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Exploring the Relationship Between Work, Family and Religion Among Clergy Families

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN WORK, FAMILY AND RELIGION
AMONG CLERGY FAMILIES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

LENORE M. KNIGHT JOHNSON

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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For Aaron

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2006, guest writer Eileen Button shared her personal reflections on becoming a pastor's wife in *Newsweek's* "My Turn" column. She titled her contribution "Thou Shalt Not Turn Me Into a False Idol," an appeal that acknowledges how her husband's occupation comes with significant meaning and impacts her life in far more numerous and complex ways than his previous job as a banker. And indeed, as most pastors and clergy family members will attest, the nature of religious work – specifically the work of clergy in parish ministry – adds a challenging yet fascinating dimension to the issues contemporary families face in managing the competing demands of work and family.

It might seem odd that a column in a major, mainstream news magazine is devoted to a woman's thoughts on her spouse's work, but her reflection draws forth questions over a pastor's role in contemporary society and the impact ministry has on family life. What makes a pastor's work so significant that it can be described as a major life change and central aspect of one's identity? How are families brought into the church to the point that they, too, see a significant shift in experience and identity? How do these changes impact the already difficult feat working adults face in balancing career and family? These questions on the everyday lives of clergy families – rich in sociological significance – provide the foundation for this study.

Sociologists have long explored the blurred boundaries between public and private life (Blair-Loy 2005; Han and Moen 1999; Hochschild 1997; Nippert-Eng 1996; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter 2000), conceivably arguing that perhaps there is no distinction between the two. The wealth of analytical topics pointing to such claims include the relationship between work and family (Estes 2005; Grzywacz, Almeida and McDonald 2002; Milkie and Peltola 1999; Moen and Dempster-McClain 1987; Williams 2000;), the continued gendered division of labor in the home despite women's entry into the paid labor force (Hochschild 1989); caring as work (DeVault 1991; Miller 2005; Uttal 2002) and occupational fields demanding emotional labor (Bulan, Erickson and Wharton 1997; Hochschild 1983; Steinberg and Figart 1999; Wharton 1999). Sociologists continue to explore the blurred boundaries between public and private life in ways that are relevant to a multitude of occupational fields, and yet the work of pastors is noticeably absent from these discourses. Indeed, there is a significant body of literature on ministry as an occupation (Kuhne and Donaldson 1995; Lee and Iverson-Gilbert 2003; Mueller and McDuff 2002; Mueller and McDuff 2004; Nesbitt 1995) and its relationship to families (Blanton and Morris 1999; Finch 1983; Frame and Shehan 1994; Hartley 1978; Hartley and Taylor 1977), but thorough connections to the issues and challenges within contemporary family life are largely under-represented.

Drawing from two sociological subfields – the study of clergy within the sociology of religion and research on the integration of public and private life in the sociology of families – this study explores the relationship between work, family and religion among clergy families and addresses the need to consider contemporary family

life issues in the context of religious workers. By applying the extensive analyses around balancing work and family to the study of clergy, I delve more deeply into the complex stresses and rewarding components embedded in this line of work, which, in the eyes of clergy is a sacred calling. Further, I argue that bringing religion into the existing discourses on family – as a personal belief system, a voluntary spiritual and social organization as well as a place of work – sheds light on new and important questions in need of sociological investigation, particularly around the interplay between public and private life.

Research Questions and Objectives

Two central research questions comprise the foundation of this study. First, in what ways are public and private life intertwined in a religious context? I will explore the ways ongoing transformations in the nature of religious leadership and family life cannot be understood apart from each other, as change in one arena will necessarily lead to shifts in the other. The notion that home and family life is a refuge from work and that each realm is distinct from the other is far from accurate (Hochschild 1997; Nippert-Eng 1996; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter 2000). A principal goal of this study is to break down this presumed separation in a very particular context – vocational ministry – and show how work, family and religion are interdependent in numerous, important ways.

With my second and more precise research question, I examine how the interconnectedness of public and private life (specifically, work, family and religion) is reflected in the lives and experiences of clergy and their spouses. For several reasons, I view the study of clergy families as a representative area to explore these questions from

a sociological perspective. To begin, clergy and their spouses exist along highly blurred boundaries between public and private life. While most people face challenges in balancing paid work and family life, I suggest the integration of religion contributes significantly to the tensions, as the seemingly “private” realm of spirituality also constitutes work for one member of the family. Further, clergy spouses often face pressure to contribute to the ongoing operations of a church, adding further blurring of boundaries. Finally, and perhaps most powerfully, the sense of call clergy link to their work adds a significant dimension to the already complicated process of negotiating competing demands of everyday life such as work and parenting. For clergy, family and personal life are brought into the workplace, and likewise the workplace bleeds into the family in complex ways that represent another layer in the struggles of contemporary families seeking to manage multiple responsibilities.

The Interplay of Public and Private Life

Sociological research on the intersections between public and private life serves as a theoretical backdrop for this study. While home and family have long been considered refuges or retreats from the stress and demands of the workplace, scholars have effectively shown that this concept is far from accurate. Indeed, there remains a significant ideological separation between public and private life (Williams 2000), which Nippert-Eng describes as “the process through which we organize potentially realm-specific matters, people, objects, and aspects of the self into ‘home’ and ‘work,’ maintaining and changing these conceptualizations as needed and/or desired” (1996: 7).

Yet researchers have found in exploring the actual practices of contemporary families that these seemingly disparate spheres are deeply intertwined.

Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter's (2000) review of sociological research on work and family throughout the 1990s indicates a strong theme around the interplay between public and private life, notably the ways occupational stress negatively affects overall well-being outside of work. They write, "Job stressors have an impact on families when they cause some experience of stress within the individual, such as emotional distress, fatigue, a sense of conflict between work and family roles, or role overload" (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter 2000: 987). Overall, working adults today embrace numerous roles in life and negotiating the connections and conflicts between these roles is a continual, challenging process.

The relationship between home, family and work is perhaps the most significant example of interdependent spheres, with researchers taking different angles on the relationship. For instance, Hochschild (1997) suggests that home has become so demanding for contemporary families that work serves as the refuge where people feel rewarded and appreciated. Kiecolt (2003), on the other hand, argues that when a broader, longitudinal sample is taken into account, Hochschild's (1997) claims are less noticeable, and in fact shows that between 1973 and 1994, the percentage of people claiming work is more satisfying than home decreased, especially for women (2003: 33). While their perspectives differ over what realm is more satisfying – work or home – both Hochschild (1997) and Kiecolt (2003) agree that home and family have a profound impact on work life, just as work affects the daily life of a family.

These issues, often referred to as “work-life balance,” are especially strong for women. Examining the link between work and family among couples, Han and Moen note that men’s careers are not influenced by their wives work but women find their careers “tightly coupled with, and highly contingent upon their husbands’ careers” (Han and Moen 1999: 107). Women more often opt to reduce hours or follow a path that offers greater flexibility in order to manage the demands of home and work. In other words, in considering the process of “balance,” the pressure falls more heavily on women (Moen and Yu 2000), many who feel a definite tension between devotion to work and an emphasis on family (Blair-Loy 2005). For example, women who arrange part-time employment sense that colleagues question their commitment, and at the same time those who continue in the paid labor force face criticism for not prioritizing family. Thus, women are essentially in a no-win situation where balancing work and family is more about choosing one area on which to concentrate primary attention, since “dual-callings” go against cultural norms (Blair-Loy 2005).

The tension in this juggling act for women is related to shifts in women’s lives and broader societal changes, another example of the ways public social life bleeds into the home and private life. The breakdown of the single breadwinner model and a growth in dual-earner families allowed more women to enter the paid labor force but also lessened support for care work and domestic labor (Thistle 2006). These significant shifts in public life – namely the increased number of women entering the paid work force – in turn affect private life and the organization of labor in the home. Even among dual-earner couples with children where both parents work in the “productive” labor

market, women typically bear a much heavier burden of the “second shift,” or the unpaid, reproductive labor necessary to maintain the home and family (Hochschild 1989). Moreover, these important “caring” tasks are unpaid, and thus not considered legitimate, productive work (Daniels 1987). The feminist movement made great strides in integrating women in the paid labor force but the structure of home and family life changed little in terms of a gendered division of labor – what Hochschild (1989) deems a “stalled revolution” – in turn leading to new constraints and demands at home.

These practices and the resulting tensions are rooted in broader ideologies that reinforce the ways certain tasks, like domestic labor, are gendered. Unpaid, reproductive labor practices such as parenting (Miller 2005; Townsend 2002; Walzer 1998), meal planning and preparation (DeVault 1991) and arranging for childcare (Uttal 2002) are structured around particular understandings of gender. However, paid labor is also gendered, a reality that further illuminates the interplay between private and public life (Acker 1990; Han and Moen 1999). Acker critiques the concept of “the job” which assumes a neutral worker with no outside responsibilities or commitments and writes, “The closest the disembodied worker doing the abstract job comes to a real worker is the male worker whose life centers on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children” (1990: 149). Hochschild (2003) notes similar trends in discussing academia where career advancement largely depends on an unpaid worker at home to cover personal responsibilities. Prioritizing one’s job – as this ideal worker must do – means few commitments outside the workplace, a model that inherently excludes women due to the gendered nature of

reproductive labor. Thus, the influence of gender in structuring “private” family life is directly related to the way gender is embedded in “public” work life.

Alongside the stress adults face in the day to day process of managing conflicting responsibilities and schedules, a demanding job with long hours plays a significant role in lessening life quality among dual-career couples trying to maintain the professional responsibilities of two adults (Moen and Yu 2000). While dual-earner couples are increasingly the norm, it is clear that people – particularly women – feel pressure from competing demands and experience added stress as a result. Examining work hours for men and women in two-career families, Moen and Dempster-McClain (1987) note that half of mothers and two-thirds of fathers would prefer working fewer hours in order to concentrate more time on their spouse and children, a finding that is not surprising given the way work and family life are so intertwined.

In response to these challenges, some dual-earner couples avoid pursuing two high-powered careers and instead enact strategies of “scaling back” (Becker and Moen 1999) where one person – more often the wife – opts for a less demanding job as a way to lessen strain on the family. Along with limiting work hours (in turn sacrificing future professional advancement), some couples essentially “take turns” over whose career takes priority at different points in time. Additionally, couples shift their approach to work toward a “one-career, one-job” focus, where one person (again, more often women) finds a flexible position more for income than the challenge and satisfaction a career offers (Becker and Moen 1999). And in this process, caring becomes a commodity, something people buy and sell (Hochschild 2003), another way private life is increasingly

made public. Therefore, while these strategies offer a more balanced lifestyle, they illustrate the sometimes-unfortunate consequences stemming from the relationship between public and private life.

Finally, the interplay between public and private life is seen in the ways people contribute unpaid labor to support a spouse's career, another gendered practice that is historically (and disproportionately) taken on by women. Spouses of corporate managers contribute to the business by entertaining clients at home, providing a listening ear and thoughtful advice on business matters, serving as an unpaid secretary for work issues and managing household and family tasks that allow workers to focus primarily on the corporation. Such relationships are highly gendered as Kanter (1977) found these practices among corporate wives but did not see husbands of women managers enacting the same level of support, a trend noticeable in other examples of spousal contribution to careers (Finch 1983). Women more often provide this support out of social pressure and for economic benefit, but also because such arrangements seem "natural" in relation to the power structures in their marriages (Finch 1983). Thus, while the men in these studies are able to maintain the ideological separation between public and private life, the spillover between work, home and family greatly impacts the lives of women who see little division.

While these examples only scratch the surface of the deep and complex connections between public and private life, they effectively highlight some of the key issues contemporary families face as they manage multiple, often conflicting demands. Clergy families are not unique in the ways they, too, must negotiate time and schedules

around work and family responsibilities. But clergy families have an additional element that complicates these issues – the notion that vocational ministry is a sacred calling and a lifestyle that engages not just the worker, but her or his family, too. Thus, while the sociological discourse on families and the relationship between public and private life offers grounding for this study of clergy families, it is also important to consider work and family in the context of religion.

Religion, Work and Family

The various issues sociologists discuss around the relationship between work and family reflect the deep interdependence of public and private life, but lack an understanding of these dynamics in religious contexts. While there is an extensive body of literature focusing on the work lives of clergy, much of this research is outdated and fails to fully integrate the pressing issues facing contemporary families (Finch 1983; Hartley 1978; Hartley and Taylor 1977). For example, Finch (1983) includes career support among clergy spouses, but her analysis only considers clergy wives (not husbands) and assumes most pastors' spouses do not work outside the home. Early research addresses many similar, contemporary issues among clergy spouses such as the notion they are different or holier than “average” people, the effects of public visibility and a lack of formal training, but this research also assumes pastors are men and that wives necessarily contribute to the church as unpaid second employees (Hartley and Taylor 1977). Studies on the contributions spouses make toward clergy careers also assume pastors are men married to women (Blanton and Morris 1999).

Both the public, organizational level of religion and the private level – namely the ways people integrate beliefs into personal and family life – have changed drastically in recent years. And while scholars have traced these trends, there is a noticeable lack of research that draws together the issues contemporary families face with the significant shifts in religious communities. Here, I provide an overview of some major changes in both public and private religion that necessarily impact work and family life. In doing so, I argue for a more holistic perspective that draws from the sociology of families as a means for better understanding how broad, social changes and issues within private, family life are connected.

Examining the public side of religion, perhaps the most influential changes are denominational shifts toward more egalitarian leadership models. Among formal religious institutions, some Protestant Christian denominations have altered their stance on women's ordination, symbolically portraying where they stand in relation to gender and egalitarianism (Chaves 1997), and subsequently restructuring religious leadership (Charlton 2000; Nesbitt 1997; Wallace 1993). While clergywomen still do not benefit from the same level of opportunity as their male counterparts, they are gaining in public acceptance (Lummis and Nesbitt 2000) and will continue to do so as more women enter vocational ministry. The presence of women in religious leadership deconstructs and reshapes the image of a pastor from the traditionally gendered role, where the notion that pastors are "holy men" is no longer relevant (Carroll 1992). Beyond this, the increased numbers of women entering pastoral ministry has led to greater emphasis on issues of equal rights and social justice (Olson, Crawford and Guth 2000).

These changes, however, are not smooth and reflect the interaction between religion and social life. Even as churches become more receptive to women clergy and more women are included in church leadership positions, there remains tension over the challenge to longstanding assumptions and traditions rooted in historical religious beliefs (Lehman 1987). This is an ongoing trend in studies on the ties between religion and gender (Chaves 1997; Ingersoll 2003) where resistance to women clergy stems more from local congregations and particular cultural environments than broader, denominational policies (Sullins 2000). Women more often hold “lower status” positions in rural areas or serve as assistant pastors in large churches (Lummis and Nesbitt 2000), a trend some link to different styles of ministry between women and men (Finlay 1996) but is more accurately a reflection of limitations on women. Recognizing this trend, Lummis and Nesbitt (2000) point out the hidden practices of gender discrimination where the presence of women pastors causes denominational administrators and others to overlook a continued lack of opportunity in more prominent roles.

On a more “private” level, the gendered organization of family life has also changed. Among religious groups that favor a male breadwinner model where women concentrate on caring for children and the home, many are finding that this approach is no longer financially feasible and are restructuring family dynamics as a result (Ammerman 1987; Bartkowski 2001; Gallagher 2003). Evangelical couples make sense of their family situations in the context of broader ideals rooted in religious beliefs, and yet the actual family arrangements stem from the specific needs and constraints within

each family (Bartkowski 1999). For economic reasons or personal preferences, family life is shifting as more women enter the paid labor force.

There is no doubt these two trends are connected, and clergy families serve as an excellent example of the ways public and private religion are intertwined. Clergy families are tied to the church in interesting and complicated ways, and research has covered some specific topics related to this relationship. For example, clergywomen report that husbands are not always accommodating to the demands of their work, a result of feeling threatened by the heightened status vocational ministry imparts. In turn, a woman's position as a pastor does little to disrupt the gendered division of labor and authority in the home (Cody-Rydzewski 2007). Spouses are included as factors in studies on clergy job satisfaction, such as Hoge, Dyble and Polk's (1981) assessment, which suggests a positive correlation between spouse satisfaction and the personal fulfillment a pastor finds through work.

Research also shows how the structure of family life differentially influences the experiences of men and women clergy. Among pastors, married men earn more compared to single men but women do not notice the same correlation (Chang and Perl 1999). Similarly, Nesbitt (1995) argues that marriage and fatherhood have a positive effect on male pastors' careers where family serves as an asset to their work, but with just a few exceptions, marriage has no impact on the careers of clergywomen nor does motherhood. Consequently, men have access to positively influential resources that are not attainable by women (Nesbitt 1995). Along these lines, Perl (2002) finds that

children have little effect on male clergy's amount of visitation, while children limit the amount of home and hospital visits clergywomen conduct.

Spousal contributions to ministry work are further topics of interest. Lummis and Walmsley (1997) note the gender differences in clergy experiences around family, noting that clergy wives are much more likely than clergy husbands to prioritize their spouse's career in ministry over their own career. Considering more specific contributions and expanding on Hochschild's (1989) model of the "second shift," Blanton and Morris (1999) suggest that clergy wives work a third shift as well, incorporating the demands of their role in the church into the equation. Finally, the frequent need to relocate is shown to be particularly difficult for clergy wives who take on the majority of tasks in adapting the family into a new home and community while their spouse is preoccupied with a new job (Frame and Shehan 1994).

What is missing in these discourses is a means of comprehensively bridging the public and private realms of religious life alongside the issues contemporary families face in managing the competing demands of work, home and personal life. Doing so is the goal of this study, which seeks to connect two sociological subfields – discourses on families that recognize the interplay between public and private life and research on religion that acknowledges shifts in religious ideas, congregations and families. While research on religious authority, gender and families is indeed useful in better understanding broader religious shifts and specific clergy experiences, a qualitative focus that draws in the perspectives of both pastors and spouses on a multitude of issues adds depth and connections to family and work issues. Furthermore, the discourses on work-

family balance are missing a religious component, and adding in that element provides another interesting dimension to the study on boundaries between public and private life. Clergy families offer an excellent population to explore these questions because they so clearly represent the integration of work, family and religion.

Methodology

The research questions and goals of a study inform the methodology (Weiss 1994: 9) and for this reason I developed a qualitative approach to explore the questions at hand. While there are numerous studies examining the work life of pastors and the ways families are brought into the church, there is not, to my knowledge, an in-depth, qualitative study that explores the perspective of both clergy and spouses, particularly one that recognizes the complexities and challenges of contemporary family life. Further, most research focuses on a very specific question, while my goal is to gather a wide-spanning narrative from each participant and allow the main arguments in this project to grow organically from these stories. Therefore, I collected the data through in-depth interviews with married Protestant ministers and their husbands and wives, following an outline of questions but allowing the individual stories and experiences to emerge from the conversations. The result is a diverse set of narratives that highlights a wide-ranging span of reflections and stories.

Given my plan to embark on an open-ended, qualitative approach, I do not present a specific hypothesis to test but rather take the two broad research questions I discuss above as a starting point for exploring the everyday lives of pastors and spouses. In touting the uniqueness of a qualitative methodology, Howard Becker writes,

Something will vary and something else, dependent on what happens to the first thing, will undergo some change as well. The things that so vary will often influence each other in complicated ways, so that 'causality' is not really an appropriate way to talk about what we want to emphasize (1998: 41).

This study is less about finding certain factors that cause people to think and act in particular ways and more about the variations in everyday action and interaction that Becker (1998) references. I also believe a qualitative approach will draw forth important patterns in the lives of clergy families that cannot be fully realized through a survey or quantitative analysis. Studying work-family arrangements and their impact on mothers' time with children, Estes (2005) notices differences between quantitative and qualitative measures. Areas they found positively related to balancing work and family life – such as informal flex-time and supportive supervisors – are less apparent in the quantitative analysis, stressing the nuanced nature of these issues and the importance of studying them via multiple methods. Indeed, the literature on religion and families provides an excellent backdrop, and it is my hope to expand on many of the same issues but with further depth and detail.

I selected five denominations – two evangelical and three mainline – from which I drew my sample. The Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) and the Free Methodist Church (FMC) are the evangelical denominations and the mainline denominations include the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the United Church of Christ (UCC). My selection includes churches holding both traditionally conservative and progressive theologies, and is limited to congregations that are a part of organized denominations who ordain both women and men. This approach

resulted in a sample with enough difference to provide interesting contrasts, but at the same time enough similarity for effective comparison. Comparing clergy on far, opposing ends of a theological, social or political spectrum gives little sense of common, shared experience, but examining only highly progressive mainline Protestants also has methodological faults. I had these concerns in mind while considering my denominational selection.

I also decided to concentrate only on Protestant Christian clergy families for several reasons. Although Protestant denominations share many of the same broad tenets (for example, the bible as sacred text) they are, at the same time, highly theologically diverse and varied in organizational polity. Again, aiming to develop a sample that was neither too similar nor too disparate, I focused only on Protestant Christians but included evangelical and mainline churches. Although an interesting direction might include a comparison of Jewish rabbis or Muslim imams, the particular culture of Protestant churches provides a backdrop for my research questions that is specific to this faith tradition, specifically the long-standing perspectives on family structure among evangelicals. Finally, while Catholic clergy fit the broader focus on Christianity, a study on married pastors necessarily excludes this population.

The list of potential contacts came through the public listings of local churches available online from each of the five denominations. The Free Methodist Church is the smallest of the five denominations and therefore I included all of the clergy in northeastern Illinois in the list of contacts. I took a similar approach with the Evangelical Covenant Church, also a small denomination, though I eliminated several people with

whom I have prior acquaintance. The three mainline denominations are much larger in size so I drew a random sample from all churches within a fifty-mile radius of Chicago, and an additional group within a one hundred mile radius to include smaller communities.

I sent letters addressed to pastors at their respective churches describing the objectives of the study and asking, if they were married, to discuss with their spouse the possibility of participating. Emails or phone calls using contact information found through church websites followed the letters. After the initial letter and two follow-up attempts, I eliminated those pastors who did not respond. Some were eliminated immediately when they responded that they were not married. I also had several pastors in same sex relationships, a group that would be interesting to study but created a much wider scope of issues than I sought for this project. I noted as well that participation is voluntary and did not attempt to persuade people who said they were uninterested. Nevertheless, I provided additional clarification and reassurance for people who seemed intrigued but skeptical, with confidentiality and time commitment being the most common concerns.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Loyola University Chicago approved all research protocols, including the process of recruiting participants, interview questions and procedures for ensuring confidentiality. As part of the guidelines to protect the pastors and spouses involved in this study, all participants signed a consent form that fully disclosed the intentions and aims of the project. All names are replaced with pseudonyms and other potentially identifying information (such as locations of churches

and specific denominations) are either replaced with neutral terms or removed completely from quotes and the discussion.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the initial contacts I made and the final sample:

Table 1. Initial Contacts and Final Sample (Couples)

Denomination	Contacts	Participants	% Response
ECC	27	8	30%
FMC	13	1	8%
PCUSA	27	10	37%
UCC	17	2	8.5%
UMC	18	2	11%
Total	102	23	23%

I interviewed pastors and their spouses separately, thus my final data set includes 46 interviews each lasting between one and two hours. I conducted the interviews in locations suggested by the participants, mostly in churches and people's homes although some I met in restaurants or coffee shops. The interviews took place between September 2008 and April 2009.

As Table 1 reflects, the sample is heavily weighted toward the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) and the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), due to the number of churches in the area and the positive response to my inquiries. While I classify clergy and spouses as "evangelical" or "mainline" the majority come from two specific traditions and therefore I provide a brief overview of the organizational structure of each denomination as characteristics that might impact the findings.

The PCUSA is part of the Reformed tradition and claims roughly 2.1 million members, 10,000 congregations and 14,000 ordained, active clergy (Presbyterian Church

U.S.A. 2009). Within churches, the governing board is known as the “session” and is comprised of elected lay leaders and the congregation’s pastor. There is, however, a connection to the wider denomination as local churches come together to form regional governing bodies or “presbyteries,” which in turn combine to form larger, cooperative organizations known as “synods.” The General Assembly is the highest governing body and is comprised of all synods within the denomination, but despite this clear hierarchy, the polity is presbyterian, as the regional governing body (presbytery) ordains clergy and works alongside local churches in hiring pastors (Presbyterian Church U.S.A. 2009). Thus, in the PCUSA, pastors are accountable to the local church as well as a wider denominational structure with which they participate.

The Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) traces its roots to Swedish Lutheran immigrants who sought to build a church free from rigid doctrinal guidelines. As such, the ECC today remains firmly rooted in congregational polity, where individual members have freedom in theological interpretation and local churches control their own day-to-day operations, including the hiring of clergy. However, within the ECC there is a broader governing body, including regional conferences which assist in the hiring processes and a denomination-wide Annual Meeting, where leaders and lay delegates establish policies and clergy are ordained (Evangelical Covenant Church 2009). In other words, while the leadership leaves most control to the local congregation, there is a sense of shared identity within the ECC and accountability to the wider church.

Along with including both evangelicals and mainline Protestants for the sake of theological diversity, I considered several other criteria important for the sake of

comparison – the pastor’s gender, location of the church (urban, suburban or small town) and whether or not the couple had children. While it is not always possible to shape a data set with a random sample of contacts and a self-selecting group such as this, the participants who responded to my letters overall met my expectations. The exception is an unfortunately small number of couples from rural or small towns (two couples total). I did not turn anyone away who expressed interest in participating.

Because a comparative gender analysis is an important part of this study, I was pleased that the sample included generally even numbers of women and men clergy. The breakdown by gender as well as the work characteristics of all participants is shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Participant Gender and Work Characteristics (Individuals)

Denomination	Women Clergy	Men Clergy	Ministry Couples	Non-church workers
ECC	5	6	3	5
FMC	0	1	0	1
PCUSA	6	7	3	7
UCC	2	0	0	2
UMC	0	2	0	2
Total	13	16	6	17

An unintentional but nonetheless interesting aspect of the final sample is that six of the couples I interviewed were ministry couples where both partners identified as pastors or were employed in some form of ministry position at a church (for example, a children’s program director or music minister). By gender, the sample includes 16 men pastors and 13 women pastors, including the individuals who are in a ministry-type vocation at a church. Sixteen of the remaining 17 individuals are presently involved in some kind of

work outside the home, with the one exception being a teacher taking a break from work at the moment. Thus, all the couples in this study identify as two-career families – clearly a testament to the shifts in religious family life (Bartkowski 2001; Gallagher 2003) and one that is particularly significant for studying pastors given historically traditional assumptions that clergy spouses are unpaid, extra employees of the church.

I also hoped to draw a sample that included people with and without children and city, suburban and small town churches. Among the participants, fifteen are suburban, six are located within the city of Chicago and two are in small towns over 50 miles outside of the city. A denominational breakdown of the participants' locations is shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Participant Location (Couples)

Denomination	Urban	Suburban	Small Town
ECC	4	4	0
FMC	0	0	1
PCUSA	2	7	1
UCC	0	2	0
UMC	0	2	0
Total	6	15	2

I am also pleased with the relatively even divisions among different family structures, which are reflected in Table 4. At the time of the interviews, eight of the couples had young children living at home. Nine had adult children (this includes parents of college students still marginally living at home) and six couples did not have any children.

Table 4. Participant Family Structure (Couples)

Denomination	Parents of Young Children	Parents of Adult Children	Non-Parents
ECC	3	3	2
FMC	0	1	0
PCUSA	4	2	4
UCC	0	2	0
UMC	1	1	0
Total	8	9	6

This divided well for the purposes of my research, and allowed me to effectively incorporate these variations in family and stage in the life course into the analysis. I elected not to interview children for this study, instead concentrating only on pastors and their spouses, but consider a study on pastor's children a definite topic for future research.

One of the major shortfalls in my sample is the lack of diversity around both race and class. My sampling methods were such that identifying class position when developing the original list of contacts was extremely difficult. It is also important to note the educational status of clergy and its link to class position, at least among the pastors in this study. In my final sample, there were some differences in economic position among the families. Several people discussed financial strain, noting the typically sparing salaries of pastors while others openly shared how the spouse's salary compensated for this, putting the family in a very comfortable position. Despite these differences, the fact that clergy have all obtained advanced degrees in seminary as a requirement of their work levels the class distinctions.

Racial and ethnic diversity is perhaps the greatest shortfall in the final sample. The church websites I consulted to confirm contact information from my randomly selected lists occasionally included pictures of the pastor, and my original contacts included racial and ethnic diversity. The extent, however, is impossible to know since not all congregations provide websites and photos. The true limitations in these areas stem from the actual responses I received from my contacts, which included only white couples. In a future study, a snowball sampling method might offer a more diverse group of participants.

The Calling to Vocational Ministry

Religion serves as an important analytical category in this study, and its sacred nature is at the heart of the way work and family are intertwined. As such, it is important to explicate some key terms and ideas that are central to the population I study here. Religion is a broad term and includes many elements that transcend categories like “public” and “private.” In this study, it most often represents personal beliefs, an organization and a broader system of ideas and practices that tie clergy families and church members together under a common umbrella. On all of these levels – micro, meso and macro – religion can be both private and public, especially for the women and men who work in churches.

The primary term I use throughout this dissertation to identify the work of clergy is “vocational ministry.” The pastors and spouses with whom I spoke chose a variety of means for describing work as a pastor, many of which come out in the many quotes each chapter includes, but I chose vocational ministry for its connection to this idea or sense of

call. “Ministry” is a term pastors use liberally to describe their work specifically and the efforts of the church more generally. However, ministry alone does not encompass the efforts and tasks clergy do as employees of a church (for example, congregants do ministry on a volunteer basis). On the opposite end of the spectrum, “employee” loses sight of the spiritual and emotional side of clergy work and improperly groups pastors together with secular workers. As I show in this study, while clergy share many of the same struggles with others in the paid labor force, the element of religion adds another level to already complicated dynamics. Thus, vocational ministry as a term draws forth the multiple layers in the work of clergy, covering the “work” elements while not losing sight of the sacred calling pastors find central to their work and life.

The interest in vocational calling among sociologists can be traced back to Weber’s (2002 [1920]) classic analysis on the “elective affinity” between ascetic Protestantism and modern capitalism. Suggesting that two idea systems mutually support each other, Weber shows how the values of ascetic Protestantism – notably, hard work and its monetary rewards reflecting an extension of God’s favor – laid the groundwork for an environment in which modern capitalism could thrive. Rooted in beliefs about predestination, where only certain believers are elected toward salvation and God’s favor, workers saw their economic success as a sign that they were among the chosen.

Elected status and predestination aside, Weber’s historical study offers a glimpse at the powerful effect religion has on the workings of everyday life, particularly when connected to occupation. Central to Weber’s analysis is the way people understand work as a divine calling. Living into this calling means great sacrifice, but a powerful belief

system justifies the trade-off in the eyes of ascetic protestants. Applying this to contemporary clergy, while many of the theological ideas in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 2002 [1920]) are outdated, the sacred perspective on work serves as a useful model for analyzing pastors and their families. As I show in the chapters that follow, vocational ministry involves forfeiting self-interest for the sake of work and the church, which clergy families willingly assume as an extension of their beliefs in and commitment to this call. However, within the sacrifices clergy families also find rewards, another important piece of a vocational calling.

More recently, Bellah et al. (1985) distinguish between a job, career and a calling, the latter of which is defined by its moral significance to an individual's life and its commitment to a broader community – in the case of clergy, the church or wider denomination. Christopherson (1994) also separates a career and a call by emphasizing how careers are chosen, not imposed in the case of a calling. Further, he notes an inherent conflict between career-focused pursuits, like promotion to larger congregations and the selfless emphasis of a calling, which is “a symbol to which clergy develop a measure of commitment” (1994: 221-222) and a means for distancing pastoral work from other, more self-fulfilling careers. A calling, therefore, demands a willingness to pour significant time and energy into the church not because of a paycheck, but because religious beliefs motivate such commitment. Work is aimed at a larger, more significant purpose compared to secular jobs, and this sets a calling apart from other occupations.

The emotional side of religion is highly significant to the idea of a sacred calling. While a calling to vocational ministry may seem subjective from an outside perspective,

to the pastor who senses this call, it is very real. Indeed, a religious experience, however mystical or subjective, is real to the individual, as James writes, “[I]n the distinctly religious sphere of experience, many persons (how many we cannot tell) possess the objects of their beliefs, not in the form of mere conceptions which their intellect accepts as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended” (1982 [1902]: 64). In other words, an important component of the calling to ministry is a belief that something greater, more powerful leads a person toward certain tasks and a commitment to those beliefs necessarily means fulfilling that calling.

Therefore, we see some specific components of a calling to vocational ministry: the element of sacrifice, motivation from religious and emotional experience and a sense that work is for a larger purpose. However, despite the sacred, religious nature of vocational ministry, it is still very much a job where pastors are employees just like other, non-religious workers. Job satisfaction among clergy is not limited to the sense of call, as pastors’ interests mimic those of other professionals, and they are equally concerned over autonomy, job security and workplace support (McDuff and Mueller 2002). And although pastors use the language of a calling when discussing work in a general sense, when they go about searching for a new position, job characteristics play a greater role than faith-based motivators (Wildhagen, Mueller and Wang 2005). Therefore, we see clergy in an interesting social position, situated between a highly emotional motivating force and the reality of a job that involves schedules and tasks. The push and pull between these two sides of vocational ministry is largely what makes clergy families so interesting sociologically.

Overview and Key Findings

This study begins with a descriptive overview of vocational ministry and the ways in which clergy spouses and children are brought into the church. Beginning with the day-to-day work life of pastors, Chapter Two provides a snapshot of a pastor's schedule and responsibilities, examining both the difficulties and positive elements. The first section concentrates on the four areas pastors point to as most challenging or stressful about their work and I discuss how pastors deal with these stressors by concentrating on the sense of call. I argue that embracing the sacrifices in vocational ministry legitimizes the calling by turning a religious idea into a real, concrete aspect of everyday life. In the second part of the chapter, I consider the inherent rewards in fulfilling a calling – benefits that directly parallel the sacrifices clergy make and further legitimize the sacred calling. Overall, this chapter highlights that clergy face similar pressures as other workers, but the added element of religion heightens both the stresses and positive elements.

Chapter Three focuses on the way families are brought into the church. Using the image of church as the “family business,” I examine the three levels at which clergy spouses participate in congregational activities and provide support for the church – the partnership model, the layperson model and the independent model. The way people talk about family participation highlights the fact that, regardless of the model spouses exhibit, they are in some way integrated into the church and affected by their husband or wife's calling to vocational ministry. Further, I examine the social forces that influence a spouse's level of involvement and consider the role of expectations as well as gender and denominational differences. Finally, I consider the consequences of the family business

on clergy children, the ways they are integrated into the church and parental efforts to alleviate the stress and pressure on kids. I close with a model for making sense of clergy family life that shows how pastors and spouses “weave” together work and family responsibilities rather than trying to “balance” seemingly conflicting demands.

Chapters Two and Three serve as foundations for making sense of the interplay between public and private life for clergy families, the analytical focus of the remaining chapters. Chapter Four expands on the concept of weaving, closely examining the blurred boundaries between public and private life and focusing on four areas where this relationship is particularly complex. The home, family time, friendship and personal religious beliefs are aspects of private life for most people, but for clergy families the church and, more broadly, the calling to vocational ministry has a tremendous impact on these four realms, drawing them into public work life. And while pastors and spouses recognize the hidden benefits in vocational ministry, as outlined in Chapter Two, they are simultaneously constrained by powerful ideologies around work, family and religion, which overshadow the positive elements. Clergy families represent a model for effectively integrating competing responsibilities, but the ideological separation between public and private life adds a complicated layer to this process. I discuss the relationship between ideas and actual practice, explicating the tension it creates for clergy families as they manage the various lifestyle demands of vocational ministry.

Weaving work, family and religion has an impact beyond the lifestyle elements of schedules, family time, holidays and friendships. For pastors and spouses, vocational ministry is also woven into identity, bearing weight on one’s sense of self and how they

interact with people. In Chapter Five I concentrate on the construction of identity as another central way public and private life are intertwined for clergy families. Again, pastors and spouses recognize the way vocational ministry bleeds into highly personal realms of life, and identity is no exception. However, as I argue in Chapter Four, ideas play a powerful role in the way pastors and spouses deal with the connection between ministry and aspects of personal life. I explore the images of a “typical” pastor or clergy spouse as described by my participants and consider how they impact the ways people interact with congregants and those outside the church. While I highlight the pressure stemming from these images, I suggest that people are not passive victims of ideas and expectations, but rather actively engage these assumptions, challenging and reinforcing the images as a way of establishing an identity as pastor or clergy spouse.

While the bulk of this study concentrates on pastors and spouses, churches are a central player in the weaving of work, family and religion. In order to fully make sense of the intersection between public and private life for clergy families, it is important to unpack the diverse ways churches function as institutions. In Chapter Six, I examine how clergy and spouses discuss the church, specifically as an employer. In the same way pastors and spouses view ministry as something greater than a job, they also set the church apart from other places of work. In many instances, churches operate as alternative institutions, with policies and practices that challenge conventional workplace norms and when churches do not provide this level of care to pastors, clergy and spouses seem disappointed, highlighting the elevated view of the church. However, there is an ongoing tension for clergy families when it comes to defining the church as an institution

because, as much as pastors and spouses would like to interact with congregants on the same level as other members, they are indeed set apart. Again, we see the tension between ideas and actual practice, and how it plays into the difficulty clergy families face in managing multiple demands embedded in the calling to vocational ministry.

Thread throughout each chapter is a comparative analysis where I take into account certain factors like gender, denomination (divided between evangelical and mainline Protestants) and stage in the life course on the broader claims I make in relation to clergy families and the interplay of public and private life. The different experiences of parents versus non-parents are especially salient in comparing the stories of the people participating in this study. I also include several discussions on clergy couples and the ways this unique arrangement heightens many of the issues and challenges pastors face as they weave together work, family and religion.

In the final, concluding chapter, I draw together the lessons learned from this close examination of clergy families and the knowledge these particular examples can lend to broader sociological discourses on religion and family life. While clergy families may seem unique, they are in fact much like other contemporary families when it comes to the pressures and time constraints of managing work and family demands. I argue that clergy families offer a model that alleviates common stressors by integrating or “weaving” the multiples spheres of public and private life, rather than simply trying to “balance” conflicting responsibilities. However, I suggest that the ideological issues surrounding work, family, religion (including the church as an institution) and identity must be broken down in order for this model to be truly effective. I close with a

discussion on questions for future research that would expand this analysis further into considering multiple forms of family and additional models of ministry work.

A Note on Standpoint

Writing on her experience of existing in a variety of highly diverse roles – researcher, erotic dancer and wife – Ronai (1992) notes the inability to move between identities as if they are contained social positions. Each influences the other, even when one is not physically occupying a particular position. For example, Ronai’s dancing and research are intertwined as she analyzes and writes on the sociological significance of her work, but she also must play the part of dancer effectively in order to collect useful data. She states, “The various role conflicts and multiple levels of absorption discussed here cannot be described in terms of a place on a two-dimensional continuum marked researcher at one end and native at the other” (Ronai 1992: 122). Thus, research is not about becoming a “native,” fully engaged in the population of interest, nor is the researcher ever completely separate from the group.

Like any researcher, I, too, occupy a variety of roles that intersect with my work as a sociologist, and most significant to this study is the fact that I, too, am a clergy spouse. Especially as I conducted interviews, people often asked how I became interested in the topic of clergy families. My response to this question is convoluted and involves explaining my long-standing fascination with religion and more recent interests in the dynamics of family life and work. But while the primary role I employ here is sociologist, I cannot deny that the connection between these more general topics and the

specific issue of clergy families stems from my personal position of being married to a pastor.

It is true that I can never fully separate my identity as a clergy spouse from that of sociologist and researcher. My insider perspective necessarily provides insight into the issues clergy families may encounter and the various ways churches function. For example, questions and discussion around relationships with church members are informed by my own experiences of struggling with such boundaries. As such, my experience is thread throughout the construction and analysis of this study, helping turn my broad questions into a targeted project examining how clergy families fit in the discourses on contemporary family life. However, the quotes and examples I share in the chapters that follow are from the women and men with whom I discussed life as a clergy family. Many stories – both general and particular – are similar to my personal experience and many differ greatly, but I chose not to integrate my own examples and instead rely on the narratives gathered through the interviews.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EVERYDAY WORK OF A PASTOR

It's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. Honestly. And yet it is the most rewarding because God somehow is in the midst of that. So we are really blessed and I love the challenge. It is exhausting, but I'm here.

--Helen, evangelical pastor

It was a cool, fall morning when I sat down to talk to Helen in the living room of the home she shares with her husband, Roy – a charming house situated next door to the church Helen pastors. As we spoke, I was struck with how peaceful and relaxing their home felt given its proximity to Helen's place of work, especially as she divulges examples of the spiritual and emotional strain that accompanies her ministry. Unlike some pastors I interviewed, Helen did not have extremely painful or damaging experiences under her belt, but like every one of the people with whom I spoke for this study she felt the weight of her role and responsibilities almost constantly. Helen's comment above – a reference to vocational ministry in general and working with diverse personalities in particular – sums up the overall impression I found among the clergy I interviewed. Their work is, at the same time, incredibly difficult and incredibly fulfilling. Throughout my conversations with clergy, I heard countless examples illustrating what life is like for a paid employee of a church and many of these stories seem to fit Helen's assessment – that pastoral ministry takes a spiritual, emotional and physical toll on a person, but ministry is also a calling they willingly and happily embrace.

In this chapter, I provide a descriptive overview of day-to-day life for a pastor centered on the relationship between the difficult and positive sides of vocational ministry. Pastors are like other workers who find certain elements of a job more fulfilling than others. Indeed, as I will show there are very clear challenges as well as benefits to vocational ministry. Clergy overall consider it a privilege to pastor churches, but the responsibility the role imparts can lead to high pressure and stress. As such, vocational ministry represents an interesting combination of challenges and rewards that run parallel to each other. In other words, that which makes a pastor's work so hard at times simultaneously makes it fulfilling and enjoyable.

As I explicate the ways ministry is both extremely difficult and highly rewarding, I discuss how the element of religion – specifically the sense of “call” to serve the church as outlined in Chapter One – plays a significant part in the ways pastors manage the challenges and benefits of their work. Peter Berger writes that religion allows people to make sense of “human phenomena within a cosmic frame of reference” (1967: 35) suggesting that human actions and interactions are made meaningful through the lens of religion. As such, I argue that a calling is not a one-sided “gift” from God, but rather an ongoing, interactive social process in which religious ideas are continually reinforced as pastors engage in their work and interact with congregants. Clergy fulfill the difficult requirements of vocational ministry because they are committed to their beliefs and the calling they embrace as pastors. Furthermore, the positive fulfillment and benefits they gain through church work reminds pastors that vocational ministry is rooted in a larger, significant purpose. Pastors balance these two sides of their work by focusing on their

sense of call, and in doing so they legitimize its validity, leveling the challenges of church work alongside its rewards and allowing for greater ease in reconciling the integration of public and private life.

The Unconventional Schedule

Churches will suck blood from a stone if you let them and a lot of times you just have to say no.

--Nick, mainline church staff and pastor's spouse

Nick and Diane both work at different suburban, mainline churches – he on staff and she as a solo pastor – and as parents of a pre-teen child, Kyle, they know first hand the complicated task of coordinating two demanding and unconventional schedules. For their family, dividing up the days of the week and taking turns on “Kyle duty” is the best solution to ensure both fulfill church responsibilities at the same time Kyle has the presence of at least one parent (a preference Nick indicates is very important to them). Of course, Nick and Diane are not alone in this ongoing negotiation of time. Couples in dual-career households, especially those with children, are constantly managing the demands of work and family responsibilities (Christensen 2005; Hertz 1986; Hochschild 1989; Jacobs and Gerson 2005; Jacobs and Gornick 2002). But vocational ministry adds another layer to this puzzle rooted not only in the unconventional, demanding and unpredictable nature of church work but also in the notion that ministry is a calling.

In general, pastors' schedules are typically fragmented and clergy express concern over time demands given the amount of church-related business that takes place in the evenings or other “non-work” times such as over lunch or breakfast (Kuhne and Donaldson 1995). In discussing a “typical” week, pastors are quick to point out the ways

their schedules vary greatly each day. With this, pastors stress that there is always work that could be done, which means work is uncontained:

When I first started working, I had this newborn or I guess the first two months I was pregnant, and then I went on maternity leave. And I was working like 40 hours a week instead of part time. That was the nature of that church. It was very corporate. They would take as much time as you gave them. (Gwen, mainline pastor and spouse).

Pastor's schedules rarely fit into any set of standard boundaries, even as people try to maintain some consistency and separation from work. For workers in general, this is often related to the lack of adequate childcare, a major stressor for mothers in particular (Uttal 2002). But my findings show these trends among parents and non-parents alike. Lisa, who pastors a suburban mainline church, does not have children but still describes her work in a similar tone as Gwen, noting the difficulty in setting work aside.

