

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Work Experiences of New Zealand Clergy and their Wives

A study of the vocational experiences of male clergy and
the impact this vocation has on their spouses

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Master of Science (Psychology), Massey University, Palmerston North

Sarah E. Schmidt

2013

Abstract

Church ministry is unlike any other occupation. Few other vocations require such a high level of training while offering so little in the way of material gain. Similarly, few occupations invite so much prejudgement, not only for the ministers themselves but, by extension, their families also. This qualitative study examines the experiences of eight ministers representing five main church denominations as well as the experiences of six women married to church ministers. Semi structured interviews and phenomenological analysis elicits information on both the joys and stresses of this occupation for both spouses and reveals how, with experience, those in church ministry overcome the unique pressures of this vocation while revelling in the satisfaction and sense of community this role affords. Consideration is also paid to the effects societal change has had and will continue to have on the Church in New Zealand. Findings reveal that despite the complexity and challenges of the role, ministers overall derive great satisfaction from this role. The study also found the role of the wives of ministers is slowly changing as more of these women enter paid employment and are less available for the needs of the Church.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Peter McKenzie, John Hornblow and Professor Philip Dewe for their help, encouragement, time and their suggestions.

Thanks also to my family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement in the completion of this study.

I would also like to thank Dr Jocelyn Handy, who supervised this work for her patience, expertise and guidance.

In particular, I would like to thank the respondents of this study for their time, candour and their willingness to open their lives and share both the joys and pressures associated with church based ministry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
1. INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Objective of this Research	10
1.2 Where this Research fits into the Academic Literature	12
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Person Job Fit & Person Organisation Fit	17
2.2 Family Life	25
2.3 Leadership	28
2.4 Social Life	34
2.5 Spouses of Church Leaders	37
3. METHODOLOGY	42
3.1 Theoretical Stance	42
3.2 Recruitment and Sample Selection	46
3.3 Interviews	51
3.4 Interview Questions	53
3.5 Data Analysis	55
3.6 Limitations	57

4. FINDINGS	59
4.1 Introduction	59
4.2 The Ministers' Perspectives	60
4.3 The Ministry as a Calling	60
4.4 Rewards of Being a Church Minister	62
4.5 Relationships with Parishioners and The Wider Community	62
4.6 Work Variety	65
4.7 Role Autonomy	66
4.8 Pressures of Being a Church Minister	69
4.9 Living the Role	69
4.10 Social Life	72
4.11 Friendships with Congregants	73
4.12 Socialising with Other Ministers	75
4.13 Preconceived Ideas of Ministers	76
4.14 Family Life	79
4.15 Pressure on Clergy Children	79
4.16 Work/Family Balance	84
4.17 Defining Boundaries	87
4.18 Vacations	89
4.19 Shielding Children from Work Stress	91
4.20 Church Leadership	94
4.21 Impact of Societal Change	94

4.22	Following a Business Model	99
4.23	Conflicts with Congregants	103
4.24	Professional Supervision	107
4.25	The Ministers' Perspectives of the Role of their Wives	108
5	THE WIVES' PERSPECTIVES	118
5.1	Accepting Your Husband's Calling	118
5.2	Rewards for the Wives of Church Ministers	120
5.3	Role Autonomy	120
5.4	Relationships with Parishioners and The Wider Community	121
5.5	Pressures of Being The Wife of a Church Minister	123
5.6	Living the Role	123
5.7	Social Life	126
5.8	Preconceived Ideas of a Church Minister's Wife	126
5.9	Church Ministers' Wives Perspectives of the Benefits of Being in Paid Employment	131
5.10	Opportunities to Meet Other Ministers' Wives	133
5.11	Family Life	134
5.12	The Pressures of Church Ministry on Children.....	135
5.13	Family Commitments and Church	136
5.14	Safety Issues When Living Near the Church	138

5.15	Living Away From the Church	139
5.16	Ministers' Wives Perspectives of their Role In the Church	140
5.17	Conclusion	146
6	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	147
6.1	Entering the Ministry	149
6.2	Work Satisfaction	151
6.3	Leadership	152
6.4	Fulfilling Others' Expectations	154
6.5	Impact on Family	158
6.6	Role of Ministers' Wives	161
6.7	Conclusion	166
7	REFERENCES	168
8	APPENDICES	182
	Appendix 1 Information Sheet Ministers	182
	Appendix 2 Information Sheet Ministers' Wives	184
	Appendix 3 Questions for Church Ministers	188
	Appendix 4 Questions for Ministers' Wives	191
	Appendix 5 Consent Form	194
9	TABLES	
	Table One Ministers' Details	49
	Table Two Ministers' Wives' Details	50