community and the church. (That would vary.)
From church to church and I think in a smaller church many
times you can. Like our former church, we worked with the
younger children so very much and so we kept their respect
and yet they did call us by our first names, but it's hard,
the larger the group it would be hard. (Actually a symbol
in a way. In some cases it's a symbol of status and in other cases a symbol of social distances. There might be a little of both.) That's right.

**Interviewer:** Have you found here or in previous pastorates that you've had that there is possibly some tendency toward a rather invidious comparison of you with the wife of the last pastor or the wives of other clergymen in town and that sort of thing?

**Respondent:** Well, there is at times by certain ones. They'll compare you with more, with the former pastor's wife, not necessarily the one that has just been ahead of you, but ones in the past regardless of who they were. They will at times.

**Interviewer:** People as you've already indicated rather expect you to be able to help them in almost anything and you're expected to be sort of a neighbor to all your parishioners too. If they're in trouble you're expected to show up somewhere along the line and help out a little bit and so forth. It terms of that how much help is available to you when you need help, from most individuals, from the parishioners?

**Respondent:** It depends, I think, upon the pastor's wife. Now are you speaking of in terms of coming in and doing my work if I was . . . (Well, if you were sick would someone
come in and help you, would someone bring in food, would your parishioners drop back into the old-fashioned pattern of neighboring?) Well, I think so. I am the type of person, though, that if I can at all manage to have my own work done, I do it and I think it's a fault of mine in a way, because people can sense that. But they are, they have always offered to help and if I've been in a place where I just couldn't do it or my husband why they have come in and helped and they do bring in food and have been quite considerate, I would say. (So neighboring isn't a completely lost art?) No, it isn't. (I'm glad to hear that because that's one of the things that means most to me is in the contemporary scene that I thought we were losing.)

Interviewer: To what extent does the system of gratuities still exist?

Respondent: That depends upon your community, I think. Now in our former church we were very well remembered on our birthdays, Christmas and throughout the year in that respect. More so than we are here. Our people are good to us, I don't mean that, but I think it depends upon your community. (Again I was wondering if that's a system that is passing out or ...) No, now I don't think so entirely. As I said I think it depends on your community to a great extent. I know the community where we were
formerly, I'm sure they are considerate in that manner of each pastor and his wife. In fact it took in the whole town. On my birthday, why the neighbor ladies would all come in, they'd bring in a big lunch. You'd have two or three birthday cakes and they would bring gifts and all and you would just have one big time together. Now this community they don't do that, but it's just what the community is accustomed to doing that way.

**Interviewer:** What things do you have or feel in common with other ministers' wives which may not be shared with members of the adult, female congregation?

**Respondent:** Well you're more free in your conversation. I mean as others would be among themselves, you talk about things that, now to pinpoint it, I can't offhand, but I know you do talk about things a little more freer when you're with another minister's wife because you feel that you can do that. It's something that you cannot express your feelings freely in front of your own people and you can do it with another minister's wife and if you have a problem you may feel more free to discuss it with her where you do not want to burden your own people with your cares and problems. Even sometimes they're little things but it helps to discuss them with someone else. As far as I'm concerned that's one thing that I miss about the ministry.
You cannot really have anyone that is a true friend so to speak within your group of people. At least you shouldn't.

Interviewer: How about your own mental health. You just brought this up. It's one of my questions. In terms of recreation, days off, having a confidant of some kind that you can go to when you have problems. What measures do you have to protect your own mental health?

Respondent: Well the ministry is very hard on you in that respect many times and you do get to the place many times where you feel you're going to break under the load and the cares and sometimes the schedule becomes very heavy and all, but if a person would, I know we haven't. We've talked about it. If you would take at least one day a week and just completely relax, do something entirely different it would help a great deal. We don't do it like we should and I know just a little vacation or anything is a great help and that is something, I think, that is neglected among the pastors and their wives to a great extent. (Have you been able to take regular vacations since you've been in your pastorates?) Well, we take two weeks every year, but you need more than that. You need a day off now and then or even a few days off if it's possible.

Interviewer: Are you able to find a confidant within the ministry of your church? (Yes.) Are there other people that you know that when you have problems and they're just
beginning to stack up a little bit too much you can talk to them and talk some of these things out?

Respondent: Yes we do. We have some that are very good friends of our that are in the ministry.

Interviewer: Do you feel that your husband's role as both husband and pastor has had a very definite effect of any kind on your marriage? If he were in some other occupation would your marriage in some ways be easier, more relaxed than it is when he's carrying people's cares around with him?

Respondent: Well, I don't think so. There may be times, upon occasion, where he is tense for a short time, but usually we have, as I mentioned before a happy home and we get along fine and there are no difficulties from that standpoint at all.

Interviewer: I think we've already mentioned this matter of social isolation, but what to you would be the ideal minister's wife? If you want to say yourself, that's fine, I won't feel that's an immodest answer.

