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LONELINESS, DEPRESSION, SOCIAL SUPPORT,
MARITAL SATISFACTION AND SPIRITUALITY
AS EXPERIENCED BY THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CLERGY WIFE

by

Lena Anne Brackin

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2001
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Lena Anne Brackin entitled Loneliness, Depression, Social Support, Marital Satisfaction, and Spirituality as Experienced by the Clergy Wife and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication.

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I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated loneliness, depression, social support, marital satisfaction, and spiritual well-being among clergy wives to examine the levels of these variables present in the lives of highly stressed women. A questionnaire was sent to 785 wives of ministers ordained and working in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Arizona, Florida, Ohio, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Measures included a short demographic section and a Likert-type rating of the difficulty of the wife’s role as clergy wife and of the husband’s role as a minister. Scales of measurement included the UCLA Loneliness Scale, an adapted Relational Assessment Scale (RAS), a six item segment of the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ), the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (SDS), the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWB), and a qualitatively coded statement asking for a recent loneliness experience. Results indicate that clergy wives exhibit higher levels of loneliness than would be expected among happily married women. Overall, they have relatively small social networks, but claim to be highly satisfied with them, a counterintuitive finding. Depression levels for this group are no higher than those found in the general population. As expected, the wives exhibit high levels of spiritual well-being. Test variables were highly correlated. A multiple regression analysis produced a model composed of depression, social support network number, social support satisfaction, spiritual well-being, and marital satisfaction that explains 53% of the variance in loneliness.

The findings of this study are congruent with nonscientific and anecdotal evidence that indicate loneliness to be a problem for clergy wives while marital
dissatisfaction and depression are relatively rare. The qualitative data support the distinctions of Weiss (1973) that there are two major types of loneliness, emotional and social loneliness. The findings also indicate that loneliness and marital dissatisfaction do not always co-occur, that loneliness and depression do not always co-occur, that social support satisfaction may not always be interpreted identically by participants and social scientists, and that spiritual well-being should be studied further.
Chapter 1: Spirituality and the Clergy Wife

The topic of spirituality is one that has not been addressed often in research literature, and the clergy wife is not often used as a research participant. Therefore, it may be useful to begin with an explanation of both the concept and the population.

Spiritual Well-Being

Social science researchers interested in measuring the subjective quality of life and of relationships are just beginning to investigate the spiritual dimension of human experience (Ellison, 1983; Kirkpatrick, Shillito, & Kellas, 1999; Moberg & Brusek, 1978). Perhaps envisioned as a part of the individual not able to be measured or observed (e.g., Olson & Schaefer, 1987), the human spirit has been relatively ignored in research, although there has been sporadic interest for several years in the variable of religiosity and its effects. However, spirituality is not identical to religiosity. The concept of spirituality is more complex, as it can encompass and enlarge the elements of religiosity to include both a religious and a social-psychological component which consists of vertical and horizontal relationships “to God, self, community, and environment” (Ellison, 1983, p. 331). Religiosity has been primarily operationalized behaviorally by gauging church attendance, family discussion time, and counseling preferences (e.g., Fournier, Olson, & Druckman, 1982; McCubbin, Larsen, & Olson, 1985; Miller, Warner, Wickramaratne, & Weissman, 1997). Conversely, measures of spirituality operationalize it as a continuous one, consisting of a “non-physical dimension of awareness and experience” (Ellison, 1983, p. 331). Spirituality does not necessarily depend upon a link to a religious institution, as religiosity usually does, although spirituality may be
expressed outwardly through such an institution (George, Larson, Koenig, & McCullough, 2000). George et al. (2000) call spirituality “the transcendent sense of being in direct touch with the sacred” (p. 112). Support for this relational view of spirituality has come through a relatively small body of extant research that has examined spirituality in conjunction with loneliness, depression, social support, love, marital adjustment, attachment theory, physical health, and job stress (Dufton & Perlman, 1986; George et al., 2000; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Kirkpatrick et al., 1999; Koenig, George, Meador, Blazer, Dyck, 1994; Roth, 1988; Warner & Carter, 1984). Overall, the results of these studies indicate that those individuals who claim to be in relationship with God seem to experience, interpret, or otherwise cope differently with life than do those who only follow the ethical teachings of their religion, or who do not claim to have personal religious beliefs. As Kirkpatrick et al. (1999) point out, religious beliefs may have unique but, as of now, unknown direct and indirect effects on the individual’s relationships. They encourage researchers to examine in greater depth the potential effects and roles of spirituality in relationships and relationship processes. This study will attempt just such an examination in conjunction with more established concepts already known to be important to relational development and maintenance. These concepts are loneliness, depression, marital satisfaction, and social support.

A review of current statistics concerning spirituality and the beliefs of average Americans indicates that a study of spirituality may be important for understanding the whole person. According to the Barna Research Group, an independent marketing research company specializing in cultural trends and the Christian Church, 85% of all
Americans (randomly sampled), and 90% of the women questioned, identify themselves as adherents of the Christian faith (Barna, 2000). In describing themselves, 79% of women and 63% of men say that they are "spiritual," while 69% of women and 50% of men go so far as to say that they are "deeply spiritual" (Barna, 2000), thus indicating that religious affiliation and spiritual beliefs and practices may not be equivalent. Three-quarters (75%) of the women respondents and 65% of the men respondents indicate that having a close, personal relationship with God is very desirable (Barna, 2000). These beliefs echo and reinforce the call for the study of spirituality in life experience.