Some pastors are successful in developing a reasonably consistent schedule, such as Robert, an evangelical pastor who divides his days into three segments – morning, afternoon and evening – and tries to work just two of the three segments each day. But overall I heard throughout my conversations that a varied, unconventional (meaning clergy never fit a nine to five, Monday through Friday model) and extremely busy schedule is a major challenge in vocational ministry. It was common for pastors to refer to their days off as a “try to be off” day, or a “technical” day off, implying that they usually end up working, as Jen, an evangelical pastor describes:

And then technically Friday is my day off but I only actually end up having about one Friday a month off. I usually end up working a minimum four hours up to a full eight hour day on Friday. I do work from home on Friday. Well, it's my day off but the reality for me is that with being a preaching pastor, by the time I get to the end of the day Thursday my sermon is not done and so I have to spend a decent chunk of time on

Friday finishing my message for Sunday. And I work really, really hard at tying everything up by the end of Friday so I can have Saturday off with Scott because that's the only day of the week that we both have off together because he works your typical Monday through Friday, forty-hour week. So I end up working on Fridays and working on Fridays for me is more the rule instead of the exception. And we're talking about trying to...I might start trying to take Mondays off. Actually I'm going to but I'm a little leery of it because I'm afraid that then everything is just going to get pushed back into Saturday and I don't want that to happen.

Pastors find there is always something that could be done, from an immediate, pressing demand to preparation for future busy seasons, like Easter or Advent. Fitting work into a set time frame with specific breaks or days off, therefore, is next to impossible.

Clergy are not the only workers who have unconventional schedules and feel pressure from working odd hours (Presser 2003), nor are they alone in feeling like the standard forty-hour workweek is much too short to accomplish all they need to get done. However, working in a church creates some significant scheduling constraints, like working every Sunday. Describing a typical week, Jen started off by saying, "Sunday always comes." It is the busiest day of the week for pastors and this time-certain never changes, even when an unexpected event arises. Lunch with a member seeking pastoral care, a new baby to visit in the hospital or a funeral are all important tasks for a pastor and rarely arise at convenient times, but Sunday services still must go on, and pastors constantly notice this pressure. Sasha, an associate pastor at a mainline church with two other pastors, discussed what it looks like to keep adding more responsibilities without extra hours:

It gets particularly dicey when any of us has to shift into pastoral care with a dying person and preparing for their service because you can probably tell from the way I'm talking about this, we're all kind of fully booked already. And a funeral comes in above and beyond. It's not like a wedding

where you can plan in advance and kind of step it through. You've got to stop, put the breaks on and move immediately into it.

For pastors in large churches like Sasha's where medical emergencies and funerals are commonplace, they must fit in the planning and implementation of an additional task alongside an already packed schedule. Sunday still comes, no matter how busy the week, and for this reason pastors often sacrifice time off.

Despite the strain, pastors accept this part of their work because, in their view, maintaining this unconventional schedule and being available as needed is an important element in a calling to vocational ministry. Pastors sacrifice breaks to write a sermon or visit an ill member not just because it is part of their job description, but because these tasks and the people they involve are more valuable than a pastor's interest in a day off. There is a selfless component to this calling reflected in the ways clergy discuss giving up breaks for the sake of the church and by making these sacrifices, pastors legitimize their sense of call – an important reminder of the motivating force behind hard work.

Meetings at night represent a second particularly difficult aspect of the pastor's unconventional schedule and another practice that helps reinforce the legitimacy of the calling. Beth, who serves at a large, mainline church, has so many evening meetings that dinner with her husband, Tom (also a pastor), is rare:

Last night, a committee meeting that I had we did by conference call because it looked like it was going to be worse weather than it wound up being by the night time, but we changed it to be a conference call. And so I was home and we also did the conference call in 45 minutes when we would have done the meeting in an hour to an hour and a half, I am confident, in person, and so at 7:45 I was done with my meeting and home already simultaneously and I was absolutely giddy. And Tom and I made something and sat down, ate dinner at the table with candles and

everything, finished eating and cleaning up and it wasn't yet 9:00. It was like magic.

Like the regular availability, evening meetings are also an accepted reality of vocational ministry but also a means for clergy to actively show a strong commitment to the congregation. Because churches mostly run on volunteers, meetings as well as other church events are normally scheduled at night or on weekends when a majority of people are free. These events are voluntary for members, but typically required work responsibilities for clergy. Pastors believe their calling includes such sacrifices, and therefore being present at evening events further legitimizes the calling as a social reality and eases the strain of the blurred boundaries between public and private life.

Some pastors forgo a scheduled day off all together, a practice that provides even further backing for the significance of a spiritual calling. Kurt is one of two people in this study who do not take a regular day off each week and he justifies his choice this way:

I do not take a specific day off a week and part of that could be that I'm a workaholic but part of it could be that every day I take off, the business of that day transfers to the next day and this is a very high maintenance church, high maintenance community and in the current state of affairs both in our culture and in our franchise which for me is another way of saying denomination, it's just a lot of time. So I would say I probably average a minimum of 10 hours a day. If I'm not here, I'm on my laptop doing something. So the church is never really that far away from, which when you interview my wife you'll find is an incredible pain and probably a real stress on our relationship. And part of that is the sense of call that you want to meet people's needs but also the expectation of the members of the church.

Kurt couches his choice in the demands of his job, but also acknowledges the commitment toward his sense of call. The tasks that pastors must accomplish as part of

their work take on added significance because they all relate to the larger purpose linked to the vocation – the notion clergy are called by God to provide support for people in need – and prioritizing these issues over personal time makes this call a real, social reality (not just a spiritual idea) that provides justification for the hard work and sacrifice clergy contribute to the church.

Yet burnout is a concern among pastors in this study and most try to schedule time off for that reason. Interestingly, research on Catholic priests shows a low level of “burnout” (Fichter 1984), however for contemporary protestant ministers I suggest that family demands add pressure that is not present among Catholic clergy, setting my sample apart from Fichter’s (1984) findings. Replicating a 1960s study on clergy and time management with a more contemporary sample, Brunette-Hill and Finke (1999) note some shifts in clergy time allocation, including fewer hours in the overall work week, a significant decrease in time spent on administrative tasks (specifically denominational and community meetings) and a decline in hours spent visiting and interacting with congregants. Responding to this last trend, clergy indicate the increasing entry of women into the paid labor force means family responsibilities take up more hours for pastors and church members (Brunette-Hill and Finke 1999). Here, it is clear that family and work life are interdependent.

Pastors who are successful in alleviating the demands of the unconventional schedule (for example, those who firmly maintain a day off at all costs) seem to more heavily emphasize the fact that ministry is both a calling and a job. As such, their approach actually legitimizes the need for balance many pastors mention. Jeff, an

evangelical pastor and clergy spouse, is one of several people with concerns about burnout who avoid the workaholic mentality they see among other clergy:

There's pastors out there that I think are workaholics. They're always on the job and they're always at a moments notice will drop everything and that's just not me and it's not my personality. I value my time with my family or doing things with my friends and just the space to get away from it. So I try to do that. I mean, some pastors will, knowing they're going to be at the church until 9 or 9:30 at night will still be there at 8 in the morning and no, I'm not going to do that. So I mean that's probably my biggest reason is personally I just need the space.

But it is clear that clergy experience an ongoing tension between these two perspectives on ministry, which even Jeff and others who share this view recognize. Neal, an evangelical pastor, describes this well:

In some ways there is a pendulum part to it where there is some concern these days that some younger pastors are not putting enough effort in and use family and time away too much, so they're not putting a full effort into it, whereas when we were in school, there was a real concern, especially for the generation above me, that there some pretty harsh requirements for pastors to be always at work and always available. And I think I was in a kind of transitional time where there was beginning to be some understanding that being always available wasn't very healthy for the church or for yourself. And they were just beginning to maybe not even quite get it but it was starting that some of the problems of exhaustion and burnout and abuse and things, really bad behavior that clergy get into sometimes had to do with that sense of not having a life and not having the strength for any balance.

While Neal admits problems with the level of sacrifice churches have long expected from their pastors, he also notes that vocational ministry is different than other occupations and the unconventional, demanding schedule is essential to fulfilling the necessary responsibilities that come with pastoring a church effectively. Moving too far away from this, as Neal cautions against, not only poses potential risks for a specific congregation, but it lessens the significance of the spiritual calling all clergy embrace to some degree.

People, Personalities and Power

If you kind of have that mind's eye where you're observing yourself when you're preaching, you think, "You know, a lot of these people think I'm a liar because Tim said so. They're sitting out there. I wonder what they're thinking."

--Ryan, evangelical pastor

Ryan and I spent a great deal of our time together talking about some severe, rather painful conflicts in his ministry career. Most recently, he dealt with a member who sought power and control in the church by fueling false rumors about Ryan and antagonizing numerous people in the congregation. Throughout our interview, his matter-of-fact demeanor and ability to laugh at situations that would send many people searching for a different occupation surprised me. Perhaps he successfully worked through the pain these situations caused, but my impression is he sees tension and conflict with people much like pastors view the unconventional, demanding schedule – another key sacrifice that legitimizes a calling to vocational ministry, making the blurred boundaries easier to reconcile.

Indeed, the issues that inevitably arise from working with diverse groups of people are another common point of strain for clergy. A negative, "noxious" work environment is linked to emotional distress and makes conflict between work and home even more difficult to bear (Schieman, McBrier and Van Gundy 2003). Moreover, pastors do not always fall in line with members on political and social perspectives. In a study done on the relationship between clergy and congregations, Mueller and McDuff (2004) found that 40 percent of pastors are more liberal than the congregations they serve whereas only 10 percent are more conservative. Clergy who are more liberal than their

congregations show greater conflict in the workplace and lower job satisfaction, which means that the likelihood of interpersonal conflict is quite high for pastors.

Conflict with church members is never simple because they are voluntary participants in a spiritual community, and moreover the people clergy are called to serve. When clergy find themselves frustrated with a particular person or issue, they face the difficult task of remaining “pastoral” even in the midst of tension. Essentially, as part of the commitment to their calling, pastors set aside their own interests for the sake of caring for people – even those they would much rather ignore, and in turn reinforce the reality of their call as more than just a spiritual idea.

On a minimal scale, tension with members includes fielding phone calls about trivial matters, which, to the caller, are urgent. Jeff, an evangelical pastor noted,

[S]ometimes I get calls at home and some people are worse about it than others, which is kind of ironic that the people you would not think would be the worst about it are the worst about it. You know, calling about things that are really unimportant at 8:00 night.

Most of the pastors I interviewed admit there are congregation members with whom they have some amount of frustration. In some cases, these were simple annoyances, like Jeff’s phone calls at home or particular members of Andy’s church he describes as “the squeaky wheels.” In other instances, phone calls at home or other interactions truly test a pastor’s patience. Sasha describes how the members at her large, suburban, mainline congregation interpret her willingness to take phone calls at home or during off-hours in the event of an emergency:

The ones I’m expecting will be “My husband has just gone to the hospital and I’m afraid.” “Do you want me to visit?” “That would be helpful.”
 “We’ve just been informed by hospice that my dad is dying. Could you

come visit?” “Of course I can.” That’s what a pastoral emergency would be. So what do we get? We get some of that but there’s also “I think I’m supposed to be at a wedding at [the church] and I’m wondering if there’s one scheduled.” “Gosh, I don’t know. I’m not there. I don’t have access to the schedule.” How is that an emergency? How should I fix that? “Do you have the name of anyone?” Or “I’m supposed to be doing this at the church but I don’t know what room the people are in.” Hello? I don’t either.

Although Sasha grows annoyed at these types of calls, because she is called as a pastor to care for congregants, she maintains her pastoral presence by politely responding.

In coining the term “emotional labor” Hochschild (1983) notes how work in service-oriented occupations includes affective skills where employees provide a tightly managed emotional experience alongside the actual required service, fitting into the expectations of others as well as the overall “emotional culture” of the environment (Bulan, Erickson and Wharton 1997). While Hochschild (1983) and others speak to the ways emotional labor feeds into a worker’s success (and that of the business), for clergy it also contributes to the legitimacy of the calling. When Diane, a mainline pastor and spouse of a church staff member, was new to her congregation she experienced several conflicts with people resulting from the very firm hold on tradition in her church:

We have breads of the world on World Communion and everybody just knows how to do it. The children bring the bread forward and it’s all fine and everybody knows how it goes. It’s again pageantry and this procession of bread, which was very nice. But nobody told me I needed to say, and I quote “Bring forth the breads of the world.” That has to be said. And so I might have said, “Let us now present the breads of the world.” And three or four people came up and told me I ruined it for them because I didn’t say the right words. But they didn’t tell me the right words ahead of time.

Steinbert and Figart write, “Emotional labor also requires a worker to produce an emotional state in another person while at the same time managing one’s own emotions”

(1999: 13). Pastors in such situations describe swallowing their pride in order to remain pastoral, even though they want to point out the absurdity of people's complaints. While in Diane's view, the exact words she used were somewhat insignificant to the overall message, she recognizes the deep meaning this particular service and its history hold for members. Thus, Diane sets aside her own interests for the sake of her position in the church, and more importantly for the commitment to her calling. It is not surprising that research suggests emotional labor can make workers feel inauthentic (Wharton 1999), as so often true feelings remain hidden during interpersonal interactions.

Along with providing care for all people (even the most difficult personalities), a calling to vocational ministry also includes an interest in the organizational integrity of the church. Lay people are unpaid participants in a voluntary organization. They are not employees but those who willingly participate in a church and its ministries for the sake of spiritual or social fulfillment. Churches run on the power of volunteers and require willing and able bodies to serve on committees, organize programs and participate in events. Unlike a workplace where the incentives of pay raises and promotions trigger good performance, churches rely on the goodness of humanity and an interest in serving a higher power as motivational tools. When people are hesitant to lead, the responsibility defaults to the pastor:

It makes it more difficult because they're really expecting the boss to be the boss so if you want to do something, they'll be willing to be workers but they won't run anything. They won't take charge of anything. So if there is a fundraiser I've ended up most of the time having to organize all the fundraisers. We started doing a craft fair several years ago. I ended up having to organize and run the craft fair, which we did not do this year because I just didn't have it in me anymore. But if you want people to take leadership and ownership of something, they're reluctant to do so. And it's

not that they're not willing to do the work but I don't think they see themselves as having the gifts and talents that they need in order to run something and be in charge of something. (Lisa, mainline pastor)

Lisa's ministry and work life depends in large part on the success and failure of various programs and events, and therefore she is far more invested in the church compared to members, who are voluntary participants. But her commitment is broader and more significant than her specific church members. As a pastor called to serve this institution, she not only addresses the needs of congregants but also the needs of the organization.

This dual commitment – a focus on the people as well as the overall organization – adds another layer to the challenges clergy face in pastoring difficult congregants. In explicating the general and particular politics clergy deal with in ministry work, Burns and Cervero (2004: 249) write, “One cannot normally change a ministry's fundamental purpose without first altering the power and influence dynamics among persons shaping the ministry.” Many of the conflicts pastors experience or witness are rooted in struggles for power and control in the church and have potential to damage the proper functioning of the organization. A good example of this tension comes from Ryan's experience of investing so much time and energy dealing with a highly combative member that, in his words, “the church was paralyzed.” Eventually, he brought in an outside mediator to handle the conflict because he realized remaining “pastoral” and accommodating this individual only sustained the damaging situation. Clergy have to make tough choices in how they address conflict. In trying to pastor a difficult person, the rest of the church could suffer negative consequences. These situations are never clear cut and easy to

resolve, and pastors continually struggle over how best to stay committed to their calling while recognizing the deeper problems that stem from interpersonal conflicts.

Beyond this, pastors also want to see the congregation excited and involved, as a calling is also about forming engaged and active people rooted in strong religious beliefs. And indeed, a flourishing church is another means of legitimizing a pastor's calling to vocational ministry. Neal spoke of the importance in cajoling members to give time and energy, ensuring the church remains strong:

Part of it is the reality of working with volunteers that, in fact, if you don't go to the meeting or you don't show support for what they're doing, things fall apart fairly quickly. People do need encouragement. They need to know that the pastor understands and is working with them. And when you're not around, communication can get mixed up or lost or things just don't happen. And so part of it's a reality in the nature of the organization, because of that.

As this quote from Neal illustrates, working effectively with people – regardless of how difficult it may be – contributes to organizational success. Engaged people and an active and thriving church, in turn, reminds pastors that their calling is not imagined, but a reality that is reflected in these markers. It is more than an idea rooted in beliefs – it is a valid motivator that informs the actions and interactions of pastors as they go about their work, even amidst conflict and tension.

Working in the Midst of Real Life

I feel many times that I would have heeded the advice of Hans Luther to his son Martin and become a lawyer rather than a pastor. I'm not saying it's not fulfilling, but I'm also saying that it's also very, very real.

--Kurt, mainline pastor

Marital conflict, illness, spiritual struggles and death are the issues pastors feel called to confront, and they are trained in seminary on how to provide care and comfort to congregants dealing with grief. As Kurt notes in his reflection above, vocational ministry is very real. Clergy cannot choose to only visit people during the healthy, happy moments and they accept, as part of their calling, that their work demands a presence at some of the hardest, most challenging points in members' lives. Being the person who provides care and support, leading a family through the religious significance of death or illness is a tough role that adds yet another level of stress to the work of a pastor. But again, fulfilling such difficult tasks adds further validity to a sacred calling to ministry.

The stress stemming from working in the midst of real life is, in part, a conflict in logistics. Emergencies, like the death of a congregant, arise at unexpected times. As Neal comments, "[O]bviously in ministry stuff happens. People die and people are in the hospital. Issues come up." At the most painful times in people's lives, pastors not only offer care, but they must do so at a moment's notice with little time to prepare:

When people are in the hospital and somebody dies, of course you go. When there's a time for a funeral I go into action. You know, a funeral takes about a day or a day and a half of work, preferably a day and a half of work just to do the typical things that seem like...I mean, they look easy when you've got them all organized but it takes a while to make it right. (Ralph, mainline pastor)

Because these events are so significant in the lives of people, pastors like Ralph believe part of their calling is to be a particularly comforting and effective pastor during these struggles. In other words, because death and illness are unplanned occurrences, pastors must do their most solid work on short notice with limited preparation.

The calling to vocational ministry also involves being ready at any time to respond to emergencies, regardless of the time of day. Adam felt a definite pressure from this element of his work:

[E]ven though Friday is off, Saturday is off, you are on call also twenty four hours. I mean, at any point someone could die or be in a horrible accident. So it was always challenging to me and I never knew quite how to deal with it. If it's two in the morning and I'm coming back from a bar, I'm in no shape to do anything. What if someone calls me?

Even when a pastor is technically off work, they are situated in the midst of real life and therefore still a pastor. Vocational ministry is more than a job and more than a career – it is a lifestyle that encompasses even the most trying elements for people – and this, for clergy, is a tremendous weight at times. Jeff compared this challenge of his work to parenting a child:

[T]he way I always describe it is there's sort of this movement in life from dependence to independence and I always thought independence was the end of it, but then there's this stage called responsibility. And in a sense the responsibility is always there, but being a pastor and having people depend on you, being a parent, having a child completely dependent on you, things like that, it's sort of this stage I call responsibility where burden is maybe not the right word but I feel the weight of...I feel that on a daily basis.

His comparison draws out an important perspective many pastors share in discussing the stressful aspects of work in a church. Even when you are tired or need a break, the responsibility of your call is still present – especially in times of emergency like a death

or illness – and a pastor’s commitment to that calling supercedes their own personal needs or interests in taking a break. Clergy take on these sacrifices, though, not only because they feel responsible but also because doing so reinforces their sense of call, reminding them of the broader, motivating factors that originally drew them to ministry.

This is also another example of the emotional labor clergy conduct on a day-to-day basis, and the outcomes contribute another layer of stress to ministry – one that impacts the well-being of the pastor. Referencing Hochschild’s (1983) notion of “emotive dissonance,” Wharton warns of the conflict between what workers actually feel and what they outwardly express (1999: 163). She writes, “When jobs involve emotional labor, the fusion of self and work role increases the risk of burnout” (Wharton 1999: 162). This issue is especially salient for human service workers, according to Wharton, because “the feelings expressed at work are inseparable from the self” (1999: 162). Clergy, like all people, have feelings and the difficult issues they confront no doubt affect them emotionally. Losing a church member to a fatal illness or watching a person struggle through divorce impacts pastors, too, and yet in order to effectively care for people, the emotional needs of a pastor often take a back seat to the congregation. Moreover, clergy feel as if the responsibilities far outweigh the time and energy they can devote to such heavy issues:

People die, they don’t consult your calendar. Your whole life changes. Babies are born. There are weddings. There are domestic disputes. There are suicides, homicides, etc. etc. And the expectation is that the pastor will be there. And most pastors that I know want to be there, but that is a constant stress because there’s also this expression. You’ve heard it. It’s sometimes used in marital relationships. It’s not enough. It’s never enough. No matter what I do it’s never going to be enough. For example, one of the things is this constant problem of folks who are inactive or shut

in, that the pastor will somehow miraculously by strength of personality or charisma of the spirit will somehow revitalize an inactive member or make sure all the shut ins are visited very, very regularly. And you never can catch up on that. That is a constant stress. You never can meet all of those needs. (Kurt, mainline pastor)

Indicating “It’s never enough,” Kurt speaks to the difficulty pastors encounter as they fulfill this part of their calling. But again, this is a sacrifice linked to vocational ministry and a difficult, yet important, task clergy take on, in turn strengthening their sense of call. While Kurt recognizes he cannot fulfill all his congregants’ needs, the fact that he feels this pressure indicates how closely these demands are tied to his sense of calling.

The unpredictable timing of pastoral emergencies impacts spouses, too. While Charlie at times is bothered with how much his wife, Kimberly, spends on church-related business, he also understands how hard it is for her to prioritize time away from work given some of the issues with which she must deal as a pastor:

I think being a pastor at a church is even harder because it’s hard to make those boundaries and just say... You know, if someone is calling you, it’s for a reason and they need someone to talk to. That’s why our home phone number is on her business card. And she talked to me about that before she put it on there. She said, “Do you think this is okay?” “Well if people need to reach you, if it’s not during church...” Of course no one has called us yet. It’s still early but I’m not concerned about that at all. I know that she needs to be able to be reached if people have issues. (Charlie, mainline spouse)

Agreeing to include their home phone number on Kimberly’s business cards, this couple acknowledges that ministry work is a lifestyle that comes with added pressures and sacrifices. In this regard, spouses also actively legitimize the spiritual calling, openly accepting the constraints and demands brought on by the church. Courtney, who serves on staff at the same church where her husband Austin pastors, puts it this way:

I think it's definitely a challenge because when you are working with people you can't just turn them off and people are part of real life and being a pastor, it's more focused on relationships than tasks. So it is definitely hard to have balance because relationships don't fit into certain hours and certain times and you need to be able to make room for that. And I think it will definitely probably get harder as Tyler gets older and if we have more kids. I think that will be harder because they'll demand more of the time that we have together as is and I think they'll maybe at times have a hard time dealing with the fact that dad is talking on the phone with this person and "Why can't he tuck me in to bed?" That sort of thing.

For Charlie and Courtney, the reality of real life and their respective spouses' responsibilities in relation to these issues intersect with family life, but they reconcile the strain by stressing the higher calling that accompanies pastoral ministry. Like pastors, spouses manage the demands not because doing so is necessary, but because it feeds into a very significant belief that clergy are called by God to serve the church and its members, especially in these most disquieting moments in life.

Personal Life Scrutiny

It can also be a challenge because you feel like everybody is in the middle of your whole life.

--Jeff, evangelical pastor

The fourth area pastors address as a significant challenge in ministry is the public nature of a pastor's life. When Jeff explains how he often feels like he and his family are on display, I could literally see his church in the background through the living room window. As pastor at a neighborhood church, he is highly visible to laypeople and encounters congregants almost daily whether he is in his office or out on a walk with his son. Therefore, even as Jeff goes about his daily business, he is still very much a pastor.

Continually being “on” in a role that carries some heavy images and expectations (a topic I explore further in Chapter Five) means pastors have to carefully guard their actions and being in a public position like ministry, pastors can hide very little. Church is, in part, a social network for laypeople and as such, people typically discuss the significant and insignificant goings on in day-to-day life. But pastors navigate a complicated path in this process because they also hold authority in the church. Therefore, openly disclosing personal troubles is not about seeking advice from a friend, but being vulnerable among congregants – the people clergy are called to serve. For fear of damaging the pastor-congregant relationship, clergy tread lightly, being particularly mindful of what they say or how much information to share. Yet again, we see a sacrifice clergy willingly take on as a way of embracing and legitimizing the sense of call.

One realm where clergy are particularly careful is the pulpit. Although some pastors note that family life provides a wealth of sermon illustrations, integrating such personal elements into a public forum is risky in the eyes of some clergy. Ryan, for example, opts against using personal stories in his sermons even though congregation members want him to be more open about his personal life:

[P]eople would like to hear more personal illustrations but it’s like, my life is not all that important compared to somebody else’s necessarily and I don’t really want to kind of receive the glory or put my family on display or anything like that. I mean, occasionally I do, but to really be open and vulnerable about how this last conflict has affected me, you really can’t talk about that in the congregation at large. You’d produce too much anxiety if you did. So a lot of my illustrations are not personal ones.

Others avoid sharing stories about their family as a way to shield a spouse or children. Andy, for example, has used his children as examples while preaching but admits they are approaching an age where this could become an issue, as they could feel singled out. He is also mindful of the ways he discusses very personal experiences related to his wife, such as the death of her parents or their battle with infertility.

Andy's example illustrates the complicated situation pastors encounter when it comes to disclosing personal information. On the one hand, they recognize that certain struggles might resonate with congregants, opening up an opportunity for greater pastoral care. But doing so means church members are brought into family life on a highly personal level, and clergy families are protective of such private stories since their life is on display in so many other ways. Similar to the ways clergy work hard to remain "pastoral" amidst conflict, clergy are aware of how significant and formative their interactions can be among congregants. Revealing certain aspects of one's life could potentially damage a pastor's position in the church, making work more difficult but also, more importantly, potentially challenging the legitimacy of their spiritual calling.

Those who serve in smaller, tight-knit communities where everyone seems to know each other found personal life scrutiny – what some call life in a "fishbowl" – particularly stressful compared to pastors in an urban environment or larger suburbs. For instance, Kurt admits that he and his family often drive to restaurants in the next town so he can have lunch without having to constantly be a pastor. Gwen and Eric, mainline clergy who currently serve two different churches, feel they are frequently under the

spotlight because Eric, in particular, is well-known as a pastor in the area. Here, Gwen shares how this plays out in their everyday life:

[I]t's just more that sense that people are paying attention more than you think they are. I think five years from now, I would probably laugh at the same thing and go "Who cares?" But when you're new in a place, you want to be intentional about how you do it and not over a dumb thing make life more complicated for yourself. One time we went to the movies and we had our kids in one movie and we were in the next one. And somebody from church walks in and Eric goes "Oh, we're going to get busted."

Later in the interview, Gwen compared the suburb where Eric pastors to Mayberry, a cultural reference that Lisa also used while talking about her church:

Mark and I joke that it's like Mayberry outside of Chicago because we can go to different restaurants or whatever and it's not unusual for us to meet somebody there who knows who I am, who knows what my function is, to be greeted by "Hi pastor." The mayor will come over. Sometimes he calls me Lisa, sometimes he calls me Pastor. It all depends. But he knows who I am and you know, we're on friendly terms. And some of the aldermen know who I am.

Every pastor in this study expressed some level of worry when discussing the public nature of private life. I gathered the sense that many feel on-edge as they go about their lives, recognizing that they serve as models both inside and outside the church. With this, there is a clear concern over maintaining the legitimacy in the specific role and more broadly the larger sense of call pastors link to their work. While pastors struggle over the ongoing feeling they are being watched, accepting this fact further strengthens the social significance and reality of a calling to vocational ministry and reminds clergy that the sacrifices are part of the greater purpose on which their work focuses.

The Benefits within the Challenges

Although clergy have professional standards and training requirements, they differ from other human service workers like nurses or social workers in that vocational ministry is rooted in the sacred. As Gannon writes in distinguishing between clergy and other professionals, a pastor “cannot practice his profession; he must live it” (1971: 71-72). While the “lifestyle” aspects of vocational ministry inform the challenges I discuss above, there is a positive side to pastors’ work. The four areas of challenge – a demanding and unconventional schedule, working with difficult people, the reality of “real life” circumstances and the consistent spotlight – all contribute to the strains many pastors express stemming from their work. But at the same time, the individuals with whom I spoke remain highly committed to ministry and, in fact, appear to love what they do, citing the significant rewards or benefits in being a pastor.

The positive side of vocational ministry is the focus of the second part of this chapter. Interestingly, the benefits pastors mention as they talk about their work run directly parallel to the challenges. In other words, the same elements that create strain also foster some of the aspects pastors enjoy most about vocational ministry. Furthermore, just as the difficulties clergy embrace provide legitimacy, reinforcing a calling as more than a spiritual idea, the positive side of ministry has a similar effect rooted in broader religious beliefs that with sacrifice comes reward. The fact that clergy find great excitement and fulfillment in ministry, despite the immense challenges, is a real representation of the spiritual, sacred significance embedded in their work. This is not to say clergy embark on a “cost-benefit” approach to religion, acting in pure self

interest and seeking compensation for their efforts as a rational choice approach might suggest (Iannaccone 1990; Stark and Finke 2000), as the sense of call is the primary motivator (not the rewards). But reaping the benefits of vocational ministry further reinforces the calling by allowing pastors to experience the positive returns from the time and energy they willingly and often selflessly devote to the church.

Flexibility

One of the things that I discovered early on was that the real beauty of my role here, and certainly in the early days when there wasn't near as much activity, was I really had freedom to, you know, go and do.

--Eva, mainline pastor

Eva, a mainline pastor who is also the daughter of a pastor, described the household in which she grew up as a well-oiled machine. When she talked about her own, immediate family – husband Bruce and two daughters – she was quick to point out how their home was nowhere near as calm and organized. Her reflections accurately exemplify what Blair-Loy (2005) sees as a conflict between devotion to family and devotion to work. The fact of two demanding careers meant she and Bruce were constantly juggling numerous responsibilities as their two children were growing up. However, Eva points out that her occupation as a pastor actually allowed her to balance this strain more effectively because, although her job is demanding, she is largely in control of her work hours.

Pastors' demanding and irregular schedules create stress from the ongoing process of negotiating time at work and time away. But while schedule challenges were among pastors' most commonly discussed sources of strain, they also frequently mentioned the

flexibility embedded within and its benefits, particularly for parents with young children (as Eva's past experience can attest). A constantly shifting schedule means clergy have little consistency and trouble maintaining steady breaks from work, but at the same time this structure allows clergy to adapt work around personal events or emergencies. Examining the factors contributing to fathers' care for young children, Brayfield (1995) notes how unconventional employment schedules can reduce the amount of time parents have with their children. However, in the case of clergy, they compensate these absences by being available during other times.

Because so many pastors work hours far beyond what the church requires, they typically do not need to request an afternoon off or be concerned about losing pay for leaving early to pick up a sick child from school. Granted, this sometimes mean pushing work to another time of day (since "Sunday always comes") but especially among parents of young children, I found an ongoing theme that flexibility is one of the hidden rewards of vocational ministry. Given the fact that dual-career couples with young children, especially preschoolers, are highly susceptible to work-life conflict (Moen and Yu 2000), it is not surprising to hear clergy highlight this positive side of their schedule.

Flexibility is an added bonus that essentially helps compensate for a very demanding, unconventional schedule. Clergy willingly embrace the demands and sacrifice a pastor's schedule imparts and suggest they are necessary to fulfill the calling, but seeing the other side of an unconventional workweek reinforces this calling, too. For example, Courtney and Austin both serve at the same church, she on staff and he as an associate pastor. While they do not have the luxury of taking time off for holidays like

Easter (an issue I discuss further in Chapter Four), they simultaneously acknowledge the benefits in vocational ministry, particularly as it relates to balancing work and family as Courtney mentions:

Easter we don't ever go home. We're here because that's a huge holiday and we have to be here for that. I think you just go into an understanding that it's not necessarily going to be the nice, relaxing holidays that you remembered as a child. But it has its other perks during the week. I mean, we can have more relaxing times then. I mean, as Tyler gets older if he has a soccer game or this and that, we can just go. You don't have to take time off of work to go. We can just go and work some other time.

Austin made a similar comparison in talking about the exchange of benefits and challenges in his schedule:

Like Sundays are real tough days for our family because I don't see... I see Tyler a couple times in the morning and then I don't see him the rest of the day. You know, I'll go in and lay my hand on him or something like that late at night. So I'd say my occupation in one sense hinders or it affects it because I'm not around for gaps of time or going on for weekends, like I'm going on a trip or whatever. But my occupation also affects my family in a positive way, and this I think will be real beneficial when he's older, I'll be able, if he has a game or if he has an activity, I'll have flexibility during the day to go do that where I don't think I normally would have in another occupation. So there is some trade-off there.

In both these examples, Austin and Courtney accept the tougher areas of ministry work, like stressful holidays and weekend demands, knowing that there is also a benefit in the varied nature of their schedules. And just as their acceptance of sacrifice legitimizes the calling to ministry, experiencing the positive side also helps reinforce its significance and level the burden many sense from the demands of vocational ministry.

Parents with young children are most appreciative of the flexibility and the non-standard work schedule is very appealing, matching Presser's (2003) argument that such flexible, alternative work models are in greater demand by people seeking more time for

other responsibilities. Annette's church is particularly adaptable: "Even though I'm a mom too, at least with being a pastor I feel like I have some flexibility in my schedule. It's not like I'm in an office nine to five. If Isaac is sick or having a bad morning, I can go in late." Along with being able to negotiate her hours (something her pastor husband Jeff can do as well, though his work is full time compared to Annette's part time position) she also has the option of bringing Isaac along on pastoral visits and mostly works from home. As we talked about the different scenarios she and Jeff have considered for balancing parenting and their careers, she adds, "I would need to supplement our income some how. And there just was nowhere where I could do that where I could take Isaac with me as much as I do and enjoy what I do as much." Of course working from home with an infant presents its own challenges, but Annette recognizes the trade-off like Courtney and Austin, reinforcing her sense of call and the sacred element of her work.

Gender plays a role in the ways clergy talk about flexibility, most notably as people describe men's involvement with their children. Milkie et al (2004) found that fathers typically perceive greater time deficits due to longer hours at work and have a sense of lost time with their children. But for pastors like Trey, he is able to compensate for his demanding schedule by adapting his hours around his children's activities:

I like to be home when kids get home. So Monday I'm home when kids get home. Tuesday I'm home when kids get home. Wednesday it's a mish mash. Thursday I'm here when kids get home. So I don't know if that matches up what I said but I do try to be home at 4 every day for kids. Try. Usually I'm pretty good.

Gwen saw Eric make a similar transition in how he arranged his schedule after noticing how much time he was losing with his children. Yet along with acknowledging the

benefits of flexibility, several men add that they are present in ways other fathers typically are not:

I think being a pastor, he also had freedom that a lot of people don't have. And if the boys had a concert or if they had a baseball game or if they had...Morning or afternoon, he could arrange his schedule and he could go and go back to work. You know, there's some fluidity, if that's a word, in your schedule that you can go to things that other dads can't. (Carla, evangelical spouse)

Both clergy and spouses point this out as yet another positive addition to the benefits in a flexible schedule. These examples show how gender adds another layer to the ways people reconcile the sacrifice in a calling to vocational ministry, strengthening the notion that with hard work comes great reward. Fathers feel particularly fortunate as they compare their situations to a dominant concept of family life where men have more limited opportunities to parent.

Beyond time with children, a pastor's flexibility also coordinates well with spouses' careers, contributing another benefit to family life. Howard admits that church often took priority over family while his children were young, but his ability to adapt his workdays provided greater space for his wife, Jane, to concentrate on her career. With a lengthy commute, occasional travel and a generally fast-paced, demanding corporate position, Jane was able to advance in her field partly because Howard could more easily attend to the needs of their three children. In this twist on Correll, Benard and Paik's (2007) findings that parenthood negatively impacts women's career progress while it benefits men in the workplace, the inclusion of Howard's flexibility actually lessened the impact for Jane. This early effort at creating equal emphasis on their careers fits more

accurately with the notion that such efforts foster more egalitarian perspectives on both work and family (Hertz 1986).

Pastors accept a demanding, unconventional schedule as an important component of a calling to ministry, but the flexibility that comes alongside helps alleviate the stress. Like most aspects of vocational ministry, emergencies override personal time, but the autonomy and control pastors have at work adds a positive vibe amidst a consistently strenuous workweek. As such, pastors more readily embrace the challenging elements of their calling because the hidden benefits offer balance and, more importantly, a crucial reminder that ministry is rooted in a higher calling that involves both sacrifice and reward. Seeing both perspectives firmly establishes the calling as a legitimate motivator and a very real component of a pastor's work that helps reconcile the challenges amidst blurred boundaries.

Being There for People

There's times when I realize I'm about to say "Hey, welcome" to my family, like on holidays. I just am always doing that. And I like that.
--Tom, mainline pastor and spouse

As an ordained pastor (and also a pastor's spouse) who oversees a growing ministry, much of Tom's days are spent greeting people he does not know and encouraging participation in various programs. In turn, he cannot seem to separate himself from the constant state of welcoming. Tom noted how much energy it takes to be a pastor, always interacting with people and helping them feel part of the ministry community. While it is not always easy to work with people, especially around conflict,

Tom is like most pastors in this study who frequently point out how much they enjoy simply being there for people.

When I asked Howard what he enjoyed most about being a pastor, he was quick to point out the relational nature of his job: “I love to meet lots of people. I love it when people join the church. I like knowing the people as people.” Adam also reflects on the benefits of spending time with people, enjoying it so much that it often does not feel like work: “I liked that going out to lunch with someone counted as important work.” He later added, “And just some of my favorite times were after the service at the fellowship time sitting around tables, hearing people’s stories, joking.” And even Ralph, who confronts conflict more often than other clergy in his role as an interim pastor, describes working with people with great enthusiasm. He says, “I guess the other thing that I enjoy is working with people. I’m an extrovert so I get energy out of people and they don’t drain it from me, they give it to me.” The phone calls at home or a frustrating committee meeting are realities of vocational ministry and a pastor’s calling, but the positive interactions and sense that pastors are truly providing a meaningful experience for congregants serves as the rewarding factor alongside the sacrificial components.

Interestingly, as clergy discuss the fulfilling rewards of working with people, they still include many of the difficult, high-pressure moments as positive. Sasha, for example, appreciates being a pastor to struggling people, saying, “The things I enjoy most about my work are sitting with people who are in crisis because they have no other way to be but to be honest.” Despite the emotional weight embedded in these interactions, clergy nevertheless look optimistically on these moments as signs they are

effectively fulfilling the call to care for people. Similarly, Jeff shares several instances of seeing people come out of down times in their lives, and mentions the excitement of being with them in the process:

Like this past week, I had a couple different people, one kid trying to get his life back together came asking if he could be baptized and I look forward to getting to talk and work with him on that. And then another person who grew up in the church but sort of wandered away is now a young adult that would like to be confirmed. So I'm looking forward to that, having conversations with him and talking about theology, talking about how is it that Christian people live their lives or what are sort of our guiding whatever. So that kind of stuff is what I probably like the most. Seeing people learn and grow.

Much like the flexibility that stems from an otherwise demanding and unconventional schedule, pastors also find positive components to the complicated dynamics of working with people – not just in the happy, exciting life events but also in the sad and painful times. In working to fulfill a sense of call, a pastor's availability to interact with congregants and see them through tough events in life is yet another way this call is made real and significant.

An especially interesting conversation around being present to people came in my discussion with Carla, the wife of an evangelical pastor, Neal. Stating how she, too, enjoys opportunities to spend time with congregants, welcoming them into the church community, she wishes people would call Neal and her more frequently – a surprising statement given that so many pastors and spouses struggle with boundaries:

It's sad, because I guess that's what I really like about a clergy family. You get to share those things with people. I mean, that's what really connects you. And those are the things I treasure about other situations of being allowed to enter into situations, because that really is a gift that people give you and to be able to go through things with people, I mean that's...I look back on relationships with people and that's really where

it's at is traveling through those times together. And I mean, that's really a neat part of pastoring.

Carla shares a specific instance where a member of her women's bible study indicated her husband had recently been in the hospital, but did not notify Neal. Several people mention the increasing privatization of peoples' lives – especially in suburban contexts – and hint at concern over the resulting lack of interpersonal time with members. What sometimes feels like a nuisance to clergy is also what many find fulfilling – the satisfaction that comes in dropping everything to be present for someone in need.

On the surface, these competing narratives may sound contradictory. From the perspective reflected in the first part of this chapter, clergy wish for greater boundaries after sharing stories where difficult members call for trivial reasons or foster tension within the congregation. But clergy frequently cite these moments as simultaneously fulfilling, a trend that speaks to the way a pastor's calling helps reconcile the challenges and draw out the rewards. Annette offers a useful example of this process:

There was one week where I went to visit this old woman in the hospital, and I felt like that was the most important thing I could have done that week. And I'm not even sure why, probably because Christ calls us to that and she's sick and she's elderly and she has no family. Yeah, it was kind of annoying for me because I think I had to find care for Isaac and like the traffic was bad and she's not like the best conversationalist and things like that, but there was just something that I felt was really important about the work and I feel like the world doesn't value things like that because it's not productive and I'm not like producing anything or making money or anything, but for that woman and for that moment in time, she was sharing this thing that had happened and praying for her... I don't know, there's something really important that happened in that space and that time. And then the traffic and the babysitter didn't even matter, that I had to work those details out.

Annette specifically references her calling as the motivating force for visiting this member in the hospital. But her calling is also reinforced and made legitimate, not just by arranging the visit, but also in noticing the gratifying side of this event. Annette's actions and the ways she experiences this situation help transform her sense of call from an idea into a significant interaction with a congregant that supports her belief that vocational ministry is more than just a job. Her ability to see the reward from what began as a difficult situation serves as a social representation of this broader belief, and the notion that a pastor's sacrificial contributions to the church will also reap benefits for all those involved.

Presence in the Intimate Spiritual Moments

There's no other job where you get to be with people for everything if you want to be, from graduation parties to...I mean, every key moment from birth to death, you can be with them, including happy times. And you can be in people's homes. You can talk to people about anything.

--Howard, mainline pastor

As noted, pastors work in the midst of real life and sometimes that means bearing the heavy burden of providing care to people in crisis. But beyond the general satisfaction of working with people, on a deeper level integration into the intimate spiritual moments of congregants' lives represents yet another hidden reward of the tough work clergy do on a day-to-day basis. As part of the calling to vocational ministry, clergy are often responsible for helping people apply religious meaning to both times of joy and times of sorrow. As Howard attests, no other occupation affords this same level of intimacy over such a broad spectrum of significant life events, and the emotional weight from "working in the midst of real life" is balanced out by the privilege clergy

feel from being present in these core, spiritual moments. Kimberly experienced this reward when she performed her first baptism:

I baptized my first baby on Sunday and that was so neat. And getting to know the little baby's parents. My husband and I went and celebrated with them at a brunch after service and that was just... To be able to be in the sacred moments and to play such a unique role, it's just... It gives me chills. It's really cool. I love that. And I love hearing people's stories and sharing. Hearing them share and offering them space to just be where they are at this particular moment and to offer them prayer. That's really neat.

While undertaking rituals like baptisms or weddings are part of a pastor's job description, Kimberly's comments shed light on the larger purpose clergy connect to their work.

These are not simply tasks to cross off a to-do list, but rather highly momentous events that clergy, as an ordained representative of the church, are called to officiate.

Like being there for people, the fulfillment pastors gain from meeting these requirements of the calling to ministry is not limited to the joyous occasions like a baptism or wedding. Religion provides meaning in peoples' lives to explain something positive but also to help make sense of a difficult experience (Berger 1967). For example, clergy appreciate opportunities to counsel people through illnesses and even reference funerals as highly rewarding and meaningful events:

I know that some clergy talk about being drained by this work and I don't feel that way about it. People say to me after a funeral "Gosh, that must be hard to do that. You didn't even know that person." I said "Well, it's not hard to do it." I try not to put people's ideas down but for me doing a funeral is a very wonderful opportunity to try to help people and to try to help them make sense out of things and I enjoy doing it. (Ralph, mainline pastor)

Neal shares a similar perspective on counseling people through taxing life struggles and how he feels about connecting the sacred nature of his work to the lives of congregants:

I mean, it may seem strange to some but just that doing a lot of funerals and going to graveyards and proclaiming the resurrection, things like that, to me it takes on a life that it's not just words, a ritual, but there's a life there and I experience things and see things in a new way.

Of course, pastors do not enjoy death per se, but as Ralph and Neal both suggest, the chance to offer support, counseling and religious meaning to crises such as illness or death is at the heart of a pastor's calling. And as pastors embrace this calling, making religion a central component of everyday life, providing a means for others to see the significance of religion during important life moments is indeed a very exciting and rewarding opportunity.