Respondent: No, I don't feel I am. I strive to do the best I can but I think it... raising a family and all you're just limited in being an ideal pastor's wife as far as the community is concerned and your social activities there if you're going to be active in the church. (I mean your own
ideas of the ideal pastor's wife. Not some stylized figure over here that we put up the neon lights or anything like that. Your own idea of what the ideal pastor's wife is.) Well, I think one that will help her husband whenever he needs it and will work with him. One who is able to. Well, when she's called upon to be up in front of the congregation to be able to word herself and to conduct herself in the manner that a pastor's wife is expected to. That's something that I do not have the ability to do. The ability to get along with people. There will be those that always have problems whenever you see them and you have to be pleasant, I mean you should be and one that can be considerate, I mean, as you talk to these people to have them feel that their problem is the most important thing right at the moment, the ability to make them feel that way I think is necessary for the ideal pastor's wife at all times. I don't know offhand what else. There are many things that would be taken into consideration, of course.

**Interviewer:** What would be your advice to a young pastor's wife, now she's a sweet innocent little thing, she has just married a pastor and is going to have to move into a new community as pastor's wife. What would be your advice to her generally?

**Respondent:** I would tell her above all, always to keep the
confidence of the people when they come with their problems and cares. Not to grumble and complain about difficulties to your people and make them feel that you're dissatisfied with what they are doing for you because many times they think they're doing the best that they can do for you and usually that is the case. And then I think a pastor's wife should be very careful of her home, in keeping it tidy and the dishes taken care of and so forth. I think that's very important, at least I think it is, I don't know. Many opinions are formed many times when someone steps into the home and if it's cluttered and doesn't look presentable they form quite an opinion of the minister from that and I think she should always be neat in appearance and endeavor to get along with people.
Interview with Minister's Wife No. 6

Interviewer: How long have you been married?
Respondent: Twenty-three years.

Interviewer: How long have you been in this parish?
Respondent: Nearly three years.

Interviewer: How often have you moved?
Respondent: It would take a while to figure that out—many times. We were in California six years before we came here. Before that, we were in Arizona and back East. You see, if you're on a mission, you can be transferred at the bishop's request. It's not like some denominations where the people can vote you out—sometimes for unimportant reasons. But, when you're a rector, you won't be transferred unless you request it.

Interviewer: What effect has moving had on your children?
Respondent: I don't think it hurts when they're little. But, when they're in high school, it's too bad—especially if they're a senior. We only had one real problem and I think that was due to a teacher in the first grade. She called my son a baby and he is a very sensitive child.

Interviewer: Were you married before your husband became a minister?
Respondent: No, after.

Interviewer: Did you have any reservations about the
profession?

Respondent: Well, I have always been active in church work and I knew one minister's family since I was three years old. I saw the wife work herself into the grave but . . .

Interviewer: What kind of career aspirations did you, or do you, have for yourself?

Respondent: Well, I would like to get a degree in library science. I studied music before but once, when I was trying to find a job for someone, I found a job in a library and she didn't have the qualifications but I did. So I decided to go to work half days which really discombobulated some of the parishioners.

Interviewer: What kind of role do you play in the church?

Respondent: I'm a firm believer that the minister's wife shouldn't hold office. I just try to do what a normal member of the church should do. I've done everything from clean lavatories to pour the tea. I've taken care of the nursery school. I do all the secretarial work. (How about music?) Well, the training has been helpful but they take advantage of you. I had to direct the choir for seven months and, of course, they didn't pay me like they do the choir director. I'm kind of a fireman to the rescue. I substitute for the organist when he's not available. I
think some women resent it when the minister's wife steps in and runs things.

Interviewer: How much do you participate in your husband's pastoral activities such as calling?

Respondent: This is probably where I'm unsatisfactory. They probably don't think I do enough of it. There are a lot of shut-ins and elderly people who would like me to come for an afternoon but I just don't have time. I try to go with my husband sometimes to the hospital.

Interviewer: Do women of the parish use you for a sounding board sometimes before presenting ideas to your husband?

Respondent: They do that. It's a help to my husband because they often don't really have much to say.

Interviewer: Do they come to you for guidance?

Respondent: Yes, more now than when I was younger--I guess they thought of me then as a daughter. But they'll call up in the middle of the night and ask for him and I'll say, "He's in bed." So they'll say, "You do just as well." I don't like to do this since I'm not a psychologist but I just listen. That's all they really want. I listen to their problems with their husbands or an uncontrollable child. Often, when they see you after that, they won't speak to you because you know all their problems. Of course, they told them to you.

Interviewer: What kinds of expectations does the
congregation have of you?

Respondent: Some of them are unreasonable. It varies from place to place. Here, they're pretty lenient: they don't care if you wear lipstick or smoke, though I don't smoke. Once they came over to help prepare a tea and I was late so they put on the pot to boil and it didn't heat up fast enough for them. In sixty days I had a new stove. That was wonderful. I don't think they'd object if I wore a fur cape as long as they didn't think they paid for it. They look upon the house as their possession. They mention other ministers' wives who weren't good housekeepers. I don't know what they'll say about me when I'm gone. I don't know the people who were here before us but they talk about them a lot. I guess they were just normal people like we are. The last one was quite active in politics and the parishioners resented this. They didn't want the League of Women Voters meeting in their parlor. I don't think the minister and his wife should express their political preferences. It can cause problems and really hurt a minister. I was surprised at the last pastor's wife who was very active politically. I don't know what they'll say about me. I suppose they'll fall out of love with me pretty soon. What's that saying? The first year you're adored, the next year, you're criticized, the next year
you're ostracized. . . . I don't remember how it goes.