To be able to formulate new hypotheses and theories concerning spirituality and its effects, George et al. (2000) advocate continued study using various subgroups of the population. One such subgroup is that of the Protestant clergy wife. In denominations that allow the clergyman to wed, being married is considered to be an asset to him and to the church (Chang, 1999), with some groups considering it to be a necessity. Although a study of the Protestant clergy wife might be a logical choice based solely on the assumption that these women would be a group high in expressed spirituality, there are other benefits to such a study. Homogeneity of background and constancy of lifestyles among women in religious groups are considered to be useful since some confounds such as alcoholism, substance abuse, and extramarital affairs may be eliminated or greatly diminished (Butler & Snowden, 1996). This may be an advantage in allowing researchers to measure the effects of variables in a less complex setting while still studying real life situations. In addition, there are some life circumstances, explained in the following section, that make this group an interesting one in terms of relationships. However, it is
obvious that any categorization will not be able to describe the situation of many Protestant clergy or their spouses. The following description is intended to paint a broad overview of the life and situation of many if not most Protestant clergy wives. \(^2\)

**The Protestant Clergy Wife**

The Protestant clergy wife, also referred to as a minister’s wife or pastor’s wife, may be unusual in several respects. Unlike most other American women, this individual is normally defined socially by the job or cultural role of her spouse. However, there is no terminology to express the situation of the clergy wife as a person in and of herself except as a woman married to an ordained man. She is defined by her marital relationship as the pastor’s wife. When introduced socially to a group, the clergyman is introduced by name and title (Reverend or Doctor), and the wife is often introduced as “his lovely wife” with her first name omitted (Pannell, 1993). Most people have a predetermined if unconscious idea of how a clergy wife should look or act, and may really notice her only when she violates such expectations. With no clearly understood role in the church or in society, the Protestant clergy wife is necessary since many parishioners feel that a man must be married to be able to be a mature pastor (Segler, 1960), yet, the wife is often unrecognized as an individual in her own right.

Culturally, American society defines people as either clergy or laity (Seagle, 1981). The laity consist of those who are not ordained clergy. The ordained clergy are human symbols of the divine, and are viewed by some as individuals who should be superhuman, not expressing anger, frustration or sorrow. Many people believe that they should not strongly desire the things that ordinary people need and want such as love,
security, or success (Seagle, 1981). They are judged by standards higher than those set for the rest of society (Goodling & Smith, 1983). As stressful as this expectation is for the married clergy, it poses a greater difficulty for a wife because she is married to the ordained individual of whom so much sacrifice is required. She shares his life, his higher standards, and his lifestyle, yet she is not ordained; she does not share the legal or social standing of the spouse. Ordination is a church rite that allows the clergy to function in unique ways within the church and to perform ritualistic functions and ceremonies for congregants. A clergy wife cannot do these things. Ordination is also a legal step, as the government requires this step before authorizing an individual to sign a marriage certificate or to serve in a prison as a chaplain. The clergy wife cannot do these things. Therefore, she is not “under holy orders” (Goodling & Smith, 1983, p. 284) for the church, nor authorized by the government, but neither is she exactly laity since she is married to the ordained one. In many churches, clergy wives are not seen as “regular” church members who have the right to voice an opinion in church matters or vote in a church business meeting (Dobson, 1995; Goodling & Smith, 1983). Often, this ambiguous social situation means that the wife takes on the identity of the spouse (Brown, 1981). She may seek to live this out by attempting to be a full ministry partner, an action that is often rebuffed by the congregation. Whether or not she identifies so strongly with her spouse, the clergy wife usually takes on at least enough of his ministry identity to see every complaint and criticism about the minister as a personal criticism of herself as well. This is easy to do as some individuals who may be displeased with the minister find the wife an easy target for projected anger (Griswold, 1999). One minister’s
wife states that "knowing ourselves and being ourselves are probably the most difficult" tasks facing the clergy wife (Pannell, 1993, p.67). Another states that, "We know the difficulty of making a life with an authority that has been derived from our spouses, but which must eventually be earned by us" (Griswold, 1999, p. 89).

The congregation that the clergy serve usually shares the attitudes of society as a whole in seeing the clergy couple as unusual and unique. While research indicates that clergy and their wives tend to see their family unit as having the same rights and responsibilities as any other Christian family, church members see things differently (Brown, 1981). On average, congregants feel that the pastor and his wife and children should be different, reflecting that more divine nature of the ordained one. They should set the example of the ideal family (Brown, 1981). This is listed in Brown's study as the number one stressor of the clergy wife, perhaps especially so as the husband is not usually aware of the extreme pressures placed on his wife (Brown, 1981). Whether this is due to the reluctance on the part of the wife to complain, or reluctance on the part of the husband to see a problem (Cooper, 1990), the results could certainly pose a strain for their relationship.