These particular moments provide the strongest reinforcement of a pastor's calling to vocational ministry because it is in these times when clergy most clearly represent the sacred meaning in religion to congregants. Jen finds this aspect of her work incredibly rewarding and also overwhelming:

I think the other thing that's just overwhelming about being a pastor is that people simply, by virtue of the role that you are living into, people invite you into their lives in just overwhelmingly extraordinary ways, whether it's...I just did a baptism of a baby on Sunday. Whether it is looking to you to carry out a sacrament that for a family and for a community declares God's love and gift for people and his mercy and grace. And you're invited into people's homes to talk with them about that. Or whether it's in physical sickness, where you walk into someone's hospital room and people just, they open up to you. We have someone who for the last year or so has been going through a really nasty divorce and just they share. They don't know me very well. Like I'm new there. I've only been there for a year, but by virtue of the role people gift you with their lives. And that's amazing to me when someone will walk out of my office and have just kind of exposed a deep wound that they have. It's just like, really? It's amazing.

Her comment that "people gift you with their lives" speaks to the enormous sense of privilege Jen associates with her work, a trend that is common among new pastors and

those more seasoned in vocational ministry. Jen and Kimberly are both in their early thirties and relatively new to church work, but these same trends are noticeable among pastors with decades of experience, too:

I get to see things that maybe other people don't. For instance, I've been able to see quite a few people die and be there and I've done a lot of funerals and been with families in grief times. I get to see babies when they're pretty little. Not when they're being born but when they're pretty little. I get to talk to people at different points in their lives and have gained so much from just a variety of especially older people who have lived pretty interesting lives and gone through a lot and to be able to sit and just talk to them about their life is... Those are the things that I think have been most strengthening to my faith. (Neal, evangelical pastor)

The “real life” struggles people experience mean pastors continually encounter pain and grief among congregants, and they acknowledge a burden that comes with the calling to provide care and counsel in these moments. Yet at the same time, the deeply satisfying sense of illuminating spiritual significance in joyous and even the most sorrow-filled times for congregants provides powerful meaning that reinforces a pastor's calling and allows clergy to see the rewards alongside these tough events. Further, not only do such experiences strengthen the sacred meaning of the call for a pastor, but as Neal points out, there is a positive impact on personal faith, too.

Living the Good Life

I don't know if all pastors are as happy as I am in ministry. I just can't hardly see myself doing anything else and having as much satisfaction in it.

--Robert, evangelical pastor

The examples I discuss up to this point connect the challenges pastors encounter in their work to the rewarding elements. Throughout these narratives, it is clear that

vocational ministry is more than a job or a career – it is a lifestyle to which clergy are called. As noted in the first section, this lifestyle includes a highly visible, public role for pastors (and in many instances clergy families) that is all-encompassing. As such, clergy often have the sense they are on display, constantly open for scrutiny from congregants and others. But overall, pastors take on the public pressure and visibility for the sake of a lifestyle that is highly rewarding:

I always like to say to people that it's a good life. I think there's a bad word out there that it's not. And that it is and it's a positive and it's a good thing to do. It's a good thing to give yourself to. And I have some hope that that word is going to gain more acceptance. I would like to see that. Sometimes you see some of these studies, I don't know where they come from or who they talk to but they're really negative and that's not been my experience. I know some of the negativity. I know some of the problems pastors get into, but my experience has been much more positive. I like other pastors. I'm in a group with other pastors and I like them as people. I find them to be engaging and helpful. And so that's the sort of image or you know, kind of word that I would hope would be able to grow among churches and communities, younger people that it's a good thing to be.
(Neal, evangelical pastor)

Perhaps coincidental or a reflection of a recent conversation, Neal's wife Carla used the same words – “It's a good life” – while reflecting on the many years she has spent as a clergy spouse. While there are immense challenges in serving a church as pastor, the people I interviewed for this study emanate an overall sense of happiness and satisfaction. Indeed, the stress of work that is an all-encompassing, highly public lifestyle is alleviated by the fact that clergy embrace the calling, recognize the ways it impacts multiple levels of everyday life and still consider it good.

Research suggests that pastors are most committed to their work when they find it engaging, challenging and personally fulfilling (Hoge, Dyble and Polk 1981).

Throughout my interviews, it was common to hear pastors talk about their general love for their work despite the all-encompassing nature, and it is clear they are deeply committed to the church specifically and the tenets of Christianity more broadly. Although clergy feel like they are “always a pastor” and in that public role, many list areas they genuinely enjoy and repeatedly mention how great it feels to have a job involving ideas and responsibilities that are fulfilling and meaningful. Lisa saw many parallels between her personal interests and her job responsibilities:

I love doing worship. I love designing worship. I enjoy music and so just the whole thing of putting together something that makes sense where the music and everything ties into a theme and it all kind of fits together and is aesthetically pleasing. I really enjoy doing that. That to me satisfies a creative part of my nature.

Similarly, Andy, who did not originally intend to become a pastor even as he entered seminary, is continually surprised at how much he enjoys his work. While he expected ministry to be “a season” in his life, he has stuck with it through three churches and is now developing a new congregation in the city:

It’s been just much better than I ever thought it would be. Going into it, I thought I would...I thought I would go into the ministry for two, three years, I’ll get ordained and then I’ll do something else. I’m the kind of person who always likes to keep their doors or options open, whether it was journalism or I kind of flirted with campus ministry or other various things. I just never thought I would enjoy this as much as I have. So yeah. And the fact that it really can be a great thing for our family.

Andy’s comments include an important distinction that addresses the balance between a highly public, all-encompassing role and “the good life” so many pastors appreciate about their work. Andy can rarely “hide” from his clergy role and his wife Claire and their two children are brought into the public nature of ministry, most notably as his new

endeavor drastically shifts the family's lifestyle. Yet describing how he appreciates the community connections and involvement of his entire family in the church, it is clear that the all-encompassing, public role is less a burden for Andy and more a benefit.

It is interesting to see how clergy, who are cautious about divulging aspects of their personal life to the congregation, still seem to appreciate some of the all-inclusive aspects of ministry. Just as in the other positive and challenging trends discussed in this chapter, the balance between the difficulty of a highly public role and the hidden benefits are entwined with a pastor's sense of call to vocational ministry. As clergy talk about the good life that is work in a church, it is clear that the positive perspective largely stems from a deep and profound integration of tightly held religious beliefs and the other aspects of life – work and family in particular. In other words, pastors embrace a calling to a certain lifestyle because they already believe in its fundamental values and purpose.

Jen's experience serves as a good example of this trend. Growing up, she always loved being at church, and therefore none of her family or friends are surprised that she became a pastor. In her eyes, she is fortunate to be able to combine something she enjoys personally and finds extremely significant with her day-to-day work:

It is crazy to me that I get paid to study God's word. Hello? Like that's the greatest thing ever. I love the bible, so I really enjoy studying the scriptures. I really enjoy reading commentaries and trying to figure out how the text applies to our modern lives and what God's truth is in it and what does it mean for us.

She later added:

I can't imagine doing anything else. I love the work that I get to do and it brings me great joy and I pray that it brings God glory. You know, it's a wonderful...I receive my call as a gift. I really do. I can't imagine doing

anything else. At the same time, it's just like anything like that you truly love, there's a challenge to it and it impacts the rest of your life.

For clergy, the public lifestyle and its engrossing responsibilities are palatable because pastors believe so strongly in the broader message on which the church exists. Thus, being called to serve a congregation in this way and involving a spouse and children in the process is, in the eyes of many pastors in this study, a privilege.

Along with the family connections clergy cite, pastors also willingly take on the visible, public role because they greatly enjoy seeing the outcome of their ministry on congregants. Gwen, for instance, is genuinely captivated in reading the bible and as such welcomes the chance to share its message with others:

So right now I'm reading Romans and it's in the lectionary and it's really exciting to read Romans. And then I think if I only I could help somebody else experience the love and the wonder of what's in the bible. If I can pass on that love, no matter what lesson we're doing, then they would get it.

Others, like Eva, appreciate opportunities to portray the positive side of Christianity, challenging many of the problematic images she feels people associate with her tradition:

That's really been an important or an exciting part of my ministry here, has been to help people really see the church in a way that isn't at all like the stereotype the culture would have it be. Help people wrestle with what does it mean to identify as a Christian in a world where most people think Christians are whack jobs.

While these exchanges necessarily mean pastors are publicly sharing personal ideas (perhaps opening themselves up to potential scrutiny), they experience immense fulfillment in doing so because, in their view, ministry and more broadly Christianity has a strong, positive effect on people. Being the representative of this important, powerful message is perhaps one of the most significant elements of a calling to ministry and one

clergy take very seriously. Furthermore, as clergy willingly accept the challenges a calling to vocational ministry brings, this immense satisfaction reinforces the beliefs pastors hold as motivating forces in their work, a central rewarding factor for those who serve churches as pastors.

Summary

Clergy view their work as more than a job or career. Vocational ministry is a sacred calling in the eyes of pastors and with it comes heavy responsibility and a willingness to make significant sacrifices. In this chapter, I explore four of the most challenging aspects of pastoral work – the demanding, unconventional schedule, difficulties in working with people, the stress of “real life” issues like death and personal life scrutiny. Although each of these areas poses ongoing strain for the clergy in this study, they still willingly embrace the challenge because it legitimizes their sense of call, transforming a spiritual idea into a social reality that continually informs the work of a pastor. And when a pastor finds legitimacy in their calling, the lack of boundaries between public and private life are much easier to manage, because the challenges are justified by the satisfaction that comes in fulfilling a greater purpose.

The sacred call pastors take on is further reinforced by the fulfillment they find amidst the difficult responsibilities and tasks of ministry work. Each of the four challenges I discuss holds within it a benefit that clergy experience as unique to the field and rewarding. Pastors, therefore, more readily accept the sacrificial nature of a calling because they find satisfaction and meaning that lessens the strain and further legitimizes the sacred calling to vocational ministry.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Church was not...It was not the job, it was the family business. Not only was it something you did but it was something that you believed in. You know? We didn't get together and light candles at Christmas time to celebrate capitalism or the fact that the federal regulators have come out with the new ISB pronouncement on such and such depreciation.

--Bruce, mainline spouse

The comparison Bruce makes between his corporate job and Eva's work as a pastor is couched in humor, but his point is sincere. Regardless of his occupational demands or the responsibilities associated with raising two children, the church has always been central in their family. Bruce is no different than the other clergy spouses I interviewed, all of whom define themselves apart from the church through career, family, school or hobbies. And like most working families with children, both Bruce and Eva repeatedly mention the difficulties of parenting and maintaining their home while also pouring considerable energy into their respective occupations. Yet despite his own overabundance of work and family demands, as a clergy spouse Bruce acknowledges that church is the primary focus. It is the family business.

Managing the demands of work and family life is an ongoing struggle for people seeking to balance multiple responsibilities. Research cites an incompatibility between paid labor and the demands of personal life (Folbre 2001) – most notably parenting (Crittenden 2002; Deutsch 2002; Williams 2000) and the lack of adequate and affordable childcare (Edin and Lein 1997; Hansen 2005) – which means balance more often

becomes a juggling act. The clergy families in this study are no different than other middle class families in this regard and the people I met all shared examples where handling an overload of responsibilities pushed them to the limit of time, energy and resources.

Yet for clergy families, balancing church responsibilities alongside personal life is not just a task for a pastor – her or his spouse and children are also brought into the mix. Indeed, other occupations exist where people contribute unpaid labor toward their spouse's success (Kanter 1977, Finch 1983). Spouses may entertain business clients or children visit a parent at the office, but clergy spouses and children are often intricately connected to the ongoing operations of a church as members and participants as well. In the previous chapter, I stress that vocational ministry is a lifestyle to which pastors are called, and this calling serves as a means for leveling the challenges of church work alongside its rewards. In this chapter, I consider how the calling to vocational ministry affects clergy families, the ways they become involved in the church, what informs the degree of participation and the social consequences of this engagement.

Following her study in the late 1970s on the marital satisfaction of clergy wives, Hartley (1978) predicts that this role will continue to diversify with multiple ways of living out this position. This is certainly true given the various ways clergy spouses participating in this research interact with churches. However, while the amount and type of engagement among clergy spouses in this study varies greatly, all are in some way connected to the church their wife or husband pastors. I begin by outlining the levels of involvement for clergy spouses, focusing on three models of participation – the

partnership model, the layperson model and the independent model, followed by a discussion on the factors that inform the three models of participation. While spouses describe their involvement in churches based on their interests and choices, it is clear that they face both overt and hidden expectations. Along with this, there are some noticeable trends around gender, age and religion that significantly impact a spouse's level of engagement in the church. I suggest that, while spouses actively choose how much or little to participate in the church, their decisions are set in both a general and particular social context.

There are definite consequences stemming from the integration of family into vocational ministry. The lack of boundaries clergy families encounter negatively impacts marital and parental satisfaction, and moreover clergy families may experience stress from the lack of social support in churches (Morris and Blanton 1994). This stress can be especially strong when it comes to the place of children in the church. Seventeen of the twenty-three couples in this study are parents, and among those fourteen share how vocational ministry plays (or played) a significant role in shaping their children's upbringing. The remaining couples entered ministry later in life after their children were grown, but discuss feeling fortunate they avoided the pressure of raising a child in the church. It is, therefore, apparent that parenting alongside a calling to vocational ministry brings additional and sometimes complicated challenges, and I explore these issues focusing on the positive and negative consequences of the family business on pastors' children. Finally, I close this chapter by providing a means of understanding the ways

clergy families approach work-family balance, which serves as an analytical model moving forward.

The Partnership Model

Let me count the ways I'm not involved in my church.

--Mark, mainline spouse

Mark is so heavily engaged in the church where his wife, Lisa, serves as solo pastor that when I asked him to describe how he is involved in the church, he listed an extensive array of volunteer responsibilities and formal committees – deacons, the building committee – along with tasks he covers as needed like miscellaneous repairs or cooking for a church event. In his view, there are no boundaries between church and other realms of his life:

In some cases I see some things that aren't being done and I just do them. If somebody ain't going to do it and it needs to be done, it gets done. So that's what I mean when I say "What boundaries?" And then last weekend Lisa was sick. I did the sermon. I ran the service. When she gets sick at midnight, you can't get a pulpit supply so I do it.

Mark represents one approach to church participation – the partnership model – where a spouse embraces the idea of a shared calling and is deeply involved in the church beyond most members. Although Mark has other responsibilities working as an adjunct instructor at a local college, he is heavily committed to Lisa's church and does whatever is necessary to keep it running smoothly, even to the point of filling in as pastor on a Sunday when she is sick.

Mark's willingness to deliver the sermon in his wife's absence is unique, but his approach to involvement is not. For some spouses, participation is a way to establish a

place in the church and build connections with people, seeing ministry as a partnership. Both Carla and Paula prepare dinner for roughly one hundred congregants on a weekly basis, coupled with other ongoing responsibilities. Along with providing childcare for a young mothers group, Carla also teaches Sunday school to the youngest children so she can get to know them early on in their lives. Her reasoning for doing this fits with her highly involved presence at the church – learning their names now means she will always know who they are as they grow up. Paula also volunteers as a youth leader and regularly holds dessert gatherings at home for church members so she and Ryan can get to know people better.

It was not unusual for spouses to talk about ministry as a shared calling, believing they, too, have a significant responsibility to contribute to the church. In talking about Kurt's work as a pastor, Bev indicates, "everything revolves around his job." For example, working as a substitute teacher, she periodically declines work requests in order to attend a church funeral. I asked for her thoughts on their family revolving around Kurt's job and she replied, "I'm not uncomfortable because I think that you're called to it, too. I mean, if you're going to marry a pastor, you better be called to that or else don't do it." Penny used similar language:

I felt as much called to be a pastor's wife I think, as he felt called to be a pastor, which is really the best way for it to be. I know it probably isn't always that way. I really felt like we were going to do some ministry together.

Framing ministry as a joint effort, and more broadly a shared, sacred calling means that spouses perceive almost as much accountability in the success of the church as the pastor.

They are clearly incorporated into the lifestyle of vocational ministry and enthusiastically embrace the role of clergy spouse.

Partnership spouses reach beyond church activities and also provide indirect support, resulting in greater space for pastors to fulfill the demands of church, much like Kanter's (1977) analysis of corporate wives. For example, while Carla talked about how much she enjoys her work as a nurse because it gives her a focus of her own outside the church, she also appreciates the flexibility of working the overnight shift leaving her daytime free to cover needs at church. Penny likewise found ways outside the church to support Robert's work:

I feel as for me and my role as a pastor's wife, my priority is to be a support to him and so when the kids were little and stuff like that, I mean my goals were just to manage the house. I still had to work but just kind of manage the house. If I could manage the house and make sure he had a meal when he was supposed to have a meal that I was doing as much for the church, and keeping the kids under control, that I was doing as much for the church as I could.

Penny and Carla both apply the partnership model inside and outside church, adjusting schedules and responsibilities around the needs and demands of their husbands' ministries. While these couples represent two-career families, it is clear that church is the central component around which spouses adapt their occupations, fitting Becker and Moen's (1999) suggestion that contemporary families more often take a one-job, one-career focus in order to manage the conflict between competing pressures.

It is important to note that within the partnership model, spouses refer to participation in terms of "gifts" or things they enjoy doing. Penny said that "plugging in holes" is her spiritual gift, and thus she felt like it was natural to perform so many different tasks at Robert's church. As a theologian, Martha's involvement also directly

relates to her professional interests. She teaches Sunday school for adults and regularly assists Trey with his sermons, which he feels are better because of Martha's contributions:

We work together on a lot of my sermons. We'll sit down and I'll say, "Here's the text. Give me your insights." She'll go over what she sees as a theologian and then I'll get her insights and then I'll put it together and I think that makes my sermons unequivocally stronger sermons because there's a whole other layer added by a theologian.

Although Martha has a demanding career of her own, she is extremely committed to Trey's church, taking her skills and interests and applying them to his work. As such, church becomes almost as central to Martha's life as it is to Trey.

However, there is an important distinction to make in outlining the characteristics of partnership spouses. While Martha tries to focus her energy on ways she can connect her own interests to the betterment of Trey's ministry, she acknowledges a willingness to cover tasks as needed, such as preparing dinner for a weekly meeting of new Christians or helping decorate the church:

I'll do whatever I need to do. I'm now on the decorating committee and I've been doing stuff there. So you know I'm very happy to be involved but I also realized I have to be involved deliberately in very key things that I can kind of do quickly and well and then I've got to pull back and focus on this, because my research is really where I'm going to benefit the church, not by doing supper after supper after supper. Though I'm happy to do it if I'm needed. In fact, it's a nice break from studying to do something with my hands because I'm always in books.

Spouses who utilize the partnership model are constantly looking out for areas where help is needed, suggesting that "picking up slack" is an important if not crucial contribution. Yet I never had the impression these spouses felt overburdened by church. Vocational ministry is much more than a husband or wife's occupation – it is a lifestyle

where spouses in particular are deeply embedded in the ongoing operations of the church, “filling holes” as Penny describes. And contributing to the church in these ways means they are not merely helping their spouse do a better job at work as Kanter’s (1977) research suggests. For clergy spouses who approach ministry as a partnership, they are also fulfilling a sacred call.

The Layperson Model

I feel fortunate in that way that she didn’t wait and spring it on me ten years down the road. “By the way, I think I want to change my career and go into ministry.” You know? And she never hesitates to remind me “You had your chance. You could have gotten out. You knew what I was doing.” Before we got engaged, she was talking about seminary. I know I had my chance.

--Charlie, mainline spouse

Charlie laughed as he recounted this exchange between him and Kimberly, referring to the inevitable impact her work would have on his life should they get married. They did, of course, marry and Charlie has indeed experienced some changes based on Kimberly’s work as a pastor. Most notably, Charlie left the church in which he was involved for over ten years, a change he did not want but one he took on nonetheless because of his wife’s new job. He is involved in their new church in ways he feels comfortable – playing piano for the youth choir, providing freelance design work at no charge – but he does these things because he is used to being active in his spiritual community and by virtue of his marriage, Kimberly’s church is that community. His experience is not unlike other spouses who are brought into a role more by default than choice. Charlie represents a second approach of participation – the layperson model –

where spouses are involved in the church, but more as a member than a partner in ministry.

Layperson model husbands and wives are committed to their spouse's churches but they do not articulate the same shared sense of calling to ministry as in the partnership model. Instead, they suggest that ministry is the pastor's work and calling, separate from a spouse's work, family and personal responsibilities. For instance, Jane describes her relationship to Howard's church this way:

[Y]ou know, when they accepted him as their pastor, he was their pastor and I had my own life. And I was a parishioner and I would be involved however I chose to be involved but they didn't get a twofer. And he never had to say that and there was never, ever any "Yeah, buts" from the church leadership or the church community. There was never any of the "But so and so always did it that way." There was never any of that.

She went on to say how much she enjoyed being a leader in the Stephen ministry program, especially now that her work schedule is much less demanding. Her volunteer work stems from personal interests and skills, like partnership model spouses, but it is limited to those areas. In other words, while spouses like Penny and Mark (who fit the partnership model) are will to do almost anything at church as needed, layperson model spouses are much more selective and willing to say "no."

The sense of call layperson model spouses connect to their role is separate from their wife or husband's calling to vocational ministry. It is far more general and directed at the church as a religious institution active Christians are called to serve. Thus, it is a similar calling that other members might feel in relation to their own participation and commitment to a church community. Jen and Scott serve as a good example of this distinction:

[O]ne of the things that we did early on is make very clear that Scott had a job and it wasn't at the church. Scott is a professional, that he has work that he does, that he would be involved in some things in the church, but those things would be of his choosing and of God's calling of him, just like for average Joe member. (Jen, evangelical pastor)

Here, Jen uses the term "calling" in talking about Scott, but in a more open sense around his personal beliefs and interest in participating in a church. And from Scott's perspective, he is comfortable picking and choosing activities to support, such as an evening bible study or a justice-focused committee, based on what he finds personally fulfilling, not out of pressure from his role. Ian took a similar approach, which his wife, Sasha, supports:

I think she's glad that I have been involved as much as I am but she doesn't seem to be calling on me to do a lot more or anything. She seems pretty comfortable with letting me find my...I think she and I both appreciate how important it is for people to say no when they need to for involvements and not do things out of obligation, so I think that's pretty solid in her and I share that and we appreciate each other that way.

Pastors are generally accepting of layperson model spouses who prefer to integrate into the church in more limited ways and for these couples, there is a definite balance between the job and calling aspects of vocational ministry. Whereas partnership model spouses embrace the lifestyle of ministry and frequently talk of a shared calling, layperson model spouses draw more boundaries between church and family, leaning closer toward the idea that ministry is a job for which they are not responsible.

Yet layperson model spouses enjoy church and clearly want to be involved. The key distinction from the partnership model is that layperson model spouses see church much like a voluntary activity rather than a responsibility. Describing Jane's involvement, Howard says, "She comes to Sunday school if it's a good class. If it's a

boring class, she won't come. But she kind of does what she wants. She does what feels fulfilling to her." Similarly, Hannah considers her participation in Evan's churches to be in line with other members, teaching Sunday school out of her own interest. She also chooses which of the multiple services to attend based on their daughter's schedule, rather than attending both the Saturday evening and Sunday morning events. Be it personal fulfillment or working around a child's schedule, layperson model spouses approach church as an enjoyable part of their week but put limits on how fully they are brought into the workings of the congregation itself.

There are some instances, however, where layperson model spouses take on tasks out of pressure more than interest, though this is much less common than in the partnership model. Hannah has been trying for some time to end her involvement with children's church (a separate activity time for young kids during the worship service) but continues helping because of limited volunteers. Similarly, Bruce does not particularly like to sing, but the choir at Eva's church needs more men. His experience represents more of a transition from a partnership approach to layperson, based on the changes and growth of Eva's church:

If activities needed an extra body I was pretty much always here. Fortunately that's changed a lot too because there's more critical mass here now. Before, you know, there's a skating party, you go to the skating party. The men's group. You go to the men's group. There's a men's retreat now. I don't want to go to the men's retreat, but I go to the men's retreat.

Roy is also drawn into things he would rather not do, like shoveling the church steps in the winter. When I asked how this played out, he explained:

I don't even know if we had talked about what happens to the grass or to the snow, but because of some physical limitations I just didn't want to be expected to be doing that. Nine years later, I've been doing it for about nine years. Not the grass, but the snow.

He went on to say:

Somebody's got to do it. I have, again because of some health issues, had to occasionally just leave it and either somebody else will come and do it or people will come and try to walk into church through the snow. And that's not very inviting. I try to do what I can to make the church an inviting place because I want Helen's ministry to be successful. So you know, if it means the walk and the steps need to be shoveled before church on a Sunday morning, I'll grumble about it and go do it.

Roy's comments highlight another key distinction between the layperson and partnership models. Bruce, Hannah and Roy willingly participate in ways they would rather not for the sake of their wife or husband's ministry, but they openly express that this is not their preference. Whereas spouses like Martha, Carla and Penny seem eager for the chance to help on a committee that needs more members or cook a meal on short notice, layperson model spouses approach these situations begrudgingly and describe the tasks as chores. They still help, but with much less excitement, and take an opportunity to quit an undesirable committee or activity if that chance arises.

The Independent Model

His first week, they sent me an email. "Oh, we're starting a new members class on Sunday. It starts at 10 a.m." I'm like "Holy crap. How did you people find me?"

--Lindsay, evangelical pastor and spouse

Lindsay was not prepared for an invitation to join Chris's church so soon after he began serving as co-pastor. Like some of the couples I interviewed, Lindsay and Chris

are a clergy couple, but since finishing seminary Lindsay has been unable to find a full-time position in a church or ministry. As a discouraged pastor in an unfulfilling, secular job, Lindsay struggles with her role as a pastor's wife and found it extremely difficult to see Chris's church as a spiritual home. Therefore, she decided the best solution was to find a separate church. Lindsay represents what I call the independent model where spouses choose to attend a different church, distinctly separating personal religious practices from their spouse's place of work.

Unlike layperson model spouses who took on responsibilities by default, sometimes hesitantly fulfilling tasks out of need, independent model spouses draw much firmer lines. For example, Lindsay is periodically asked to help at Chris's church but says, "I'm leery of things that give me any sort of official position. Like I got an email about would I like to greet and welcome people at the door and I turned that down." Furthermore, independent model spouses frequently take a no-apologies approach when limiting their involvement. Gwen and Eric work at churches in two different suburbs, and while Gwen's current position is both part-time and temporary, she is only minimally involved in Eric's church:

I was on the super secret sub list for Sunday school. You couldn't count on me front line but if you called and you were desperate I would help out. And then also right away they asked me to sing in the choir and I said, "I don't do that. I don't sing." I don't go to all the old ladies luncheons. That's not me. So just helping the church understand that. It was not new to them. The previous pastor's wife worked full time downtown and was never there. (Gwen, mainline pastor and spouse)

Although they consider Eric's church the family's congregation, Gwen actually uses her part-time position as a means for easily opting out of activities without explanation. As

evidenced in her comments above, she is clear about her limits and does not take on responsibilities in which she is not interested.

While layperson spouses frame involvement around what other congregants might do, spouses who take the independent approach see their role as even more disconnected compared to members. Elsa attended the suburban congregation where Adam previously worked but did not feel like the church was a fulfilling spiritual experience, therefore she became involved in a more fitting urban congregation that met Sunday evenings. Elsa justified her decision by separating herself from other members, suggesting she had less responsibility to participate in Adam's church than the rest of the congregation:

I wasn't about to give up my job and really felt like the best thing for me to do, although I wanted to attend church, was to not take on any responsibilities at all. It was to just sort of be there, be supportive, get to know people but that's it. You know, I'm not here to take on a lot of responsibility or anything like that. I feel like that's really up to them. This is their church...I'm not a member of the church so I feel like it's up to the members of the church to take on those responsibilities and I'm just the family of the pastor.

Elsa feels neither called to be a pastor's spouse nor an active member because, like other independent spouses, the church is strictly her husband's job. Her congregation meets on Sunday evening, freeing her mornings to attend with Adam, but beyond this her participation is limited.

Sam makes a similar distinction, choosing to remain at his long-time church even after his wife, Barbara, made a career change into vocational ministry:

I really didn't want to cut all the ties to our church because as close as you have to be when you're a pastor, A, you need a little space and B, eventually she won't work there and that probably won't be our church of choice. (Sam, mainline spouse)

Again, there is a strong emphasis on the church as Barbara's place of work, as in Elsa's narrative. As a long time member and active participant in music programs, it makes sense in Sam's eyes to stay involved in their "home church" knowing Barbara will one day retire.

Yet even within the independent model, church still resembles a family business where spouses support the pastor's church and ministry. Sam occasionally visits Barbara's church for special events, like weekly summer picnics or occasional movie nights, noting the importance of getting to know the congregants. Elsa attended church with Adam mainly out of her own perceived expectations from members:

I still went to the church in [the suburb] where he was a pastor most every Sunday and just would go to this other church in addition. We used to joke that I was the one that was more prayed up between the two of us because I went to church twice on Sunday. But yeah, I did both. Although I think he would have been fine with me not coming to church with him, it was an older, more traditional congregation. I do think there would have been...It might have reflected not as well on him if I hadn't come on a fairly regular basis with him to church. So I did both.

And Joanna, who has her own, separate church from the congregation Ralph pastors, finds ways to connect with people in his church:

I'm always happy on a Sunday afternoon to go to the hospital with him or something like that or eat out with people, but I don't do it every week. I have my own church and my own life and work it out.

Ralph works as an interim pastor, spending short periods of time in churches going through transition, but Joanna prefers to stay part of the same congregation she has attended for many years. But along with joining him on visits, she attends services roughly once per month and repeatedly mentions that her monetary success allows her to give generously to her own church as well as Ralph's. Even among spouses taking a

highly separate, independent approach to involvement, there is still a level of support for the church that maintains the connection between family life and vocational ministry. Regardless of the spouse's approach to participation, church is consistently the family business.

Social Sources of Clergy Spouse Participation

These three models lend further support to the notion that clergy spouses do not easily fit into neat categories. They are much more than passive support people for the pastor and instead choose unique and varying roles (Hartley 1978). Detwiler-Breidenbach (2000) shows the integral and powerful position Maria plays as the wife of a pastor in an immigrant church where her contributions are central to the operations of this ministry and she is considered a second pastor alongside her husband. Maria is far from passive in her role, and her integral involvement highlights the fact that clergy spouses are actively engaged in the family business on a vast array of levels. But this example also illustrates the importance of context and the way outside factors help shape the model spouses embrace. While clergy spouses make concerted choices over how to be involved in the church, these decisions are rooted in pressure from expectations, as well as broader social factors like gender and denominational affiliation. In this section, I explore several trends – micro, meso and macro level factors – which influence the approach spouses take toward their role in the church.

Micro-Level Influences: Interpersonal Expectations

External pressure from congregants represents one source of influence on clergy spouses, informing the fact that all three models of spouse involvement include some support for the church. Several people share that churches have very particular ideas about how they should look, act and participate. For example, Evan's congregants question his wife Hannah's choice to attend only one of the two weekend services:

[I]f Hannah and Grace aren't there on Sunday, these old people who have expected, who have a vision about what a pastor's wife is supposed to look like and be, they notice. And it's not a good enough answer for them to say, "She's been to church. She came on Saturday." It should be, but it's not.

Hannah also notices pressure and says she tries not to let the congregation's expectations force her to do something, maintaining her position as a layperson spouse. But she mentions the need to justify her choices, just like Evan has to explain her reasons for attending only one service, showing the power of external expectations.

It is difficult to determine how expectations impact the partnership model since these spouses are typically very involved at the outset. Before Courtney joined the staff at Austin's church, she represented the partnership model and when I asked about pressure from the church, she did not feel like her role as pastor's wife came with specific responsibilities: "I don't think if there was something I really didn't want to do, they'd be like 'You need to do it because you're the pastor's wife.'" However, she immediately began helping in a number of areas at the church – teaching Sunday school, volunteering with the youth group and helping with the mid-week dinner programs – and admits she would likely feel pressure if she had not become so active: "I got really involved right

away because I wanted to be. I think there probably would certainly be pressure if I weren't involved." Claire expresses a similar idea:

So I think it's a good thing that there aren't... That I don't feel like there are these expectations, but I have a feeling if I weren't involved it would still be sort of a "His wife never comes to anything" kind of thing.

Partnership model spouses often overlook expectations because of their heightened engagement with the church, but the expectations are still present. And while these expectations may not be a primary source of pressure, they do exert a subtle, perhaps indirect influence.

Expectations and pressure are not just external social factors, as clergy spouses also share their own, internal views over how a clergy spouse should be involved in the church. Sometimes these internal expectations create even more powerful pressure than what comes from the congregation. For instance, Elsa's participation seems to stem more from her own ideas than any overt demands articulated by congregants:

I don't think they had any particular expectations for my involvement besides I think they probably expected me to be there on Sundays, although they certainly never said that to Adam or said that to me. I think they would have been disappointed if I hadn't come to church on Sundays. But other than that, there were no particular expectations that I would lead groups or I don't think anyone expected me to set up the coffee hour or something like that. I just did it because it was not that hard and it made sense and I was there.

Similarly, Bruce's level of participation, which began as a partnership approach and eventually moved toward the layperson model, is couched in his own perceptions of a clergy spouse:

[W]e've spent a lot of time thinking about it, both Eva and I, because Eva was raised with I think a little bit different expectation about church than I was. For us, it was absolutely all consuming. My father had three churches

when I was a kid, so we were always in the process of something. Everything focused or rolled around that. Eva's father treated it a little bit more like a job and had some boundaries around it.

Eva notices the pressure Bruce puts on himself, also acknowledging how his past experience affects his relationship with her church:

He has these self-imposed expectations that I think are deeply seeded in his own parents' experience. His dad was definitely of the era that when you answered a call, your wife was part of that. And it was a package deal. And that was not the case with my mother. Although she was heavily involved in the church, she never felt like she had to live up to anybody's expectations about anything. So I think that's colored how much he has done or not done more so than my expectations of what he's done, which that gets all tangled up a bit, too. I'm not sure where it comes from.

In other words, pressure does not need to come from the church per se in order to impact the pastor's spouse. While pressure from the church is strongest in the stories people share, there are noticeable, internal expectations that also inform the level to which clergy spouses engage with the church.

Meso-Level Influences – Local Church Culture

Local church culture is another factor playing a central role in shaping clergy spouse participation, in particular, precedence set by previous clergy spouses, which almost all spouses reference in our discussions. Congregations are influenced by the local context in which they exist (Ammerman 2005; Chaves 2004) and vary greatly in how they operate (Becker 1999). Scott does not feel like the church where his wife, Jen, pastors has many expectations of him, but he senses this is partly because the previous pastor was a single woman. Likewise, Eric's church has few expectations on Gwen since the previous pastor's wife was rarely involved:

I just acknowledged that she will be as involved as she wants to be. Probably not as much as some have been and probably more substantively than others. My predecessor's wife, I don't know what she did professionally but was seldom here. So it's kind of a low bar to come in, so it was good.

Gwen's independent approach, therefore, fits well in this church culture as does Scott's slightly more engaged layperson model of participation. Overall, spouses appreciate the minimal expectations with Scott saying, "I wouldn't mind people coming up to me and asking me if I want to be involved in something or different ways to get involved in the church. That's fine. But I think I just haven't felt pressure, which has been nice." When there is no one in the immediate history to whom a spouse is compared, or if the previous clergy spouse was mostly absent, spouses often have a greater sense of flexibility in the church.

But depending on the church, a seldom-involved former pastor's spouse can have a different impact. Hannah attended a breakfast meeting with Evan while he was interviewing for his current position and noticed the church definitely had expectations for her engagement:

[O]ne outspoken lady, she at some point during breakfast, she said "Well, you seem like the kind of person that would be very involved at the church and really support your husband." And it's like, I'm not sure what to do with that. And it kind of became clear from anecdotes that Evan shared with me, it became clear that people were a little frustrated that the previous pastor's wife was not involved much at all. So I knew there was kind of that expectation but for me, I've tried to be involved in the same way that I would if I was just an average layperson.

The fact that Hannah was asked to attend the interview is telling of the congregational culture, and this is not uncommon in churches, particularly for the evangelical clergy with whom I spoke. Along with this, Hannah also noticed long-standing ideas about

clergy spouse involvement and found that precedence set by the previous pastor's spouse, who was barely present, actually created more pressure on Hannah than seen in the other instances.

Standards set by past clergy spouses serve to reinforce the amount of involvement the current spouse accepts, illustrating the interactive dynamics in these processes. At Trey's church, Martha feels people are hesitant to ask for her help since the former pastor's wife was very distant and rarely participated in church functions. She uses this example to support her partnership approach:

They think that I'm more fragile or my boundaries are more fragile. They're like "Should we ask Martha?" I'm like "Yeah, don't worry. I'm fine. I'm not like the other pastor's wife." She wouldn't...She'd sit up in the balcony. She just didn't even want to be mentioned in a sermon or anybody draw attention to her. It was a really odd relationship. I don't get it.

A spouse's experience with a different church can also serve as a factor in how they respond to the local church culture. Like Martha, Penny also found it surprising that Robert's current church had so few expectations:

At this church, I didn't feel like there was any expectation. It was a really unique situation for me. They were just used to, I guess because they didn't have a pastor for a little while, they were just used to doing. So they didn't seem to really care if I did anything, which was totally bizarre and I totally didn't feel right just showing up to stuff and not doing anything. I'd never had that before.

For both Martha and Penny, their current churches appreciate their heightened level of involvement, likely because it represents a different, more active model of participation. From the perspective of partnership model spouses, comparisons to the previous clergy

spouse provide reinforcement for the notion of a shared calling, particularly when the expectations are low.

The only instances where spouses truly seem to avoid any pressure or expectation are larger churches where the clergy family is much less visible than these other examples. Beth's church has a precedence of pastors spouse's being involved as much or little as they please and thus she feels there is minimal pressure on her husband, Tom (who is also a pastor, but serves in a ministry that meets during non-traditional hours.)

People believe that they are hiring one person and not magically two. Some of that I think is about size, class, history of expectation and I don't think that has been the case. Then the folks that have been here have had wives and/or husbands that are also employed and have whole other things that they have to do and people get that I think. But they're always glad to see him.

This may be related to Tom's work as a pastor elsewhere, but he also links the lack of expectations to the church's culture:

It is a larger church and more on a corporate model so I think it is more of a feeling of these are our pastors, and not in all the negative stuff but our paid employees. But there hasn't been any sort of expectation like the two for one deal. I don't feel that.

Charlie, Jane and Ian all share similar experiences as Tom, supporting the correlation between large churches and lower pressure on the pastor's spouse. Furthermore, spouses in smaller, tighter knit congregations (particularly those with solo pastors) like Hannah, Roy and Elsa experience a more noticeable impact from the congregational culture.

Macro-Level Influences – Social and Religious Factors

Along with the expectations of individuals and the various church cultures, some broader social factors impact the approaches spouses take with church involvement.

Overall, I noticed few patterns among layperson model spouses, likely because this approach is a balance between the notion of a shared calling and the more distant relationship some spouses develop with congregations. However, in both the partnership and independent models, there are several trends that help explain why a person might take this stance on the role of clergy spouse.

While some mainline spouses embrace the partnership approach, the independent model is more common among these families. However, a higher proportion of evangelical spouses utilize the partnership model. These trends are not surprising given the historically traditional family structures embraced by conservative Protestants (Ammerman 1987; Christiano 2000; Wilcox 2004) and the more progressive bent of mainline churches. Although several studies reference the shifting structure of evangelical families, a particular ideology remains quite strong in conservative contexts (Bartkowski 2001; Gallagher 2003; Gallagher and Smith 1999). I would expect, therefore, to see remnants of these ideas present in the church, especially around such central, public positions as the pastor and spouse.

The exceptions to the denominational patterns are clergy couples, who are most frequently independent model spouses regardless of denomination. For example, Lindsay (an evangelical pastor) attends a separate church from the one Chris, her husband, pastors and couches her decision in the challenge over reconciling her identity as a pastor with that of clergy spouse. Annette also admits to struggling over similar role conflict in an evangelical denomination and finds that serving a separate church from her husband, Jeff, helps alleviate some of the tension.

It is important to point out that all but one clergy couple in the study – evangelical and mainline – exhibit an independent model for spousal participation. The exception is Austin and Courtney, who work at the same church. Thus, there is an obvious logistical issue for clergy couples that comes with working in separate congregations. Yet some spouses who take an independent approach indicate this as a preference regardless of the schedule conflict, such as Gwen who seems relieved at finding a part-time ministry position that allows for some distance from Eric’s church. As such, the correlation between clergy couples and the independent model is not simply an outcome of logistics. Instead, I believe it stems more from the conflict between multiple, competing roles noticeable in Lindsay and Annette’s examples.

The gender patterns in the models provide further backing for this argument. The majority of spouses embracing a shared calling and ministry as a partnership are women (Mark being the one exception) but interestingly, with the exception of Sam, women also comprise the majority of independent model spouses. The sample in this study is small, which could account for these trends, but given that gender has long served as a contested realm in religious institutions (Ingersoll 2003), particularly more conservative evangelical contexts, the connections are more about the historical gendering of the clergy spouse role and what I see as recent resistance to that gendering. While current sociological research on pastors includes the important recognition that both men and women serve as clergy, research on clergy families remains highly gendered and limited in its scope. Moreover, within the narratives I collected for this study, almost all participants point to gender as a defining factor in the image of pastors and clergy spouses, an area I discuss in

more detail in Chapter Five. Despite the reality in most denominations, there remains a dominant view that pastors are men married to women.

Given that pastors and spouses still frequently cite this outdated, yet powerful, assumption, it makes sense that the spousal participation approaches follow certain patterns around gender. Just as evangelical spouses show a stronger leaning toward the partnership model, women fall into this category as well due to continued gendered perspectives on religious authority. Although the five denominations included in this study ordain women, views on gender and authority among members in local congregations do not always shift alongside broader church policies (Chaves 1997; Wallace 1992; Zikmund et al. 1998). Furthermore, research highlights the ways some women in religious contexts interpret a supportive position as empowering (Brasher 1998; Griffith 1997; Kaufmann 1991; Pevey, Williams and Ellison 1996). While the spouses in this study do not exhibit the same submissive tendencies, they are by no means passive subjects of historical gender ideologies and do make concerted choices (albeit within a particular context) over their level of participation in the church.

The trend toward more women exhibiting an independent approach sheds additional light on the ways women actively pursue a particular role in the church. Here, I suggest that women have become so aware of the dominant images and stereotypes of a clergy spouse that they are especially determined to carve out new ways of defining this role. The male spouses of clergywomen are much less insistent on claiming a particular position, perhaps because they feel they are already paving new roads as men (again, a remnant of an historically traditional gender order in the church). This argument

accounts for the relationship between clergy couples and the independent model.

Clergywomen married to pastors exhibit much more role strain compared to their male counterparts. Not only do some wrestle with their role as clergy given ongoing resistance to women's ordination (mostly in evangelical contexts) but they also experience tension as a clergy spouse and uncertainty on how to balance the two positions. Men in clergy couples did not bring up the same concerns as women like Lindsay who felt "defeated" attending Chris's congregation, highlighting the deep significance gender still plays in the church. Taking an independent approach, therefore, helps eliminate the tensions for women, especially pastors.

Finally, age and phase in the lifecycle also influence spouses choosing an independent approach to involvement. Barbara became a pastor much later in life and at that point she and Sam had already been invested in a church for twenty-five years. Therefore, his choice to remain active in his long-time community makes sense. Similarly, Joanna has actively participated in a congregation for many years, and since Ralph frequently moves between churches as an interim pastor, she feels the need to stay settled in her church. As people advance through the lifecycle, balancing work and family responsibilities becomes less burdensome, particularly for women who exhibit greater stress as children are growing up (Higgins, Duxbury and Lee 1994). Consequently, these couples nearing retirement express little tension over the spouse taking a highly independent approach because there are fewer competing demands to manage at this point in life.

Raised in the Family Business

I think as careers go, if I think about it, I think it's better than many to be a parent and be a pastor. But it is complicated.

--Eva, mainline pastor

After hearing many stories from people who tried or are trying to effectively raise PKs or “pastor’s kids,” Eva’s assessment that it is “complicated” is an understatement. Certainly pastors benefit from flexibility and other perks that aid in parenting (especially young children) as I outlined in Chapter Two, but the family business has broad consequences extending beyond pastors and spouses. Like their parents, clergy children are also drawn into the church and face pressures and expectations, but their engagement looks different and includes factors that are complex and challenging for children and parents alike. Although I did not interview children for this study, they are a frequent topic of conversation while discussing work-life balance. In the following sections, I explore the consequences of the family business, considering the impact of vocational ministry on clergy children as told from the parental perspective.

On one level, complications arise when children recognize how much a parent or parents’ work affects their life. For example, as Andy prepares to start a new church in the city, he explains that his daughter has mixed feelings over the idea of moving:

ANDY: She doesn’t seem to be depressed or anything because of the move. She would love it if we changed our minds. But when we’ve gone down to look at schools in the [city neighborhood], she seems to be okay exploring that.

LKJ: What gives you the impression that she’s not happy?

ANDY: She’s told us. When we pray at night, she prays that we’ll change our minds.