Interviewer: Does the congregation expect your children to be exemplary?

Respondent: Yes, just yesterday a woman with some things to carry into the hall. She wanted my husband to help but he was talking to someone—counseling—so she asked that the boys do it. He didn't know where they were and that really made her sore. Our son is a basketball player and, depending on how he does over the weekend, my husband hears about it on Sunday morning. Once he was thrown out of a game and somebody came right up to my husband and said, "You should be ashamed—a minister's son getting thrown out of the game." The kids take a lot of guff. I think they are a little defensive about it—especially the oldest son.

Interviewer: Can you ever manage to get a day off or a vacation?

Respondent: Oh, you know you're supposed to have a month off every year but, if you plan something, you can count on somebody dying. One time we stayed home because "Pop" was dying and he didn't die for five years. Another time we planned to go up to the lake for a weekend and the minister who was here before wanted to do the services for us and renew old friendships. Then some of the parishioners thought we should stay home and have a reception
for them. Well, I thought, "they know people here and they'd probably just as soon we weren't here," so we just went. Once, when we were in California, my husband had to take two weeks for the reserves and someone died so I wired him but he couldn't get off unless it was a death in the immediate family. So I arranged for another minister to take over and I baked the lady a cake and arranged for a babysitter so I could go see her. Another time, we rented a cabin in Maine and we made the mistake of answering the phone just as we were leaving. Someone had died. He was an atheist but his family was in the church. Well, my husband had another minister take care of it. We stopped by their house to offer our condolences to them as we left but they never forgave us. You know, it's expensive too. We figured out it cost $55 a day to take three kids on a vacation when they're little and that's eating crackers for lunch. We really can't afford it. Monday is traditionally the minister's day off but, as long as you're here, you're busy.

**Interviewer:** With all his responsibilities have you ever found that your husband doesn't have enough time for his family?

**Respondent:** Well when they were little, he thought it was my jurisdiction. He said he wasn't paid to be a babysitter.
But now that they're older, he makes a real effort to spend time with them—throw the football around and so on. He'd stay up all night and talk to them if they want to. If he's asked to talk somewhere and there's a basketball game, he'll go to the game. Of course, sometimes he can't. Sometimes there is a conflict with the profession.

Interviewer: If your daughter were to marry a minister, how would you advise her?

Respondent: Don't!

Interviewer: How would you advise a young minister's wife?

Respondent: I guess I'd say she has to be patient and love people. If you don't love people... And you can't get wounded over things like anonymous notes. (Anonymous notes?) Oh yes, they slip them under the door like, "You need a haircut," or "Your wife is too stuck up."

Interviewer: What activities do you participate in outside the church?

Respondent: Well, I really don't have time for much. I am in the mother's club of my daughter's sorority and I try to help out in the kids' activities like Boy Scouts. My husband belongs to Kiwanis. I really am too busy to enjoy clubs. I have some hobbies I'd like to spend more time at. I love to play the organ and the piano for my own enjoyment. I like to knit and do handwork and paint.
I'd love to just listen to records but the only time I have for that is when I'm polishing the hall.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about having close friends in the congregation?

**Respondent:** I generally think it's better not to. I've found one here. She wouldn't care if I came over in an old pair of slacks. I can go over there and just talk and enjoy it. The ministers' wives have a coffee hour once in a while and I go but they try to be intellectual and that bores me. I'd rather just relax.

**Interviewer:** Who do you and your husband associate with socially? When can you feel really comfortable?

**Respondent:** You have a lot of friends and no friends. You have to be friendly but aloof. They kind of put you on a pedestal. You can't be obvious about friendships.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever feel you're cramping the style of a party?

**Respondent:** Oh, you have to know when to leave discreetly so they can have their fun. Sometimes you know you are spoiling the party. You have to sense the crowd. Some don't mind if you have a glass of sherry. But some might find it objectionable and, if I think that's the case, I don't. But really you don't feel like socializing too much. You're so busy with church activities most of the time that, if you ever had a free evening, you'd like to
stay home and stare into space.

Interviewer: Do you think a minister's wife should have some kind of training?

Respondent: Yes, well, music is helpful. I think they should definitely have a course in church doctrine. People call up and expect you to know everything. This week somebody called me up to settle an argument. She was at a beauty parlor and she wanted to know something about Ruth. Luckily I have read the Book of Ruth many times. Comparative religion is another thing. They ask you about the differences with the Catholics on Communion and the Baptists on Baptism. These differences are pretty subtle. Oh, another thing these poor girls should know is how to cook and plan for large crowds and how to make a casserole stretch for ten when you've prepared it for four. Too, all about funeral and wedding etiquette. They're always asking. I think I do more work than the bridal consultant at the local department store and I don't get paid for it.
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