Expectations of the "ever-alert" congregation are both idealistic and often contradictory in nature (Hsieh & Rugg, 1983). Beliefs about religion are slow to change, and beliefs about clergy and their wives are a case in point. In his landmark sociological study on minister's wives, Douglas (1965) included a review of literature from the 1800's concerning social expectations of the clergy wife. One minister's wife's manual from that time period indicated that the wife should be "happy, thrice happy" through being
"wedded to her husband's parish" (p. 2). In a review of literature published from 1945 to 1965, Douglas concluded that little has changed other than the emphasis having switched to put the clergyman first. The clergy wife is exhorted to accept him as a person and to accept his career, “realizing that she has married not only a man, but in a sense, the Church” (p. 8). In addition, her husband belongs not only to her, but to the congregation as well (Douglas, 1965). Inspection of three current minister’s wives’ manuals shows that congregant expectations remain high (Dobson, 1995; London & Wiseman, 1999; Pannell, 1993). Within the congregation and the community, clergy wives are often expected to be “consummate homemakers, wise counselors, competent teachers, gracious hostesses, capable leaders, willing workers, good neighbors, and trustworthy friends” (Pannell, 1993, p.66). They may also be expected to be more spiritual than anyone else in the church, possess a superior Bible knowledge, to play the piano or organ, and to appear at all worship services and meetings of the church (Bouma, 1980). Hartley (1978) states that “the Protestant minister’s wife stands alone in the extent of demands made upon the wife” (p. 178), with the beliefs of others that she should be the “most extreme” example of the ideal, traditional woman in society, subordinating her own interests to the needs of her spouse, family, church and community. Such unrealistic expectations must surely have significant effects on the relationships of the minister’s wife, especially when she internalizes these expectations herself (Dobson, 1995; Douglas, 1965; Mace & Mace, 1980; Pannell, 1993).

There are many different religious groups in the United States. Approximately 55% of the U.S. population is Protestant (U. S. Census Bureau, 2001). Koenig et al.
(1994) looked at the major beliefs and worship practices of the Protestant denominations and divided them into mainline (Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian), conservative (Baptist), and Pentecostals (small groups high in expressed affect and extreme in conservatism). These researchers found that the conservative or Baptist groups differ from the other groups somewhat in their life experiences. Baptists are primarily middle class individuals, and research indicates that, as compared to the mainline and Pentecostal groups, they are lower in chronic health problems, have lower rates of psychiatric disorders, and show lower church attendance by baby boomers (Koenig et al., 1994). Baptist groups comprise 18% of the total American population (Barna, 2000).

**Southern Baptist Clergy Wives**

Even though all clergy wives may experience similar social role difficulties, the Baptist subgroup of wives have some circumstances that may be unusual due to the polity or working procedures of the denomination. The largest of the Baptist groups is the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), a group whose name refers both to the denomination and to the yearly meeting of delegates elected from 15.8 million members of 40,000 local congregations in the U.S.A (Executive Committee, 2000). Southern Baptist churches voluntarily join this Convention or alliance, which is not a hierarchical or mandating organization. Member congregations believe in the principle of church autonomy and self-rule, and therefore, the Convention does not ordain ministers, levy contributions, dictate literature, or assign staff or congregants to churches. The Convention does collect voluntary contributions and use funds to establish services for all members, such as a publishing house for literature, a national missions agency, and an international missions
agency. SBC churches also organize themselves locally in associations of churches to provide programs and other resources. However, the local church still rules itself in most matters, prompting the Executive Committee of the SBC (2000) to state that an SBC congregation “is about as independent as you can get and still be counted as part of a denomination” (para. 4). The local church does not have to participate in national, state, or associational activities. Given this loose connection, it is not surprising that serious controversies have arisen, most recently between an extremely conservative Convention leadership and local congregations in reference to the role of women as ordained ministers. Nevertheless, membership in the Convention and its local churches has continued to rise (Palm Beach Post, 2001) in contrast to that of the mainline denominations that are traditionally more affluent and individualistic than the conservative, middle class Baptists (Koenig et al., 1994). While Southern Baptists do exhibit a diversity of beliefs and practices, one belief stands at the center of the denomination. To join a Southern Baptist church requires an individual to publicly claim to have a personal relationship with God. This spirituality emphasis of the denomination indicates that this group may be a useful one in the investigation of spirituality and personal relationships, as the SBC clergyman and his wife are expected to exemplify this belief in their daily lives.

The typical Baptist clergyman is much like the prototype presented by Barna (2000) with one major exception. The average clergyman in America is likely to be married, highly educated, earn just over $35,000 yearly, and to be comparatively loyal to his spouse and to his profession (Barna, 1998), despite the fact that his salary ranks with
the lowest-paying occupations and unskilled labor (Bouma, 1980). The divorce rate for clergy has risen in recent years, but it still stands at 15%, about one third of the national norm (Barna, 2000). It is here that the Baptist pastor differs from the prototype. Divorce among the conservative clergy is relatively rare among all groups (Chang, 1999). The divorce rate for Baptist clergy couples stands at only 4% (Bird, 1995). This may be due in part to extreme consequences of divorce for the couple, as it most often results in the husband being forced to leave the ministry. The prevailing philosophy is that a man’s family is part of his work, so “if he fails with his family, he fails to qualify to be a minister” (Bouma, 1980, p. 70). Because perfection is an impossible standard, attempts to live up to the image of the perfect family leader can lead to serious relationship pressures for the clergyman and for his spouse (Birk, Rayburn, & Richmond, 2001; Davies, 2000).