Parents relocating children for work is not unusual, nor is it out of the ordinary for a child to resist the change. But being a pastor's kid adds another layer to this potential tension in families. Church is not just a place parents and children attend together on Sundays. For clergy families it is an institution at the center of family life. Eric and Gwen, who both worked at a large church prior to their current, separate positions, saw their daughter make this realization while they served as co-pastors: "Jenna said some time when we were at [our last church], something like 'I wish you weren't pastors. I hate this.' She did one of those little moments. But she mostly loved that church, too" (Gwen, mainline pastor and spouse). Like many Christian parents, the couples in this study talk about the importance of children becoming part of a church community. However, clergy children are integrated into the congregation on a much deeper level than most of their peers, and as such there are some noticeable outcomes.

Jenna's claim of "hate" is partly directed at the church events she often attends but also at the times she waits for her parents to finish greeting members after the Sunday service or does homework in her mom or dad's office while they participate in a committee meeting. Unlike a clergy spouse who can choose how much or little to be involved, clergy children (especially at young ages) cannot as easily limit their participation and soon become highly aware that their mother or father's job has a profound impact on their life. In reflecting on the ways vocational ministry impacted her daughters as they were growing up, Eva provides an insightful comparison:

What I think is that, for pastors, and for pastors who are doing work like we're doing here, the difficulty is, it is like such a huge pressure on kids. It's a double bind in regards to if you have a mom who is a nurse who works nights, it's not unlike that. If you have a mom who is an executive

or something and she works nine to five, she works lots of hours, then you can be pissed about that because you can say, “My mom wasn’t there for me, blah, blah, blah.” But if you have a mom who is doing something altruistic like what I’m doing here or a nurse or a doctor or something, it’s really difficult to be pissed about that because you don’t... You can’t give way or you can’t give voice to that anger because it’s as if you are saying those other people don’t deserve her time or that somehow or another I’m more important than all the huddling masses of the world. And I think that’s tremendous pressure, because I think every kid has to go through a period of time of kind of being resentful that somehow or another their parent didn’t measure up in some way or some form.

Comparing vocational ministry to other careers highlights its “giving” component, as Eva argues, which makes it hard for families to demand more time. And indeed, research suggests certain fields are susceptible to the integration of families, including pastoral ministry (Finch 1983). But the element of a sacred calling sets vocational ministry apart from other altruistic fields like medicine, and clergy children are also brought into the fold, not necessarily as shared partners but as family members necessarily impacted by the responsibilities a parent or parents feels called to fulfill.

For example, parents mention how congregants view their children as an extension of ministry work and develop expectations around their appearance and behavior. This is especially true for Diane and Nick’s son. Because they work at different churches, Kyle either sits with friends or by himself without a parent to supervise, which sometimes leads to Kyle acting out during the service:

The way they do communion at my wife’s church is they pass out the bread and then my wife speaks a few words over the bread and everybody eats it all at once. And then they distribute the wine or the grape juice in individual glasses and they wait until everyone has that and then my wife speaks some words over that and then they all take the grape juice together. And as they were doing the grape juice one Sunday, my son happened to be sitting in worship and as they were getting ready to all drink the grape juice, my son blurted out “Bon Appetit!” very loudly and

some people were horrified and thought it was a horrible thing. (Nick, mainline church staff and pastor's spouse)

Nick laughs at this story, but also acknowledges the spotlight Kyle is constantly under at church given his relationship to the pastor and the unrealistic expectations. Diane notices the same trend, sharing an instance where a congregant compared her son to Kyle and another staff member's child:

[W]e both took a beating from people about how our child wasn't... "My child, when he was in worship at that age, he sat still. He was afraid to move. And your child can't sit still." You know, I'm like "Well I don't see how that's a great thing."

Members often put pastors' children on a pedestal above other children in the church and assume exceptional behavior. In Diane's case, the criticism over Kyle's "unruly" behavior doubles when congregants believe it is the result of a mother who cannot be present at all times. Here, gender intersects with an already stressful situation for Diane.

Pastors tend to bear the brunt of criticism more heavily than their children, since they often hear the comments, yet such pressures can be damaging to children as well.

Kurt and Bev's teenage son reacts to congregational expectations by breaking the stereotype of a well-behaved pastor's kid:

I think for my older son, what I've noticed is that he tries real hard to be normal and not labeled a preacher's kid. So there's testing the waters and swearing and all this kind of stuff to be normal, whatever normal is. I think that adversely affects... Instead of just going through the motions and just living life, he's almost on that other edge of "I'll show you." (Bev, mainline spouse)

Kurt also recognizes some resistance to church from his son:

[T]hey know that there are boundaries but they test those boundaries. But I've not had any problems with the children say being vandals in the

church. But I have had problems where they didn't want to participate in certain things because the expectations were so high.

In this case and others where children feel they must fit a particular mold, they react against it and direct frustration at parents or the church. Gwen and Eric's daughter wears jeans to church as her own way of challenging the role of pastor's kid. On a more profound level, Paula believes her children, who are now grown, are mostly estranged from church because they not only witnessed conflict between their father and the congregation but also faced pressure to be perfectly behaved:

I would have to say that our family, it wasn't just Ryan being attacked by some of the leaders and stuff, and especially the former pastor's wife, it was...Like this pastor's wife having expectations on how our daughters were going to behave. Here they're in high school. It's just all the stuff that goes on in high school and they were involved drinking and stuff, so she would say, "Well, this is how a deacons family is supposed to act."

Clergy families talk about trying to create a "normal" upbringing for their children, but the reality of the family business is that children will also share the spotlight and experience pressure.

While the couples in this study have varied perspectives on spousal expectations, they are much more direct in acknowledging that ministry creates added stress for children. Even couples whose children were grown by the time a parent entered ministry suggest that pastors' children face an added burden growing up. Helen, who describes her children as supportive of her work, is grateful her sons were older when she made a career change:

I did not go to seminary until our second child was a senior in high school so he escaped being a preacher's kid and I'm sure he's very glad. Both of them are. But they have always been very supportive. (Helen, evangelical pastor)

Vocational ministry was a career change for Sasha, too, and her husband Ian points out that their daughters also benefited from the timing:

You know, it was late enough so I think they avoided some of the kinds of issues that some children have when they're the pastor's kid. They were already grown so they didn't run into any of that really I don't think.

These examples highlight the reality of expectations on clergy children but also how readily couples admit that children are a major part of the family business. Parents exhibit a clear sense of relief over sparing their children the additional pressure from life as a pastor's kid. There is no doubt in their minds that, had the children grown up with a clergy parent, things would look profoundly different.

And indeed, for parents whose children grew up in the family business of the church, many stories do center on the strain ministry work adds to the already difficult task of raising children. One major source of tension comes when the roles of parent and pastor conflict. Jane describes a situation where her son, Alex, had a highly critical Sunday school teacher and her husband, Howard, a new pastor at the time was unsure how best to handle the situation in a way that protected their son while being careful to avoid alienating the congregant:

[T]hat was the only time that I can think that his being the pastor compromised our child and there really was not a grievance process. If he had not been the pastor and my kid's getting whopped on by this holy roller, I would have been able to go to the pastor and have a conversation about that and figure something out, but that wasn't going to happen in that dynamic. That always... That was a sad thing. He would do it entirely differently now because he's forty years older and a few more resources in problem solving and relationship skills, but at that point he didn't and Alex ended up kind of taking the lumps.

This story provides insight into the ways parenting and pastoring do not always cleanly align. As noted in Chapter Two, pastors must deal with difficult members delicately, trying to remain “pastoral” while confronting conflict, but doing so is increasingly challenging when the brunt of the criticism is your child. Jane admits that Howard was a young, new pastor at the time and was unsure how to approach the teacher, whereas today he would be more protective of his son. Regardless, though, the fact that pastors and spouses encounter these situations and need to tread lightly in handling them highlights a major stressor for clergy families.

Parents repeatedly mention the various issues that stem from being a parent and a pastor at the same time. Long work hours are one concern, which can negatively affect the relationship between a child and the parent, according to Crouter et al. (2001). But beyond these issues, pastors and spouses find it hard to help children distinguish between parents as pastors and parents as mom or dad, as Gwen describes here:

[T]here were times in church when my little one was there and he was whimpering or fussing over something and I had to say “Caleb, I look like your mother but I am not your mother right now. I’m the pastor. Sorry. In a half hour I’ll be back with you. Hang in there kid.” So sometimes having to ask them to be patient.

Since Gwen’s husband Eric is also a pastor, they do not have the luxury of another parent to focus attention on the kids. For instance, when Eva noticed her daughter having difficulty separating her mother from the pastoral role, Bruce intentionally altered his Sunday morning routine:

[W]e noticed the first few months, Allison, my youngest, she was just seven, she always seemed to have some big, really burning question for me right after church when I was trying to greet people, you know? She wanted my full focus right then. And I found myself going “You’re going

to have to wait. You're going to have to wait." And all of a sudden, like, duh, she's just seeing all these people have access to me. She wants to be sure that she still has access to me after that. And so Bruce and I talked about that and I said, "Those 30 minutes right after service, you have to give her lots and lots of attention because she's feeling like she can't get to me."
(Eva, mainline pastor)

It is not uncommon for clergy spouses to prioritize their children during church events to make up for the absence of the other parent. Like Bruce, Hannah recognizes she is alone as a parent during church events and spends much of her time caring for her daughter, Grace, while Evan is up front leading services. Although this may help in lightening the challenge for kids, the reality is pastor's children see their mother or father where everyone else sees a pastor, and when they are young, it is challenging for a child to separate those roles.

Along these lines, some clergy are concerned their children do not have a pastor figure in the same way as others. This is particularly true for children of solo pastors (although even when another pastor is on staff, children see two roles: pastor and parent's co-worker), such as Robert who sought a pastor figure for his children outside his congregation:

I've always worried that the kids were robbed of having a pastor. By the way, in most churches, not in this town because my kids are all grown, but when my kids were in high school we had a good relationship with the other pastors in town and I talked to one. I went to my kids at one of our family meetings and I said "If you guys ever have a problem where you need a pastor but you don't want your dad the pastor, I've talked to this other pastor at this other church and he will not divulge anything that you talk to him about to me. He will not even tell me that you've talked to him. But he said he's very willing to be your pastor. He knows you can't come to his church because your dad is over across the street, but he's very willing for you to come and say 'I need a pastor.' And he'll be your pastor since your dad is your pastor." When they had a youth pastor they could do that. So I don't know if they ever used that or not. I have no clue. But I

thought that was important that maybe some time they needed a pastor and all they had was dad.

Similarly, some clergy mention how grown children have difficulty finding a church as adults since the idea of a pastor is so intertwined with their mother or father.

Interestingly, youth are shown to have more favorable attitudes toward religion when they develop good relationships with pastors, more so than parental influence (Dudley and Laurent 1989). Although very young children seldom call on pastors for counsel, as they progress through teenage years and into adulthood, clergy believe a pastoral presence is important and notice the impact vocational ministry has on their children.

Making Church a Positive Place

When we first got here, as I said they were about the only kids and they initially were, you know like treated very specially. I mean, everybody was excited they were here and it was... They were the center of attention a lot and I think that was really cool.

--Eva, mainline pastor

Pastors' children are brought into a world they do not choose and unlike their parents who make intentional decisions over how much or little to be involved in church, this is not always the case for kids:

[T]hey were expected to be there. And I mean there were times when they had conflicts and that was allowed. But no, this is what we do. And they never rebelled against it so I don't know what that would have been. And I can remember, oh like prom, I said, "You can stay out as late as you want but church is at 10:30." And so that's the tradeoff. You give, we give. And it was never a problem. (Carla, evangelical spouse)

Neal and Carla are not the only couple who expected their children regularly attend church as they were growing up. For those with young children, like Claire who picks up her daughter early from slumber parties in order to make it to church on time, consistent

participation is the norm. Although this is partly a logistical issue, where children are too young to stay home alone while parents attend church, overall the couples in this study want their children in church. They believe in religion as a positive aspect of life and in dedicating so much of their time and energy toward encouraging others to be part of a spiritual community, it only makes sense they would do the same for their children. Thus, as much as these parents work to suppress the pressure from congregants, in reality parents have expectations, too.

In general, couples in this study say their children are expected to attend church on Sundays and participate in age-appropriate activities, like youth groups or children's choirs, framing church as an assumed activity in the family. Recalling a conversation with his daughter, Robert reflects on the way he and Penny approached this issue with their three children:

We were very, very blessed. We never had children that rebelled and didn't want to go to church. Somebody asked us once in a meeting, they said "So what do you do when your twelve year old says they're not going to church anymore?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. We never had to face that." And so we talked about it for a few minutes and I just said something about how we just always made it an assumption that we'd be going. My daughter, who was maybe sixteen at the time spoke up and said something about "You mean we had a choice?" And we all laughed. But we never had to face that, so that never seemed negative to us.

Parents make church a non-negotiable that children learn is a standard, weekly activity just like school, and most couples in this study indicate little resistance from children. Some share examples where a child protests a specific activity, such as Neal and Carla's son wanting to quit the youth choir, but no one in this sample had a child who simply refuses to attend church.

At the same time, parents in my sample are highly aware of the negative impact excessive demands can have on children, and therefore work to alleviate unrealistic pressure, which Kurt believes can hinder a positive relationship between children and the church:

For the children, it's for them not to resent the church, the church taking their dad away so much. And also seeing the...I try to underplay this with them but it is very real. This whole living in a fishbowl existence where people are always watching them and expecting more from them. And the reality is because there is that expectation, they're doing just the opposite.

Whether these ideas stem from internal assumptions and stereotypes or from the experience of witnessing your children challenge expectations (as Kurt argues), parents are highly aware that children are not immune from the complicated dynamics of vocational ministry. As such, couples consistently talk about the intentional ways they work to alleviate potential stressors and create a positive environment for children.

Some pastors provide space for their children to explore personal interests and make choices over how to be involved in church, much like the way spouses develop varied ways of participating based on their individual interests and needs. For example, Diane's son attends her church but often volunteers in the nursery rather than sit in the service, which he claims is boring. Diane encourages him to stay in the service, but mostly allows this tradeoff knowing he is at least present on Sunday morning. Gwen is particularly aware of the need to create space for her kids, especially since both parents are pastors:

[I]f Jenna wants to wear jeans to church, fine with me. If she wants to walk out of the service and go do something else, as long as she doesn't make a huge effort I'm going to try and cut her some slack. Because they're good kids and they will find ways to try and help, but I do let them

have opinions because I don't want them to resent it. I mean, you hear these stories about pastor's kids and here my kids are double PKs. I think when Jenna was in the womb someone said "Just give her a cigarette right now." Come on, that's not fair. I do know very faithful people who have been pastor's kids, too, so I hold hope that if I'm good at listening to them and hearing what matters to them instead of just telling them "Sit up straight in church."

Pastors and spouses choose battles when it comes to church. While most take a firm stance when it comes to attendance, they also see the pressure so many pastors' kids experience and believe giving kids some control will foster more positive, lasting connections.

Although clergy children do experience church differently from their peers and face expectations from parents or congregants, being the child of the pastor does come with perks – the tradeoff Carla references. They have a special identity in the congregation and while that may mean they are frequently under the spotlight, some kids enjoy the attention:

One of the benefits of having your dad as the pastor, you can go turn on the sound system and talk into the microphone in the sanctuary. That's really kind of a cool thing. And run up and down the aisle, play hide and seek under the pews. So we went down to look at the school, the Catholic church in the [city neighborhood where we are moving] has a school so we were down there looking at that, and afterward we kind of peeked in the sanctuary to look at it and the kids were like "Woo hoo!" and started running around the sanctuary because they're used to doing that here. So again, I think they're at an age where it's kind of cool to have dad as a pastor and I realize that probably won't last forever, but they're part of the church. (Andy, mainline pastor)

Even children who exhibit some resistance to church seem to recognize a positive side.

While Gwen and Eric's daughter Jenna claims to "hate" that her parents are pastors, she also insists on regular Sunday school attendance to win an award and chose to stay in the

youth choir despite having the option of quitting. Diane and Nick noticed the same trend with Kyle, sensing he actually enjoys the attention he receives as the pastor's son (and as the choir director's son in Nick's church).

Given parents' awareness over potential difficulties for children, many draw on these areas children enjoy and help foster the notion that they are special in the church, in turn creating a better experience. At Robert's previous church, a member who was a "great pie baker" in Penny's words, periodically brought pies to their family. Robert and Penny would remind their children that the reason she baked for them was because their dad is the pastor and they are a unique family in the church. Claire likewise sees the extra consideration her kids receive at Andy's church as a bonus that helps lessen other pressures. She said, "I think they really enjoy it. Everybody knows them and every time they come they get a treat from the secretary's office. You know, they love to hang out in daddy's office." Of course, this attention can be damaging, for instance when Eva's congregants all heard and talked about the fact that her daughter, Chelsey, had a bad time at her senior prom. Yet Eva also notes how much her daughters enjoyed the extra care and interest from the congregation as they were growing up in the church and even now as adults, enjoy visiting partly because of the attention they receive.

Along with cultivating generally positive images, clergy and spouses also try to make the time at church more enjoyable, especially since clergy children frequently join parents for meetings or events. Neal and Carla offered special toys or videos to watch, making the time seem special. Austin and Courtney bring their son, Tyler, to work with them every day (since they both work at the same church) and see this as a very positive

arrangement not only for them but also for their son. Austin described Tyler as “the church baby” who is “showered with a lot of attention” and noted, “I just think people love to be around him. He’s got a great disposition. Especially my junior high and high school kids, they love to pick him up and spend time with him.” In Austin and Courtney’s view, the extra attention Tyler gets from the congregation makes up for the fact that he spends much of his days at work with his parents.

Clergy parents essentially do the best they can under the circumstances and hope children end up with a positive view of church. Some parents lament general or specific situations they feel tarnished their children’s relationship with church, like Jane’s story of the strict Sunday school teacher or the amount of conflict Ryan and Paula’s children witnessed. But others find their children end up with a very positive perspective on church and life as a pastor’s kid. Neal shared an instance where he asked his sons how they felt growing up in the church:

I asked both of them that question a year or so ago to just kind of check to see how it was for them. They both felt that it was a good place to grow up, to be the pastor’s kids in that church. They both felt like that was a very good, supportive, encouraging place for them. People treated them well and they appreciated that and liked being a part of that. They never felt that they were singled out in a negative way as being the pastor’s kid who has to live up to a standard or whatever, but felt much more that it opened doors to relationships with adults and others and they appreciated that a lot.

What makes some children have such positive feelings and others more negative outcomes is difficult to say without actually hearing their perspective, but what is clear through the eyes of parents is that children are necessarily a part of the family business,

and rather than trying to shield them from this reality, parents feel they are most successful when they make church a positive place despite the potential pressure on kids.

Weaving

The way clergy families balance pressure on children represents a significant model for approaching tensions between work and family. As Gornick and Meyers (2003) suggest in examining the interplay between work and family, accepting the ways these spheres are connected (rather than assuming work and family should remain separate) opens possibilities for positive experiences among women, men and children. Clergy families, who work within the confines of their circumstances integrating family and church, appear to be moving in that direction and represent an exemplary strategy in managing the competing demands contemporary families face today.

While “balance” is a common term to describe the tensions working adults face in negotiating time management and responsibilities, clergy families more accurately fit a model of “weaving” (Garey 1999). Instead of resisting the integration of work and family life, clergy families address competing demands by integrating various spheres of life into a holistic tapestry. This is clear in the ways spouses and children are brought into the church, modeling a family business, like Neal states:

[F]amily and work in some ways, you know, were blended that way. Sort of like a farm family where dad’s working but he’s home. It’s a similar kind of thing that way. Even though I worked a lot, I wasn’t gone either. And I thought especially Carla was helpful in kind of negotiating that. She was very good at just kind of bringing them along and not worrying too much about whether they would be disruptive or whatever. They were just part of the life of the church. I thought that helped a lot.

While there are definite constraints in weaving work and family, couples also encounter benefits. Claire speaks to the two sides of this issue in describing her family's relationship to the church her husband, Andy, pastors:

His work is our family life because we don't have the option of skipping church. Well, we don't give our kids the option. We don't have the option of taking a Sunday off here and there, sleeping in and having a late brunch. And we don't have dad around a number of times because he's busy doing things at the church. But at the same time, for family activities at the church, we're always there. And then we've met a lot of friends through the church and other families, so it's given us a pretty big social network, too. So it's really become very intertwined.

Claire's term "intertwined" or Neal's idea of family and work as "blended" demonstrate the concept of weaving. For these families, church is central to everyday life. It is more than a job or even a career – it is a calling, not just for pastors but typically for family members, too. As Bruce suggests, vocational ministry is largely about belief in a larger purpose, and pastors and spouses put those beliefs into practice in the way a family operates.

Summary

Pastors articulate a very clear sense of call to vocational ministry and embrace both the challenges and rewards embedded in their work. However, clergy families are also brought into the church in ways unlike other occupational fields. In this chapter, I examine the integration of spouses and children into the lifestyle of ministry and consider the sources and consequences of such involvement. The clergy spouses I interviewed vary greatly in the ways they participate in and support the churches their wives and husbands serve as pastors. Spouses fall into three general categories – the partnership

model, the layperson model and the independent model – each representing a different perspective on the relationship between a calling to ministry and a pastor's family. However, while some spouses are highly engaged and others only minimally, all spouses provide some degree of ministry support. Indeed, this finding provides significant backing for the argument that church is truly a family business.

The three approaches to participation are not random, but rather stem from a variety of social factors, which I discuss in the second part of this chapter. On the micro-level, expectations from congregants, ideas from a clergy spouse's own mind and past experience help shape the ways they choose to integrate into churches. Local church culture also plays a role, where the particular context – especially precedence set by previous clergy spouses – impacts the choices people make around involvement. Finally, broad, macro-level social issues help determine the approach a spouse takes, namely gender, denominational affiliation and stage in the lifecycle.

In the third and final section, I consider the consequences of the family business on clergy children, who are also brought into the church, but have less control over participation (particularly among minors) compared to their parents. Pastors and spouses are highly aware of the pressures children face, and many describe situations where congregants place unrealistic expectations on their children. However, clergy parents also have expectations and in turn make church an assumed family activity each week. Recognizing the strain this could place on their children, parents enact strategies to help alleviate the pressure in hopes of fostering a positive relationship between children and the church as they grow older. These strategies serve as an effective approach to

managing the competing demands of work and family life, which for clergy families appears more like “weaving” than “balancing.” In the following chapter, I look more closely at the specific ways work, family and religion are intertwined for clergy families, expounding on this notion of weaving together public and private life.

CHAPTER FOUR

WEAVING WORK, FAMILY AND RELIGION

[T]hey always say your relationships should be God, then your family, then your friends or job and you know...And I do not know a pastor whose priorities are that. To me God is their first priority but right after that is their job. I don't know anybody who is not like that.

--Bev, mainline spouse

While work, home, family and personal life are typically organized in ways that foster a sense of separation between these spheres, reinforcing powerful cultural ideologies, the actual, lived experiences of contemporary families shows that the boundaries between public and private life are fluid social constructs (Nippert-Eng 1996). Categories we may experience as “opposites” like family life and paid labor are more accurately understood as “interpenetrating” (Rapp 1992) in that the ideas and practices in each realm influence each other. For example, greater inclusion of women in the paid work force has done little toward shifting the gendered division of labor in the home (Hochschild 1989 ; Gerson 2002) which leads to heightened stress for women trying to manage a career alongside personal responsibilities. And when dual-career couples who share economic equity also establish more egalitarian home arrangements, the burden often transfers to lower income women who provide care for upper and middle class children of these families (Hertz 1986; Hochschild 2000; Thistle 2006), or care simply becomes another commodity to buy and sell (Hochschild 2003).

Family life plays an integral role in shaping the experiences of workers in the paid labor force, where the public-private overlap is perhaps most noticeable among parents of young children (Moen and Yu 2000; Voydanoff 2004), though caring for aging parents or other relatives can also detrimentally affect workplace engagement (Grzywacz, Almeida and McDonald 2002). Mothers face penalties in advancement and wages (Budig and England 2001; Crittenden 2002; Correll, Benard and Paik 2007) as well as negative assumptions around their level of commitment to work (Blair-Loy 2005). Men likewise notice ways family life impacts work, particularly among heavily involved fathers living with their children (Eggebeen and Knoester 2001). The gendered nature of the workplace as an institution (Acker 1990) and the notion of an ideal worker as a man with few family responsibilities (Williams 2000) most noticeably limits the ability of women to be fully involved as both parents and professionals, but there are negative consequences for men as well, particularly those wishing to more fully take part in family life (Cohen 1989; Coltraine 1996).

These tensions are rooted in broader ideological issues around the definition of family, and the distinction between ideas and actual experience provides a useful framework for understanding why people continue to struggle over the intersection of public and private life. The paid labor force and, more broadly, social policy are structured around a family model that is no longer dominant and perhaps never was (Coontz 1992; Stacey 1991; Thorne 1993). Most notably, the single income, typically male breadwinner family is a limited interpretation of a standard family, and yet as an idea this family form still shapes the ways people make sense of their own experiences.

For example, Hansen (2005) shows how people strive toward an independent nuclear family, believing this is the norm, but in actuality most families are more “interdependent,” relying on outside help to maintain career, parenting and personal responsibilities. While such kin networks have long served as effective ways of managing competing demands (Stack 1974), the ideological emphasis on individualism overshadows the benefits of such models.

Other research highlights the ideological pressures on mothers in senior career positions who sense criticism from both sides as they seek to focus on both work and family (Blair-Loy 2005). Gerson suggests that women make choices regarding work and parenting based on an “interaction between socially structured opportunities and constraints and active attempts to make sense of and respond to these structures” (1985: 192), stressing the connection between ideas and real, lived experience. The reality for most workers is one of ongoing negotiation between entangled roles and responsibilities amidst a context where paid labor, care work, parenthood and gender are interconnected (Jacobs and Gerson 2005). Rather than assuming working adults “balance” exclusive tasks, the image of “weaving” (Garey 1999) is by far a more accurate descriptor because it recognizes the deep integration of home, work and family in contemporary family life.

While all workers struggle with blurred boundaries to some degree, for clergy families, these issues include another level of complexity. Not only are religious communities integral in shaping dominant notions of family (Edgell 2005) but vocational ministry represents a very particular type of work where pastors embrace a sense of call to a lifestyle and families are integrated into the church on multiple levels. Chapter

Two's overview of the calling to ministry and Chapter Three's discussion on the ways families are brought into the church both illustrate the reality that pastors and spouses do not actually "balance" multiple realms of life but instead mimic Garey's (1999) concept of weaving together a holistic tapestry. As such, the integration of work, family and religion exemplified among clergy families is a model for a new, perhaps more effective means of alleviating the strain of competing responsibilities.

Yet among the couples in this study, conflicts between the demands of work and family life remain prevalent in discussions. In this chapter, I explore four areas that are sources of such tensions – the home, family time, friendships and personal religious beliefs – and describe the intricate ways work, family and religion blend together, challenging clergy and spouses' ideals. Although clergy families weave a tapestry of public and private life, they simultaneously operate with certain "ideological codes" (Smith 1999) that promote a highly limited perspective on these realms of everyday life. In other words, clergy families represent an effective model of weaving work and family life but encounter strain over the way their unique arrangements go against broader, cultural ideals around work, family and religion. Rather than noticing the benefits of these unique arrangements, they fall back on conventional perceptions that overshadow the positive side of an integrated lifestyle.

This analysis begins with a discussion on the role of the home for clergy. Sociologists have long argued that home is not a refuge from work, but rather it is work itself (Hochschild 1997) especially for women who face greater demands at home, even when part of a dual-earner family (Hochschild 1989, McCraw and Walker 2004). I show

how the boundaries between home and work are highly fluid for clergy families, which causes tension amidst the ideal that home is a private space away from work. Next, I consider family time and the ways pastors struggle over finding mutually available moments to be with their spouse, children or extended family. Here, the ideal that families spend particular moments together, like weekends and holidays, serves as the point of tension. The third area I discuss is friendship and the boundary concerns both pastors and spouses encounter in developing social relationships with congregants. Clergy idealize the social elements of a church community and envision church as a place to meet like-minded people, but the calling to ministry sets limitations on developing friendships. In this instance, clergy and spouses encounter a conflict between competing ideals, each of which fosters a different approach to social interaction. Finally, I examine the impact vocational ministry has on personal religious beliefs for clergy and spouses. Pastors embrace the calling and idealize the ability to integrate a significant element of personal life into work, but in reality serving a church can make religious and spiritual practices feel more like chores. In each of these areas, the integrated lifestyle represents an alternative to “balance” by breaking down the divisions between public and private life. However clergy families tend to focus on broader, cultural ideals and in turn lose sight of the positive sides of weaving work, family and religion.

Home as Work

[E]ven if I'm not working, you still carry some of the emotional baggage home with you. So there will be times when Annette and I will have to process something because I'm really not feeling good about something or am frustrated or mad about something and that's probably... That helps.

--Jeff, evangelical pastor and spouse

Envisioning Jeff and Annette, both pastors, discussing their respective work stresses over dinner brings to mind a scene familiar to many couples. Workers – clergy or otherwise – no doubt carry the challenges of the workplace into the home, affecting moods and interactions with family members. For pastors, home and work are deeply connected and yet clergy still make attempts at separating the two because home is often the lone place where church members are not present. Jen and Scott intentionally avoid inviting congregants to their home because, as Jen described, it is the only setting where she does not need to be a pastor. Austin and Courtney, who share an office at the church where they both work, try to set limits on work-related talk at home since church can so easily consume all their time and energy. And Kimberly would rather drive thirty minutes to her office on a Saturday than bring work home because doing so means her apartment is no longer free from church related issues:

I don't work from home generally. There was one week that was extraordinary where I wrote my sermon at home but generally I would come in here, because I do separate home from work. Now that I have this space, I can do that. And I would rather tell Charlie I'm going to go into the office for a couple hours and get done what I need to and then when I'm home, be able to truly be home and not have my mind wandering. That's been helpful to me.

Although Kimberly claims to separate work and home, in reality there are few boundaries. For example, Kimberly's husband Charlie says she typically delivers a

practice run of her sermon on Friday night where he gives feedback. Jen almost always does some work at home on Fridays, her day off, and Austin who admits he is constantly checking email also holds a youth bible study at his home where Courtney makes dessert for the group.

The fact that pastors bring work home is not the significant trend here, as doing so is common among other workers (for example, teachers who grade papers in the evening). What is interesting about pastoral ministry is that the type of work clergy do is uncontained and always present – an example of the way work is woven into personal life. At the same time pastors claim to separate work and home throughout our conversations, they consistently come up with exceptions. For example, Jen argues she does not need to be a pastor at home, and yet she reads work-related books during her day off. Church is so woven into her day-to-day patterns that tasks she completes at home feel less like work and more like everyday life. Kurt's comment about avoiding phone calls illustrates this point well:

I hate to answer the phone when I'm at home. And I rarely answer the phone. When I'm at home I don't answer the phone. And a lot of times our family, we just let the phone ring and take the answering machine. I try to do most of those what I call incidental calls on my cell when I'm driving around. But when I'm at home I don't say, "Well why don't you come over to the house" very much. I'll say, "I'll meet you." I try to separate that.

While Kurt claims to ignore the phone, he gives an example in the same conversation of his response to calls he receives at home. Further, the fact that his family must think about whether or not to answer a call illustrates the continual presence of Kurt's work.

Others point out that work is never completely out of mind and by extension, out of the home:

[Y]ou get phone calls or there's things that you've got to get done but I try to leave stuff there and I purposely leave stuff there and don't bring things home so I won't be tempted to work on them. But again, it depends. If I really have to get something done then I'll bring it, but for the most part when I'm at home, I'm at home. (Jeff, evangelical pastor and spouse)

Jeff is among the pastors in this study who claim to have good boundaries, but it's clear in this comment that ministry work is deeply intertwined with his time at home.

Vocational ministry and its associated tasks easily supplant the boundaries clergy strive to create, and as such pastors and families rarely find a respite from church. Indeed, as I show in Chapter Two, many of the tasks clergy do on a weekly basis cannot be contained to certain hours or postponed, which makes separating work and home a highly difficult feat. Thus, even as people like Kimberly claim to hold firm boundaries, they also list their home phone number on business cards because sometimes parishioners must call the pastor at home. Despite her best efforts, Kimberly is among most pastors in this study who find that vocational ministry and its diverse responsibilities cannot be easily turned on and off.

While workplace autonomy can bring positive consequences to workers who appreciate the schedule control it offers (Keene and Quadagno 2004), it can also bring added stress in attempting to manage work and family demands (Schieman, McBrier and Van Gundy 2003). This is true for pastors because their work is uncontained and therefore often done during the day, evenings and on days off. Autonomy offers workers

a sense of freedom, but in the case of pastors, it makes it extremely difficult to create boundaries around work and maintain a scheduled day off, as these examples illustrate.

What is interesting about these examples is that clergy and spouses willingly accept the fact that church work is uncontained and includes numerous tasks that happen at home, like phone calls, meetings and sermon preparation. Embracing a call to vocational ministry includes the odd hours and the use of home as a workplace. Furthermore, clergy frequently note how these aspects of work result in flexibility – an added bonus that allows for easier management of competing demands. In many ways, the autonomy of vocational ministry and ability to do work at home if needed represents an effective example of weaving work and family.

Yet at the same time, clergy families also appear frustrated that the boundaries between home and work are so unclear. This is one example of how clergy families are caught between an ideal that the home is a private refuge and the reality of vocational ministry where work and home are woven together. The home is far from private for clergy families, and is one of several areas deeply integrated into work life. Even those who avoid inviting church members into their homes take phone calls, respond to emails, rehearse sermons and read church-related books. Work is almost always present, and yet clergy make sense of their experience with an assumption that home should be private.

The constant presence of work is particularly relevant for pastors who preach regularly. Sermon preparation is the most commonly stated example of a ministry duty that cannot be contained to certain hours because it involves spiritual reflection alongside the more concrete tasks of research and writing. As such, solo pastors and other

consistent preachers find that working at home is largely a necessity, since carving out the time to complete a sermon amidst the demands of visitation and administrative tasks is a challenge. Evan and Hannah set aside Friday evening to go out together, but if his week is particularly busy, Evan finishes his sermon for the Saturday evening service late on Friday night:

[Y]ou can imagine if it's Friday, late Friday afternoon and I'm at a home with my three year old and I know that all I've got is maybe an outline and part of an introduction and then I have the prospect of a movie...Dinner and a movie with my wife so that I'm not even back to work on this until Friday at 10:30, that's not a good feeling for me.

In Evan's view, a "normal" family spends Friday evening together so he maintains this regular date with his wife, but his unconventional schedule and the demands of ministry work mean that he comes home to sermon preparation. Work tasks, his home and his scheduled time with Hannah are all intertwined, and while he may appreciate the ability to maintain time with his wife he notes frustration over needing to work on Friday night. Trey, also the primary preaching pastor at his church, admits to the same pressure in completing his sermons, an issue more prevalent among parents with young children:

Fridays I try to take at home for sermon preparation but a lot of stuff can come up on a Friday that I've just got to pay attention to. Saturday up until about three-ish doing stuff around the home and then at three if I haven't written my sermon, I'm writing my sermon until about midnight pausing to eat dinner with my family, pausing to help get kids in bed, pausing to help get kids in showers and out of showers and all those kinds of things.

From one perspective, pastors appreciate the flexibility of being able to complete tasks at any time and place but this means people like Evan and Trey rarely have a moment that is fully disconnected from church. They are constantly juggling the tasks they believe define a family – dinners around the table and tucking kids into bed – alongside the

reality that ministry work bleeds into the home in such profound ways. In fact, there is even an interweaving of physical space for clergy since ministry work can potentially occur anywhere and at any time. Pastors bounce between work and family responsibilities in the same space – home – making any notion of a “refuge” from work an unrealistic ideal.

The distinction between home and work is blurred even further among clergy whose offices are in their homes. In these cases, clergy forgo physical space boundaries, accept the integration of public and private life and take advantage of the convenience a home office affords. Again, there is a positive side to this arrangement. Robert spends some time at church but since people rarely visit, he prefers working from a comfortable chair in his home next door to the church. Helen, who also lives next to her church, similarly appreciates the flexibility of a home office:

Actually once I realized that was going to be the best thing, I stopped trying to work out of two places. It has worked pretty well. I close the doors so that I have privacy. If Roy's around, that's great. I try to schedule meetings with people individually, especially someone of the opposite sex, when he may be around just to keep it right and to not raise any questions. But quite frankly, the church is a whole lot more isolated than my home. So, you know, here people are walking by all the time. People are calling, whereas at church no one will see me. And that's a pretty scary thought because I can be very isolated over there. So I kind of like working out of my home.

Some pastors, especially those who live next door to the church, would rather spend their days at home, but this also means work is almost constantly present, both emotionally and physically. Furthermore, family members are integrated to a greater degree in these cases, such as Helen depending on her husband Roy to be home when she meets with

men from church. As such, the home is not only transformed into a workplace for Helen, but for Roy, his home also now represents church to some degree.

These arrangements are appealing to pastors and represent a model for managing conflicting responsibilities, but a home office adds a layer of stress for clergy families. The concept that nuclear families have a private home causes tension as pastors attempt to balance personal responsibilities with necessary work tasks. The church where Annette serves part-time is small and has limited space, so she works from her laptop at home. On one level, weaving together work and home offers flexibility and fewer childcare costs, yet she finds it hard to schedule in work when other demands – such as laundry or their young child – are visibly present. Even when her husband Jeff is home with their son, Isaac, Annette has trouble concentrating and feels pulled in multiple directions. Indeed, the structure of work impacts family life, but family life also impedes on the ability to appreciate professional life (Meiksins and Whalley 2002). For pastors like Annette who work from home, ministry tasks get in the way of her family responsibilities just as her home life impedes on her work.

In her study of employees at a large corporation, Hochschild (1997) argues that the roles of work and home are exchanged, where the stress and demands of housework and family members turn the workplace into a calming, satisfying refuge. People feel appreciated and rewarded at work, while home embodies a daily grind of thankless tasks. Hochschild's model is widely applicable to numerous occupational fields, but in vocational ministry both home and church represent work. The ongoing demands pastors encounter in caring for people and preparing for services bleed into the home, greatly

diminishing time clergy have away from church issues and members. Adding to Hochschild's (1997) approach where "work becomes home and home becomes work," for pastors, work and home are both saturated by church.

Thus, while workers in general struggle with the idea that home is a refuge from work when in actuality it is a stressful environment, clergy encounter even greater pressure in this area. The religious element of pastoral ministry implies sacrifice and a willingness to be available at a moments notice for pastoral emergencies, like a church member's death. In turn, pastors and spouses willingly give up a private home in exchange for this calling. This heightens the already difficult strain families face in managing competing demands from home and work. Clergy families, like all families, encounter the ideological weight of the nuclear family image living in a private home apart from the stresses of the workplace. The distinction between ideas and real experience are the source of tension here, much like Hansen's (2005) findings that suggest people operate under the assumption that independent nuclear families are the norm (when in reality, this model is highly ineffective and unrealistic). Pastors, spouses and their children embrace the weaving of work and home as part of the calling to ministry work (and notice the hidden rewards), but at the same time they are also challenged by this integration because it veers so far from the ideal of a private refuge.

Perhaps the most complex challenge to this ideal – and one that is very unique to vocational ministry – is the clergy family who resides in a church-owned property. Three of the couples I interviewed presently live in a parsonage or manse next door to the church and four others referenced such arrangements at previous churches. When a

person's workplace owns their home, it leaves almost no differentiation between public and private life. And yet, clergy families are still bound by the powerful ideology that "normal" families have a private home, seeking to establish some level of privacy in a parsonage. For example, in attempting to create some separation, Helen and Roy keep the shades drawn in the mornings so people do not drop by. But the reality is a parsonage belongs to the church and as much as clergy families try to make the home their own, they are always challenged by the presence of work. The youth group from Robert's church meets in his basement weekly and although the associate pastor oversees the activities, both Robert and Penny are aware of the group's presence. The pastor's private residence is transformed into a public, church meeting space, further erasing boundaries between home and work especially around physical space.

Much like completing church tasks in the evenings or maintaining a home office, parsonages represent the tension between effective work-life weaving and the broader cultural ideal of a private home away from work. These ideas are again rooted in the images clergy families have over how typical families operate. Hannah and Evan both compare their current context of a private house ten minutes from the church to their past experience of living next door in a parsonage:

I guess it is good to have a little bit of a distance. I suppose it forces us to be a little more organized if I have to go to the church to do such and such, I'm going to make sure I take everything I need with me. Whereas, at [the previous church], it seemed like every Sunday after church I'd go to the person that was counting the offering and I'd say, "Just give me a second, I've got to run back home and get my check. It's still sitting on the desk." It's a little more inconvenient to just run back home for stuff and the distance that way is good. (Hannah, evangelical spouse)

Living next door to the church offers convenience for both pastors and spouses, as Hannah suggests, and the blending of work and home allows for greater flexibility. But this flexibility comes with a lack of boundaries, and challenges the concept that home should include a certain level of privacy.

Unlike any other example of weaving work and home, a parsonage gives clergy families the impression they are actually living at church. In turn, these couples seem even more concerned over boundary issues because their situation extends so far outside the notion of a typical family. Home is where one returns after work, thus living at work throws off the very concept of home and family for pastors, a trend noticeable in Roy's comments:

It's not as bad as the last church we were at where the house and the church were physically connected on two levels. We couldn't go out of the main level to the basement where the laundry facilities were without going down a stairway that went through a Sunday school classroom. You had to be careful because you never knew who was in the building. And so you didn't dare run down to grab a shirt off the line as you might in your own home. You had to be sure you were appropriately covered.

Regardless of how effectively a pastor can "leave work at work," living so close to the church means boundaries – emotional or physical – are thin. Spouses notice the tension, too. In fact, several couples that live in church-owned property told me they always have to go out of town in order to have a real break.

But there is more to this matter than simply the presence of church. It is also important to note how a parsonage arrangement infringes on a sense of freedom at home, another way work and home are integrated in vocational ministry. Unlike most homeowners, clergy families have little opportunity to make changes as they please

without consulting the church, and this lack of full control can be a source of stress (Frame and Shehan 1994). Work is, therefore, even further woven into family life as the design of the home and how it is used may be a church decision, not one left to the pastor's family. Helen describes the parsonage where she and Roy live as a very nice, comfortable home but she also says, "There are things I want to change. I would rip out all the carpet and put in hard wood if I could. I can't because it's not my house." Home is not just a physical place, but also an idea that represents family independence – another powerful ideology that impacts the ways clergy and spouses make sense of their experiences. The concept of home not only includes the idea of a refuge from work, but also the space where a person can act freely without constraint. In turn, clergy families struggle with the limits that come with parsonages because it challenges the idea of home as private, just like the constant presence of church tasks.

For this reason, Diane turned down her church's manse even though her decision was upsetting to many congregants:

The committee when they were advertising the position said, "You have a choice between a housing allowance or the manse." And while they kind of hoped I leaned toward the manse I didn't want to live in the manse. I didn't think that would be healthy for my husband or my son. It just didn't fit our life. And Nick being a music teacher, if he were to set up a piano studio, I didn't want there to be any kind of question of using the manse for business. For him earning money out of the manse, there are all kind of tax ramifications. And it's a fishbowl enough and I wanted the distance.

Along with distance, this loss of freedom was the primary motivator especially as Nick uses their home to teach music lessons. Using the church's property (which is tax exempt) for his business purposes would complicate the boundaries beyond their comfort level and perhaps legally. It is understandable why so many pastors grapple with the

integration home and church, and given the powerful ideology of the independent, nuclear family it is also not surprising that so many decide against a parsonage situation.

Neal and Carla are among the couples that experienced living in a parsonage next door to church and a home some distance away. They exemplify the competing tensions embedded in a parsonage arrangement, as Carla enjoyed the convenience but Neal disliked the constant presence of work. Discussing this particular housing scenario, Neal offers a metaphor that highlights the complex boundaries between home and work for pastors, and the tension that stems from viewing work and home as separate entities:

It wasn't good. We were glad when that ended because the main thing was I could never visually get away from the church. It was right out the kitchen window, the wall of the church, and there was no clear differentiation between our lawn and the church lawn, so I ended up mowing the church lawn all the time. There was just no boundary in that. It was just way too easy to run over to my office at 10:00 at night and work for a while.

Neal talked about ways he tried to keep work out of his home as a means of establishing boundaries for his young children but in reality the two were closely connected and woven together. In his view, separating home and work is a healthy strategy for his children, but his calling to vocational ministry necessitates the integration. His story of mowing the lawn represents how hard it is for clergy to reconcile competing responsibilities: Being unable to classify a dividing line between home and church, he took care of both.

The three examples I discuss – the uncontained nature of church-related tasks, working in a home office and living in church-owned property – exemplify the ways work and home are woven together for clergy families. Further, we see how much

church bleeds into family life simply by the ever-present, physical and emotional reminders of work that are not easily hidden. Although this integration could offer pastors an effective way to be active and present in both church and home, clergy families make sense of their situations in an ideological context of home as a private refuge. Rather than embracing the positive side of weaving work and home, the distinction between ideas and actual practice is a source of strain. Moving forward, I examine another aspect of ideology that serves as a means for interpreting clergy family life – the practice of “family time” – and consider how couples’ ideas about what families do together adds further tension amidst the reality that public and private life are deeply intertwined.

Family Time

We’ve had to be very intentional about saying what time we want to spend together. We’re going to block it in and we’re going to keep it, because if we don’t, it will get taken.

--Kimberly, mainline pastor

Having been at her church as associate pastor less than a year when we met, Kimberly is still a bit unsure of how best to draw lines between her public work life and private life – particularly time with her husband, Charlie. A common trend among pastors is to select times to be together and Kimberly does her best to hold to those commitments. But a busy schedule coupled with her interest in getting to know congregants means she occasionally feels pressure to cancel these important family dates:

[T]he very end of October there was a new pastor’s retreat that I really felt like I needed to go to. And it was over our anniversary and I almost got to the point where I was going to rationalize and say we’ll just celebrate another time, and luckily I had a conversation that sort of...I mean Charlie

was not pleased about that, but he heard it and said, “You said Tuesday night would be alright. You said that that was free.” And I was like “Well it was free and now this has come up.” And he was just kind of quiet, so then I did think a little bit more about that and realized the retreat will go on without me and there were other issues anyway that were going to make it difficult for me to go to the retreat, but even if there hadn’t been, this was more important. This was a day that we had kept. And then we’re going to go to the theatre tomorrow night. And we booked the dates and he was like “When can you go?” So I chose this date and I’m like, “This should be fine.” This was months ago. And now there are a lot of things going on tomorrow night, but once you have tickets to something it’s really easy to say, “I can’t be there.” But I’m realizing had there not been tickets or had it not been something as momentous as an anniversary, if it was just we’re going to go out with friends, I just need to be strong and assertive and say I can’t be at things, and it’s a little more difficult than I thought because there’s just so much going on.

Charlie accepts Kimberly’s need to work weekends for weddings and funerals, and describes her unconventional schedule as “part of the job” and “something we’ll both get used to.” But he also confesses that her long hours – especially on weekends where she leads retreats or plans dinner with church members – take a toll on their time together and personal life. Even if they are out at a restaurant on a Friday night, when church members join them he does not feel like that counts as a break. It is clear from Kimberly’s account that Charlie grows frustrated at times over the amount of hours she spends on church business, even when he is involved. Their situation is not uncommon for pastors who discuss the importance of “family time” but realize scheduling these moments is dependent on church.

Like the way “home” represents ideas of independence and privacy, the concept of family time is a way for people to reproduce an idea of the “proper family” (DeVault 2002). Family time is another social construct that serves as a powerful means through which clergy families make sense of the relationship between public and private life. It

speaks not to the structure of the family, but rather the active ways people establish themselves as a familial unit. In other words, spending time together is what makes people a family – not necessarily the kinship ties. Pastors frequently compare their families to other, “normal” families who spend weekends together and sit in the same row at church. Here, the notion of family time is rooted more in the “social production of memories” (Daly 2001: 288) than the real, lived experiences of people in demanding occupations, which makes the tension in trying to create time together more noticeable for clergy families.

While pastors benefit greatly from the flexibility church work affords – an aspect of ministry that represents positive work-life integration – the benefits are often overshadowed by the way schedules revolve around the church. Along with daytime hours, the evening meetings and weekends stretch the workweek, fostering barriers to finding personal time. Estes (2005) notes the trade-off families face when they have flexibility for daytime activities but miss out on evening times with children. For example, clergy who firmly commit to family dinners (a practice many pastors use to make up for other absences) often return to work after a period of time at home, or the family eats at odd hours.

Mimicking Deutsch’s (2002) study of alternating shift couples, pastors and spouses creatively coordinate work schedules and family time around the unconventional schedule and ongoing demands of the church. While the couples Deutsch examines do so out of economic need, she suggests they unintentionally pave new ways of effectively integrating work and family life. In similar ways, clergy families appreciate the ability to

fit in times together other “typical” families might miss, but they are simultaneously challenged by the way church dictates the schedule because it infringes on their sense of control – another ideal surrounding family time. Dinner serves as an example of idealized family time, where sitting together at a table gives clergy the impression they are a normal family. Clergy families find it incredibly hard to set aside time together, especially when evening meetings occur, but they hold firm to the idea that doing so is a necessary element of being a family. Indeed, people talk about the idea family time as restful, positive breaks, but in reality these moments are rooted more in a sense of obligation (Daly 2001).

Weekends and holidays are two specific areas where the issue of family time is especially challenging for clergy because these are key moments that define a standard family in their view. Because pastors work on Sundays, coordinating a mutual time to be with family is a constant juggling act. For example, Scott’s extended family almost always plans gatherings on weekends – mainly Sunday afternoon – because that time works best for his parents, siblings and their families. But Scott’s wife Jen, a pastor, works Sundays and is exhausted after church. She typically complies with the plans but describes how tough these regular events are for her:

Well, for example for Scott’s family, it’s like Sunday afternoon is the best time for all of them to get together. It’s such a natural time for families to get together after church. Sunday afternoon for me is hands down the worst part of my week energy wise and I don’t know how to say it. You’re just tired and there’s just this release that kind of physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually needs to happen, or that does happen for me on Sunday afternoon where I just kind of...It’s like “Here it comes. Here comes the nose dive.” And I can literally after lunch on Sunday, I can feel this crash. And Scott sees it happen in me and I just crash and I shut down for a bit. Kind of a recouping kind of a thing. And so this coming Sunday

is a good example. It's our nephew's fourth birthday and so we're going out there right after church and that is really hard for me because I don't...I'm conflicted because I want to invest in my relationship with our family and yet I'm exhausted and I have a headache and to try to carry on a conversation with his dad takes everything within me. And that's the worst time of the week for me.

Chris and Lindsay have the same problem where the extended family schedules get-togethers on Sunday. The dilemma is not so much being available (as these gatherings typically happen later in the afternoon following church) but the fact that pastors are drained of energy on Sundays – a reality most people mention in our conversations. When pastors describe a typical week, it almost always includes a nap on Sunday or a similar activity that allows them to decompress (such as watching football or taking a walk). Compiling the energy for a family event is taxing, and often the last thing a pastor wants to do following her busiest workday.

But spending Sunday afternoons with family is an idea people use to reinforce the notion of a normal family. Because clergy veer so far from this norm given the unconventional schedule and demands of vocational ministry, there is a clear conflict in these situations. While most significant factors leading to a sense of imbalance comes from long work hours and work spillover into family life, perceived imbalance is more likely among people who miss family events on account of work (Keene and Quadagno 2004). Pastors find it hard to conform to these familial norms because their sense of call includes a highly demanding and unconventional schedule that integrates work and family time. Again, clergy are caught between the religious element of call (and its sacrifices) and the dominant ideology of a family who relaxes together on Sundays.

The tension here is rooted less in the actual hours people spend together and more about the specific times this happens (or does not happen). For instance, Jane mentions weekends as one of more frustrating ways Howard's occupation affects their family:

Certainly the weekend thing. I mean, they don't exist. So everybody else can go away for spring break. Everybody else can go away for holiday weekends. Everybody else can go away for weekends, but that's not an option. So you know, those kinds of family bonding times when kids are free to do fun things, you know, he's not able to do those kinds of things.

Jane's comment that "everybody else" takes weekend trips and schedules fun outings together speaks to the conflict between a clergy family's way of thinking and how they actually operate. Howard's calling to vocational ministry means their family is woven into the lifestyle of his work, but Jane operates through the context of a socially constructed ideal where families are together on weekends. Thus, reconciling the deep integration of public and private life is not just about actual family time, but participating in specific activities at certain times during the week that reinforce the idea of family.

Interestingly, Howard spoke positively about the practice of using his day off to organize "special Mondays" with his children and other clergy mention examples of being present in moments most parents are at work (this was particularly noticeable among clergy men, who felt like they differed from other fathers in this way). Again, the issue is not so much a lack of time together but the specific days in which family time takes place. The integration of work and family and a flexible schedule allows pastors to attend daytime activities for children or be home when they return from school, but the socially constructed notion of a normal family (and what that family does together) is so

powerful that it overshadows the positive side of this scenario – the fact that Howard can spend Mondays with his children while Jane works.

Indeed, while clergy appreciate the flexible schedule, they repeatedly bring up the frustration in always working weekends – even those like Howard who schedule alternative times with their spouse, children or relatives. Church is a voluntary activity most people do in their free time on weekends, but for clergy it is work:

I don't think lay people have any understanding of what it's like to work your entire career every weekend. Family never gets a weekend off. You never get the long weekends. You never go off on a four-day trip. It just never happens for a pastor and it really takes a toll on you year in and year out. But it's like, oh well, that's what you signed up for. (Ryan, evangelical pastor)

Ryan acknowledges the fact that church so often supersedes family time, but notes that it is part of the job. The pastors in this study struggle with working opposite shifts from family members and experience tension over the interplay between work and family time in vocational ministry. But the greater tension is over what weekends represent – a “normal” family who enjoys a relaxing brunch on Sunday morning or spends Labor Day weekend on vacation. Clergy families operate under a very specific image of the nuclear family and ideas about what families do, but the reality of vocational ministry makes these images impossible to achieve.

Along with weekends, clergy families experience holidays as another significant conflict in the idealized notion of a normal family. Holidays represent the epitome of family time – sacred days where people take breaks from work and enjoy special celebrations or trips to visit family. But for pastors, major holidays mean added demands at work. Holidays present scheduling problems for clergy and are exhausting given the

extra planning and hours spent on church-related tasks. Like the way Sundays serve as the pinnacle of a pastor's workweek, holidays like Christmas and Easter serve this role in the annual calendar. Helen says her adult children become frustrated that she does not have weekends off, but grow especially tired of her schedule around the holidays. She is so drained after working at Christmas that she has little energy left for the family:

We've done a Thanksgiving eve service here even before I came, so we always do that. So it may be Thursday morning before we take off and leave for some place else. There've been times we've flown out on Thanksgiving Day. When we were in [the previous state], we flew back here to be with family. And then I may end up flying back on Saturday night so I can get back for church. But I've got to make do with what I can. Christmas, if there is any way I can... We don't do a Christmas Day service so if there is any way we can take off on Christmas day so we can go someplace or they can be here, that's great. Yeah, I think they resent... Not resent, but I can't give them full attention until the event is over and I know that. And then I'm tired.

Helen and Roy have figured out ways to still spend holidays with their children, but as she points out her presence is clearly impacted by how exhausting work is during these times of year. Quality free time is a scarce resource for people with both work and family demands, especially among women who take on greater responsibility caring for children (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003). Yet again, family time is deeply woven into and dependent upon church and Helen's commitment to her calling as a pastor. There is a noticeable clash between her commitment to the church and the broader image of a relaxing family Christmas gathering, and like many pastors, reconciling these commitments is all the more difficult as a result.

In discussing holidays with the couples in this study, the most common problem is organizing a trip to visit out of town relatives, as Bev indicates in talking about Kurt's job as a pastor:

We've tried in years past to have Christmas here. Do your church responsibility here and then after Christmas we've tried to go east to [the state where our relatives live] to visit both families if we can. That's all we can do. Never Thanksgiving. Never a holiday.

Alongside the usual weekend constraints, pastors are responsible for planning special holiday services at church around Christmas and Easter. Further, as Bev points out, some churches also hold Thanksgiving services, which means pastors have very little chance to travel for major holidays. Those who do not have Thanksgiving responsibilities comment on how much they enjoy this holiday because of the break from church. Beth and Tom's family all live out of state, so she is among those who truly appreciate a chance to travel:

We actually often go for Thanksgiving. That's sort of like the pastor's haven because Thanksgiving is on Thursday so you can be back for Sunday. So Thanksgiving is great. It's like my favorite holiday and I think it's not supposed to be.

Beth's choice of a "favorite holiday" has less to do with its religious significance than her ability to travel and visit relatives. Her statement illustrates how infrequently she and Tom actually have an opportunity to spend holidays with extended family, and more broadly how demanding these seasons can be for pastors and spouses. Not only do these events mean fewer breaks for clergy, but the idea of working on a holiday challenges her general concept family, adding a further dimension to the complicated boundaries between public and private life.

The fact that clergy spouses and children are involved in church holiday events contributes another layer to the process of weaving work and family, as holidays with family and holidays with church become one in the same for pastors. However, rather than embracing the way families are brought into these special celebrations, clergy families are again constrained by ideals about private, holiday time. For instance, Claire found it difficult initially to separate Christmas at the church from family traditions:

[W]hen we first moved here, like the first Christmas we were here, Molly was an infant and we were in our new house and I wanted to... You know, we need to have family traditions. And I wanted to decorate the house. And Andy was like "No, we've got to decorate the church." And I remember feeling we are spending all our time at the church. The church is more important than our own getting a Christmas tree together as a family.

Church members enjoy these extra services and events as part of their holiday celebrations while clergy families encounter even greater tensions between the call to vocational ministry and an idealized notion of family. They see a clear conflict between working on a holiday and spending time together as a family even though for pastors, holidays and family time are woven together. The ability to have family present while working is a positive outcome of this arrangement, and yet it challenges the idea of holidays for so many families.

Conflicting schedules, weekend demands and holiday responsibilities doubly impact clergy couples. While Diane and Nick developed an effective arrangement for maintaining jobs at two different churches alongside care for their son, the missing piece is an opportunity for all three of them to be together. Despite trying to separate out time as a family, Diane admits it is largely dependent work:

So the three of us as a family, probably the most sacred time is Sunday after church and we go out to dinner, lunch dinner and try to spend the rest of the day together. Now that said, this Sunday we had our lunch together and then Nick took Kyle and I went off to the hospital and did two hospital visits which by the time all was said and done, it was 5:00 or so. I stopped at the store and came home and then we're all pooped. So it's bad. I mean, it doesn't feel quite right.

Diane also sees how the conflicting schedules impact her son, who asks if there is something wrong or if he is in trouble when she and Nick are both home for dinner. She described his reaction as “a really sad commentary on family life, traditional family life anyway.” In her mind, families eat dinner together but from her son's perspective, something is wrong when both parents are home at the same time. Although Diane mentions other times she spends with Kyle, she is obviously anxious over the issue of dinner, since this is a central marker of family.

It is also important to note the mostly middle-class positions of these families, which speaks to the heightened expectations they have for time together (Roxburgh 2002). The couples in this study share a standpoint where holidays include time off from work and travel is a standard part of life. Thus, for these clergy families, holidays operate far differently from ideal expectations. At Austin and Courtney's church, the senior pastor usually covers Thanksgiving so they can travel out of town, but for Christmas they usually plan an overnight road trip following the Christmas Eve service or leave early Christmas morning, spending a good part of the holiday in the car. Courtney reflects on this arrangement, noting that she and Austin prefer to work at the same church because it allows for an integration of work and family. However, in her comments it is clear the ideology of family conflicts with the positive side to this arrangement:

[T]he reason we always said we didn't want to work at two different churches is because even before either of us even started working at church, just from the volunteer work we did, you see how hard it is on pastors' families and how many long hours you work when you're working on staff at a church, especially for important things like Sunday mornings and holidays. You would never be together and I guess we just decided those are times we need to make family times even if one of us is working at a church or both of us. You need to make that work and it's not going to work if you're at two different churches. And I think it is important for churches to see families together. I would have a hard time, especially being a children's minister, working at a church and having my family go to a different church. I think that would be...I don't know. It just doesn't seem to be the way we are called to be family, to be separate on Sunday morning.

Courtney names certain markers – Sunday morning, holidays – that she believes define a family. She compares their arrangement to an idealized image, highlighting what she sees as a burden on clergy families – the inability to travel when they please or sit together in church. The integration of work and family time is indeed tough, especially around holidays, but there is added strain in these couples' senses that family time veers so far from their ideal despite the ability to effectively manage competing demands.

Diane and Nick have even less flexibility, mainly because they work at different churches but also because of their specific roles, and yet they are able to involve their son in their respective churches. Diane is solo pastor at her church, which makes holiday time especially demanding, and Nick oversees music at his (a crucial position in church holiday seasons). In talking to each of them about family time, I gathered the same sense that they are at times concerned over how work negatively impacts their son because their schedule differs so greatly from the ideas each has about normal family operations. For example, Diane described what Christmas looks like for their family of three:

Christmas Eve probably is the biggest holiday. I have one service. Nick has three. So this year we had lunch together on Christmas Eve day, kissed each other goodbye, Nick was gone and Kyle and I, he had to come to church early with me. We probably had peanut butter and jelly or something for Christmas Eve dinner but we'd had a nice lunch together. And came and worshiped and went home and I think Kyle put out some cookies for Santa and we had some hot chocolate and he went to bed. And I stayed home, obviously stayed there while he was in bed. Did some baking and waited for Nick to come home. Nick didn't get home until after two. I think I finally went to bed.

She goes on to discuss how tough it is to form family traditions when both parents work in churches:

But it just makes for a really hard way to celebrate because then he's so tired, and I'm tired. I think, I can't remember if I finally went to bed, but then I felt bad for going to bed, you know, not waiting up for him. So those are pieces I just hate. I wouldn't give up being a pastor because of that necessarily but I think Kyle gets gypped in all of that.

While Diane is able to bring Kyle to work – a positive element of weaving work and family – she focuses more on the ways their family differs from her ideal:

So you know Kyle sits alone in the pew or he'll sit with somebody, but I'd like for Christmas Eve to be special for him and I'm not sure that he's getting that same feel with both parents working. I don't think he resents it but I'm sorry for what he's missing that I know could be there.

Pastors like Diane see their family missing elements they feel define a real family – traditions, special meals and time together, particularly at Christmas. Whether these situations truly do have a negative impact is hard to say, but the important point is that such tensions are real to clergy and thus significant in the strain they experience from the integration of public and private life. While these examples illustrate unique and effective strategies at managing conflicting demands, the benefits are often overshadowed by idealized images of family life.

Friendship

With my friends I can talk about my work. I can't talk about my work with people in the church. They are my work.

--Sasha, mainline pastor

Relationships – specifically friendships with church members – represent yet another realm where public and private life are woven together for clergy families in unique and challenging ways. In a relational field like ministry, one might assume pastors are fortunate to have a large social network of friends with whom they spend social time outside of work. And indeed, many people in this study talk about how much they enjoy spending time with congregants, learning about them and building positive connections. Yet as Sasha appropriately points out, church members are work – a reality that challenges the idealized image of the church as community. While pastors spend a majority of their time with congregants they are mostly unable to develop friendships with these people, adding another layer of strain in accepting the interweaving of public and private life. Pastors have a strong sense of call that motivates careful scrutiny in relationships, but this belief competes with the idealized image of church as a social community. While they embrace both concepts – the calling and the community – translating both into practice is near impossible.

The tension here is rooted more in competing ideals that foster different ways of interacting with people, rather than a conflict between ideas and practice as in the previous examples. Important elements of religion include community and solidarity (Durkheim 1995 [1912]), and churches often take on family-like characteristics, where people find support from others (Becker 1999). Congregations are places where people

receive not only spiritual fulfillment, but also networks of faith and shared identity with other people (Ammerman 2005). And yet for pastors, the element of friendship is largely missing from the church because of their position. Clergy accept this reality, recognizing important reasons why they cannot befriend congregants, but these limitations, in turn, challenge the idea that church is also a social network.

To be sure, clergy and spouses spend time with people from church, attending parties, going out to dinner and developing relationships that resemble friendships. But there is always a sense of guardedness within these relationships, regardless of trust or closeness to congregants. Pastors use a variety of terms to describe this type of friendship, but the trend is consistent: connections to parishioners come with baggage:

There are certainly people who I feel comfortable and enjoy spending time with and you know, who treat me more just as a person rather than a pastor. But you never really get out of that. And I think that there are people that I feel I can trust with confidentiality and who are not going to stab me in the back if I share something with them that is some kind of vulnerability or something. But I'm not sure that there is anyone here that I would seek out for, like I'm really upset, I'm really concerned, I really need to talk. I don't think there's anybody in the church. And I've had those kind of relationships in the past, or I thought I did, in past churches and I got stabbed in the back. (Ryan, evangelical pastor)

Ryan gave an example of a congregant he considered a close friend who ultimately forced his resignation from a previous church. As much as clergy view ministry as something bigger than a job, the reality is they are employees and have certain responsibilities. Here, the lines between church as a vocational calling, a lifestyle and a job are clearly absent, as relationships and work are deeply integrated. While people develop social networks with fellow parishioners, pastors interact professionally which inherently alters the types of relationships they can develop. In this instance, clergy face

pressure between competing ideals – the notion of a relational church community and the sense of call to vocational ministry.

One way this plays out is in conversations with church members. For congregants, church is partly a social gathering time and pastors interact with people in social ways, however clergy are also in work mode. Thus, when two people – pastor and parishioner – are involved in a conversation, there are two different meanings or motivations in the discussion. For example, pastors are very careful about what they say to people because comments could be misinterpreted, a level of caution some learn through experience:

Sometimes I've been a little more vulnerable with people than I should have been or a little more honest about things that I struggle with or you know, things like that, that people have not... That have sort of come back to haunt me later. Like I sort of felt like someone was maybe safe, like we're friends, I'm their pastor but I'm also their friend. But I recognized later on that maybe they needed that distance or authority or something like that for their own sake. And so that's sort of... Does that make sense what I mean? Maybe just... Yeah, like without getting into too many details about one relationship, like this one person has seen me express anger or frustration a couple different times and it sort of has come back to haunt me because the person has called me on it. Like in a way that I think would be okay to express anger in front of a friend but this person sort of called me on it as far as like "You're my pastor and that's hard for me."
(Jeff, evangelical pastor and spouse)

Jeff gave an example of a congregant criticizing the doctor he and Annette chose for their son. He responded to the criticism somewhat defensively and clearly the congregant was taken aback by his response. In this moment, Jeff realized how his position as a minister added an extra dimension to the conversation, which stressed that he is a pastor to church members, not a friend. Here, Jeff is caught between his calling as a pastor, which places

limits on relationships, and the broader, cultural concept that church is a place where people interact socially and develop friends.

Spouses are equally careful in choosing words, since they are always connected to the pastor in the eyes of the church. For example, political activism has long been a complicated issue in churches, where denominations and churches expect clergy to hold more neutral positions and pastors take risks by expressing an opinion on contentious issues (Winter 1973) such as the Civil Rights Movement (Hadden 1970) and more recently around the 2000 presidential election (Smidt et al. 2003). While there are some clear guidelines for pastors, such as the legal restrictions on endorsing political candidates, the rules are less clear for spouses and therefore often more difficult to navigate. For example, Paula was hesitant to disclose her political leanings during the 2008 presidential election:

Well I didn't wear my t-shirt until [Obama] won. I was cooking here at the church and I wore it. And I couldn't believe how many people in the church came out of the closet and said that they were supportive of Obama and I did not know that earlier on. If they saw my car, which I think a lot of people did, they were respectful. I never had...Ryan never had anybody say any comment about it not being okay for me to support Obama. Ryan didn't make any...He didn't declare at all.

On the one hand, people like Paula want to be open and honest about their personal ideas and interests because, from their perspective, church should serve as a safe environment for doing so. But at the same time, spouses also encounter a competing ideal over protecting the pastor's standing among members. Many spouses hold the ideal that they can "be themselves" in church, but in reality are highly constrained by proximity to the pastor, as Scott describes:

I don't want to speak for Jen or to have views imputed on her. So that's part of it. And I just...I suppose if I knew someone was, you know, a Democratic activist I might feel comfortable talking about things than I would had I no idea where they fall on the political spectrum. And I think, and I could be wrong, but [the church] has people I think that are pretty much across the spectrum and I guess I'm just...It's one of those I don't think anymore it really does offend people, even if I not only brought something up but shared my opinion on something, I don't know that it would necessarily offend people. But I don't think it's something that Jen wants to...I don't think she wants people to know. I don't want to speak for her either but she doesn't want people...She doesn't want to be telling people how to vote.

Even though they have no formal role in the church, spouses are still cautious of what they say to congregants for fear a comment could be misinterpreted, returning to haunt their husband or wife. As such, they too are caught between the demands and sacrifices inherent in a call to vocational ministry and their own image of church as a place where like-minded people enjoy open and honest conversation.

Issues with clergy friendships are not new phenomena, as earlier research points to a link between the puritanical tendencies and sense of authority among pastors and a heightened stress over relationships with congregants (Hammond et al. 1972). A common approach I noticed as clergy talked about relationships with church members is to classify several different categories of friendship. In other words, pastors acknowledge there are congregants with whom they enjoy spending time but separate these relationships from a "real" friendship as a way of managing the competing ideals. For example, Neal used the term "pastoral friendship" to describe the difference between real friends and his relationships with church members, explaining that "being friendly" is not the same as "friendship." I asked him to expand on that term and what it means in his ministry work:

I think it's always being aware of having the best interests of that person at heart and seeing that person in the context of the congregation and of what ministry would be in their lives. There's always some caution about both what of myself to share with that person, what is appropriate and there is a caution about understanding that at any point I can make an administrative decision that is going to affect the relationship, and having to understand that, that that can happen and does happen. And so it puts some boundaries on the nature of the friendship.

The pastors I met define friendship in a particular way, setting it apart from the pastor-congregant relationships they have with most church members. Robert says he and Penny are "friendly" with people in the church, occasionally going out to dinner, but states that no one is an actual friend. In fact, most clergy and spouses in this study openly state they have no friends in the church, highlighting the way vocational ministry and its responsibilities take priority over social relationships.

Denominations caution pastors against forming friendships and some strictly prohibit relationships that go beyond pastor-parishioner, but clergy have their own reasons for avoiding friendships with members. The strongest reasons stem from the potential impact such interactions could have on their work, noting the need for some distinction between pastor and congregation. Again, it is clear that pastors notice conflict between the ideal of an effective pastoral relationship, stemming from a calling to vocational ministry, and the idealized notion of church as a social network and community. Neal emphasizes the "best interests" of his church as a key reason he avoids friendships and Helen takes a similar approach:

Well, to let people get too close means that I may compromise being the pastor in a situation where I have to make a harder decision, where they may want something and because they're my friend, they think they ought to have it. So if I have given into them simply because they're a friend, then I've lost my ability to be their pastor.

Clergy are hesitant to form friendships with congregants because doing so impacts counseling and interpersonal care, as numerous people discussed in our conversations:

People come in and have some agenda issue or crisis and your job is to hear them and help them think through it, either practically but to resource them to professionals who can help or theologically help them think through how this is affecting their spiritual life and that's your role. And the person who's sitting there telling about his marriage coming crashing down isn't interested in how my life with Gwen working is affecting, you know, they are in crisis. Sometimes the role, it's appropriate. You should be in that role. And I'm not likely to be best friends with this guy anyway, but he's about the same age and stage with younger kids. And we could have had rapport maybe but his place in life right now makes him so needy. He needs me to be pastoral to him and not reciprocal. So that happens all the time and that's just part of the deal. (Eric, mainline pastor and spouse)

A central aspect of vocational ministry – presence in the intimate spiritual moments – is especially important for pastors to consider when interacting with congregants, as Kimberly points out:

There's just a little bit of a distance. There's distance, which I don't keep as much a distance as perhaps some do. But in order to be one's pastor and to be with people in their moments of their greatest grief or their greatest joy, those types of intimate moments in some ways make it...I guess it's difficult to have those most intimate moments and to be able to be pastor if you are friends in the way that I'm friends with those old friends that are not members of the church.

Clergy essentially exchange friendship for the ability to effectively enact their role as pastor and all its responsibilities. Consequently, even in a personal area like friendship, clergy find that the church comes first and foremost before their own interests, drawing further attention to the interplay between public and private life and the ways ideals conflict with the experiences of clergy families. Clergy and spouses enjoy the interpersonal aspects of being part of a church and see this as a highly positive

component of vocational ministry, and yet they are challenged by the notion that relationships impede upon high-quality ministry work.

An additional, shared concern for both pastors and spouses is the fear of unintentionally creating an inner circle – another potential barrier to successful ministry work. An inner circle of friends could prove divisive in a congregation, and pastors are very intentional in avoiding any situation that would have this impact:

For instance I went to some people's home for dinner and in my opinion as a pastor. I didn't have any other experience of it when I was there, but I think to some degree in their thought as a potential friend kind of thing. And part of it was later on in church, somebody had gone "It was great to have you at dinner." Going on around church and I thought if you kept that up, then you create a circle. (Beth, mainline pastor)

Beth shared this example with a tone of nervousness, which reflects her deep concern and caution around selective friendships. Spouses are not immune from this issue as Roy is just as concerned about developing an inner circle as Helen, even though she is the pastor and he is a member:

The boundary issues with relation to friendships are one of perception on the part of others in the congregation. If you appear to be best friends with a person or a couple, what all is being shared? Why can't they be your good friend? Have you shared confidences? So we both just try to not let that become an issue. For Helen to be the pastor to all the people, there has to be a certain amount of... Isolation isn't the right word but a certain amount of independence of her attentions so that nobody feels slighted. And by virtue of being the spouse, I'm included in that.

The impact is greater in a small, tight-knit community, as Gwen notes in comparing the previous church she and Eric co-pastored to his current congregation:

In the big church in [our former city] it didn't matter who we spent our time with, that we made friends in the congregation and there were twelve other pastors, nobody cared what we did. So we did have good friends there. We did spend a lot more time with certain people than others. We

had small groups. That would not be possible in a small church and they really notice if Eric does something with some people and not others. They notice who we've had to our house for dinner.

Both Gwen and Eric repeatedly mention how guarded they are with their actions in this new environment, and developing friendships is no exception. The unfortunate reality is that clergy families default to avoiding social situations with church people, or enter into these scenarios with so much wariness that relationships remain superficial. Thus, the positive side of a relational position like pastor is easily overshadowed by the constraints and tensions that come from spending social time with congregants. The competing ideals between church as community and a pastor's sense of call often leave clergy families isolated with few deep friendships. For fear of creating an inner circle, pastors (and by extension, spouse) have no circle.

Certainly many professionals face similar limitations, like a social worker or physician who, for ethical reasons, cannot develop friendships with clients or patients but a key difference comes with the lifestyle elements of vocational ministry. For pastors and spouses, church is so deeply woven into everyday life that social relationships, work and family almost become one in the same. Along with Sunday morning services and the weekday events like dinners, committee meetings, bible studies and choir practice, clergy families are also invited to private events with church people – graduation parties, baptism celebrations and dinner gatherings. To pastors, participating in the life of the church and its members is part of the calling to ministry and yet at the same time, their calling limits how engaged they can be with members. There is a noticeable contradiction here, and one that creates a great amount of strain on clergy families.

Furthermore, the fact that clergy families spend so much time at church or participating in church-related events means that opportunities to develop friendships with people outside the congregation are few and far between. Almost all of the families in this study have relocated at least once so maintaining long-standing relationships via other social networks is not always possible. This only adds to the tension stemming from the integration of public and private life, particularly when couples view church as a central, social community but are limited in how much they can engage given the sense of call. Courtney describes how hard it is for her and Austin to make friends:

[T]he church is sort of our life because we don't have friends outside of church because there is really no way for us to meet people outside of church because we don't work outside of church. We didn't grow up here so we don't know people. It will probably be a little easier as Tyler gets older and we start meeting parents through preschool and what not. But right now, it can be kind of stressful because you don't necessarily feel like you have an outlet because you can't complain about things at church, which is a huge part of our life, if you're frustrated, because you complain to people who also go to the church. So I think often times that is kind of difficult. I mean, we love it but at the same time it's probably one of the more difficult things because it's everything. We don't have other places to make friends and do things.

Clergy couples like Austin and Courtney find this challenging not just because church is so woven into their family life but because they have minimal alternative social outlets. Whereas some couples found friends through the spouse's work, for clergy couples there are minimal options, which in turn leaves people with very few friends either inside or outside the church. Further, this conflicts with the concept that church is the ideal locale to meet like-minded people with similar interests and values, creating another layer in an already difficult situation.

Thus, the high level of commitment and time required for ministry work leaves pastors in a complicated predicament. Clergy greatly appreciate the relational components of their work but cannot make friends with congregants because they fear doing so will have a negative impact on the ministry, a concern motivated by the sense of call. Spouses, who want to be part of the church, face limitations as an extension of the pastoral role and their ideas over protecting the relationship between clergy, spouse and church. Yet in devoting the energy and time necessary to do parish ministry, pastors find few chances to make friends outside of church. Again, clergy families are caught between an idea – here, church as a social network – and a competing ideal – a sense of call to vocational ministry. In turn, clergy families end up with a small number, if any, lasting friendships:

I mean, you can have a lot of fun people that you do church related things with that are wonderful, but everybody is always in role. And then when you leave this church, those relationships are gone. And so at age sixty on, we don't really have any friends that are our friends. (Jane, mainline spouse)

Jane's comments address this thorny issue around clergy friendships within congregations. When a pastor leaves a church, she also leaves the people. In fact, pastors reference denominational rules around maintaining relationships, which typically caution against ongoing involvement after leaving a church. While clergy and spouses sacrifice the ability to develop friendships for the sake of the spiritual purpose or calling that comes with pastoral work, they are simultaneously challenged by broader, idealized notions of church as a community. Given this context, clergy families face an added difficulty in reconciling the integration between public and private life.

Personal Religious Beliefs

[S]ometimes I have an excitement or a commitment or a belief in the things that I read in the bible in spite of being a pastor.

--Gwen, mainline pastor and spouse

I was especially intrigued by Gwen's use of this phrase – “in spite of being a pastor” –since other clergy used similar language in talking about personal beliefs.

Pastors are careful to distinguish between work and personal spirituality, and yet these two sides of religion are deeply intertwined in vocational ministry. Sasha's perspective exemplifies this relationship:

I would say that my personal faith is stronger in spite of my work as a pastor and probably to some extent because of my work as a pastor. So what do I mean by that? What I mean by that is the bulk of the people that I get to interact with are deeply caring and committed people and I am grateful for my time with them, the opportunity to walk with them on this journey. Perhaps it's more true in a congregational setting, but I'm not sure. But certainly it is true in a congregational setting, there are those who for whatever reason seem to think that the place they can take all of their frustration with life out is on the church and therefore probably on the clergy. My faith is stronger in spite of them.

As already shown, the nature of vocational ministry means home, family and work are woven together as an integrated tapestry. Added to this interwoven picture is religion, which represents perhaps the most interesting and complex area in which private and public life are intertwined for pastors and their families. Pastors are religious people with beliefs and spiritual practices, and the opportunity to connect these beliefs with work is yet another ideal among clergy. However similar to the previous three examples, this ideal conflicts with the realities of vocational ministry, creating tension when personal beliefs and religious practices feel more burdensome than enlightening.

In order to be a pastor, an individual needs some level of appreciation for church and the clergy in this study all seem to deeply value the experience and practice of Christianity. As such, spending their days thinking about faith and dealing with issues related to it is an aspect of ministry pastors truly enjoy, fostering this idealized image of integrating religion and work. Jen shares how none of her family or friends were surprised she became a pastor because of her long-standing love for church, and Gwen likewise notes how central church has always been in her life, even as a child. Clergy overall have a sense that they are fortunate to be able to spend their days thinking about issues of faith. As Barbara pointed out several times in our conversation, “I get paid to read, write and think.”

Indeed, a pastor’s unique access to spiritual and religious resources is shown to promote overall well-being, more so than among church members or elders (Pargament et al. 2001), but pastors soon discover the difference between personal spiritual practices like attending Sunday morning services and working at a church. Here, the conflict between an ideal and reality is apparent. Prayer, reading the bible and studying theological issues shift in meaning when they become tasks pastors need to do in order to continue their work with integrity. Austin, who oversees a youth group, says, “I’m not going to stand up in front of students and say, ‘This is what you need to think and believe’ and not myself have been thinking about it.” Kimberly also draws a direct link between her personal spirituality and the ability to effectively minister to her congregation:

And in order to be God’s vessel, I must be open to the spirit and must be in relationship with God constantly, so my prayer life and my devotion

times are just that much more significant and important because this is now... We have different calls in our lives, but as my call is to be a pastor in a parish, there's that constant intersection then being a clergy person.

For those who preach regularly, bible study routines, which are voluntary, spiritually fulfilling practices, are a requirement of the job:

You know, it just forced me to go deeper into the scripture. And I'd preach from the lectionary, which meant that I wasn't just going back to the old favorites as far as bible verses. It made me really tackle a wide range of stuff that's in the bible. So I guess it gave me a broader and deeper understanding of scripture itself. (Adam, mainline pastor)

Pastors continually explore their faith internally so they may express it externally to the congregation, and overall the idea of these tasks is appealing to clergy. But as Chris and others point out, praying and reading the bible is "part of the job description" – a fact that illuminates the difference between pastors' idealized notions of integrating faith and work and the actual reality of vocational ministry and all its responsibilities.

One clear example of this tension is in the need to address uncomfortable topics and issues, providing theological interpretation for the congregation. Pastors find it hard at times to engage in these topics when it would be easier to preach on more uplifting and exciting texts. Neal brought up this tension as he talked about his ongoing bible study and reflection:

I think that the close study of the bible over the years, you know, having sort of done this for thirty-four years and every week working on a text, there's a real positive part of that, that it builds into you. There's a richness that comes into life and faith. But there's also a complexity that I think a lot of folks don't encounter or have to deal with. Some of the texts are hard and some of the things you wonder about and some of the things are more complex than you realize and to be every week "Now what does the text say this week?" Sometimes I'd rather not do that. Sometimes I'd rather go have a job somewhere, do something else. There are sort of dry times and down times that come and yet you still have to keep doing it

faithfully week by week. That's a good thing, but it does take some toll I think, too.

Pastors do not have the luxury of glossing over complicated topics, nor do they have the ability to take a break from study and reflection when it becomes tiring. Because religious beliefs are so intricately connected to work, there is definite pressure on pastors to maintain this area of life. Pastors readily concede to the fact that personal beliefs can go through high and low points. They see this among parishioners and often work with congregants to move beyond tough moments in life, encouraging people to depend on their faith. However, pastors also have low points and dealing with them is far more complicated when one is a public figure representing Christianity to a congregation. As such, clergy face an ever-present conflict between the idealized combination of faith and work and the reality that vocational ministry includes many difficulties – some that test a pastor's spiritual belief system.

Another source of strain comes when pastors themselves experience doubt and questions. In considering changes in religious leadership, Carroll (1992) finds that clergy more often acknowledge faith struggles and the uncertain elements of Christianity, challenging the notion that pastors are theological experts whose faith and beliefs are always strong. Further, research on religious coping finds that clergy experience spiritual struggles on an equal level as church members (Pargament et al. 2001). None of the pastors I met talk about actually doubting the core tenets of Christianity but several mention times when they wonder if they are continually proclaiming a message more out of tradition than true belief. To be a pastor with integrity, clergy sense a level of accountability that can be extremely challenging at times:

There are times where I sit and wonder if all the stuff I'm doing, you know, if it's really true. When I preach...Not so much when I preach but when I'm preparing. Am I just saying stuff to say stuff? Do I really believe this? What if it's all false? So I have those times that I'm thinking a lot of people have and I'm not having just because I'm a pastor, though the thought will go through me "Well I better believe this because my job depends on it." So there's this "Am I just saying it to promote my own salary?" What would I do if I weren't a pastor? So there's some of that. (Diane, mainline pastor)

Again, the occupational component for clergy creates a tension with personal beliefs because the idealized image of spending days in prayer and reflection is far different from reality, as Lisa points out:

I will be honest and say there are times on Sunday mornings when I'm preaching and there's a little voice in the back of my head going "Do you really believe this? Do you really believe this?" At those times all you can do is just try to hang on. I mean, it's not quite a dark night of the soul but it's... You really do kind of think "You know Lord, it would be a lot easier if you were feeding me something here." So yeah, it definitely... I would say my faith life prior to seminary and in seminary was probably a lot richer and more fulfilling and even in my first few years of ministry than it has been over the past couple of years.

Recognizing the shift in her faith life, Lisa's case exemplifies how hard it can be for clergy to maintain energy around personal beliefs when religion and work are so closely linked. Her church is in the process of selling its building and possibly merging with several other congregations. During this especially difficult time in her ministry Lisa finds that her beliefs are called into question, and yet a significant responsibility in her work is to help build faith within her congregation around this transition. Lisa, therefore, finds herself putting her own struggles aside in order to keep a strong, public appearance.

Tough theological issues and doubts aside, the day-to-day religious practices pastors maintain for the sake of work add a new bent to the idealized notion of "spending

days reading, writing and thinking.” Vocational ministry allows pastors to explore a wide range of aspects within Christianity, but when doing so is a job for which they are paid, spiritual practices take on new meaning. To be sure, beliefs remain a significant part of a pastor’s personal life, but clergy also discover that when the work component of ministry bleeds into personal, spiritual practices, the level of fulfillment changes. In other words, the enjoyment a practicing Christian might find by spending days in study, prayer and reflection is quickly overshadowed by the realities of ministry work – weekly sermon preparation, organizing bible studies for congregants or providing spiritual guidance to people in the midst of troubling life circumstances.

Indeed, personal beliefs are no longer fully personal for clergy as they are woven into work, but beyond this, pastors find their faith is targeted toward the benefit of others rather than for their own spiritual fulfillment. Thus, while pastors feel that vocational ministry helps grow and solidify personal faith, so much of this added strength benefits the church and its members, not necessarily the pastor:

The interesting thing is I do find it hard as a pastor to what I would call disengage from my role as pastor and be simply a child of God. To simply receive God’s truth and God’s love for me. I’m always constantly thinking of the next step for me on behalf of or for others, you know? (Jen, evangelical pastor)

In reflecting on what this means for her personal beliefs, Jen described this situation further:

I think what happens a lot of the time for pastors, at least for me, is you can know God’s truth, you can receive that, but you don’t rest with that and just receive it automatically or like “Okay, how is it that I or how is it that this benefits the church? How do I now need to speak this truth into other people’s lives?” And so we don’t sit with the goodness that God has given us simply as his child or as his people, and so that’s a hard thing that

I'm trying to find balance for and more time for. Like I find my sermon preparation and that aspect of my job very theologically and spiritually rich, but at the same time it's something that I'm always doing on behalf of others, not just to kind of nurture my own soul.

Robert also notices times when it feels like his religious practices do little for his own spiritual satisfaction. He admits spending so much time and energy addressing the needs of his congregants that he becomes disconnected from his beliefs:

[Sometimes] I think I work so hard trying to do an excellent job in what I'm presenting to other people that I don't take it seriously enough for myself or I don't do enough things just for my own spiritual benefit. So sometimes I feel... You know, I'm excited about what we're doing and what I'm doing in the area of leading something. I can sometimes feel very dry myself like I could be teaching physics as well as what I'm doing. When there's not that connection, it's been very difficult.

Comparing ministry and teaching physics, Robert highlights a vital element of this tension for clergy: While pastors embrace a sense of call and see ministry as a task greater than a job, when it comes to personal religious beliefs, pastoring a church feels a lot like work.

These examples provide another useful example of the strain clergy face around the interplay between public and private life. While they acknowledge the importance of integrating personal beliefs into their work as part of their calling, doing so goes against the idealized image of engaging faith and work so many pastors hold. Again, clergy are situated between the idealized notion of being paid for theological study and the actual experience of being called to an occupation rooted in religious beliefs. Engaging personal beliefs is a necessary part of ministry and one that pastors accept and often enjoy, but they are simultaneously constrained by the way ministry shifts their excitement around religion.

This distinction between ideas and practice is further highlighted by the seemingly mundane yet important tasks around the church, which pastors often cover by default. Research on clergy work roles and time management show a greater emphasis on administrative tasks, overshadowing the ministerial responsibilities like counseling and pastoral care (Kuhne and Donaldson 1995). Most of the churches connected to this study employed at least one part-time administrative worker to photocopy fliers and answer the church phone and none of the pastors were solely responsible for cleaning or other custodial tasks. But within smaller congregations with limited finances, clergy often share in these responsibilities either out of a willingness to help preserve resources or out of necessity:

We're a big enough organization that we should probably have a part time custodian or something, but we don't because really, the church financially can't afford to add that position especially with the co-pastorate model. And so we find ourselves doing things like changing out batteries on thermostats so the heat will kick on or you know, like just doing that kind of stuff that is just like, you know, this is not how the church would really prefer that I spend my time when I'm in the pulpit every Sunday. They would probably prefer that I spend this hour thinking theologically, studying scriptures. That really does more for equipping the saints than changing out this or going to buy batteries and changing out these batteries. However, if one of us doesn't do that, it's going to be cold in here on Sunday. (Jen, evangelical pastor)

Jen is among those who note how lucky she feels to engage her faith with her everyday work life, but this comment illustrates her own disappointment over how much time she spends on these everyday tasks compared to her idealized image of work. Such routine tasks can overshadow the enjoyment clergy gain in connecting personal beliefs and work life, and yet pastors recognize these are important and necessary chores.