Like her husband, the SBC clergy wife has been described as loyal to her spouse and to his work. In his landmark sociological study, Douglas (1965) begins his presentation with two case studies that typify the SBC wife. He says that these wives are the “purest type of teamworker that survey research of this kind could identify” (p. 37). SBC wives often consider themselves to be unordained ministers, highly active in the church and committed to service. Douglas found that the average number of church activities of these women as a whole is more than that of clergy wives from other denominations. According to his survey, 74% of them teach a church class, 63% call on the sick, and 42% hold an office in a women’s church organization. Expectation runs high for the SBC wife, both from the congregation and from herself.
The most obvious of other unusual pressures for the Baptist clergy couple, and perhaps for the wife in particular, comes with the loose coalition of churches within the SBC. Since there is self-rule by each church, and since the SBC institutions and leadership rarely have any influence on the assigning of ministers to a local congregation, the clergy couple is employed directly by a local group of individuals. Thus, while the minister is the spiritual leader of the congregation, he and his wife are also their employees, with no one in a position to intercede in case of conflict. This situation is exacerbated when the couple lives in a house owned by the church. Once the norm for all Baptist pastors, this is slowly changing. When the church does own a pastorium, the church members feel that they have a claim on the house and can schedule it to be available for meetings, or can at least drop in whenever they please (Bouma, 1980). As the one responsible for the home, this obviously presents an extreme difficulty for the wife as she is expected to be the ideal housekeeper with no advance notice of an “inspection” visit. Just as her husband and her church conduct belong to the congregation, now so do her home and her family. One newspaper reported the situation of a pastor’s family being told to leave the church after the wife asked to redecorate the pastorium (Wicai, 2001). While uncommon, such situations indicate the underlying ownership attitudes of congregations towards the church and the pastorium.

The average SBC church has approximately 100 members (Executive Committee, 2001). This means that every member of the congregation has the opportunity to form a personal relationship with the pastor and his wife. In addition, it means that each member must contribute financially to the church to pay the pastor’s salary. Knowing
that each individual in the congregation is one of her husband’s employers is an extra
difficulty for the Baptist wife. The very people she is to build her life around in working
and caring, are the people who can, and often do, fire her husband and leave the family
without job or home. The primacy of the employer relationship over the friendship
relationship seems to be supported by the work of researchers Dillard, Solomon and
Samp (1996). In their theory of relational judgments, Dillard et al. state that there exist
only two relational frames, that of affiliation and dominance or relational control. These
frames tend to displace one another, with involvement as an intensifier. When the clergy
wife seeks to find friends, an affiliative relational frame will be activated for her. Within
the members of the congregation, an affiliative frame may be activated in response to her
attempts, but when matters of money and employment for the pastor arise, the dominance
or relational control frame is activated for the relationship with the wife. Extending this
to the relationship between the congregants and their employees, it is likely that relational
affiliation with the many other congregational members is then activated as they carry out
their business. The pastor and wife are on the outside.

Many women have attempted to cultivate good friendships within the
congregation, but in the vast majority of cases, these friends violate the trust placed in
them by the clergy wife by telling confidential information to other church members
(Bouma, 1980). Other times, information learned in the context of the friendship is used
as a manipulation device when conflict does surface. Clergy wives may spend a lot of
time with people with whom they are friendly, but most wives soon discover that having
a good friend with whom one can truly be oneself is nearly impossible given the primacy
of the employer mentality (Bouma, 1980). In the instances in which a pastor's wife does form one or two close friendships, it is not uncommon for the husband to be fired based on the jealousy and resentment that this causes on the part of other church members (Valeriano, 1981). Therefore, most wives soon learn that they must always be friendly to everyone, "showing an obvious affection and interest in all members" (Dobson, 1995, p. 23), without crossing a line of self-disclosure that might be dangerous to her or her spouse. They must ever smile and appear to be friendly and happy. One church dismissed its pastor ostensibly because his wife did not smile at the congregants often enough. Although this may seem to be just an excuse, the fact that it was proposed and accepted by the group is an indication of the situational pressures faced by the SBC clergy wife in her daily relationships.

Summary

As indicated by previously cited data, Americans believe that religion and spirituality are an important part of their lives. Research indicates that those who claim to have a spiritual relationship with God experience life somewhat differently from those who claim no religious beliefs. Among the subgroups in American culture that it may be profitable to study are those of the clergy wife in general and the Baptist wife in particular. By looking at the relationships of these individuals with their spouses, God, and the people in close daily contact with them, we may be able to formulate hypotheses and test theories concerning both loneliness and the role that spirituality plays in forming and maintaining such relationships.
Chapter 2: Loneliness

Loneliness has been described as a common human experience that is as old as mankind (Hart, 1977; Hojat & Crandall, 1989). Madden (1977) says “to be human is to be lonely” (p. 11). Nevertheless, the discussion of loneliness has often been deemed the forum of the poet and playwright rather than of individuals in everyday conversation. Even though we do not speak of it, research indicates that the experience of loneliness is a common one for Americans (Tornstam, 1992). In 1969, a survey indicated that 25% of all Americans had felt intensely lonely during the past two weeks (Bradburn, 1969). Not much has changed in the intervening years. A recent poll indicates that the current prevalence of loneliness still remains at a similar, or possibly even more widespread, proportion within the population today (Rokach & Brock, 1998).

Definitions of Loneliness

Although loneliness may be a universal human condition, defining the concept is not easy. The average individual knows when loneliness strikes, but has only a vague notion of how to define it (Kiefer, 1980; Peplau & Perlman, 1982), usually settling for a description of physical separation from others. Theorists and researchers have attempted to define the concept in more useful terminology. The prevailing definition of loneliness among researchers is a cognitive one proposed by Peplau and Perlman (1982) which states that loneliness is a sense of dissatisfaction arising from perceived deficiencies in one’s social relationships. However, there are many definitions of loneliness, most of which emphasize the subjective components of the experience. In their attempt to formulate an acceptable definition, Peplau and Perlman (1982) listed twelve formal
definitions and extracted three points of agreement from among them. These are that loneliness results from deficiencies in a person's social relationships, that it is a subjective experience, and that it is unpleasant and distressing. Their analysis also reflected three theoretical emphases as well, interpreted by Peplau and Perlman as needs for intimacy, cognitive processes, and social reinforcement needs. These emphases underscore the complexity of the loneliness concept and the difficulty encountered when attempting an inclusive definition. Perhaps the difficulty in defining loneliness has led to Perlman's (1989) statement that definitions of the concept actually turn out to be mini-theories in themselves, a practice that loneliness theorist Weiss strongly advises against (as cited in Shaver & Brennan, 1991).