Finally, the pastoral ideal of integrating faith and work is put to test as clergy encounter real people with questions and problems. Clergy develop theological positions in seminary, but they are typically rooted more in ways of thinking than lived experience. Witnessing first hand the nuances in social interaction and the impossibility of fitting real lives into neat, theological categories forces pastors to rethink certain positions:

As far as my theology, of course it's normal when you're young and just coming out of school, especially when you're studying things kind of a part from practice or reality. There is a little bit more of an idealistic bent to formal education that probably set up a theology that when it got into practice and reality and you begin to make more observations about what really does seem to work in people's lives, what is it in a faith that is most helpful and in the kind of liberal conservative balance, who actually is in church on Sunday and who is being helpful and who is being encouraging. And that influenced me. (Neal, evangelical pastor)

Jeff also notices his theological positions shifting slightly from his work as a pastor, a transition that stems from the people he meets and works with at church:

I can hold convictions and proclaim them boldly but I always have to carry them lightly as far as, you know, I mean I believe in peace, I'm a pacifist in that regard, things like that. I don't think Christians should be involved in wars, things like that, and I'll pray for peace and I'll proclaim the message of peace boldly, but at the same time you've got people in your congregation that are veterans. You've got people that... Not only do they disagree with you but their life stories are different than that and you've got to take that seriously. And how do you interact with that in people's lives? You've got people that are veterans. You've got people that maybe have children that are. I don't think we have any people here, but in other contexts I see that. Like how does a church handle that when you've got a couple that has children that are in Iraq or Afghanistan or something like that? How do you proclaim a message of peace without them feeling like you're leaving their child out there to die?

Clergy develop specific theological perspectives within seminary, but in actual practice many find these ideas challenged by the very real life situations in which congregants exist. Annette also admits that becoming a pastor provided her with a willingness to “live

in the gray area.” Working with real people, she suggests, makes her think about the impact of certain theological debates, such as whether or not to support same sex marriage. Whereas she previously did not see how this fit with her beliefs, now that she understands this debate as an issue impacting people (not just ideas) her perspective has changed to the point that she would consider officiating a marriage between two men or two women.

Some clergy claim ministry has made them more conservative while others describe the transition as moving toward more progressive positions. But what does matter is the specific context in which a pastor serves and the way theological positions shift within a social environment. Indeed, churches operate based on their particular surroundings more than denominational positions, moving between progressive and conservative theologies depending on the local culture (Warner 1988; Ammerman 1997) and this helps shape the way vocational ministry and personal beliefs are tied together. Eva, whose urban church reaches out to homeless people in the area and welcomes the local gay community, notices how this environment affects her personal beliefs:

I don't think that my sort of theology has changed significantly from one call to the other, but I've become much more passionate about the justice issues of inclusivity since I've lived here and have had real life conversations with people who felt shunned from the church. And not just gay folks but other people who've come from more conservative evangelical backgrounds who grew up afraid to get out of bed at night because someone told them that the devil lived under their bed or who, you know, grew up afraid all the time of God. And so that has really made me much more, like I said, passionate about teaching and preaching a gospel that is inclusive and supportive and is about justice for everybody.

Eva appropriately notes that her theology remains constant, but the issues drawn out as most important match the needs of this neighborhood. The people with whom a pastor

interacts and the location of the church have a profound influence on the ways faith evolves for pastors, again representing how closely public religion and private beliefs are woven together in vocational ministry.

Spouses do not encounter the same pressure as clergy in having to publicly declare beliefs week after week, nor do they discuss the challenge of low points in their faith. Because of the less official role, spouses can more easily hide these moments and keep beliefs somewhat personal. However similar to pastors' experiences, there is a public element to religion that comes with being a clergy spouse that conflicts with ideas about personal beliefs and religious practices. On the one hand, spouses appreciate the ability to engage their beliefs at a deeper level, as Elsa points out:

I probably have thought about my own faith a whole lot more than I ever would have if I hadn't been married to somebody who went to seminary and then became a pastor. Discussions about faith, especially during seminary, come up all the time even when we're just hanging out having a party or something, somebody is having a theological discussion. So probably I know a lot more about Christianity and the bible and thought a lot more about my faith than I ever would have if I hadn't been married to a pastor, even though I was definitely involved in the faith and in the church before Adam decided to go to seminary. But I think probably it's taken a much bigger piece of my life, a lot more focus in my life than it probably would have otherwise.

Others note the positive side of discussing sermons, like Sam who says he gained an informal theological education just by talking with Barbara throughout her seminary studies and now in her work as a pastor. Clergy spouses idealize this "insider knowledge" and ability to think about and discuss religious ideas with an expert, noting the positive outcomes of this integrated lifestyle.

But spouses also point out how these discussions can grow tiresome. Charlie enjoys listening to Kimberly's sermons, but admits on the weekends he would much rather talk about other things. Others, like Elsa, explain that so many of their friends are seminary educated that at times it is hard to avoid discussing church. Although spouses generally value these conversations, when they are so prevalent in everyday life the spiritual fulfillment lessens. Moreover, some pastors wish to disengage from religion outside of work since they spend so much time and energy thinking about faith. In turn, spouses note that developing religious practices like reading the bible as a family can be hard when a pastor would rather relax, take a break from work and watch football.

Spouses' ideas about putting beliefs into practice also conflict with the reality that they are different from other church members. As noted in Chapter Three, spouses approach church involvement in different ways with some claiming they are "just like any other member," and yet this concept does not fit with the reality of their position, as informal as it may be. Jen shares a story of Scott beginning to understand that his ideas about church participation clash with the fact that he is the pastor's husband:

[O]ne of the unfortunate parts for him is that his gifting is in finance and that's what he does for a living. And he said to me one day, "I just think one of the ways I could really use my gifts for the church and for the Lord's work is to be a church treasurer, take care of the church finances." And I was like, "That is so great. You will never be able to do that." He was like "What?" And I said, "Scott, that is a total conflict of interest. If I am the pastor, you can't be the treasurer." And there was kind of like this "Oh" because he saw himself serving in that kind of way. But not when I'm a pastor. This is not possible. You just can't. So that grieves me, you know? That makes me sad because that is a way that he could really feel like he could use his gifts for the work of the church that he, as long as I'm working in ministry, won't be able to do in that way.

In general, clergy spouses can only practice their beliefs in ways that appropriately fit their relationship to the church. Most spouses found avenues to be involved in the church around their own interests and saw this as an extension of religious commitment, yet there is a clear tension between the ideal that spouses are just like other congregants and the reality that they carry a role in the church.

The weaving together of private beliefs and public religion has a noticeable impact on clergy children that conflicts with the visions clergy and spouses have for the faith life of their families. Many pastors share positive examples of the way their work influences the beliefs of children, such as Diane who describes a recent exchange with her son:

Kyle will say to me at times when one of his school mates is going through a difficult time...One of the little girls he's grown up in school with, her parents had separated for a while and he came home and said, "Mom, I think you should pray for [my friend] and her parents because you are a pastor." And it stops me a little to realize how he equates my faith with my role and how maybe...I don't know that he would say that to me were I not a pastor. Who knows? You can't tell. But that sense of...He sees that faith in me that's put into practice in a really public way.

Overall, clergy want their children to grow up with an appreciation for Christian beliefs, just as most parents hope their values will transfer to the next generation. When pastors' children seem well adjusted and accepting of Christian beliefs, parents talk about feeling fortunate for the positive way the family's deep involvement in church influenced the children. But again, the reality of working in a church with its conflicts and difficult people can challenge a pastor's ideal around their child's faith and make the integration of public and private life particularly frustrating.

For instance, while Diane shares this story with appreciation for Kyle's interest in prayer, she is also aware that he cannot fully separate religion as a personal belief system from religion as his mother's work. She does not seem concerned that Kyle's connection between prayer and her work as a pastor would have a lasting, negative impact, but this speaks to a larger issue for clergy families who confront the difficult task of teaching children to appreciate religion and church even when they see faults in the latter. Ryan, who dealt with an unusual amount of conflict throughout his ministry career, found this to be especially hard with his children:

Well, the craziness out in [the previous state] I think really damaged our kids' understanding of the church. It was really very nasty and they were... The church really did not handle things well, the leadership of the church. Here you can kind of identify one person who is kind of the bad guy and it's easier to deal with. There it was like the church really tried to screw us and there were people at the church who were unhappy about that and we didn't bring it home to the kids and say, "Look at what they're doing to us." But they are old enough and smart enough to figure out what was going on and so we had to process some of it with them and I think it really turned their hearts against the church and I really, really regret that.

Ryan's wife Paula puts it well in connecting church conflict with the personal beliefs of their children:

I think for pastor's kids, it's kind of like God is the church to them because it's such a big part of their lives when they're young that their understanding of God is so connected with the church that when the church disappoints them, then they're disappointed in God.

Because these children witnessed conflict within the church and negativity directed at Ryan and Paula, they now somewhat reject religion because it represents so many of the unpleasant memories within the family. This is especially hard on Ryan because the

nature of his job means his children are lacking an area in their lives he and Paula believe is extremely important.

Religious beliefs and faith are complex areas of an individual's life in that they are highly personal and yet often lived out in public ways. For clergy, spouses and children, the relationships between public and private religion takes on new meaning as beliefs are heavily integrated into the work life of one or more family members. Church and religion represent the family business, and this includes the most personal side of religion. Although pastors and spouses have specific images of what they hope from this combination of personal beliefs and the church, the realities of vocational ministry – interpreting difficult texts or growing tired of theological discussions – create tension with these ideals. Clergy families represent a unique integration of public and private life that breaks down the separation between conflicting spheres, and yet the continual focus on certain ideas about work, family and religion overshadow the positive side of integration.

Summary

The nature of pastoral ministry is such that work is uncontained and bleeds into the home, family time is structured around the church schedule, friendships within the church (and sometimes outside church) are limited and personal beliefs are far from private. These four areas represent the ways public and private life are woven together for clergy families. That vocational ministry involves religion, specifically a “calling” to a task clergy view as more than a job, speaks to the particular way work, family and religion become a holistic tapestry that breaks down the perceived division between these

spheres of everyday life. Clergy and spouses accept the sacrifices that come with ministry work, describing them as “part of the job” or “what you sign up for,” acknowledging the firm commitment to this lifestyle. And as such, the families in this study represent a distinctive and perhaps highly effective model of weaving, where family and other personal responsibilities are intertwined with work, lessening the need for “balance” and allowing for positive integration.

Yet at the same time, pastors and spouses note the tension that comes from a highly integrated lifestyle. In examining the four areas where public and private life are most deeply connected for clergy families – home, family time, friendship and personal beliefs – I suggest that the model of weaving is particularly difficult to reconcile because it goes against powerful ideologies and ways of thinking which provide a context for interpreting family, work and religious life. The notion that home is a private refuge for the nuclear family, the idea that families relax together on weekends and holidays, perceptions that church is a community and means of social ties and the idealized visions of engaging faith and work life all serve as ways of thinking about the relationship between work, family and religion. But ideas and lived experience are never cleanly aligned and in this case, the differences create tension for clergy families. Despite accepting the sacrificial nature of a calling into vocational ministry and living lives that offer a model for integrating competing demands, clergy families are simultaneously challenged by ideological assumptions embedded in their ways of thinking which can overshadow the positive side of the interwoven tapestry.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

My friends call me Jeff. People at the church call me Pastor and some call me Pastor Jeff. How do you live into all of those? And how does it work when you've got relationships that really can appropriately exist in a couple of those names for who you are?

--Jeff, evangelical pastor and spouse

The clergy in this study often talk about their choice of title, moving between “Reverend,” the less formal “Pastor” and the preference some have with simply using a first name. Jeff’s comments above exemplify how these choices are about much more than names – they are a reflection of identity. Lummis and Walmsley (1997) argue that while lay people and outside observers perceive clergy (and spouses) as extraordinary and special, they are in fact real people with real lives who happen to work in a particularly demanding field. While Chapter Four addresses lifestyle issues for clergy families, vocational ministry is also woven into the identity of both pastors and clergy spouses, representing another example of the blurred boundaries between public private life. Furthermore, in the same way people in this study are constrained by ideals around work, family and religion, they also encounter tension around images of pastors and spouses, which play a role in the construction of identity.

In considering different types of identity, Hammond (1988) suggests that while some identities like familial roles are all-encompassing, others can be turned on and off, such as occupation. However for pastors, ministry work bleeds into so many realms of

everyday life that clergy (and in some cases spouses) are unable to conceal this aspect of identity. Because vocational ministry is a calling (and therefore more than just a job), it bleeds into lifestyle as well as a pastor or spouse's sense of self. Jeff is a pastor and a friend, but he is also a husband, a father and a pastor's spouse. These aspects of his self are not exclusive and contained but rather inform who he is, how he interacts with people and how others make sense of him as a person. But the same time, pastors and spouses are not passive victims of such images, and instead actively engage with them in ways that both challenge and reinforce powerful ideas over who pastors and spouses are as people and how they act and interact with others. This interactive process is the focus of this chapter.

Offering a more holistic perspective on identity, Ammerman (2003) suggests theories should include the real, social contexts in which identities exist. She writes, "Describing religious identities is not a matter of asking a checklist of categorical questions, but a matter of analyzing a dynamic process, the boundaries of which cannot be assumed to fall neatly within private or personal domains" (Ammerman 2003: 224). Here, Ammerman challenges categories that assume clear boundaries between social positions without contradiction and highlights the significant role of human agency in challenging or reinforcing various identities (Ammerman 2003: 211). For clergy, this approach recognizes the reality that a pastoral identity is always present even when it comes into conflict with other social roles, such as parent, child, neighbor or friend. There are limitations in both an overly fluid, postmodern understanding of identity just as a structured, deterministic framework loses sight of agency (Ammerman 2003). This

middle ground approach helps us recognize that pastors and spouses are impacted by the expectations and ideas attached to their identity, but also actively challenge or reinforce these images.

This chapter explores this issue of identity, focusing on the ways public and private life intersect through the construction of a pastor or clergy spouse's identity. I begin by noting the major trends stemming from a question I posed to all research participants asking them to describe the cultural image of a pastor or clergy spouse. The people with whom I spoke have strong ideas on how people inside and outside the church perceive pastors and spouses, and these ideas influence the ways people make sense of their specific position in the church. But clergy and spouses actively engage these ideas, and the ways they speak and interact with people both challenge and reinforce images of the "typical" pastor or clergy spouse as they describe. I argue that just as tension around ideas affects how clergy families reconcile the integration of work, family and religion, these powerful images similarly impact a pastor or spouse's process of constructing an identity within a calling to vocational ministry. As such, I add further support to the claim thread throughout this study that what people do shapes social realities more than what people think, particularly around the integration of public and private life.

This process of challenging and reinforcing images occurs in both the actions and language clergy and spouses use as they interact with people inside and outside the church. In her discussion on identity, Ammerman (2003) focuses on narrative, arguing that language and communication are the means by which these active social processes occur. She writes, "We tell stories about ourselves (both literally and through our

behavior) that signal both our uniqueness and our membership, that exhibit the consistent themes that characterize us and the unfolding improvisation of the given situation” (Ammerman 2003: 215). This is an important reminder that people engage with ideas and images, and communication occurs through language but also unspoken actions. To make sense of these processes I draw on the work of Erving Goffman, who offers a model for analyzing social interaction inspired by theatre and dramatic performance. While we work within dominant patterns and norms, individuals adapt, reject and reinforce these norms in the process of identity creation. Thus, past experiences help shape clergy and spouses into the people they are today, but identity construction is also a continual, fluid process.

Pastoral Images and Identity

I think there are definitely people who don't see pastors as real people and don't want to see pastors as real people.

--Lisa, mainline pastor

The idea of a “real person” is a social construct and highly subjective, but nonetheless a term pastors use in describing the image of a pastor. In discussing images from the perspective of clergy, most share the impression that people see them as superior Christians with a near perfect life and few, if any, personal struggles. And although pastors feel like this label is unrealistic and claim it does not fit their experience, they still believe it matches the broad, cultural perceptions of a pastor and notice pressure stemming from the concept. Of course, pastors are in some ways elevated above congregants. Seminary offers much more than a standard theological education. It provides religious and social capital, such as familiarity with the norms and standard

practices of a denomination that set clergy apart from congregants, instead closely tying pastors to other seminary-trained leaders within the denomination (Finke and Dougherty 2002). But at the same time, the boundaries between clergy and laity are becoming less formalized and distant, and lay people take on much more responsibility in the “doing” of ministry in churches (Carroll 1992), a trend that breaks down the elevated status of pastors.

Exceptional religious knowledge, beliefs and practices are central to these images. Carroll (1981) grounds clergy authority in a link to God or the sacred and in a pastor’s knowledge or expertise, and authority is institutionalized in that the person occupying the office immediately takes on the associated attributes and roles, including the spiritual authority (Carroll 1981). Helen, for instance, feels like people assume pastors never get angry, but are always “kind and sweet and nice” and live lives of strong faith without doubts. Trey gave a similar description, saying, “People I think have an image of the pastor as somebody who pretty much knows everything in the bible and knows what it says and has it absolutely all together.” Indeed, clergy do have formal training that sets them apart theologically, but many indicate that the role includes an overly idealistic view of religious awareness and beliefs. As she describes the image of a pastor, Diane notes that her role comes with some elevated assumptions:

Holy. Knows the bible from one end to the other. Is always nice. I don’t know. Reverent. Will do anything. A good pastor will stop anything and do what you want or need.

Using the term “good pastor” highlights the fact that Diane sees this as an ideal – a level to which all clergy should strive – and in turn feels added pressure. Although clergy

recognize how far these images veer from reality, the ways they present their perceptions point to a subtle tension. Again, clergy separate themselves from these images and yet still use the descriptors to outline an idealized vision of who a pastor should be.

Along with the notion that pastors have their lives in order comes the idea that they possess a heightened level of emotional stability. Again, pastors note this is an unrealistic expectation, but nevertheless name it as a characteristic of a typical pastor that impacts their everyday interactions:

I think there's an expectation that you have all the answers. Or maybe I just put that on myself because I feel like there are some times where I can say "I'm not really sure about that. What do you think? Let's try to learn from each other." It's hard to know if these are self imposed or imposed by others but just that you would have it all together and not be emotional, because I feel like sometimes I'm too emotional. (Annette, evangelical pastor and spouse)

This is a more complex characteristic because embedded within are assumptions that showing emotion is somehow negative, which is clearly rooted in a link between vulnerability and instability. Annette's willingness to admit her own uncertainty speaks to this tension. On the one hand, she is concerned over being too emotional, but also appears to struggle with the idea that emotions are negative. Her reaction to a particular situation fits this social construct of the "real person" Lisa mentions, and yet Annette is unsure how best to reconcile this reality with her identity as a pastor.

Annette's example reflects the tension many pastors feel between images of a pastor and real, personal experience. For some, this comes in recognizing flaws that many would find incompatible with a career in vocational ministry. For example, Eric notes how a history of poor language was a concern when he entered the ministry:

Well as a pastor, the role has such strong expectations for propriety. You can't be a potty mouth. I actually swore a minute ago and wondered if it was going to get back to me some way. I considered not going to seminary because my mom was kind of a potty mouth and I was a potty mouth then. You know, it was like "This isn't going to play very well." But you know, I'm a person. I'm a person who happens to be a potty mouth.

Eric uses this example to stress that pastors are "real people" and yet the notion that clergy do not have any flaws is a very real and dominant pressure in his everyday life. It was not uncommon for clergy to point out mistakes from their past or present habits they feel contradict the image of a pastor, even though these "flaws" themselves are social constructs. Annette's concern over showing emotion and Eric's issue with cursing in public do not change the fact that these individuals are pastors, but they do challenge the ideas surrounding the office, resulting in added tension in the construction of identity.

One of the most interesting themes I noticed while discussing images and identity with pastors is the way they often define the cultural image as negative, setting themselves apart from particular concepts. Diane distances herself from the stereotype of an "older, more serious" pastor, and others suggest that clergy in general are out of touch with the everyday world, wrapped up in their own, outdated ways of doing religion. In describing her view of the "typical" pastor, Sasha said, "Well in my culture, it would be white male, probably balding. Heavy set but not fat. Patronizing. Judgmental. Don't I have a nice, positive set of images? Closed minded." I asked her to explain how she developed these negative views of clergy:

Because I know a lot of them. Most of the people that I interact with in the clergy don't fit that at all, but thinking about what I imagine to be...I think it's kind of like what we see in broadcast ministry. Some holier than though, self righteous, narrow minded literalist.

I noticed a definite categorization of clergy where the pastors I met explain their own identity as very different from the noticeable, public faces of ministry (televangelists were frequent targets of clergy critiques). In other words, they believe the perception of pastors is largely negative and therefore work hard to create distance from such images:

I still think it's older white male who kind of has a humdrum personality. I mean, I'm 41 and I still get occasionally double takes when people learn that I'm in the ministry. I don't know if it's my age or I try to... That I wear clothes that aren't, I hate to say, nerdy looking or whatever. So I think that breaks the preconceived... And the fact that I'm active and I'm an avid runner and all this stuff. I think for some folks they just don't make that connection with who a pastor should be. (Andy, mainline pastor)

Descriptions like Andy's highlight the general themes most pastors point out in response to my question asking pastors to describe a "typical" image. Adam names similar characteristics, like the conservative slant and more traditional, straight-laced demeanor. He is also among numerous pastors who use television and the media to strengthen a point:

Well, you know most of the time you turn on the TV, they're managerial looking, wearing suits and ties, nice haircuts and nice smiles. And you know, probably the cliché is probably a little holier than though. Conservative, if not outright sort of reactionary and hostile. I would say generally not creative or sort of generally not of the creative class but of the more corporate class. You are the maintainer of traditions and status quos and you seek sort of harmony and don't want to ruffle feathers. Just want to keep it all. You drive a nice car. You probably, if you're Protestant, you probably have a nice family. A couple kids. Somehow you were born at the age of forty-two and you sort of hang around between forty-two and sixty-four.

While Adam does not fit this image, he admits having to reconcile the identity factors within vocational ministry, specifically embracing leadership and authority characteristics. While he tries to "push against" many of the negative images he believes

are prevalent inside and outside the church, at the same time these ideas are strong factors in his experience. Again, there is a noticeable relationship between ideas and actual practice and for pastors, this plays out in the process of identity construction.

Age represents an important, influential factor in how clergy draw comparisons between their own identity and the image of a typical pastor, as people describe in the interviews. Like the examples above, Jeff gives a somewhat negative description of a pastor when discussing how people are often surprised when they find out he and his wife, Annette, both serve churches as pastors. His experience is highly rooted in the fact that he is in his early thirties and therefore “young” compared to many of his colleagues:

I think partially because they do have this image of a pastor that's typically, you know, a man in his fifties or sixties with a big gut and not well kept beard or whatever, that has a big cross dangling from his neck. And so when they encounter a young person that's a pastor, they're surprised. I know Annette, when they encounter women that are pastors, they're surprised, and so I think in that way it sort of intrigues them. Especially because I almost feel like you've got that one image, the older guy that just talks really slow, uses big words, you know, and things like that. And when they think of different people, they picture a guy with his blackberry on his hip and his polo shirt and so conservative that you would never find him there in that circle.

In these images, age represents much more than a marker of years. For clergy like Jeff who identify age as an important component in pastoral images, it serves as a depiction of maturity and life experience, as well as the level to which a person is “in touch” with contemporary culture and social life. Because age holds both positive and negative consequences, it serves as an especially strong idea in the ongoing process of constructing identity. On one side, pastors embrace the notion that they are young and

relevant, but resist the idea that one must be seasoned to truly find success in vocational ministry.

Gender similarly appears as a central defining standpoint, impacting the distinctions pastors draw. Women in particular describe the image of a pastor as typically male, even those in denominations where women are highly visible leaders. Research shows that while clergywomen point out styles and practices that they feel set them apart from their male counterparts, male pastors do not acknowledge the same gender differences. In their study of male rabbis and pastors, Simon and Nadell (1995) find that most men do not distinguish their work from women on account of gender. However, gender intersects with age, where younger women point out identity strain much more readily than older women:

I think it's changing but for me I guess I still think of an older, white male even though I...Most of the women...Most of the people who have been most influential in my faith journey have been women and they have been...But they've never...They've been influential not through being pastors. Many of them are non-ordained. They're just volunteers which is why for a while I felt like I don't need to be ordained to minister of word and sacrament, because look at all these amazing women. They're living out their calls. But when I think of pastor, that's probably what I would think of. (Kimberly, mainline pastor)

Kimberly notes that as an associate pastor in a mainline denomination, being a young woman is not unusual, whereas she thinks the combination of her age and gender would be more unique as a solo or lead pastor of a church. While Nesbitt's (1995) study examining the effects of age on Episcopal and Unitarian Universalist clergy found that gender has a stronger impact than age on the career trajectories of women, among the

younger clergywomen in my study, age appears to play a more crucial part in shaping identity, a perspective Beth's experience supports:

I still think people by and large still think of men. I think they probably think of middle aged men. But I think there's a wider, a slightly wider acceptability for men's age. And I certainly think that younger pastors that are men get to be taken more seriously. A 25 year old man and a 25 year old woman have different levels of seriousness I believe taken as they are... Would you be hired as a solo pastor of a church as a man faster than a woman at 25 in your first call? Yes. I believe that. But I also think it does depend on where you are.

Jen references the same issue, emphasizing that gender is of little concern to her congregation since the previous pastor was a woman. Yet her age makes for a noticeable barrier in her pastoral identity. These examples highlight the importance of context (Ammerman 2003), stressing the fact that identity is shaped by expectations and ideas, but also continually created and recreated by the ways people interact with others and their particular surroundings.

Clergy move between humorous and more serious examples of the images they feel portray a typical pastor, but the ongoing trend in our conversations is that these ideas – as distant as they are from a pastor's real, lived experience – play a significant role in shaping one's sense of identity. Jeff admits struggling with his identity as a pastor because of pressures to be “put together” or “righteous.” Because he does not see himself in this way, claiming the identity of pastor takes added effort:

And so you always see them as a person that doesn't have issues, that doesn't struggle with things. They're the stable force, you know? Or they're sort of a stable image of what it means to be a person or whatever and obviously it's kind of a childish image that I don't buy into, but at the same time there are people that I think want that from you as a pastor. And I always struggled with being called pastor because I felt like it would be disingenuous because I didn't fit into that. That's not who I am and that's

not who I'm comfortable being. I'm comfortable being a pastor because it's what I'm trained to do and I feel it's what I'm called to do, preaching and caring for people. But I also feel like a healthier church community recognizes that the pastors are flawed people with issues, too.

Pastors are highly aware that people within and outside the church have perceptions of the clergy role. Furthermore many recognize how these images often come from past experiences. Regardless of the source, the trend is apparent: At the same time pastors seek to reject certain images, such ideas play a significant role in shaping identity.

Two central themes emerged in my discussions with clergy on the notion of a "typical" pastor. Clergy seem to share a common perspective on how the general public might view a pastor – a middle-aged or old white male who is conservative, authoritarian and out of touch with contemporary trends and issues. In describing their perceptions, however, pastors intentionally tried to distance themselves from these somewhat negative images as a way of establishing an identity. In the following sections, I further examine the powerful role of images in identity construction by discussing the ways clergy interact with people inside and outside churches, continually recreating what it means to be a pastor. While these images play a powerful role in the ways pastors interact with people and construct an identity, clergy are by no means passive players in this process. Through narrative tools and social action, pastors actively establish a pastoral identity, challenging many of these images while simultaneously reinforcing others.

Challenging and Reinforcing Images

I stopped fighting this honorific way people were treating me and see what value I could make out of that. To just say “That’s the way it is. It doesn’t say anything about who I am but that’s the way they think I am. So how can I best utilize this for the work that lies in front of us?” And then I mean I don’t know if anybody else recognized it. It might be something that just went on in my own head.

--Ralph, mainline pastor

Ralph is a seasoned minister with several decades of pastoral work under his belt. Having served in an impressively diverse list of positions in a wide array of locations, he is no stranger to the images and expectations on pastors. As he mentions above, he reached a turning point in his career where he embraced this fact and found a way to use the expectations to advance a cause he believes is significant and necessary. Clergy identity is partially a product of these images, but also something that is established by the ways people interact in everyday life. Goffman (1963) offers a useful means for making sense of the tensions between idealized images and actual reality for clergy families. Distinguishing between actual and “virtual” or assumed social identity, Goffman positions stigma as the difference, and the factor by which a person is discredited. Some clergy mention a negative stigma when describing the “typical” pastor, but more broadly pastors discuss the reality that vocation defines them in almost all social settings. The categories of virtual and actual identity represent the two realms where clergy find themselves balancing their lived experience alongside the expectations and images attached to the role.

Indeed, while clergy work to establish a personal identity that is unique and recognizes how clergy are “normal” people, they are constrained by the powerful images and assumptions people hold. Goffman writes,

Personal identity, then, has to do with the assumption that the individual can be differentiated from all others and that around this means of differentiation a single continuous record of social facts can be attached, entangled, like candy floss, becoming then the sticky substance to which still other biographical facts can be attached” (1963: 57).

Here, it is important to note that these images are not just external, but internal as well where clergy have their own perceptions, like Ralph’s comments attest. The subjects of this study exist within a particular context where their identity is centered on a specific role. Of course, clergy identity is much larger than their occupation but as they interact with anyone – from a congregant to a stranger on the golf course – they find how deeply images bleed into so many aspects of identity.

Pastors have a general sense that they are “set apart” from others and their interactions are always and everywhere influenced by the pastoral role. This is particularly true when interacting with people as a pastor, whether in their daily church work or at a church-related event like a wedding or funeral. When Chris was officiating the wedding of a family friend, he noticed how his role as a pastor and the images within that role became the primary element of his identity in the eyes of others. Given his previous relationship to the groom, he was invited to the bachelor party, but noticed how his position interfered with his ability to fully participate in the festivities:

And there was a turning point in the night where we went out and went bowling and some people started to have some drinks and then you could tell they were going to go and get wasted at the bachelor party and didn’t want me there because there was that...Not just that I’m a pastor, but also that I’m the one doing the

wedding and the pastor, and so that sort of like level of difference there. And so they kind of came up with...I could tell what they were doing and so finally I said, "I'm just going to go home." And everyone was happy because they didn't have to hide it from me.

Although the groom was not a member of his church, he was there in a professional capacity, which meant people had trouble viewing him in any other way. He described this scenario noting the awkwardness in realizing that, despite being friendly with the groom and the other men, a pastor clearly did not fit in at a bachelor party. Indeed, any situation in which a pastor is present *as pastor* influences the dynamic between people and here, powerful images shape the interactions taking place, impacting Chris's identity in this particular situation.

Goffman (1959) would argue clergy have a "social front" they enact based on what they want others to see, but that they also engage with people and adapt this front in an interactive form. This is another way pastors engage with the ideas and images of a "typical" pastor. Goffman (1959) calls this the "art of impression management" because clergy are continually managing their identity around the compatibility and incompatibility of various images. For example, people keep secrets about potentially damaging information that could taint their status (Goffman 1959: 141), such as clergy and spouses who hide political leanings from church members.

Chris's identity as a friend who might enjoy a beer at a bachelor party is incompatible with his identity as a pastor, and he adapts his interaction accordingly. While Chris is clearly managing an impression, leaving the bachelor party early actually reinforces the pastoral images he finds problematic. He sees himself as more than just a pastor, but acknowledges others do not. Recognizing the reactions of the other men at

the party, Chris adapts his actions and plays into the idea that clergy and bachelor parties do not mix. This is a socially constructed perspective, and yet the idea is made real in the way Chris responds to the situation.

Such interactions are varied and complex however, as clergy also enact strategies that break down certain images. Ryan takes concerted steps to challenge the concept that pastors are strong leaders:

I probably don't put on airs I don't think about being pastor or the role I have as pastor. When I sign birthday cards and stuff, I kind of in my mind have this thing that this person, in a sense, really want me to sign as Pastor Ryan. And when I write this out for this person where I'm in a different kind of relationship, I'll just write out Ryan. I never use Reverend or anything like that, so I just don't put on those kinds of hats. I try not to.

The significance of titles represents a medium for Ryan to counter the authoritative images he feels people have about clergy. Eva and Robert both describe the typical pastoral image as a strong, forceful leader but similarly reject this model. Robert works to re-define this image by empowering other leaders within his church to be the up front voices, and Eva hears members comment on her more personable interactions that set her apart from other pastors.

These ongoing interactions contribute to reshaping the broader, cultural ideas about pastors and allow people to see a different type of religious leader. Despite the pressure such images place on clergy, what it means to be a pastor is something constantly redefined through these specific encounters. Trey finds that helping with chores at the church like cleaning up a mess or taking out the trash remind the congregation that he is not above these sorts of tasks. While putting away tables after an event, he was surprised when a church member told him no pastor in the church had ever

helped in this way. Trey claims his actions are about maintaining integrity and living what he preaches, but in doing so he not only constructs a particular identity but also breaks down ideas about clergy being too good to help clean up after an event.

As noted, theological superiority is one of the most common characteristics pastors link to a traditional pastoral image, and some draw attention to the ways they contradict this idea. Among the clergy I met for this study, only one seemed to enjoy the elevated status his role provides, whereas I found it much more common for clergy to resist the idealized image by highlighting their own perceived shortcomings. Although Annette feels like her emotional side does not match with the image of a pastor, an experience where she openly expressed her feelings helped lessen the tension between ideas and actual practice:

And a few people shared things about how it meant so much to them when I opened up and shared something real and cried a little bit. And it meant a lot to me that they were willing to say that and that they appreciated that because that was me being me and opening up, and sometimes people don't want to see that from their pastor. I feel like they want their pastor... There's at least this expectation that pastors would have it all together and be perfect and this and that. But by kind of exposing my humanity I guess it was a gift to them and I appreciated that they appreciated it.

Similarly, Trey openly admits when he does not know an answer to a bible related question, saying he will ask his wife, Martha, who is an academic theologian. While he senses pressure from the idea that he knows more than other people, he also actively resists this stereotype by shifting his interactions and stressing the fact that he, too, has questions. Some clergy use religion to justify their "realness," as seen with Jen:

I can't be the pastor everyone else thinks I should be. I can only be the pastor that God has made me. That doesn't mean that I don't have growing

edges and there aren't things I shouldn't work toward, but good Lord. I can't do it all.

Arguing that God created her in a particular way (yet still called her to vocational ministry) Jen allows room for the image of a less than perfect pastor. These processes all contribute to identity construction in that pastors experience pressure from idealized images, but are not passive victims. Instead, they actively engage with these ideas, in turn establishing a unique pastoral identity.

A pastor's identity travels with them and any time church members are present, there is a noticeable difference in the interactions that occur. Gwen shares an example from her previous church where a family came to her home, and clearly felt tension from the image of a pastor:

Sometimes people are nervous. I remember the last church, when people brought us meals when our child was born, like our first month or second month at the church, somebody came all dressed in her pearls and in her Sunday clothes and her little guy in a bow tie. You know, she was going to the pastor's house. People wouldn't want me to stop by their house. They would feel like they needed to clean their whole house if I was even going to pick up something, which is not necessary for me. My house is a mess always. I'm much more interested in reading books or writing a sermon.

Acknowledging that her home is messy reflects Gwen's efforts at resisting pastoral images and trying to create a different perspective that clergy are "normal" people as well. But this can be particularly challenging in social settings when a pastor feels like they cannot separate from their position, regardless of the scenario. Again, vocational ministry is both a lifestyle and identity, which means the boundaries between work and the individual self are highly fluid. Beth feels this way attending parties for church members:

[T]here are moments when people invite you over to a graduation party for their kids or something, and part of what I found is that in an hour let's say, the first ten minutes, maybe fifteen are fun and the last 45 are work. And I'm pretty clear about that because I'm going to know other people there because they're going to have church friends that they invited and at some point people are going to start talking to me about church or about something that is going to ultimately feel like I'm doing pastoral care in the midst of a graduation party.

Several people share similar scenarios, and many simply avoid such gatherings in order to manage the tension, yet doing so has consequences and affects a pastor's identity.

Attending social events with church members means clergy feel like they are working at a party, but steering clear means pastors miss out on opportunities to establish stronger ties with congregants. Furthermore, avoidance only reinforces the elevated image of a pastor and notion that clergy are not "real" people who attend parties and enjoy socializing. It is a complicated predicament and one that highlights the ongoing conflict between ideas and actual practice for pastors.

Many pastors mention the importance of other clergy in helping alleviate some of the pressure in "always being a pastor." Connections to other clergy are important relationships because colleagues in vocational ministry share the same social position and can relate to each other's concerns (McDuff and Mueller 1999). Clergy groups also make up for some of the relationship deficits described in Chapter Four, and allow pastors to connect with people who experience similar issues on a day-to-day basis. In these circles, pastors are able to disconnect somewhat from the public role and talk openly about church matters, seeking advice from fellow pastors in ways they cannot with congregants:

We don't see individual people in the church very often. We go to group things that we're asked to do but try hard to make friendships outside the congregation if we can. And that hasn't always... There hasn't been a whole lot of time for that so that has been one of the great joys of the clergy group has been this contact and I have heard all of us say the same thing at one time or another, some of us anyway, that it's really good to have some contact outside our congregation 'cause that adds such a level of stress to things. (Eva, mainline pastor)

Eva sees this group as a source of support amidst the lack of deep relationships at her church, but moreover it provides relief from the powerful images and expectations clergy encounter in daily interactions with people.

However, it is important to point out that these relationships are still connected to the pastoral identity, which has both positive and negative implications. From one perspective, there is still the reminder of work since these are friendships rooted in the shared calling to vocational ministry. On the other hand, clergy notice far less pressure from the expectations attached to their role in such contexts. Adam draws this distinction in explaining how most of his friends are connected in some way to ministry:

So most of my friends are either pastors or related to pastors or have been to seminary or somehow work in the church. I found it hard, I still find it hard, and I think maybe it's just the nature of people who get into this profession, we'll go out for drinks or we'll go out to eat on like a Saturday afternoon or Saturday night and it doesn't take too long until we start talking about church, talking about religion and theology and it's hard to leave the work behind. Even though you've left it behind and you're not dealing with any problems but you're dealing with friends and colleagues and here we're talking about work. Even if we're not talking directly about work, we're talking about something broadly in the category of religion or church.

Even within a "safe" group of people, Adam deals with a constant reminder that he is a pastor. Interacting with clergy outside the church allows people to be open about their ministry work without fearing uncomfortable or negative reactions, but it is clear even in

these situations that pastors cannot fully separate from their role, as public and private life are deeply intertwined around clergy identity.

Not all images are negative, and it is important to point out instances where clergy appreciate some of the perceptions they believe people attach to the office:

I mean, you know, even a situation where I'm there in that ministerial role, and this is more likely to occur in a situation like a wedding or a funeral or leading worship, there is something compelling for me about the mantle of the ministry that's very... It's a very empowering thing and I'm reluctant to use the word power, but I do mean empowering. There's a sense of the role that is for me very helpful in leading worship, in doing a wedding, in doing a funeral, doing a baptism, where in that role I just assume it. You know, I'm not Sasha sitting and chatting. I am the minister. I am the priest. And it fits and I'm comfortable in it and in that role people are able to take the comfort of that, the power of that, the support of that, whatever it is they need.

Sasha's experience sheds light on the tricky balance for pastors who, on the one hand wish to challenge broader ideas that clergy are superior Christians but also feel called to a leadership role in the church. Embracing one aspect of a pastoral identity necessarily comes with the tension of discomfort with a less than appealing image. Sasha's open acknowledgement that she is uncomfortable using the word "power" speaks to this concern, and highlights the complexity in pastors' engagement with ideas and images.

Clergy images are constantly evolving through the ways pastors interact with people, and in challenging and reinforcing the stereotypical images, clergy continually redefine what it means to be a pastor. Furthermore, lay people are increasingly taking on tasks traditionally limited to clergy, such as hospital visitation, reaching out to new members, teaching courses and planning services. Pastors appreciate the participation of laypeople and do not feel threatened by a heightened level of engagement (Monahan

1999), as it lessens some of the unfavorable images, like the domineering or authoritative pastor. At the same time, however, clergy recognize the importance of establishing respect as a leader for the sake of effective ministry work. Finding the thin area of compromise between these two realms is an ongoing challenge as pastors reconcile the way vocational ministry shapes identity.

Encounters with Strangers

You drop the God bomb on people and that wall goes up.

--Ryan, evangelical pastor

Like many of the pastors with whom I spoke, Ryan admits to some hesitation in disclosing his occupation outside the church, such as with people he encounters at his regular lunch spot. At times, pastors try to conceal their identity – what Ryan calls “the God bomb” – because they never know how a stranger will react. Indeed, clergy identity extends beyond church and other work-related events and pastors find that ideas and images are equally powerful forces in non-church settings. Such interactions represent yet another example of the deep interplay between public and private life, where pastors rarely have an opportunity to separate from their role and find their identity as a pastor is all-encompassing. While people within the church have an overall, shared understanding of the pastoral role, outside the church people have varied perspectives that veer even further from the actual experience of clergy in this study. But again, clergy are not passive victims of these ideas and in meeting people outside the church, social interactions continue to reinforce and challenge images, reshaping a pastor’s identity.

In his portrayal of social interaction as a game comprised of various players, Goffman argues that, “Courses of action or moves will then be made in the light of one’s thoughts about the others’ thoughts about oneself” (1969: 101). He describes how people maneuver through situations, always assessing the other players ideas and moves, adapting strategies in the game accordingly. Goffman’s theoretical model could apply to any pastoral interaction, as the examples in the previous section highlight ways clergy adapt performances based in the perceived thinking or reactions of the other person involved. However, this model is particularly salient in examining the interactions of clergy with strangers, since the reactions pastors receive upon disclosing their work are highly varied.

Context represents a very important element in Goffman’s model and applies well to the reality of “life on display” indicative of many clergy experiences. Goffman states, “For in real-life situations it is usually the case that gamelike interactions occur in a context of constraining and enabling social norms” (1969: 113). Here, interaction is much more of an intentional process that follows four-steps – assessment of a situation, decision-making, initiating a course of action and payoff. Pastors follow these steps in a cultural context in which they are defined, by virtue of position, as a unique individual set apart from others. Clergy and the people with whom they interact all have particular ideas about religion and religious people. The details of such ideas, however, vary between social settings and help shape the nature of interactions.

With the few exceptions where clergy completely conceal their occupation, disclosing the fact they are a pastor almost always has some effect on conversations with

strangers. Adam shares a few examples where people were quite surprised when hearing of his work. One such instance occurred at a writing center where he volunteers and is known simply as Adam – a rare situation for a pastor but one many seem to appreciate. When Adam finally disclosed his occupation, he describes watching people think back to previous conversations hoping they did not say anything offensive. Another instance occurred with a plumber doing work on his house:

[Y]ou know, we've been having a lot of work done on the house and a lot of plumbing work had to be done early on. And so I spent a lot of time, in between jobs when I had all day to kind of manage the project, and the plumber was here often. And he was a good, salt of the earth, cussed up a storm, blue collar plumber. So you know, we'd have long conversations and it wasn't until he was almost done with the job, it was two and a half weeks, and he asked me what I did. And I was like "Well I'm in between things but I'm a trained [mainline denomination] minister." And he was horrified. I mean, he was horrified about what he had said, not that I was a pastor. And for the next couple days he would cuss and then he'd immediately apologize. And he said some of the most vulgar things I'd ever heard and told some of the most vulgar jokes and I participated in that fully and so he sort of, again knew me as a guy who wasn't bothered by that necessarily but then found out I was a minister and he just couldn't allow himself to sort of freely interact with me in the way he was before. And then it made it hard for me because he was clearly holding back and uncomfortable which made me uncomfortable.

Diane also notices shifts in behavior when she discloses her identity as pastor, particularly around conversations and the ways people speak with her. While she does not necessarily hide her profession she admits being hesitant to bring up her work since it can quickly change the conversational dynamics:

Some folks find it very interesting. I'm usually not the first person to tell people that. My husband will. He'll say, "Well Diane's a pastor." And I'll think please don't bring that up. I'm not ashamed of it or anything but it can kind of be a conversation squelcher. The jokes change their color when people are having... Or they'll apologize for having just said damn or hell or something. They'll say, "Oh, I'm sorry pastor." They'll call me

pastor instead of my name. So there are some negative things like that, but it's not terrible.

Like discussions with church members, these reactions imply that clergy possess theological or religious superiority. Further, embedded within are the images that clergy are never inappropriate but are judgmental of those who curse or tell off-color jokes. There is a noticeable presence of expectations, assumptions and ideas of the "typical" pastor at play, and this makes clergy highly aware that their identity is both salient and meaningful across social settings, generating a host of varied responses.

The numerous and evolving ways clergy interact with people outside church mimics the dramaturgical model Goffman (1959) outlines as a way of explicating social interactions between people. Again, it is important to note that clergy are not victims of these images, rather they are active agents who engage with ideas, adapting performances in ways that either challenge or reinforce an image. This is a central component to the process of constructing identity, not just within the church but in all social environments. Goffman (1959) separates "expressions given" and "expressions given off," the latter emphasizing the agency of individuals in portraying a certain image they wish others to see. Pastors have their own ideas about how they should act and, accordingly, shape their interactions with people around these expectations. However, social performances are not always self-serving and one-sided from the actor's perspective, but also help create a scenario anticipated by the other people involved on "established social roles" (Goffman, 1959). Regardless of the ways a pastor or spouse is acting in the specific moment, people will always make sense of their actions through these established perceptions, or abstract ideas of how a pastor is supposed to behave.

An important component of Goffman's analysis is the concept of region. Front region performances fit into to cultural norms and expectations allowing the actor to depict a specific, intentional appearance. In the "back region," characteristics the individual seeks to hide in the front region are on display (Goffman 1959: 112). The front region performance may contradict the back region actions. For clergy, church serves as a front region where they cleanly fit into the image of pastor in appearance and performance, but in other settings the pastoral image does not always neatly adhere to the specific environment. This is why these encounters with strangers or people outside the church are so interesting, as the particular setting also plays a factor in how a conversation or social interaction plays out.

Neighbors are the most common example where pastors adapt their performances according to the reactions of others, but also around the pastor's own ideas of how that particular person understands their role. Austin and Courtney are friendly with the family who lives next door but as Courtney says, they were "definitely a little shocked" to find out Austin is a pastor and that she also works at the church. But Courtney couches her assessment of this interaction not just in the way the neighbors responded (showing some surprise) but also in her own assumptions. For example, she says they do not attend church and make "interesting" choices, which I asked her to define more specifically:

We've definitely gone over there and one or both have had a bit too much to drink. That sort of thing. And you know both of them are divorced and they are living together with sort of a variety of kids, but they're not actually married. They've been living together for a long time. So I think in those sorts of things, people are like "Oh, there's the pastor next door."

Although Courtney notes these neighbors created some social distance when they found out her family's involvement in church, she is also noticeably reacting to her own perception over how someone might interact with a pastor. Further, she is reinforcing the boundaries between clergy families and those outside the church, comparing family structure and everyday behavior, like drinking, to an unstated but clearly present image of a pastor's family (and perhaps more broadly a Christian family).

Media images of clergy serve as a central component in such interactions and provide a starting point for many pastors seeking to make sense of how others might perceive them as religious leaders. For most in this study, the images of pastors or Christians in general on television or in the news are far from ideal and yet pastors are aware these are often the only examples some people see. Actively resisting these models are another way pastors establish an identity. Tom finds himself justifying his religious beliefs apart from what he expects the general public to assume about Christianity:

I always feel acutely aware being part of a tradition that certainly in my view has such a negative perception in society in general, not widely, but the predominant voices of Christianity have been views that I tend to very much disagree with and so there's often an explaining role, saying...[In my ministry] I say "We're religious but we're no scary."

Neal also feels like cultural images – both positive and negative – can play a role in interactions. But like Tom, his approach seems partially rooted in experience and partially in his own personal ideas:

Well, there has been both a kind of pedestalling of ministers over the years, which does not lead to good relationship or conversation but kind of puts "Oh, you're out doing wonderful things with people all the time." Or there is, in recent years with all the clergy abuse and stupid evangelists on

TV saying odd things, there is a kind of “You’re one of them and I’m not sure I want to know much more about that.” There is also I think... People hold their spiritual views very strongly. People have spiritual opinions very much so. So when you say you’re a pastor, “I have my spiritual views.” There’s just sort of a “That’s nice you’re a pastor but don’t come preaching to me because I know my beliefs.”

Language is an important part of Goffman’s dramaturgical model, where actions are supported by the ways people talk about social positions. In both these examples, Tom and Neal challenge images with narrative tools, hoping to explain the distinction between their identity and the negative images they feel dominate the public perception of pastors and, more broadly, Christianity.

Gender is an especially prominent factor in shaping the various ways pastors interact with people outside the church. Several clergy in this study share stories of Catholic colleagues or acquaintances who are clearly taken aback with the idea that a woman – and a married person, for that matter – can be ordained. Jen found this to be true among several people she knows:

We have acquaintances here that are not-practicing Catholics and the husband just has no context for me. He calls me a priestess. And when he introduces me as that, I have to be like “No, I’m not Wiccan or anything like that.” And I have to explain to him and he kind of chuckles, but for him there are male priests and so the female version of a priest is a priestess. And so that’s how he refers to me. And now it’s kind of a joke.

While Jen and Scott both gave this example in humor, it is clear among many of the women with whom I spoke that people are not always sure how to respond when they meet a clergywoman. Evangelical women in particular notice greater resistance from people, but mainline women (and their spouses) also face questions especially when they

encounter strangers who come from different traditions. Bruce describes some of the ways people react to the fact that his wife, Eva, is a mainline minister:

Most can't even accept it. There's one group that when you mention that, in Chicago in particular, you know it's such a heavily Catholic group, you can just watch the smoke come out. You can't be married to a priest because a priest is a male but a priest isn't allowed to be married. You can almost physically see that happen. There's another group, almost always when that comes up, it's this "Oh, that's nice." And that's the end of the conversation and they, you know they take their drink and head off to somebody they can deal with that has a frame of reference. It's very interesting.

Bruce is not alone in facing criticism on behalf of his pastor wife, and some men noted how they have grown to expect a negative reaction. Helen and Roy were among numerous clergy families who indicate that disclosing Helen's identity as a pastor is a quick way to end a conversation. Ammerman writes,

As with any other identity, we cannot understand the nature of religious identities without asking questions of institutional power and hegemony. We need to know what the existing rules are and what resources various actors bring to the task of identity construction and maintenance" (2003: 222).

This undoubtedly applies to women who, for so long, were excluded from positions of authority in the church (and in some contexts, still are). Clergywomen not only engage with general pastoral images in establishing an identity but also structures of power inside and outside churches which maintain a male pastoral norm.

It is important to point out that encounters around gender do not always elicit negative reactions. Indeed, some women clergy encounter combative strangers, like Beth who found it necessary to "justify" her work to a person she met at Tom's high school reunion. But she and others note that people are also genuinely intrigued and interested

when they strike up a conversation on an airplane or at the hair salon (two settings women give as examples). Lisa acknowledges how varied the responses can be:

Catholic women often really like to meet women pastors. I mean, they find that very affirming which is very interesting. I haven't had any really negative things since I did chaplaincy work. I mean, I had one person who was visiting a patient at [the hospital] and I came in to visit as chaplain and he told me I'd be going to hell because women are not supposed to do that kind of thing and he mortified the poor lady that he was visiting. Almost all the women have run into that at one time or another.

Many women discover people are less confrontational and more intrigued. In these interactions, the continued and lasting presence of women as leaders in the church helps recreate pastoral images to be more gender inclusive (Carroll 1992; Charlton 2000; Nesbitt 1997; Wallace 1993). Challenging images, in other words, occurs through the simple fact that women serve as clergy, which alone breaks down the male image of a pastor and reinforces the pastoral identity of clergywomen.

Like interactions inside the church, relatively younger pastors (in their late twenties and thirties) find that age intersects with pastoral images and identity outside the church as well. Jeff described an interaction while golfing that stresses how much people associate older men with the pastoral office:

Some people, you know it's almost generational. Younger people think it's really interesting. That's usually my experience. But I remember one time I was golfing with some guys and got assigned to them and I was like 24 years old at the time and I was a youth pastor and these guys were all in their forties or whatever and you know, they were like guys are sometimes when they golf, they were being really crass and stuff like that the whole time. And I didn't care. You know, it's not like I've never heard that or am never that way myself. And then finally on the 9th tee, we're about to turn and play the back nine on the ninth whole or something like that and they asked me what I did. I was like "Oh, well I'm a youth pastor." Well, for the rest of the round, the language stopped, they started calling me

reverend the whole time. The whole rest of the time it was reverend. They didn't call me Jeff, things like that, ever again.

Women find this especially tough, as they negotiate both gendered images and expectations around age. However, the presence of younger people in the pulpit is another way broader, cultural images shift in meaning. Intentionally or unintentionally, the very existence of pastors who challenge norms adds to the process of redefining what it means to be a pastor, just as the presence of women helps alter the gendered nature of vocational ministry (Charlton 2000).

This ongoing process of challenging and reinforcing broader, cultural images adds to a pastor's construction of identity. Most significantly, these encounters show how clergy are always and everywhere trying to make sense of the meaning attached to their public role and its impact on personal identity. Kimberly traces the progression in claiming her identity as a pastor, a narrative that sheds light on this significant process for clergy:

[W]hen I was a seminary student, I tended to say, "I'm at seminary but I was a high school teacher before that." And I'd always include the teaching part, because teaching is universal. Everybody loves a teacher. That's sort of an easy way to go. But acknowledging that you just never know how people are going to respond to that. And it was interesting because through seminary I became more comfortable just saying I'm a seminary student and letting go of that past identity as teacher. But that was a transition and so I think having experienced that, I'm at a place where I'm able to say I'm an associate at [the church] and claim that authority, but it's been a process over four years. And I guess I'm to the point where it doesn't bother me how people will respond in the way that it did when I first started.

Kimberly moves from the identity of teacher to seminary student and now to her present role of pastor, all along engaging with the ideas and images outside people hold of clergy.

Her ability to embrace each aspect of her identity at these various points in time in her life reflect how important titles and labels are when they involve a vast array of images – some that fit a pastor’s actual experience many that do not. In the process of challenging and reinforcing these images, pastors develop an identity rooted in work, but relevant throughout everyday life. Yet again, we see how a pastor’s private, personal life is deeply intertwined in the calling to public, vocational ministry.

Clergy Spouse Images

And when your husband needed someone to play and or sing, you went along and you played and or sang. And you made Jell-O and you know all those kinds of stuff. I never made Jell-O.

--Bruce, mainline spouse

Eva and Bruce come from a long line of family heavily involved in church, including both of their fathers who are pastors. This history means they have an extremely vivid sense of the roles clergy spouses often play in churches. Bruce sings in the church choir and taught Sunday school at one point – two of the tasks he links to a typical pastor’s spouse. But he also points out ways he is atypical as a clergy spouse, joking about never making Jell-O and stressing that his gender automatically sets him apart from broader cultural images, since in his view people more often assume pastors are men married to women.

Indeed, much like the way clergy have particular ideas and assumptions around the image of a typical pastor, clergy spouses also feel as if people link their role to certain characteristics. Like pastors, clergy spouses find many of these images unrealistic and far reaching from actual experience, yet they, too, experience pressure as a result of such

assumptions. In this section, I outline the major themes stemming from my discussions with clergy spouses around their own description of the cultural image of a “typical” pastor’s spouse. While spouses point out the ways they differ from these images, the fact that people point out certain attributes highlights how salient these socially constructed impressions really are in relation to clergy spouse identity. But again, people are active in engaging with ideas, and clergy spouses both challenge and reinforce the images attached to their roles, just as pastors do so in constructing an identity.

As noticeable in Bruce’s comment about making Jell-O, some spouses offer humorous responses that highlight the immense power of images. Food preparation, such as cooking for a church event, often comes up as people describe the image of a pastor’s spouse. My discussion with Scott highlights another common trend in my interviews – music. When I ask how he fits what he thinks is the broader, cultural image of a pastor’s spouse, his immediate response is “I play the piano.” Scott does play piano and enjoys being able to share this talent in Jen’s church from time to time, but his response to my question is directed more at the long-standing assumption that the pastor’s spouse is a willing and able (and unpaid) contributor to the ongoing activities in the church, like musical programs and Sunday school.

Although clergy spouses make jokes about certain images, my discussions also elicited serious pressures from the expectations and ideas people link to a “typical” pastor’s spouse. For example, Scott is among several spouses in this study who mention being introverted or shy, emphasizing the difficulties of his public role as a pastor’s spouse who is often present at church events. Being in an upfront role – not by choice

but by virtue of one's spouse – leads to certain demands and while spouses are able to laugh about some, others are difficult to manage.

A noticeable trend – and one that mimics the pastoral images discussed already – is the notion that clergy spouses are exemplars of the all-around good person. Carla describes a pastor's spouse as very nice, very religious and someone who smiles frequently. When I asked how she fit this image, she said:

Oh, I probably fit it, but I don't know that I fit it because I'm a pastor's wife. I think that's more who I am, that I don't like to make waves and you know, try to see people on the good side. It's not always true but I try to project a positive, welcoming image. Want to have a feeling for how people are perceiving the church. You see people standing in the corner and no one is talking to them and feel guilty about that or sensitive to those kinds of things. More on how they'll view the church.

Joanna's notion of a typical pastor's spouse is very similar to Carla's emphases on kindness and hospitality:

I think I associate the pastor's spouse with food and drink. You know, you're supposed to have a punch bowl. I do. I used to have two punch bowls and you know how to make all that stuff. You know I have recipe boxes for that sort of role. But I never did have a tea in my house where you sat down at the end of the table and poured tea. I guess I could come up with that. But it is being gracious and friendly and also being someone people confide in.

Carla and Joanna both seem to fit the image they describe and admit this is a comfortable match to their own identity and participation in the church. However, most people described the typical pastor's spouse in a way that noticeably differs from actual experience and personal identity.

Gender plays an extremely powerful role in the ways spouses talk about images and identity. In Carla and Joanna's comments above, they do not overtly link clergy

spouses and women but mention tasks and personality characteristics that are socially constructed as feminine. Most clergy husbands concertedly point out that they are more an anomaly compared to clergy wives:

[G]enerally it would be a woman because a pastor is more commonly...It's been males. Someone who is there who's a presence but sort of behind the scenes. Just more of a support role. In attendance, helping out with coffee hour or whatever, but not really having a strong voice in the church I would think. Like it's more like that's their job. That's my spouse's job so I'll give them that sort of space. It's not really my area. It's more them. (Charlie, mainline spouse)

Men share many of the same assumptions on how people view a pastor's spouse, mimicking some of the characteristics women use to describe the "typical" pastor's spouse, but they do so through a highly gendered lens:

I think now being a male pastor's spouse, I think I'm still expected to look appropriate, to behave appropriately, to be a role model for the people we come in contact with, both inside and outside the congregation. (Roy, evangelical spouse)

Roy describes these expectations and includes a clarification that, despite his gender, he falls into the same category and faces similar assumptions as women. Thus, even in pointing out that he challenges the typical model, he also reinforces the gendered image by implying its femininity, much like the trend Williams (1995) notices among men working in "women's" careers like nursing. Even as clergymen discuss blurring gender lines, they in fact maintain a gender binary by falling back on particular categories as means of explanation (Lorber 1994). Like other men, Roy simultaneously points out the ways he is different from the broader cultural image but still draws from this image in making sense of his position in the church, defining his position as a man in relation to a broader concept of women (Connell 1995).

Women likewise rely on gendered images, and in fact appear to have such assumptions more heavily thread throughout their descriptions, such as in Penny's response to my question asking to name characteristics of a "typical" pastors spouse :

The image is the wife keeps the family going, keeps the husband going, keeps the house clean, keeps the parsonage clean, keeps everything looking good and teaches on Wednesday night, teaches on Sunday morning. I think that's pretty much the standard. And doesn't have to be exceptionally pretty. Should be modest in lifestyle and in dress. So I think I meet most of that.

While clergy husbands specifically mention gender, women (particularly those from evangelical denominations) have this supposition built in to their way of thinking.

Paula's description follows this trend:

I would hope that a pastor's wife would really care about the church and care about the people in the church. We knew early on that we were going to be in ministry together in some way. Real early, like before we even got married. And I wouldn't expect every pastor's wife to do this, but the whole area of hospitality I think it's good when you're able to do it. It's okay if you can't do it. Being a friend to people. Being able to listen. But I would hope that you could be yourself.

Unlike Roy, Bruce and the other clergy husbands, who deliberately mention the fact that they differ from cultural images by gender, some women have this notion so ingrained in their minds that they overlook the fact that both men and women occupy these roles.

This is possibly an unintentional omission, but nonetheless one that speaks to the powerful assumptions embedded in the ways people think and talk about vocational ministry.

Overall, the major theme in my discussions is that clergy spouses generally feel different in the eyes of people inside and outside the church, and yet spouses also appear largely unsure of their identity, given the informal and unofficial role in the church.

Again, images play a powerful role in the way clergy spouses reconcile this aspect of the interplay between public and private life. Claire, who describes a “thin veil” separating Andy and her family from the rest of his congregation, is clearly uncomfortable with the way she is set apart as the pastor’s spouse, recognizing that the congregation views her differently by extension of her relationship with the pastor. Charlie describes this well, comparing Kimberly to a celebrity around whom he, as her husband, is still partially in the spotlight:

Well my personality, I’m just naturally quiet and more reserved and just not quite as outgoing as a lot of people would be. So for me to be just sort of thrust into “here’s a bunch a people you don’t know and we’re going to hang out with them for a while” it takes me a little while to get comfortable in that position. You know, I hopefully don’t let it show very obviously, but I am kind of shy and she’s not as shy at all. She’s much more outgoing, so she’s definitely the more social of the two of us. But I know that being married to her, at any church event she’s sort of the celebrity so me just being next to her puts me into not the spotlight but sort of the glow off the spotlight.

As a more introverted individual, Charlie is uneasy with the implications of his role as pastor’s spouse, but like Claire also acknowledges how his place in the church is a very real part of his identity.

Undeniably, clergy spouses exist in the midst of an interesting and complicated situation. While they do not have a formal role in the church, they have an unofficial position that carries expectations and assumptions, not just from people in the church but from the general public as well. The lack of any regulatory body to condone or prohibit certain ideas or actions is absent, which makes establishing standard practices extremely difficult (Fuller 2003). Thus, despite the informal nature of the role, spouses find it

difficult to separate this identity from other aspects of everyday life. Martha makes an excellent comparison to her own experience that effectively illustrates this tension:

It's like being the first lady in some ways. You better be able to act appropriately as well in public and honestly and as Christ would deem you to act. So that's always in the back of your mind before you go up and complain about something, whether it's service at a restaurant... You don't know who you're talking to. And there's something very good about that, very good about those kinds of boundaries. And I know they could be something to resent but I don't resent them. I don't resent them because any negative that might come from that I have to see as "You know what? That's just part of the territory and what Christ has laid out for me." I just have to honor Trey and our church and God in all of that. They're all wrapped up together. It's all part of the package so I don't resent it.

Like pastors, spouses do not necessarily fit these images, and yet they remain central to everyday, lived experience. Martha's perspective on being set apart speaks to the multiple nuances in the images of clergy spouses, and the reality that this role necessarily adds a layer to an individual's identity simply by extension of marriage. In the following section, I explore identity construction more closely, looking at the ways spouses engage with the images they link to their position, establishing not just their own identity but adding to the social construction of a "typical" pastor's spouse by challenging and reinforcing images.

Constructing an Identity as a Pastor's Spouse

You're not just the average congregation member because you're sleeping with the pastor.

--Jen, evangelical pastor

Scott tries hard to be an "average congregation member" in the church his wife Jen pastors, employing the layperson model I outline in Chapter Three. As someone new to vocational ministry, he still has some hope that this is possible. At the same time,

Scott realizes that he will never truly be the same as other congregants because of his relationship to Jen. Both mention how Scott is aware of his role and that it influences what he says and how he interacts with people. He admits to having a filter of sorts, considering what books or movies he discusses and Jen acknowledges that he likely does not “express himself as freely as he would like” in church meetings. Outside the church, Scott also experiences a similar feeling like the “holiness” image many pastors associate with vocational ministry, or the notion that clergy (and by extension spouses) are religious exemplars who live highly righteous lives. This translates into perceptions from others around his behavior, based on ideas over how a clergy spouse should and should not act:

Actually I swore one time recently loudly and this guy said, he’s like “Geez, your wife is a woman of the cloth.” I mean, it did...It convicted me. I realized, okay, whether they buy it or not, whether they have any interest, you know, it does...You have to be careful. (Scott, evangelical spouse)

Indeed, inside and outside the church, Scott is continually made aware of his connection to a pastor, and as a result finds that his wife’s work plays a role in his identity. Clergy spouse is not a role he chose in the same way he chose his career, and yet this part of his everyday life is central to the ways he communicates and acts around others. Scott’s identity as a pastor’s spouse is part of a social performance (Goffman, 1959) based on his own ideas about his role in the church and his interactions with others – people inside and outside the church who likewise have ideas, expectations and assumptions attached to this role.

Just like pastors, clergy spouses similarly engage in an ongoing process of reinforcing and challenging images as they construct an identity. In turn, they continually redefine what it means to be a pastor's spouse, in some instances solidifying certain assumptions and in other cases forming new models. Stressing the ways human action helps create and maintain social categories, Goffman writes, "The consequence of a presentation that is perforce made to the public at large may be small in particular contacts, but in every contact there will be some consequences, which, taken together, can be immense" (1963: 48). The seemingly minor actions and interactions of a clergy spouse, like Scott who is now more careful in how he speaks, have a lasting effect on the broader, cultural perception of a pastor's husband or wife. Goffman goes on to say, "In our society, to speak of a woman as one's wife is to place this person in a category of which there can be only one current member, yet a category is nonetheless involved, and she is merely a member of it" (1963: 53). These categories include "socially standardized anticipations" in which ideas and assumptions are normalized through the ways people act and interact. Clergy spouses are individuals, and yet they are part of a larger group which carries socially significant meaning and is part of one's identity.

Although their position in the church is less official and more informal compared to pastors, spouses, too, experience the sense they are in some way set apart from others. Interactions with people both inside and outside the church, in turn, impact a spouse's identity, highlighting the connection between public and private life. Being part of the family business means spouses and children are highly visible and congregants view them differently compared to other church members. As much as a person tries to blend

in, their identity is deeply shaped by the ideas and images others hold. An excellent example of this is Penny, who notices how participants in her weekly bible study assume she is the leader because she is a pastor's wife. She says, "Tuesdays, every other Tuesday night I have a women's bible study. I don't really lead it per se but I'm perceived as leader if I go." She explains in more detail that the other women expect her to have more theological knowledge and see her as a mentor, assuming her faith is naturally stronger. In this case, others impose the image of a clergy spouse upon Penny. However, Penny also actively participates in maintaining this image by taking on this role in the group without protest.

Penny's experience in the bible study and her response partially stems from outside pressure, in this case the women in her group seeking her guidance. Courtney similarly recognizes how people view her differently because Austin is a pastor, and while she believes in sharing her views openly she tries to be careful knowing people "look at you differently than they are looking at everyone else." Penny and Courtney are both uneasy with these expectations and yet feed into them for fear of negative consequences. For example, they are mindful in expressing personal, theological opinions because people so easily take what they say as truth, even if it is just a personal interpretation. Many assume that, as the pastor's wife (and Courtney as a member of the church staff), they must have special knowledge to impart. Although spouses do not necessarily feel like they match these characteristics, they act in ways that reinforce this notion of a clergy spouse, constructing an identity as one who is set apart.

In general, clergy spouses enact similar strategies as pastors in claiming an identity amidst a host of views around their roles, and these actions and interactions serve to both reinforce and challenge images of the “typical” pastor’s spouse. In the examples from Scott, Penny and Courtney, clergy spouses are reinforcing images and assumptions, being careful about swearing in public, accepting the default bible study leader position and carefully navigating conversations with church members. Perhaps without even knowing, these spouses maintain certain perceptions, many of which do not fit personal experience (such as Penny’s discomfort with leadership responsibilities), but nevertheless exert pressure.

Other spouses make more concerted efforts against ideas and images of a “typical” pastors’ spouse. Although she sings in the choir (which mimics the image of a musically talented clergy spouse), Hannah stresses other ways she does not conform to unwritten rules (such as dressing casually) claiming it simply does not fit her personality. Martha also points out the ways she differs from the image of a pastor’s spouse and the embedded assumptions, which extend to her family:

Probably June Cleaver. I don’t quite fit that. I think the typical image is kind of the woman who is always kind of the Jacqueline Onassis. Every hair is in place and all the kids are perfectly dressed and always sitting in a row. We’re not like that. In fact, my kids, I probably should have given them a haircut about four weeks ago and my boys have kind of long shaggy hair. I’ve got to get them cut. We don’t quite fit a lot of those stereotypes. I don’t know. That’s kind of the image I had growing up.

These images largely stem from Martha’s childhood pastor’s wife, who she claims was extremely involved in the church. Noting how she differs from this model, Martha explains that she tends to be more “intellectual” and enjoys discussing theology rather

than serving on committees. However, while she sees her actions as challenging an image, her language reinforces the same image by emphasizing the ways she veers from that norm. Ingrained in her distinctions is a socially constructed but ideologically real image of how a clergy spouse should look and act. While this image differs from actual experience, it remains a powerful force in a clergy spouse's process of identity construction.

Elsa has similar experiences, challenging the expectations she hears from people both inside and outside Adam's church:

I think sort of the stereotype is the woman leads the youth church choir and teaches Sunday school and doesn't work. I had a lot of friends, particularly friends of mine who come from... Well, I either have friends... I have some friends who are Catholic who were shocked at the idea that the pastor would be married. It's just a bizarre notion in the first place. Or I have a few friends that come from more of like an evangelical African American congregation where the pastor's wife, her picture is on the web page with his and the list of her accomplishments and what she does in the church is right up there, too. And she doesn't work. And so I got teased a lot by them and they said, "Are you going to direct the church choir? Are you going to be quitting your job? Are you going to be teaching Sunday school and all those things?" So I think that's sort of the stereotype of the pastor's wife, that she doesn't work. She is sort of the helper at the church.

Elsa, Martha and other spouses perform a role in a context that includes particular images of pastor's spouses. These ideas change depending on the environment, but the role of clergy spouse plays a crucial part in shaping one's identity across a variety of contexts. Elsa points out how she interacts with different people, adapting her performance according to their reactions, mimicking Goffman's (1959) analysis of front and back regions. She jokes with her co-workers in the back-stage region as a way to challenge

certain images, but later mentions how she sets up coffee weekly at the church – a front-stage practice that reinforces other images of a clergy spouse.

These examples show the multiple layers to clergy spouse interactions, in particular the ways spouses might challenge an image in one setting but in another, easily conform. As much as spouses try to resist particular assumptions, they are highly aware of the consequences in doing so. Like pastors, there is little opportunity to separate from the role of clergy spouse, which shows how deeply embedded vocational ministry is within a person's identity. In other words, clergy spouses wish to be seen as an average church member, but are simultaneously hesitant to disclose that they are real people with real life issues because they are always and everywhere linked to a position of religious authority. For instance, Hannah feels particularly uneasy over how church members will judge her as a mother:

There's certain people I feel a lot more comfortable sharing maybe whatever difficulty I'm having with my child. You know, "Can you help me with this potty training thing? I'm so frustrated." There's one particular person I'll go to because she's very helpful with that and I just feel like she won't judge me, whereas there's some other people that I'm just, for some reason, deathly afraid that they're going to judge me about my parenting skills or the way that I'm bringing up my child.

Others share examples of being mindful of how they dress, like Paula choosing not to wear nylons in the summer or Jane wearing pants to church (both in contexts where such choices were unusual for women). They reference these instances as a means of challenging assumptions, and indeed Jane in particular found that women saw her as a positive example given her highly successful career. But these women also share these stories as times they felt uncomfortable or concerned over how people might react,

highlighting the pressure many spouses feel from powerful ideas and images as they perform a role inside and outside the church.

Spouses are quick to point out the ways clergy family life differs from people's expectations. Some believe congregants and, in some instances, people outside the church, look at the pastor, spouse and children as the model Christian family, a hidden theme in the concerns Hannah expresses around mothering her young daughter.

Recognizing her family as a "real" or "normal" family allows Bev to embrace her role in the church:

I didn't care if they said, "This is my pastor's wife." Because I am. Hello? You are so deal with it. But then it's always so funny when someone says "Oh shit." And then they say "Oh, sorry, sorry." Well my son just said it earlier, so oh well.

By pointing out a "flaw" in her family – the fact that her son curses – Bev challenges the notion that clergy families are perfect, breaking down the separation between her family and others. However, she also solidifies a division by stressing the expectations on a pastor's family. A clergy spouse's identity is therefore profoundly rooted in images from others, but also in the very real experiences that mimic or go against such ideas.

Constructing an identity in the midst of cultural images is especially difficult for clergy spouses who are also pastors, like Gwen and Tom. Gwen serves part time in a separate church from her husband, Eric, and Tom works in a ministry that holds services on Sunday evening. Although they are pastors, both Gwen and Tom consider their respective spouse's church their own, which makes for some interesting dynamics around identity:

[C]hurch has been a big part of my life. I was a church lady who was there every time the door opened before I went to seminary. We were elders, you know, all that. And so then last year when I was sitting there as the pastor's wife, it was really hard to figure out. It wasn't my church. It was hard to figure out what to do. So in a way I kind of ducked out of that and came over here as a pastor instead. It's a little easier to be the pastor than the pastor's wife for me. (Gwen, mainline pastor and spouse)

Gwen finds some relief in part-time pastoral ministry, something Annette also references in discussing the challenges in claiming her identity as both a pastor and pastor's spouse. Tom, on the other hand, attends Beth's church regularly since his ministry meets at an alternative time:

I don't exactly know how to be at the church. I'm sure they don't know exactly what to do with me, another pastor who's there on Sundays but who's not leading worship or have any type of obvious role. The things I do really appreciate about this church, and I appreciate its size probably as much as anything, are the people there. They kind of allow that, the looseness.

While he mentions the "looseness" the church offers in defining his role, there is a noticeable tension in these aspects of his identity, since he is both a pastor and clergy spouse. There are fewer, if any, cultural images to define a pastor's spouse who is also a pastor. Tom and Gwen are aware of the congregation's uncertainty over how to interact given this lack of definition, and they in turn adapt their actions to address this issue.

Gwen found it easier to attend a different church and taking a part-time position elsewhere provides a means to avoid the uncomfortable tension she notices with Eric's congregation. Lindsay's frustration over being unable to find a full-time ministry position creates a noticeable identity struggle, and attending the church her husband Chris pastors made this struggle extremely difficult. Not working in a church herself, the conflict between the pastor spouse role and her identity as pastor is too complicated and,

in her view, personally debilitating. Therefore, Lindsay chooses to attend a different church. In doing so, she is adapting her performance not just around the perceived reactions of people in Chris's church, but also to her own view that these two roles – pastor and pastor's spouse – are incompatible in this particular context.

Alongside these significant tensions for clergy couples, gender again serves as a central defining point in this process of reinforcing and challenging images of a typical clergy spouse. As with the images people describe when asked about the image of a clergy spouse, the ways people engage with images is also highly gendered. For example, clergy husbands in this study frequently refer to themselves as “the pastor's wife,” an action that reinforces the gendered image of a clergy spouse. Tom is among several men who used this language, which he brought up in talking about his relationship to Beth's church:

I call myself a clergy wife. I don't clearly...I clearly don't fit the role. But I don't know, and I'm not used to what it's like to be a male clergy spouse but I clearly don't fit the typical, traditional roles of what a pastor's wife would do or be.

I asked for further explanation of how he is different from this “typical, traditional role” he describes, since Tom explicitly states that he does not fit this image:

There tends to be a lot on gender stereotypes and stuff but being the social grace to the male's maybe social clumsiness or whatever, so being very social. Making everything okay. Knowing everybody. Smoothing out any rough edges.

Tom's presence in Beth's church challenges the link between gender and the pastor's spouse, but the way he interprets his specific position in the church and talks about it

underlines the fact that people – including clergy husbands – still assume most pastors are men married to women.

Of course, there is another layer to the way the spouse's role is gendered, stemming from church members and others who make similar assumptions. Shortly after moving into the parsonage, a group of women from the neighborhood actually asked Roy if he was "the new pastor's wife." He said this was a genuine slip, and given that these neighbors are quite old, he credits the mistake to generational differences. But this exchange highlights the fact that clergy husbands are not the only ones reinforcing a gendered representation. The dominance of an historical image rooted in church practices which limited women's leadership still plays a significant part in shaping the ways people define clergy spouses, and these images feed into a person's identity.

On the one hand, a man calling himself "the pastor's wife" maintains a gendered image, but pastor's husbands also use this language to establish an identity in the midst of a very strong social construct. Their identity exists in a context where many people still link the role of clergy spouse to women through language and interaction, resulting in a noticeable tension for men. As such, men use narrative tools to make sense of this conflict and lessen the tension, once again (perhaps unintentionally) reinforcing the gendered nature of the role. In other words, as they attempt to alleviate the difficult balance between gender and identity as a pastor's spouse, men do more to strengthen this image than challenge it.

Indeed, reconciling the impact of vocational ministry on personal identity is made all the more difficult by the fact that the role itself is not chosen, but rather an extension

of marriage. Spouses are brought into the church as part of the family business and this includes the images, expectations and assumptions people inside and outside the church attach to the role of pastor's spouse. But like pastors, clergy spouses are not passive, but active agents who continually engage with these ideas, interacting with people in relation to the images and constructing an identity in the process. And as much as spouses successfully break down stereotypes and construct an identity that is unique from the "traditional" clergy wife or husband, their actions and language also reinforce many of the images they seek to dispel.

Summary

The woven tapestry of public and private life among clergy families extends beyond the lifestyle issues related to schedules, family time and church responsibilities. Beyond the tasks clergy families take on as part of a calling to this field, both pastors and clergy spouses experience a significant impact on identity in their respective roles. However, the intricacies of such identities and the meaning embedded within vary greatly depending on context, and are built through ongoing interactions with people inside and outside the church. Pastors and spouses have a very clear sense of the powerful images people attach to their roles – ideas that stem from past experiences or broader cultural trends – and these images lead to pressure on pastors and spouses, just as they are constrained by powerful ideologies around work, family and religion as I show in Chapter Four.

However, while these ideas inform the identities of pastors and spouses, people are by no means passively formed by these images. Instead pastors and spouses actively

engage with these images in an ongoing process of identity construction. Drawing from the work of Erving Goffman, I examine the ways people in this study perform particular roles inside and outside the church, engaging with images and continually recreating what it means to be a pastor or clergy spouse. While both groups tend to challenge many of the cultural assumptions they believe are associated with their role, they simultaneously act and talk in ways that reinforce certain images. The end result is a fluid identity that is forever shifting and clearly exemplifies another way public and private life are profoundly linked for clergy families.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY

When Dena Lockwood, a single mother in Chicago, was fired from her job after taking a day off work to care for her sick daughter, the story made headlines and resulted in a successful lawsuit claiming discrimination against parents (Sachdev 2010). Stories like this speak to the ongoing tension between work and family life, specifically the challenges parents face in maintaining employment while also addressing the needs of children. Clergy families are not immune from these demands, and given that all the people in this study are dual-career couples, those with children certainly experience difficulties in balancing paid work and childcare. Moreover, managing work and personal responsibilities extends far beyond parenting responsibilities, as most workers encounter some pressure on their personal life stemming from career demands.

A key theme throughout this study is that public and private life are deeply intertwined, and as such vocational ministry represents something greater than a job – it is a calling that pastors embrace as both a lifestyle and identity. As such, the church also operates in ways different from other places of work. Indeed, churches do share many characteristics with secular employers – paychecks, health insurance, performance reviews and family leave policies. But in other ways, congregations represent institutions that seek to live out an alternative vision, shifting many of the social norms around employment practices like the way parents with sick children are treated. While much of

this study focuses on weaving public and private life in relation to clergy family lifestyles and identities, the church is central in this process and is the focus of this chapter.

Shifting the perspective slightly, in this chapter I explore the various ways the church functions as an institution, specifically how pastors and clergy families experience congregational operations in relation to their roles. I begin by examining the ways churches provide care and support for clergy families, setting a higher standard beyond a typical business or organization. While religious institutions may hold a stereotype of traditionalism, in many ways they are paving new roads through progressive personnel practices, setting an example for policies promoting better work-life integration.

However not all churches operate in this way and some function much like a typical, secular workplace with similar standards and policies. This creates frustration for clergy and spouses who carry expectations around how the church should function as an institution, and hold congregations to higher standards. Once again, we see the significance of powerful images in shaping how clergy families reconcile the interplay between public and private life. The second part of this chapter examines this issue. I close by considering the idea of church as a community, which is at the heart of the ongoing tension between ideas and actual experience for clergy families. While pastors and spouses hold elevated expectations as to how a church should operate as an institution, at the same time their positions in the church make these ideals hard to embrace in practice.

Caring for the Pastor

Well, you know there were two periods of a week and a half in the last six months where I wasn't at work because of the needs of my family. I didn't see a direct implication there. I mean, I wasn't worried that someone was going to fire me. People were very, again, encouraging and respectful of that.

--Austin, evangelical pastor and church staff spouse

Contrast Austin and Courtney's experience of dealing with a sick child to that of Dena Lockwood and a far different scenario emerges. Tyler was born with a medical condition that requires regular doctor appointments and has led to periods of hospitalization and several surgeries. As Austin points out in the quote above, he has been able to easily take time off from work to care for Tyler without any fear of repercussions. Courtney also emphasizes the care and support from the church during this difficult time:

I think we do feel like the church definitely cares about us and our family and they've definitely been very supportive, especially with Tyler being sick and definitely everyone, we feel like they care. People called to bring meals and that sort of thing when he was just getting out of the hospital.

She says at their church, the senior pastor and congregation expect the pastors and staff to "get your work done when you need to and when you can." This makes a profound difference for their family, not just in helping alleviate the scheduling conflicts resulting from the many appointments Tyler's condition requires, but Austin and Courtney both note how the church's support lessens the overall stress on their family throughout an especially tough time.

Of course, there are secular employers who offer the same flexibility to care for a sick child, and the lawsuit following Lockwood's firing implies a move toward greater

sympathy for parents seeking to manage conflicting work and family responsibilities.

But the generosity of Austin and Courtney's church extends beyond offering time off for Tyler's medical issues. Since they are employed at the same church and share an office, the congregation allows them to bring Tyler to work each day, an arrangement that works out beautifully for their family. What's more, Courtney says there was never a question from congregants that they would do otherwise:

I think it was something that was just sort of assumed from the beginning because I only work part time. In terms of what I get paid, it wouldn't be worth it to pay someone for daycare. We'd pay just as much as I make, so they said, "Certainly just bring him with." And I can also work from home, which I do sometimes.

Their decision to bring Tyler to work is partially motivated by the cost of daycare, but more importantly Austin and Courtney both express how much they enjoy being able to spend days together as a family. As I show in previous chapters, clergy families effectively weave together a tapestry of lifestyle and identity as part of the calling to vocational ministry, and here the church helps make this process smooth.

These two situations – a single mother being fired over caring for a sick child compared to a couple's highly accommodating employer – represent the extremes in the ever-challenging battle parents face in managing the competing demands of paid labor and family life. Interestingly, while churches often carry a stereotype of holding tight to tradition, churches like Austin and Courtney's are actually setting a progressive example as a forward-thinking employer when it comes to helping families effectively weave together seemingly conflicting responsibilities. Here, we see an organization that recognizes the tough issues dual-earner couples (and any parent, for that matter) face in

maintaining careers alongside the needs of children, and instead of maintaining a position that work and family are separate, the church allows for a positive integration.

Offering flexibility, and in turn a greater balance between work and family, is the most noticeable way churches operate as alternative institutions. Although pastors feel like they are always working, flexibility and autonomy make up for many of the schedule pressures in vocational ministry. This is especially true for parents. Austin and Courtney are a perfect example of a family who feels supported by a church that clearly values their ministry work but also their roles as parents. Such churches recognize the interplay between public and private life and operate in ways that help people manage resulting tensions. A similar example is Jeff's church, which threw him and Annette a baby shower after which they were "overwhelmed by the amount of stuff." Beyond this, members of his church show an ongoing interest in Isaac with some families providing care during Sunday morning services while Jeff and Annette pastor different congregations. They depend greatly on these congregants who ease the strain resulting from life as a clergy couple. Annette feels similar support from her church, especially as she integrates parenting and ministry work:

I like to brag about the church because they still paid me when I took off for maternity leave and I'm part time there. And part time people usually don't... That's very unusual I think for a place to still pay. And they were just so supportive of me and still have been. And they said it was a justice issue. They said, "You are still working. We're still going to pay you."

Parenting is no doubt work, but for an employer to openly acknowledge this and provide compensation even when not legally mandated is truly unique, and highlights how the

church operates along an alternative value system that appropriately acknowledges the relationship between public and private life.

Such practices are not merely results of recent shifts toward greater workplace flexibility, as older, more seasoned clergy also reference ways their churches offered accommodations to help them better handle the pressures of vocational ministry and family. Eva and Bruce's daughters are now adults, but as they were growing up, Eva encountered a great deal of care and support from her congregation. This mostly came through flexibility, allowing Eva to structure her work around her daughters' school and activity schedules. However, when Bruce's work shifted so that he had to be out of state several days each week, the congregation showed how much they were willing to support a pastor that was also a mother:

When we first got the news that Bruce was going to have to go [out of state] for three days a week and one of those nights...Back then there was as much stuff on the calendar as there is now. One of those nights was a night I had to be here. And I went to the [church leadership] and I said, "You know, I don't know how this is going to affect things but I can't...I don't think I'm going to be able to keep up this schedule if he's gone three nights a week 'cause I need to be at home with my kids." And one of the members of the [church leadership] said, "The night you need to be here I'll be with them every time." And that whole year when we were first getting used to that rhythm of that schedule, she came over at like 6:30 so I could come back and do my meeting and read to them and did homework with them and she did that every week. She was great.

The fact that this parishioner offered Eva help highlights how churches operate in ways unique from other institutions. These congregations acknowledge that parenting is never contained within the nuclear family but rather is dependent on assistance from outside sources, a reality apparent in studies of contemporary families (Hansen 2005). As clergy families tackle conflicting responsibilities by weaving together multiple facets of

everyday life, churches help ease this process and have been doing so long before many businesses and organizations caught on to the trend.

A supportive work environment including family-friendly policies and benefits lessens the strain between work and family (Hill et al. 2001; Warren and Johnson 1995) but there is more to these examples than a workplace recognizing the importance of practices that better support the needs of contemporary working adults. While more and more workplaces are offering family friendly benefits, people do not necessarily take advantage of these options. As Secret (2000) suggests, the culture of the workplace helps predict the usage of family-friendly policies among workers, and these churches provide an especially unique environment that encourages use of such offerings. Annette's church provided paid maternity leave despite her part-time status and framed the decision as a "justice issue." Churches differ from corporations and other workplaces in many ways, but the motivating factors behind these various organizations offer the clearest examples. Corporations are motivated by profits, and thus workplace policies are typically structured around the end goal of the highest return given the human and material resources available. Thus, when a company deems Dena Lockwood to be a threat to productivity because of her responsibilities as a single mother, there is little interest in keeping her employed. But churches are motivated by religion and specific values embedded within a belief system, which inform personnel decisions. Again, vocational ministry is more than a job, a distinction that includes churches as "alternative" employers.

Most of the examples pastors cite in discussing supportive churches relate to managing work alongside parenting, but clergy families mention other areas of care that stand out as particularly unique and further set the church apart. Conflict between work and family is a concern throughout the life course and does not only affect people with young children (Grzywacz, Almeida and McDonald 2002), and many churches offer other means for helping clergy better manage competing demands. For example, the ability to complete work-related tasks from a variety of locations – what Hill et al. (2001) call “flexplace” – is certainly appreciated by pastors and adds to the positive side of weaving work, family and religion.

Members of Kimberly’s church invite her and Charlie to join them for Thanksgiving, knowing they cannot always travel for holidays. In other cases, churches offer especially thoughtful gestures, like the creative and generous Christmas gifts Ryan’s previous church always chose for his family, such as zoo memberships. Paula says, “When churches have treated us like we’re just part of the family or we’re a family that they need to take care of and stuff then that’s felt good.” Describing their relationship to the congregation as “family” highlights how clergy and spouses view the church as an institution. It is not simply a workplace – it is an integral part of life and an organization that operates differently because it is rooted in sacred values that other institutions are not. When clergy families are treated in kind ways, they are reminded of the larger purpose of the church, and furthermore are better able to reconcile the integration of public and private life that necessarily comes alongside a calling to vocational ministry.

Respecting a pastor's need for time away from work is another way churches support clergy and operate as alternative workplaces. Most laypeople and other church staff respect these boundaries, representing a commitment to healthy work-life management for pastors. Those who experience this from their churches consider it surprising, but are nevertheless extremely grateful for such support. For example, Kimberly, who as a new pastor is still struggling with how best to set limits on her work time, admits feeling more pressure from herself than lay people in maintaining Friday as her schedule day off:

I'm having lunch with a woman on Monday and she had suggested Friday. And I hesitated and said "Well Friday is my day off." And she was like "Oh, good for you. Let's do it another day." So it's really just me.
(Kimberly, mainline pastor)

Beth's mainline church even has a personnel policy stressing the importance of time off for the pastoral staff.

People respect having the day off. They encourage it. Our personnel handbook has that we are to work towards having two days off. We should have one, we need to work towards two, but one is sort of sacrosanct kind of thing. So that's really positive.

Knowing how easy it is for clergy to take phone calls or deal with church issues during scheduled time off, congregants frequently remind pastors to protect this time by giving them the space to do so:

Typically people know that Mondays are my days where I'm off and I'm not...and I have a lot of people who know that and will make a comment like, "You know, I was going to email about this or call you but I recognize it was Monday so I was going to wait until Tuesday." So people know that for the most part. (Austin, evangelical pastor)

Supportive congregations, who give pastors the freedom to adapt their schedules, trusting they accomplish the required work, provide an added benefit to the flexibility most clergy draw out of a demanding weekly schedule and represent another positive side to the integration of public and private life in the process.