In the more subjective attempts at defining loneliness, the phenomenon is described as "a powerful feeling" (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998, p. 1) accompanied by a "gnawing sense of discomfort" (Gerson & Perlman, 1979, p. 258), and so painful to experience that "people will do practically everything to avoid it" (Fromm-Reichmann, 1980, p. 339). It is "more terrible than anxiety" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 262), and is an "almost eerie affliction" of the spirit (Weiss, 1973, p. 13). Loneliness is a form of "acute self-awareness signaling a break in the basic network of the relational reality of the self-world" (Sadler & Johnson, 1980, p. 39). Sullivan (1953), one of the first to draw attention to the need for research into loneliness, emphasizes the strong, almost primal drive that loneliness creates in the individual to alleviate a lack of intimacy. Fromm-Reichmann (1980) writes that loneliness is so fierce that it can leave people paralyzed
and helpless. Loneliness is the "feelings persons have in the absence of meaningful human contact" (Stevens, 1981, p. 14).

In spite of its commonality and perhaps because of its severe nature, society often penalizes the lonely. The individual who acknowledges loneliness is likely to be treated with impatience and irritation (Weiss, 1973) or even social sanctions (Wood, 1986). To be lonely implies interpersonal problems in relationships (Horowitz, French, & Anderson, 1982) or some other fundamental weakness on the part of the lonely (Weiss, 1973). Often, lonely individuals may even try to hide conscious awareness of the experience from themselves (Fromm-Reichman, 1980). This is problematic because loneliness has been connected to a wide variety of social, emotional and behavioral problems (Jones, Rose, & Russell, 1990) which can include depression, relational dissatisfaction, poor social skills, and perceptions of low social support (Jones, 1982).

Yet, talking about loneliness, or even acknowledging it to ourselves, is discouraged. Most theorists regard loneliness as a natural human experience that may not be able to be avoided, but which should be managed and its effects controlled (Rokach & Brock, 1998). Chronic loneliness is usually seen by society and by its sufferers alike as self-caused, and it can be debilitating in its personal and social effects (Sadava & Matejcic, 1987; Spitzberg & Hurt, 1989). Long term loneliness has been shown to be related to measures of hostility, pessimism, alienation, fatalism, and cynicism, while high levels of loneliness have been associated with severe depression, hostility, personality disorders, substance abuse, and suicide (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998; McWhirter, 1990).
The Study of Loneliness

In spite of its avowed importance to humans, empirical studies on loneliness are relatively recent, beginning as late as 1961 with an objective loneliness measure by Eddy (as cited in Hojat & Crandall, 1989) and including seminal works by Sullivan (1953), Weiss (1973) and Peplau and Perlman (1982). Since then, much work has been done in attempts to clarify and quantify the concept for empirical study. To better understand what loneliness is and how it affects humans, various categories and typologies of loneliness have been proposed. These include the categories of social and emotional loneliness (Weiss, 1973), situational and chronic loneliness (Gerson & Perlman, 1979), state or trait loneliness (Jones et al., 1990), quality and quantity of relationships (Sadava & Matejcic, 1987), loneliness anxiety and existential loneliness (Moustakas, 1961), and the five dimensions of interpersonal, social, psychological, cultural, and cosmic loneliness (Bonsaint, 1984). Empirical studies have been numerous over the past 35 years, although much of the research done has focused on situational loneliness, using college students away from home and family, and the elderly or widowed. One key factor in the rapid growth of research has been the development of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), an easy and apparently robust scale for social deficit loneliness (Rubenstein & Shaver, 1982). Another encouragement for the study of loneliness came through a conference on the subject organized in 1979 by Peplau and Perlman (Shaver & Brennan, 1991). The literature on loneliness is now quite extensive, and includes international research efforts. Nevertheless, it is ironic that so little is still known about the development and maintenance of this debilitating experience.
Loneliness and Marriage

The lack of information on the relationship between loneliness and marriage is one example of how little is known about the mechanisms of loneliness. American culture has traditionally valued marriage as a state in which one has an intimate partner who can help fend off loneliness. Perhaps this is one reason why much of the work on adult loneliness does not consider marital status (Stack, 1998). Traditional studies have been done using college students, the elderly, or other subjects who are not married and who may be undergoing a major life change.

Although some research does indicate that married people report a higher level of mental well-being than their unmarried peers (Stack, 1998), other studies have found that up to 40% of married individuals report feeling lonely often or sometimes (Tornstam, 1992). The Tornstam data on loneliness and marriage was drawn from nearly 3000 random subjects in Sweden. The study also indicates that the degree of loneliness is higher among those who say that the person closest to them is someone other than their spouse. The Stack (1998) investigation, unusual in its scope, was drawn from 17 nations. The data in this study do support the idea that marriage appears to lower loneliness for both men and women, and that the effect is stronger for men than for women. A recent study here in the United States (Ross, as cited in Barbour, 1993) using 467 couples found opposite results with 24% of the husbands and 20% of the wives reporting significant loneliness. The data also indicate that loneliness is positively correlated with marital intimacy and depression for these individuals.
Given the recent interest in and the demonstrated importance of loneliness, it is also surprising to note the dearth of writings on loneliness specifically for mental health professionals (Audy, 1980; Fromm-Reichmann, 1980; Hartog, 1980; Leiderman, 1980; Olds & Schwartz, 2000). Fromm-Reichmann (1980) notes that loneliness is not even mentioned in most psychiatric textbooks. Olds and Schwartz (2000), professors of Clinical Psychiatry at Harvard, believe that not only do mental health professionals underestimate and misunderstand problems of loneliness, they often exacerbate the situation by discouraging patients from discussing therapeutic insights with others, thus prohibiting the growth of intimate relationships outside of the clinical setting. It appears that, in spite of years of empirical and theoretical work, the concept of loneliness remains elusive and misunderstood by the general public and professionals alike, even as the experience of loneliness grows within the population.

Predisposing Factors

The prototype of a lonely individual does not exist, although there are factors that may foster or trigger episodes of loneliness. Although some controversies and contradictions exist in the research findings on loneliness, it is fairly well established that marriage helps to guard against loneliness. Individuals who have never married (Fischer & Phillips, 1982), are newly separated, divorced (de Grace, Joshi, & Roberge, 1983) or widowed (Lopata, Heinemann, & Baum, 1982) and those who cohabitate (Stack, 1998) are more likely to suffer loneliness. Also well established is that low economic status (Fischer & Phillips, 1982; Stack, 1998) and health problems are common risk factors for loneliness in many populations (Fox, Harper, Hyner, & Lyle, 1994; Stack, 1998). One
area still in debate is that of sex differences in loneliness. Many studies report higher loneliness among females, others report higher loneliness among males, and still others report no difference between the sexes (Cramer & Neyedley, 1998; Jones & Carver, 1990). Some fairly strong trends in age differences have also been noted. Older individuals are often assumed to be lonely, but this has not been supported by empirical studies (Peplau, Bikson, Rook, & Goodchilds, 1982). Those most likely to be lonely are adolescents (Brennan, 1982), college students (Cutrona, 1982; Wiseman, Guttfreund, & Lurie, 1995), young adults without a partner relationship (Liefbroer & de Jong-Gierveld, 1990), and the elderly over age 80, many of whom may have lost the ability for independent living (Jones & Carver, 1990). Other predisposing factors that have to do with life changes in situation are factors such as moving to a new location (Rubin, 1982) or being a foreign student (McWhirter, 1997; Wiseman, 1997) or an immigrant (Dumka, Roosa, & Jackson, 1997). Many of these predisposing factors can help trigger the short term or social isolation type of loneliness.

A few predictors of long term or emotional loneliness have also been identified. These include having low intimacy relationships (Hamid, 1989), low self-esteem (McWhirter, 1997; Sletta, Valas, Skaalvik, & Sobstad, 1996), social anxiety (Jones, Rose, & Russell, 1990; Segrin & Kinney, 1995), low peer acceptance (Sletta et al., 1996), depression (Gerson & Perlman, 1979; Lobdell & Perlman, 1986), and poor social skills (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1999; Jones, Hobbs, & Hockenbury, 1982).
Loneliness and the Clergy Wife

The clergy wife does not fit some of the criteria for loneliness. She is married, is usually in the economic middle class, and is in a position that requires at least an acceptable minimum of social skills. However, she also carries some risks. Most clergy move their families from place to place relatively frequently (Pannell, 1993), whether by reassignment from their denomination, or, for those groups who choose their own place of service, by choice. This means that relationships must be constantly reestablished and developed in each new congregation. In addition, 68% of clergy wives state that their number one need is for more time alone with their spouses (Mace & Mace, 1980). Nearly half of these wives believe that a major disadvantage of being married to a clergyman is the lack of in-depth sharing with other church members (Mace & Mace, 1980). A second survey also indicates that the biggest problem faced by 56% of clergy wives is a lack of friendship (Valeriano, 1981). Warner and Carter (1986) found that clergy wives score higher in loneliness than do lay members of their congregations, and experience “a deficit of interpersonal involvement” (p. 131). Low self-esteem can result from a failure to live up to the expected prototype of the perfect wife. It may also be a by-product of what Hart (1977) calls having a “pleaser” personality. Hart claims that the highly religious who are intelligent, hard working, idealistic and sensitive can fall into this syndrome by too much self-sacrifice while trying to “please everyone all the time” (p. 43). When this persists, loss of self-esteem and loss of self-identity normally follow. Factors such as lack of time spent with a spouse, low intimacy relationships, low peer acceptance and low self-esteem may put the clergy wife at risk for loneliness.
**Research Hypothesis and Questions**

Considering the previously self-reported high levels of loneliness in this population and the stressors that appear to be built into the lifestyle of the clergy wife, this study will pose the following hypothesis:

H 1: The clergy wife will exhibit a level of loneliness higher than that of the general population.