Finally, during difficult life circumstances, churches truly stand out as alternative institutions. A demanding congregation is directly related to a pastor's level of stress and negatively impacts well-being, while supportive relationships with congregations foster more positive attitudes among clergy and create greater work and general life satisfaction. Thus, although clergy caution against forming friendships, there are some benefits to developing positive relationships with people in the church (Lee and Iverson-Gilbert 2003). Trey deals with an illness that requires consistent medical attention, and recognizing the added strain this puts on Martha and their family, church members offer to help drive the kids to activities and offer free babysitting. Tom is minimally involved in the church Beth pastors, but when his grandfather passed away he was surprised by an outpouring of sympathy from congregants, many of whom he hardly knows:

My granddad just died last month and I got an amazing number of cards. I guess this is a big church thing. I just didn't realize that it happened so much. I'd never had a granddad die. I got, I don't know, 10, 12, 15 cards from people. I mean, I know them all. I just didn't feel like our relationship was like that. I guess that's probably what surprised me. Just that typical middle America to me, deathly boring coffee hour chit chat is mostly what goes on and these people in their caring way go buy a sympathy card and send it to somebody. That's not how I do things, but that's clearly in that world. That's kind of how things work.

The church extended similar support to Beth when she lost a grandparent. The funeral service was scheduled for the Saturday before Easter, and being out of state, it would be

impossible for her to attend both the funeral and be back in time for Sunday worship on one of the most important holidays in the church. But not only did the congregation allow for her absence that Sunday but they handled the issue in a way that showed Beth her family is first priority.

Secular organizations offer bereavement time and other accommodations that mimic the same level of support these couples reference, but certain elements set churches apart from other institutions. As I show in Chapter Two, pastors reconcile the immense challenges of vocational ministry alongside the numerous rewards by focusing on the sacred calling to this type of work. Clergy and spouses both acknowledge that work in a church is highly demanding and involves great sacrifice, but they willingly embrace the difficulties, partly because of the positive benefits but also because of a commitment to the church community. However, in the eyes of clergy and spouses, this calling is a mutual responsibility. As a pastor is expected to make sacrifices for the church, she also expects the church to operate as an employer grounded in particular tenets – the care for people and a value of justice. When churches show great care and support for the pastor and her family, it adds another positive layer to vocational ministry and makes the impact on lifestyle and identity much easier to bear.

When the Church Doesn't Care

I think that there are churches that know how to love their pastor and encourage them and bring out the best in them. This is not one of those churches.

--Ryan, evangelical pastor

Of course, not all churches fit into these categories and some pastors find that despite expectations, the church actually operates in much the same way as any other workplace. Indeed, congregations share similar characteristics with most employers, being divided into “good” and “bad” categories based on factors like size and budget, as well as employment benefits like salary, autonomy, security and support (Mueller and McDuff 2002). For example, while Jeff appreciates how much the church supported him and Annette upon the birth of Isaac, he is disappointed over the lack of flexibility the church provides to him as a new father:

[F]or a while I stayed home in the mornings to care for Isaac and that obviously had an effect on when I was doing work and things like that. And I found out there were people at the church that didn't like that, were concerned about it and for eight months never brought it up.

Given how supportive the congregation seemed when Isaac was born, he thought it would be fine to adjust his schedule so he and Annette could more easily manage childcare alongside their dual-ministry careers. His disappointment, therefore, is partially directed at the fact that people did not confront him with concerns, but more broadly that the church is less than accommodating to his changing needs and responsibilities. While Jeff and Annette are seeking to weave together work and family in order to manage multiple demands, in this case the church creates a barrier.

Clergy seem rather surprised when churches operate in this way, assuming the norm is a flexible, accommodating and caring congregation. In other words, pastors expect the church to operate as an alternative institution and when it does not, they are clearly disappointed. The element of religion is important here, as it provides backing for this perspective on church as an organization rooted in a sacred, higher purpose. There are clear expectations in the eyes of pastors as to how a church should treat its employees, but interestingly these concerns have little to do with an individual's personal needs. Instead, the way the church treats its pastor reflects what the church is as an institution, and given the deep commitment pastors have in shaping a spiritual community, seeing it operate in ways antithetical to their vision draws forth questions about the strength of that community. To be sure, pastors cannot be held accountable for the multitude of decisions and actions a congregation makes on a daily basis. The concern is more around the fact that pastors have a particular concept of church and seeing a congregation function in ways counter to this vision is disconcerting, especially given the time, energy and emotion pastors devote to their calling.

This trend is noticeable in the way Ryan discusses some questionable practices and decisions of his current church. As he describes it, the congregation shows very little care and concern for the pastoral staff. Although his wife Paula notes the generous financial gift they were given at Christmas, Ryan feels that, overall, the church is distant and lacks warmth as exemplified in a specific instance he shares:

Last October was supposed to be Pastor Appreciation Month and [the office manager] put in, unbeknownst to [the associate pastor] and I, put in a notice in the newsletter that it was and people ought to say something

nice or send a card or so on and so forth. And [the associate pastor] and I both got two cards.

In a church of two hundred members, Ryan is obviously bothered that only two people sent cards. He describes other areas where the church seems very uncaring to him and his family. When he and Paula first moved to the area, the church chair sought out volunteers to bring them meals for a week, but no one volunteered to help. But for Ryan, the worst indicator of how little he feels his church cares came just as he began his new position:

I was driving across country. My dad was sick and had lung cancer. So I was driving across country and got word that he had died, which was expected but so I arrived here, we unpacked the house. And I had just driven across country. We unpacked the house virtually by ourselves. Had a little bit of help from the church but virtually by ourselves. And then unpacked the office, start to get the office organized. That was part of it that week, that first week. And then in grief, hop on a plane, go out to [the state where my parents lived] for the memorial service, come back and find out that Tim, the chairman of the trustees, has made a recommendation that I be docked two weeks pay for the time that I was moving in and was back for my dad's funeral.

The board did not go along with the suggestion to cut Ryan's pay, in his mind, the blow came with the suggestion. In many lines of work (such as any non-salaried position) a person is never paid for time off but Ryan, as a pastor, believes his workplace – the church – should operate under a different standard given its sacred foundation. Seeing the way his new church treated him in the midst of grief is about more than hurt feelings. For Ryan and others who experience similar frustrations, such actions represent a breakdown of the church's central tenets and an extremely troubling situation to a pastor seeking to form a community grounded in particular beliefs.

When congregations are skeptical over how a pastor is spending his time, clergy point to this as another sign the church is veering away from the ideal model of a spiritual community. Pastors share stories of coming in late the morning after an evening meeting (a common practice to compensate for the added hours at night), encountering cynical reactions from congregants who happen to be in the church at the time:

Well when the receptionist is on vacation, she'll arrange to have various lay members staffing the desk. And they usually do half a day at a time, so one of them will be there in the morning and one of them will be there in the afternoon. There is a particular layperson who's not embarrassed about having, when I walk in at 11:00, looking at the clock and saying "Hmm, nice to see you." (Sasha, mainline pastor)

Sasha tries to remain pastoral and avoid confronting people defensively, but she clearly believes members, as part of the church, should have more trust in the pastor and show sympathy for the unconventional, demanding schedule clergy maintain. Along these lines, requesting time off for travel – even that which is work-related – is another area where some pastors grow disappointed by a lack of trust and flexibility:

But my attitude with the church was, I don't feel like I could have asked for both times, even though neither of these times encompassed any Sundays. So I preached on the Sundays on either end of the [denominational] retreat. I feel like...And then I needed to justify the [denominational] retreat in terms of unused time off and all kinds of things just to mollify and put out the fires from the get-go. And I don't feel like I should have to feel like I have to do that. And so then [the clergy conference] and [denominational meeting], my participation with those things have been sporadic. (Evan, evangelical pastor)

Instead of the church backing his participation in these events, which Evan feels are important to his ministry and personal effectiveness, he strategically manages his requests so the church does not question his work ethic. Describing what he sees as inappropriate

scrutiny and a lack of support for professional development, Evan says with noticeable annoyance, “It bugs the hell out of me.”

Without a doubt, autonomy and trust are central to the ideal vision clergy hold for the church and pastors assume congregations share these same values. When the church does not offer trust, pastors question the congregational operations, not their own view of how a church should function. Robert previously pastored a church that often questioned his schedule and here Penny explains some of the practices she and Robert found surprising with the church’s approach:

The last church we were at, they talked about him having to punch the clock in and out, and he said “I will be glad to do that if you’re going to pay me time and a half for the overtime.” They were very suspicious. I mean, I could go on for a long time with negative comments about them but I had never been in a church like that before and it was really dysfunctional.

Describing the congregation as “dysfunctional” highlights how much clergy and spouses expect churches to operate under a different standard. Again, this model of the alternative institution is an idealized vision of church, but it is also the assumed model pastors expect upon joining a new congregation as the minister.

Part of this vision also includes certain standards over how people within the church interact, particularly how they treat the pastor. Mostly in committee meetings, pastors are surprised at the candid level at which people offer criticism, making blunt comments with very little compassion. Again, these trends go against the clergy perspectives on church as an institution and therefore are surprising and disappointing to encounter. Kurt says he has calluses from his years in ministry that now allow him to better handle such remarks, but it is clear that he and other clergy find such open

negativity inappropriate for a church setting. While Gwen is somewhat removed from the harsh comments at her church because of her part-time, temporary position, she is very aware that people act in ways she feels are inappropriate for a church. She says, “I’ve been in a lot of churches but there’s a level of meanness in this that I haven’t seen before and making it incredibly personal.” For example, members are currently arguing over a Sunday school curriculum, but in general she sees a lot of tension between members and the pastoral staff:

Real sarcastic comments. Personally humiliating other people. Things like that. Not a great relationship with working with staff. They feel that they’re against the staff, even to the point where it’s suggested that all conversations should be tape recorded. So that’s been an interesting challenge.

Gwen sees little room for such negativity within the church and is shocked at some of the conversations she hears in meetings. Sasha notices the negativity extending to comments people make about the pastoral staff in her church:

And because the moderators rarely think it’s appropriate to set parameters on how people will speak, it’s not unusual for someone to stand up in a public meeting and say something like “And what about those associate ministers? They don’t know how to preach.” Isn’t that interesting. “Have you ever been in the sanctuary when I’ve been preaching?” Can I say anything? No. I’m a minister. Or people will stand up and say what this church really needs is to get rid of the senior minister. Well, now that might not be about me but it affects me greatly. What kind of environment is this in which people feel it’s okay to say that?

Pastors understand that not all members will be happy with their work, and see conflict as a necessary component of a calling to vocational ministry. Yet these issues are about more than conflict – they represent how pastors envision people in a religious community interacting together and treating the person called to be the spiritual leader. Returning to

the motivating ideas and values within congregations, pastors believe people's behavior should take on a different form – stressing compassion over criticism – especially with clergy who make sacrifices as part of a commitment to the church.

While clergy name these specific issues, they all point to general concerns over the way the church functions as a community. When a pastor senses a lack of care or an unwelcoming aura, they connect it to this broader, ideal vision. For instance, I encountered a surprising number of couples that say they are rarely invited to congregant's homes for dinner. Many pastors link community and church together, but have a disconcerting sense that church members do not:

Maybe I'm just used to Midwestern hospitality, like "Come over to our house, let's have dinner." We don't get that very much at all. And most of it has to be initiated by me. I find the generation that is like my age and younger is very friendly, and I don't know if that's our... Well, everyone is very friendly but more personally friendly, "Oh, come over to our place" or that sort of thing more than the thirties and forties generation, the people in their thirties and forties. So we don't get, me or the other co-pastor, rarely get invited to people's homes. (Chris, evangelical pastor and spouse)

Chris distinguishes between people being friendly and actually opening their homes, a crucial difference that sheds light on the missing element of community many pastors find so worrisome in the church. Furthermore, we see yet another way ideas and actual practice do not cleanly align. For Adam, his experience also goes against his anticipations:

I expected and Elsa expected and we were told to expect "Oh, you're going to get invited to dinner every weekend. You're going to gain twenty pounds because you're going to be eating so much food." And there wasn't a lot of that and I don't know if that was because I was the pastor. I don't think it was only that because I later learned it just wasn't part of the culture of the church to go to each other's houses either. I think they again,

maybe a generational thing or a cultural thing, generally traditionally had looked to the pastor to set the direction. “You tell us what to do and we’ll do it. We’re the workers. You’re the CEO. The general manager.” And that was not how I was taught to be a leader in seminary. So they were definitely looking to me to be the one to provide the answers, not necessarily the one to ask the questions.

Clergy concerns are less about actual invitations for dinner and more surrounding the culture within these churches. While pastors are trying to instill a sense of community within their congregations, it is disappointing to find more individualistic and private people.

Looking at the various ways churches operate and treat employees, it is clear that some congregations feed into the positive side of weaving work, family and religion while others function much like a traditionally organized workplace and create barriers for clergy families. Examining the effect of women’s ordination on gendered family life, Cody-Rydzewski (2007) finds that churches are not very accommodating to demands of home and personal life, however my findings suggest that some churches represent more flexible environments for its employees, representing an effective workplace model. What is interesting in comparing these types of churches is the way pastors again operate under an idealized vision. Pastors and spouses not only appreciate the flexibility and support congregations provide, but assume this is how a church should function given its sacred foundations. However, as I argue in the following section, there is a noticeable distinction between the ideal of a holistic community and reality stemming from the integration of lifestyle and identity in vocational ministry.

Church as Community?

So if there's some measure where you either feel like you're being played or the person is not being straight forward, that's something that's really hard for me, and I think in the church of all places.

--Gwen, mainline pastor and spouse

Throughout our conversations, clergy and spouses frequently compare congregations to communities, and indeed this is perhaps the strongest image stemming from discussions over the church as an institution. As clergy families consider how churches function in comparison to other organizations, they share a perspective that congregations are different because they are based on a commitment to a higher purpose. Churches are not simply voluntary organizations or social gathering sites, but communities of like-minded people who gather around shared religious beliefs and values (Becker 1999; Ammerman 2005), and this sets churches apart more than any other characteristic.

In this study, I emphasize the ideas clergy families hold about work, family, religion and identity and how they relate to actual practice in the weaving of public and private life. As clergy families recognize the limitations on developing friendships within the church, they simultaneously struggle with the image of church as community. Clergy work hard at reinforcing this concept among church members because, in their view, it is a central tenet of participation in a religious organization. But because church is also a place of work for a pastor – the integration of public and private life at the core of this analysis – clergy families do not experience church in the same way as congregants, in turn fostering a contradiction within the ideal of community.

Gwen's comment above speaks to the tension that arises when church is at once a religious organization, a spiritual home, a social network, a community of like-minded people and a place of work. Saying "in the church of all places" sheds light on her perspective that certain behaviors do not fit within this particular institution because of the ideas and values on which it is based. And yet, the various roles of the church and the values underlying it are defined and understood in vastly different ways by the people involved – pastors, spouses, children and congregants.

Pastors put forth a great deal of effort in promoting a communal environment within their churches, and acknowledge frustration when members do not share this perspective. During our interview, Sasha speaks candidly about some concerns she has with her congregation, and her description highlights the tension between the multiple ways a church functions:

What's challenging is the realization for me that church for a lot of people has nothing to do with or little to do with commitment to this radical guy who lived two thousand years ago but has more to do with being part of a club, a club that isn't even willing to hold each other accountable. I mean, we can go over this way half a mile and get to one of the most expensive country clubs in the country and they are more willing to hold each other accountable than people in the church are willing to do.

To Sasha as pastor, the church should function based on the teachings of Jesus, the "radical guy" she references in these comments, but members view the church as more of a social network much like the nearby country club. Evan used almost the same metaphor in describing similar concerns with his congregation:

So when people will come here on a Sunday morning, they will hear a lot of warm greetings and so on, but when it comes to an actual "Are we a community?" You know, the honest answer is no. We really don't understand what it means to be a faith community. We understand very

well what it means to become a Sunday morning social club of people that are comfortable with each other because we believe the same way. But that's not a church. And I would rather be the pastor of a church than be the president of a club.

He references a “meanness of spirit” in his church, which contradicts the ideal model of the church as community. Hannah, Evan’s wife, shares his critique. When they first moved to the suburb where the church is located, she hoped congregants would be proactive in offering to baby sit their daughter or help with repair projects in their new home. Instead, Hannah feels as if her relationship to the church in general is distant and she lacks connections with the congregants. In these instances, the ideal held by the pastor and spouse clearly differs from actual experience.

Similar concerns arise around the ways clergy and spouses interact with people. Bev shares a particularly troubling incident where a good friend’s husband was unhappy with Kurt’s ministry, resulting tension and conflict within the church and in their relationship. Her friend had a hard time understanding why Bev struggled to maintain their close connection:

What I see happening in churches is that the pastors come and go but if you’re a member of the church and you’re ingrained in the church, you’re going to stay. So I found that what happened is you can blow off the pastor and his family because they’ll end up leaving anyway, but they’ll stay. And that was hurtful so I was really cautious after that and I think always will be. You can’t really be close.

Bev suggests that some congregations treat clergy as disposable members of the church, overlooking the fact that vocational ministry is embedded within a pastor’s lifestyle and identity. Thus, clergy families are at once central to the community and on the margins, a status filled with contradiction and tension.

In these instances, clergy and spouses notice a clear conflict between their own definition of church and that of congregants. Pastors genuinely wish for this image of community to become a central defining objective in their churches and are noticeably concerned over the lack of accountability Sasha references or Evan's example of a "meanness of spirit." However, there is another side to this issue that complicates a pastor's promotion of community within the church. Clergy encourage congregants to be open and vulnerable with each other, relying on mutual support when dealing with challenging life circumstances, and yet pastors have a hard time following these guidelines given their unique place in the church. In other words, they are caught between emphasizing an ideal of "being church" among the members and the reality that they cannot easily embrace this ideal for fear of negatively tainting their authority or the impressions of members.

This tension plays out in the concerns pastors have over how much information is appropriate to disclose to the church. As I show in Chapter Five, pastors are set apart from other church members, and revealing certain personal details can be detrimental to their identity and position in the church. Adding to the difficulties, for spouses church is spiritual community, not a workplace, however they are also set apart from other congregants, operating under a different set of social rules because of proximity to the pastor. Paula's situation is a good example of these issues. Having been diagnosed as bipolar, she believes the church in general should be a place where people can find support and care, but as the pastor's spouse she has concerns that her personal health issues will impact her husband's work:

I have people that I am cautious around and I'm going to try to be careful and not reveal too much because you just don't know then who all else is going to know it or if they're not going to understand it anyway. Like not everyone in the church knows I'm bi-polar and I think in some ways that's a sad thing because I think the whole general public needs to be better educated about it and other mental health issues. There's so much misunderstanding there. It's very sad.

Ryan served in several churches where, in his view, the congregation treated him unfairly, using personal problems as excuses to drive him out and therefore it is no surprise that Paula is afraid her condition will be used against him. In turn, she only shares the fact she is bi-polar with a few select people at his current church. Paula's experience shows how much vocational ministry really does bleed into family life, affecting not just the private life of a pastor but also that of her or his spouse, but also how difficult it is for clergy families to embrace the ideal of community. Having been involved in churches for many years, Paula sees a spiritual community as an important place to share the joys and struggles of life. And yet, she cannot fully immerse herself into this community and seek support for her personal health challenges because Ryan is pastor.

This represents a contradiction between ideas and reality that plays out in numerous areas, including how spouses develop relationships in the church. Most of the spouses I met grew up in religious families who instilled a perspective on church as a community of like-minded people and a primary social network. Now, being married to pastors, spouses are forced to adjust their thinking around friendships at church, hence altering their overall perspective on the role of a religious community. Bruce shares his approach:

[E]very friend at church has to be a qualified friend. Sort of like, you don't go into business with somebody... You don't go into a partnership with somebody you're not willing to sue. You don't become a real tight friend when the person you're friends with may be sitting on the... What are the... The personnel committee and doing your wife's review. Ain't going to happen.

Bruce can claim a lengthy tenure as a clergy spouse and is able to clearly and affirmatively draw such boundaries, but for others – especially those new to vocational ministry – the ability to shift thinking about church as community can be quite challenging. This puts pastors in a tricky place, as Jen points out:

We have gone out to dinner just recently with a couple couples from the church. I'm really conflicted at that because they've been initiated by Scott, which has been great and he wants to connect with people in the church, which I want him to do and it's so wonderful. And so he's made dinner plans with a couple different couples in the church just recently and we go, but for me that's work.

Jen truly wants Scott to find ways to fit in to her church and be comfortable, and finding people with similar interests with whom he wants to cultivate friendships is a great way for him to do so in her view. But as pastor, Jen is very aware that these relationships come with the baggage of her role, impacting not only her interactions but ultimately Scott's as well. Kimberly and Charlie encounter the same problem, as she explains:

[W]e did have a couple over for dinner and we had a nice time and I think Charlie got along very well with the husband because Charlie needs to get to know congregation members. But that was an instance where I still felt like I'm their pastor and I'm always their pastor, whether we're having dinner or whether I'm preaching, whatever is going on. And so that was kind of an interesting space to be in because we related on a friend level in a lot of, in much of the conversations but it was still kind of clear in what some of the conversations were, talking about worship service or whatever. That's not a hat you can take off with people in my congregation no matter what you're doing and that will take some getting used to.

Whereas Charlie is hoping to develop friends at their new church (just as they had friends at their previous congregation) there is a conflict in his approach to community compared to Kimberly's as pastor. And yet again, it is clear that spouses hold an "in-between" role within the church that does not have the formal guidelines of a pastor, but is also distinct from other members.

Eva told me that community is a central message in her church, often incorporated in sermons to encourage members to look out for each other and invite people into their lives for support and care. But simultaneously, she struggles with encouraging this same message with her family, since her role as pastor adds a complicated dynamic:

I don't want everybody to know that level of private things, and I think that's kind of hard to negotiate because we're talking a lot about community here and supporting one another. Other people get that level of support, so why wouldn't we get it too? If I'm trying to think about it from their perspective. But I get anxious because I think that everybody shouldn't know that level of detail about us. And I want a measure of separateness from that and privacy from that that doesn't come and so in some ways I've kind of pushed them a bit to be more protective of themselves which doesn't I think feel natural to them. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's like a really tricky thing to say, "Go and be this happy, one big, happy community family, but don't tell them too much." So they get a little double message there about that that's kind of hard to figure out what is the real message there. Is church really family or is it not family? And there's a double standard for the clergy that is hard.

Similarly, Paula is torn between the idea of church as a community and the reality that Ryan's role as pastor affects her ability to talk openly with people about her mental health issues. Ryan directly acknowledges how sad he is that Paula could not be more open, but that he was "not sure that this church could handle it." Like Eva, they also notice a clear contradiction in how pastors try to teach and influence congregants around

this concept of community and the realization that clergy families cannot fully embrace the ideal.

Parents are especially aware of these issues and find that the integration of clergy children into the congregation adds another level to this conflict. As noted in Chapter Three, clergy parents work hard at creating a positive image of church for their children, but pastors' kids face complications when it comes to relationships with church members as do their parents. Parents find it is difficult to teach children relationship boundaries while at the same time imparting on them an image of church as a safe, welcoming community. Thus, pastors both integrate their children and seek to protect them – another contradiction between ideas and actual practice. When Andy brought up the great sermon illustrations kids provide, I asked if he specifically uses examples related to his family:

I do, but I think Molly is now getting to the age where I need to stop probably. Maybe because she's not in church when I preach but there will come a day when I need to start asking permission to use that stuff.

With young children, like Andy and Claire's, it is up to parents to carefully manage how much or little congregants know about the kids. Also, when children are young, they are much less aware of their place in the church as a "special" person. Austin and Courtney's son, Tyler, certainly stands apart from the other kids because his parents both work at the church and like most of the couples with young children in this study, they see few issues at this age but express concerns over how their children will fit into the church as they grow older.

Once children become more independent, there is much less control on the part of parents and people begin to recognize the precarious standing pastors' kids have in the church. In turn, embracing the ideal of community becomes an even greater challenge for parents. Bruce noticed this as his daughters started to interact more freely and openly with the members of Eva's church:

You know, as they became teenagers I could see the same type of thing sort of developing that they realized that not everybody at church was being a friend just because they were friends with them. They wanted to make sure that they had an in with the pastor or something.

Eva shares similar concerns, mentioning instances where she thought congregants used her daughters to gain information about her, such as how she was spending her time or who cut her hair:

I think there are several kinds of relationships that have happened through the years with members of the congregation that have been hard for them. People who I feel like, again felt like I wasn't available enough to them so they go and make relationships with kids. And then for my kids to be attached to those people and then discover that that wasn't necessarily a true relationship was really hard. Even if I had been trying to help them see, you know, what was going on. That's really hard, especially when most of your relationships are adult relationships. I think that would have been buffered a bit if there had been other kids here because then on a Sunday morning, they would have been engaged doing things with kids and nobody would have thought to go up and quiz them about their mother.

Pastors kids, like Eva and Bruce's daughters, are a part of the church community and see others acting as friends do – socializing, talking about school and sharing news about family. It is hard to teach children the importance of church as a primary community, as pastors indicated hoping to do with their children, while also seeking to keep some elements of family life private. Much like spouses who wrestle with sharing personal

struggles, there is a level of contradiction in this approach to community and it makes the integration of public and private life difficult to reconcile.

Many of these concerns relate to children's privacy and personal feelings, but there are larger issues at stake for parents, especially the pastor. Jeff and Annette are protective of Isaac, not necessarily for the sake of his feelings (since he is still a baby), but because allowing people to interact with Isaac necessarily invites people into their personal, family life:

[W]e received a lot of care and a lot of people are interested in how Isaac is doing and a lot of people offer to help. We've had plenty of times where people have babysat and we haven't had to pay them. Things like that that other people don't get to do. But then everybody knows your life, right?
(Jeff, evangelical pastor and spouse)

Although he and Annette appreciate the care and attention they receive – and see this as an important element of a church community – they are cautious with how fully they engage with people, especially with Isaac. Again, one is always a pastor and can never fully separate from that role in forming connections with people, even when it comes to childcare.

The strain clergy feel around their children heightened by gender, which adds an element to parenting and its ties to work. Focusing on how people feel about the relationship between work and family, Milkie and Peltola (1999) found that women and men have very similar perspectives on the conflicts between work and family life, but report different sources of strain. Men reported a sense of imbalance resulting from long work hours while mothers with young children found balancing work and parenting more challenging than fathers, a trend the authors link to the stronger expectations women face

as parents. Diane experiences this directly when people use her son's behavior as a means for criticizing her work:

And out of everything that I have encountered here, that is the piece that I get...Mama Bear comes out in me. It's the piece that hurts the most in evaluations. I mean, they could tell me "I hate your sermons. I don't think you handled such and such a situation right." They could tell me any of that and I could take it. But when they start picking on my kid who is a normal kid, the tears come and my voice shakes.

Few people have their children so visibly present at their place of work, and some churches view the pastor's children as an extension or reflection of their adequacy as a pastor. As I discuss in Chapter Three, pastors' children often receive special treatment in the church, but this also means clergy and spouses perform the role of parent in a visible, public setting. When it comes to navigating relationships between church members and children, pastors are in a difficult place because they act out very public and very private roles in the same physical context.

To be sure, community is a fundamental component within congregations and an idea thread throughout pastors' narratives on church life. But when it comes to the ways families are integrated into the church, fostering a communal approach appears complicated given the profound ties between work, family and religion. Clergy are at once promoting a particular vision and remaining highly cautious as to how they participate in that vision or model of church, continually wrestling with the tensions between ideals and reality. It is not surprising that vocational ministry affects personal beliefs given this tension between an ideal model of church and the actual involvement for clergy families. Again, we see another vivid example of the complex boundaries

clergy families navigate as they occupy multiple roles and exist as people integrated within but also set apart in the church.

Summary

While churches most often serve as voluntary institutions where people find a spiritual home based on common interests and values, to pastors the church is also a place of work. However, just as ministry is more than a job and clergy are set apart as an extension of their role, pastors view the church through a similar lens – as an alternative institution rooted in a larger purpose. In some cases, congregations operate as models for effective work-life balance, altering the notion that churches are highly traditional organizations. Instead of relying on common workplace norms where family life conflicts with occupational demands, many churches mimic a more progressive, forward thinking approach in the way they treat pastors as employees, easing the process of weaving work, family and religion. Not all congregations function in this way, though, drawing forth concerns from clergy over the embedded meaning in such practices. To pastors, the way a church functions as an employer says much about how it operates as a spiritual and relational community for its members, and pastors notice clear differences between the ideal of the alternative institution and the reality that church is a place of work.

Examining these dynamics draws attention to the idea of community, a common term people in this study use to describe the church as an institution. In examining the ways pastors and spouses talk about the church as community, it is clear that clergy work hard at developing this image among congregants, encouraging people to become more

open and honest with other members. But at the same time, this ideal model of church creates a conflict for clergy families who feel they cannot fully participate in the community for fear of negative repercussions. Pastors encourage congregants to be vulnerable, yet they are at the same time concerned over disclosing too much personal information, given their “set apart” status. Thus, from the standpoint of the church as an institution, there remains a clear division between ideas and actual practice, a tension that makes reconciling the relationship between public and private life complicated and challenging for clergy families.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Political and religious rhetoric, which reached a height in the 1980s, mourned a perceived decline in the “traditional family,” suggesting this was the source of numerous social problems. However, such claims note the limitations brought on by a narrow, ideological image of family life that overlooks the reality of multiple, diverse family forms. In response, sociologists and others were quick to point out that the family itself is not disappearing, but rather taking on new, creative forms in an evolving social landscape (Stacey 1991; 1996). Rather than holding on to an ideal that never fully existed in practice (Coontz 1992), accepting diversity draws attention to the need for further support of multiple ways of being a family (Coontz 1997; Landry 2000).

Among these diverse “postmodern” (Stacey 1991) or “postgender” (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998) families are several groups modeling new alternatives, challenging the ideological construct of the historically traditional, male breadwinner model. For example, Black women have always worked outside the home, often in support of white middle class women who claim to pave new paths in career pursuits (Collins 2000), and dual-earner couples combining commitments to work, family and community have long been a reality among Black families (Landry 2000). More recently, women are forgoing the assumption that marriage is a necessary component of parenthood, pursuing alternative means of having children and choosing single

motherhood (Hertz 2006). And despite continued social resistance to supporting same sex relationships, gay families represent a progressive model of diverse family life, exemplifying the value of kinship networks (Weston 1991) and challenging claims that heterosexual couples are better suited to raise children (Stacey 1996; Stacey and Biblarz 2001).

Clergy families serve as yet another group pioneering new ways of managing the numerous responsibilities within work, home and family. But instead of “balancing” competing demands, these families weave together an integrated lifestyle and identity that is, in large part, motivated by a sense of call to vocational ministry. For pastors and spouses, religion, work and family are tied together in ways that create effective strategies for dealing with multiple, often stressful responsibilities. Though this sacred calling demands great sacrifices, not the least of which is the constant presence of church related tasks and issues, pastors and spouses point out the benefits that come from a flexible work life that involves spending time with people, sharing significant life moments, and combining family and work. Moreover, just as ministry is more than a job, the church is more than a workplace and often operates in ways motivated by the sacred, spiritual factors embedded in a pastor’s position. As such, while the added element of religion blurs the boundaries between public and private life, religion simultaneously provides a means for integration or weaving that lessens the many tensions contemporary families face.

The potential for clergy families to pave new roads in work-life integration is significant, and embracing the relationship between these various spheres of social life

(rather than continuing to view them as separate, opposing responsibilities) represents a constructive option for families wishing to lessen the tension and conflict between seemingly competing demands. Yet as I argue powerful ideologies surrounding work, family and religion overshadow the positive side of vocational ministry. Focusing on the differences between ideas and actual practice, this study further problematizes the ideological separation between public and private life that causes people to interpret their specific experience in light of outdated and ineffective concepts of family, work and religion. Clergy families recognize how much vocational ministry affects both lifestyle and identity, however they experience great pressure from the ideas that contradict their actual experience.

Just as Coontz (1992; 1997), Hansen (2005), Stacey (1991; 1996) and others (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998; Weston 1991) caution against dependence on a single, narrow definition of family, pastors and spouses benefit greatly by accepting the uniqueness of their particular situation, uncovering the positive, rewarding sides. Vocational ministry does not easily fit into a nine-to-five schedule nor are there many boundaries between home, work, personal life and one's sense of identity. Looking beyond these highly limited perceptions, vocational ministry represents a strong example of an occupational field that allows families to weave together aspects of public and private life in a positive way. The strain comes when clergy families continue to focus on dominant ideas of how to be a family, how to act as a pastor or spouse and how to engage with the church.

Clergy families, who embrace the integration of lifestyle and identity into work, focusing on real, lived experience rather than ideas, successfully establish an effective example of weaving work, family and religion in a way that lessens tension and strain between various responsibilities and interests. The model of the clergy family epitomizes the integration of public and private life, and offers a useful perspective for sociologists to make sense of and address the issues challenging contemporary working families. My findings show how realms of public and private life are by no means separate entities, but mutually dependent and influential on each other. Yet the ideological issues I note in this study surrounding work, family, religion (including the church as an institution) and identity must be broken down in order for this model to be a truly effective solution. Drawing attention toward the experiences of clergy families as an active critique of outdated and limited models of family is one step toward this important and necessary task.

Practical Applications

Along with theoretical contributions to a broader understanding of the relationship between public and private life, this study can serve as a practical resource to both religious and secular organizations. The pastors and spouses participating in this project repeatedly mentioned the need for greater preparation around the ways work is intertwined with both lifestyle and identity. Seminary education, which all the clergy in this study completed, offers theological grounding and training for counseling and other ministry related tasks, but most clergy seem to “learn as they go” when it comes to managing the boundaries around relationships, family life and personal beliefs. Thus, it

is my hope that this research can offer tools for better preparing pastors and spouses as they embrace a calling to vocational ministry, allowing them to find the positive side in this challenging, but highly rewarding field.

Specifically, this study can provide added support for many of the struggles clergy families face over the lack of boundaries between public and private life, the way family is integrated into the church, the impact on identity and implications for raising children. Learning about the experiences of others makes people feel less isolated and more connected in their struggles, recognizing their issues and concerns are not unique and rather shared among many other pastors and spouses. Furthermore, clergy families – particularly those new to vocational ministry – can utilize these stories as a way to recognize the deep and powerful impact ministry has on both lifestyle and identity. In this regard, seminaries and denominations could also benefit greatly from these in-depth, narratives, drawing from the examples as a way to better prepare pastors for the impact of vocational ministry on personal life. Finally, local congregations might consider more carefully how they operate as employers and offer policies that address the unique positions of pastors and clergy families within the church, also fitting with the broader values of a religious institution.

Considering broader applications, the ways in which clergy families weave together work, family and religion as part of a lifestyle and identity can offer further support for public policy seeking to alleviate the pressures on contemporary families. First, clergy families are a reminder that policies emphasizing a limited perspective on family are impractical, as are approaches that maintain the ideological separation between

public and private life. This study provides further evidence for the need of expanded thinking around solutions supporting adults seeking to remain committed to both family and work (rather than choosing between the two). Moreover, the ways in which churches operate as alternative organizations represent a model for other places of work. Valuing people over profits and recognizing the ongoing pressures families face in maintaining careers alongside personal responsibilities is one step toward alleviating the stress on contemporary families, and churches that operate as alternative institutions can pave the way as progressive workplaces in this regard.

Questions for Future Research

There are, of course, limitations to this study, most notably the lack of racial, ethnic or class diversity in the sample, which I address in the opening chapter. In considering additional directions for research on clergy families, this shortcoming stands out as most significant. During the process of this research, several other questions and issues arose that would add greater depth to the arguments, such as the need for further research on the experiences of clergy children. This study is limited to the perspectives of pastors and spouses only, and while children were a frequent topic of discussion, any mention of children in my analysis is from the parents' point of view. An in-depth, qualitative inquiry using narratives from people who grew up as clergy children would add an incredibly interesting and important perspective to this research.

As I note in outlining the methods for this study, I limited my selection of denominations to those that ordain women. Doing so makes sense for the purposes of this study and my interest in addressing gender as a factor in the varying experiences of

pastors and spouses. However, I recognize how my limited selection eliminates a significant population (particularly among evangelicals) that could potentially impact my findings. A wider sample, expanded to include a broader range of denominations with varying theological positions on women's ordination might draw forth further analytical issues around the impact of religion and would be an interesting addition to this present study.

This study is also limited in its sample of heterosexual married couples. Much of the sociological literature on work-life balance concentrates on married people and often those with children, however a study on single pastors would provide another side to the story I tell here. Married pastors, especially those with children, find that family responsibilities are often a good reason to say "no" to requests and while ministry is incredibly demanding, churches overall have an appreciation for the importance of family. It is hard to say how these dynamics play out among single clergy, but further study in this area would certainly answer questions such as the hours single pastors work compared to their married counterparts and the ways personal life is integrated into the church. With this, a study recognizing the growing number of gay clergy would also offer useful insight. In particular, a definite question in need of exploration is whether same-sex couples fit the same models of participation I find in this study or if they operate differently. Carrington (1999) finds that lesbian and gay couples fall into many of the same, unequal arrangements at home as heterosexual couples, a trend that draws forth questions over how gay and lesbian clergy families manage the relationship between work, family and religion.

Finally, this study examines a particular type of religious worker – pastors serving in traditional parish ministry positions – but there are a wide variety of occupations in which people embrace a spiritual calling. Among these are missionaries, who typically live in foreign countries embarking on the work of denominations or religious organizations, adding further lifestyle and identity issues. Clergy often relocate for the church, but living overseas and bringing family into a new culture complicates the boundaries between public and private life even further. Examining the same topics I explore in this study but through the perspective of a missionary family would likely shed light on many more areas to consider with the integration of work, family and religion.

Concluding Thoughts

Just as not all families fit a single model, occupations are also highly diverse and vocational ministry stands out as a particularly interesting and complicated career field. The grounding in religious beliefs and sense of call pastors embrace in their work means that public and private life are deeply intertwined, setting ministry apart from secular fields. While this study offers deep insight into the particular experiences of pastors and the integration of families into the church, it also provides a glimpse into the shifting realities of contemporary family life. On the surface, clergy families may seem unique, but in actuality they encounter similar conflicts and tensions as other families. Rather than setting pastors apart as a unique and different type of worker, it is important to consider these similarities as a way of learning from clergy family life. While not all occupations include a spiritual calling, it is possible to draw from the results of this calling among pastors, specifically the way it informs the weaving together of seemingly

competing areas of everyday life. Rather than balancing conflicting responsibilities, clergy families integrate aspects of lifestyle and identity into a complex, yet holistic, tapestry that has potential to lessen the strain on working families.

In focusing on clergy families as an example, we advance awareness of the ways public and private life are intertwined – an acknowledgement that will only help to create more manageable lifestyles with multiple, shared commitments. The rich and diverse stories in the lives of the people participating in this study show that choosing between competing demands is not an appropriate solution to easing stress. Powerful ideas, rooted in the perceived separation of public and private life, remain a strong source of pressure on these families. Yet by embracing a sacred calling to both a lifestyle and identity, clergy families stress that weaving together work, family and religion can help break down these images overshadowing the realities of lived experience, in turn fostering greater support and possibilities for contemporary families.

APPENDIX A
DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Jen is an evangelical pastor in Chicago. She is married to *Scott*, a banker.

Evan is an evangelical pastor at a suburban church and is married to *Hannah*, a schoolteacher. They have a young daughter, *Grace*, at home.

Austin is an evangelical pastor at a suburban church. His wife, *Courtney*, works at the same church as a member of the staff. They have a young son, *Tyler* at home.

Chris is an evangelical pastor in Chicago. He is married to *Lindsay* who is trained as an evangelical pastor but currently works in a non-ministry position.

Neal is an evangelical pastor at a suburban church. He is married to *Carla*, a nurse. They have two grown children.

Helen is an evangelical pastor in Chicago. She is married to *Roy*, a consultant. They have two grown children.

Ryan is an evangelical pastor at a suburban church. His wife, *Paula* is a schoolteacher currently taking time off from work. They have three grown children and one child living at home part time while attending college.

Jeff is an evangelical pastor in Chicago. His wife, *Annette*, is also an evangelical pastor serving a different Chicago church. They have a young son, *Isaac*, at home.

Robert is an evangelical pastor in a small town outside Chicago. He is married to *Penny*, a nurse. They have three grown children.

Eva is a mainline pastor at a church in Chicago. She is married to *Bruce*, who works for an accounting firm. They have two children, daughters *Allison* and *Chelsey*, who live at home part time while attending college.

Trey is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. His wife, *Martha*, is a theologian who researches and writes full-time. They have three young children living at home.

Diane is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. She is married to *Nick* who is on staff at a different suburban church. They have a young son, *Kyle*, at home.

Adam is a mainline pastor who served a suburban church, which he recently left to work at a not for profit organization. He is married to *Elsa*, a nurse.

Ralph is a mainline pastor who serves as an interim pastor at a Chicago church. He is married to *Joanna* who works for a university. *Ralph* has a grown son from a previous marriage.

Kimberly is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. Her husband, *Charlie*, is a designer.

Eric is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. His wife, *Gwen*, is also a mainline pastor currently serving a different suburban church. They have two young children at home, *Jenna* and *Caleb*.

Kurt is a mainline pastor in a small town outside of Chicago. He is married to *Bev*, a teacher. They have two young children at home.

Lisa is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. She is married to *Mark*, who teaches at a local college.

Beth is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. She is married to *Tom* who is also a mainline pastor working with a separate ministry.

Barbara is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. She is married to *Sam*, a consultant. They have two grown children.

Sasha is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. She is married to *Ian*, a psychologist. They have two grown children.

Howard is a mainline pastor at a suburban church. He is married to *Jane*, a counselor. They have three grown children.

Andy is a mainline pastor at a suburban church, preparing to move to a congregation in Chicago. He is married to *Claire*, a consultant. They have two young children at home, *Molly* and *Jacob*.

APPENDIX B
CLERGY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Tell me about your church (Tell me about your work)

Describe a basic week at work

What is your normal work schedule? (Ask about work from home)

How does your schedule change? What are the sources of change?

How do you prepare for the Sunday service?

What do you enjoy most about your work as a pastor?

What aspects of your work are challenging for you?

Do you do other work besides the church (such as another part time job)?

Tell me about your family

Spouse

Do you have children? How many? How old?

Describe a typical day in your home

What is your normal schedule?

How does your schedule change? What are the sources of change?

What sorts of things do you do with your family?

Time with children

Time with spouse

Time with both

What do you enjoy most about your home life?

What aspects of your home life are challenging for you?

How is your spouse involved in the church?

How are your children involved at the church?

How is your family affected by your responsibilities at work?

Time away from family

Hosting church related events at home

How is your work affected by your responsibilities at home?

Day to day practices such as scheduling work time around family responsibilities

Occasional practices such as taking time off for a sick child

Describe what your spouse does for work (clarify that work is paid and unpaid and adapt questions for stay at home parents)

How is your family affected by your spouse's responsibilities?

How is your work at the church affected by your spouse's responsibilities?

How would you say you fit in theologically with your denomination overall? Are there any points of tension between your beliefs and the denomination?

What sorts of religious activities are you involved in that are not associated with your home church (if any)?

How do you think your work as a pastor has impacted your religious beliefs and practices?

Describe your relationships with people at the church

Individual relationships

Family relationships (such as couple friends, parents of your children's friends)

How are your relationships shaped by your work as a pastor?

If you were to describe the "image" of a pastor, what would that look like?

Where does this image stem from?

How do you fit this image? How do you differ from this image?

What sorts of pressures do you feel to conform to this image?

How do others respond when you say you are a pastor? Examples

How do responses from other people vary? Examples

APPENDIX C
CLERGY SPOUSE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Tell me a little about yourself

Tell me about what you do (clarify that work may be paid or unpaid – adapt for stay at home parents)

Describe a basic week for you

What is your normal schedule?

How does your schedule change? What are the sources of change?

What do you enjoy most about your work?

What aspects of your work are challenging for you?

Tell me about your family

Spouse

Do you have children? How many? How old?

Describe a typical day in your home

What is your normal schedule?

How does your schedule change? What are the sources of change?

What sorts of things do you do with your family?

Time with children

Time with spouse

Time with both

What do you enjoy most about your home life?

What aspects of your home life are challenging for you?

How is your family affected by your responsibilities at work?

How is your work affected by your responsibilities at home?

Day to day practices such as scheduling work time around family responsibilities

Occasional practices such as taking time off for a sick child

How is your family affected by your spouse's responsibilities?

How is your work affected by your spouse's responsibilities?

How would you say your beliefs fit in with the denomination overall?

How are you involved in your church?

Describe the expectations for your involvement in the church.

What, if any, pressure do you experience at the church to be involved? How do you respond?

What sorts of religious activities are you involved in that are not associated with your home church (if any)?

How do you think being married to a pastor has impacted your religious beliefs and practices?

Describe your relationships with people at the church

Individual relationships

Family relationships (such as couple friends, parents of your children's friends)

How does your being the pastor's spouse impact your relationships?

If you were to describe the "image" of a pastor's spouse, what would that look like?

Where does this image stem from?

How do you fit this image? How do you differ from this image?

What sorts of pressures do you feel to conform to this image?

How do others respond when you say you are married to a pastor? Examples

How do responses from other people vary? Examples

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