To determine the possible moderating effects of spirituality on loneliness, this study will ask the following research question:

RQ 1: What is the relationship between loneliness and spiritual well-being for clergy wives?
Chapter 3: Depression

Loneliness and depression are closely linked (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998). Individuals who are lonely generally have fewer friends and are likely to not have a romantic partner (Bell, 1993). Duck, Pond and Leatham (1994) indicate that lonely individuals appear to have a globally negative view of interactions with others, creating a negative lens for viewing the social world. This closely mirrors the attitude of the unipolar depressive whose cognitions may include feeling rejection, alienation from significant others, sadness, irritability, anger and/or anxiety (Schuyler, 1998). Themes in the conversations of depressives during therapy have been noted to be a negative view of the self, the world, and the future (Schuyler, 1998), echoing the global negativity of the lonely individual. Although loneliness and depression have been shown to be distinct problems, they may have common origins in life events and stressors (Segrin & Allspach, 1999). A study by Dufton and Perlman (1986) indicates that people who are lonelier are also more likely to try to determine the causes of their loneliness. The researchers conclude that thinking about one’s social situation and possible deficits may intensify the sense of loneliness that people experience. This is likely to increase negative thoughts in general, thereby increasing one’s level of depression.

There are several types of depression. However, the most often indicated definitions of depression are those of the unipolar, major episode or of chronic depression. Cameron (1990) groups these definitions to say that depression is “a syndrome that includes not only sad mood but also other signs and symptoms such as anhedonia, insomnia, and appetite change” (p. 49). A recently published meta-analysis of
data from several genetic epidemiology studies cites a prediction that major depression will be the second leading cause of worldwide disability by the year 2020 (Sullivan, Neale, & Kendler, 2000). Other researchers claim that a consideration of all the health and social factors affected by depression indicates that major depression is already the number one cause of worldwide disability (Preboth, 2000).

It is believed that depression may be caused by biological factors and genetics (Schuyler, 1998), cognitive functioning (Gotlib & Hammen, 1992), and/or social and interpersonal variables (Coyne, 1976). The Sullivan et al. (2000) study concludes that major depression is a complex disorder that results from both genetic and environmental influences. Whatever the etiology, research has established a definite relationship between loneliness and depression. The social withdrawal that characterizes depressed individuals can create feelings of loneliness, while loneliness can be seen as one of the interpersonal variables which may help to bring on depression (Segrin, 1998). Both social and emotional loneliness have been found to be predictors of depression (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998).

Risk Factors for Depression

Like loneliness, depression is a significant phenomenon in American society. In a speech to the American Psychological Association, Seligman (as cited in Mattox, 1998) claims that this country is experiencing an epidemic of clinical depression. Currently, the typical American's odds of suffering from depression are higher than at any time in the past 100 years. One at risk group is that of adolescents and young adults from 18 to 44
(Hirschfeld & Cross, 1982), and Seligman claims that 12% to 15% of the present cohort of such individuals have already suffered a bout of serious depression.

Women in general are at risk for depression at a 2:1 rate over men (Hirschfeld & Cross, 1982; Schuyler, 1998). The lifetime prevalence for depression in women is 21% as compared to 12% for men (Enidott, Weissman, Yonkers, & Gregory, 1996). At any given time, approximately seven million American women, or 9% of the female population, suffer from various types of depression (Endicott et al., 1996). Young mothers with children are particularly at risk (McGrath, Keita, Stickland, & Russo, 1990). Some additional risk factors for depression include lower social economic status (SES), dependency on others for support and approval, low self-esteem, high levels of obsessiveness, and the occurrence of undesirable or uncontrollable life events, particularly marital stressors (Hirschfeld & Cross, 1982). One risk factor that deserves more detailed attention is that of depression and marriage.

**Depression and Marriage**

Depression has been defined by social scientists as a disruption of the social space (Coyne, 1976). Seen in this light, the social context surrounding the occurrence of depression is important (Coyne, 1976). Marriage is one of the most intimate of social contexts, and the marital relationship has been an important one for research efforts. At higher risk for depression are those who have been separated, divorced, widowed or never married (McGrath et al., 1990), indicating that depression among married individuals is lower than among the unmarried (Gotlib & Hammen, 1992). In general, this higher risk appears to be strongest for women, as men who have married and stayed...
married are less depressed overall than their single counterparts, and married women
have higher rates of depression than do married men (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White,
1996). However, adding the context of the distressed marriage further changes the nature
of the data on depression. Beach, Sandeen and O'Leary (1990) report that 50% of both
male and female partners who are in distressed marriages are depressed, and that 50% of
all depressed women are in situations of marital discord. In terms of an odds ratio, both
wives and husbands who are experiencing marital discord are anywhere from three times
(McGrath, et al., 1990), to ten times (O'Leary, Christian, & Mendell, 1994) to twenty-
five times (Weissmann, 1987) more likely to be depressed than are those who are in
nondistressed marriages. Distressed marriages are marked by negative behaviors of the
depressed individual that may include complaining and whining as well as accusations
that the spouse has caused the misery (Coyne, 1976). Some negative behaviors can be
spouse-specific, meaning that the depressive behavior is only present when the spouses
are together in interaction (Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary, 1990). In his work on divorce
prediction, Gottman (1994) hypothesizes that when wives exhibit negative behaviors
without interjecting positive behaviors as regulatory mechanisms, the couple is so
dysfunctional that it is at risk of dissolution.

The causal relationship between depression and distressed marriages is unclear,
and it is generally agreed that depression may have many determinants (Halloran, 1998).
However, one study indicates through self-report of wives in therapy for depression, that
70% of the women experienced marital discord prior to the onset of depressive symptoms
(O'Leary, Riso, & Beach, 1990). Regardless of the pathway, the association between
distressed marriages and depression appears strong, and must be taken into consideration when studying the marriage relationship.

**Depression and the Clergy Wife**

There are currently no published studies on depression and clergy wives. Even discussion of the topic within the cohort is rare. Of the three wives' manuals reviewed, one does not mention depression at all (Dobson, 1995), one devotes only two pages to the author’s experience with severe depression (Pannell, 1993), and one, written by two male authors, only advises how the wife can help the husband overcome his depression (London & Wiseman, 1999). When depression is discussed among wives, they normally use related terms such as loneliness, stress, suffering, self-pity, and trauma rather than the word itself. Anecdotal evidence as told to the researcher further indicates that depression is not considered to be an acceptable topic of public discussion for clergy wives. In one current situation, a pastor’s wife from a very large congregation in the South realized about two years ago that she was having difficulty with daily living. She and her husband have managed to keep this problem from church members. After a daughter in the family had to receive treatment from a mental health professional for panic attacks, the couple finally decided to seek treatment for the wife as well. However, the woman travels eight hours each way to another large city for treatment to keep her illness from the congregation and protect her husband’s position. Depression is still considered by many to be a spiritual weakness that can be avoided with the proper lifestyle and attitudes.
In general, clergy wives should be somewhat protected from depression by their marital status and their middle income SES level. However, the younger women with children may be at risk, as well as those who are new to the role of clergy wife as this means learning to live with many uncontrollable circumstances. It has been indicated that loneliness also puts individuals at risk for depression, so the high number of wives who indicate that this is problematic in the life of a clergy wife raises the possibility that the wife will experience depression.

Research Questions

The current study will ask the following research questions:

RQ 2: What is the prevalence of depression among clergy wives?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between depression and spiritual well-being for clergy wives?

In light of previous research findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 2: Depression will be positively associated with loneliness for clergy wives.
Chapter 4: Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction can be defined as a spouse’s overall evaluation of the quality of her/his marital relationship (Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau, 1997). Other terms that are sometimes used to signify satisfaction are marital success, quality, and adjustment (Clements et al., 1997). There has been much interest in the study of marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction, particularly in the area of marital stability (Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994). Satisfaction has been shown to be an outcome of marital processes, some of which are organized into interaction patterns (Fitzpatrick, 1988). Various typologies exist that exemplify these patterns, with Fitzpatrick (1981) naming Traditionals, Separates, and Independents as the main pattern types. These patterns reflect the couple’s normal interactions regarding affect, power, and ideology. Research using these types indicates that Traditionals are the most cohesive of the couples, and that they tend to show high levels of affection and marital satisfaction (Fitzpatrick, 1981). In general, happy marriages are marked by the spouses’ beliefs that they are best friends, and that each is committed to the relationship in spite of occasional difficulties (Lauer & Lauer, 1986). Spouses in happy marriages see the other as caring, giving, honest, and as possessing a sense of humor (Lauer & Lauer, 1986). Couples who focus on egalitarianism and sharing report higher levels of satisfaction as well (Gordon, Baucom, Epstein, Burnett, & Rankin, 1999).

As it is an outcome of a relationship, marital satisfaction is not static. Many factors can affect the quality of the marriage. Education, age at marriage, cultural and childhood background, employment, negative behavior, and homogamy of attitudes and
personalities are individual factors that affect satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). The presence of life stressors can lower marital satisfaction, particularly when they occur during the early years of the marriage (Clements et al., 1997). Adding children to the family unit also lowers marital satisfaction for women, especially when they are working outside of the home and report low social support (Graham, Fischer, Crawford, Fitzpatrick, & Bina, 2000). As seen across the life cycle of those who stay married, marital satisfaction normally forms a U-shaped curve, with satisfaction highest in the early months or years of the marriage, and again after children leave the home (Wright, Nelson, & Gerson, 1994).

Physical and mental health factors also play a part in lowering marital satisfaction. Loneliness (Sadava & Matejciec, 1987), depression, and chronic health problems can all have negative effects on satisfaction for the couple. However, having a spouse who is a confidant and an intimate friend can lower the probability of loneliness and depression (Stack, 1998).

Most research that has been done on the relationship between religious beliefs and satisfaction suggests that holding strong and homogenous religious beliefs can have a positive effect on marital satisfaction (Roth, 1988; Wright et al., 1994). Some controversy has surrounded such findings, with arguments that this effect is an artifact of social desirability, known as marital conventionalization. Although the relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction may be due to conventionalization in some instances, this is not always the case (Schrumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1982). Religiosity is an important predictor of marital satisfaction for some couples even among those who do
not respond to a conventionalization scale in a “conventionalizing” way (Schrumm et al., 1982). Sperry and Giblin (1996) indicate that a couple’s spiritual resources can mediate marital satisfaction, with spiritual maturity raising satisfaction levels, and negative, rigid or punishment-based beliefs and practices lowering satisfaction levels.

**Marital Satisfaction and the Clergy Wife**

Clergy couples have occasionally been the population of interest for empirical studies, possibly due to their low divorce rates. One study in particular (Hartley, 1978) provides a good picture of the clergy marriage. Taking into account the factors that help provide marital satisfaction, Hartley finds that the husband’s high education level and occupational status, the homogenity of the couple in background, religion and race, their later age at marriage, and their high level of expressed affection predispose them to a happy marriage. This is evidenced by surveys of minister’s wives (Bouma, 1980, Dobson, 1995, Pannell, 1993) that show wives high satisfaction levels when their husbands treat them as best friends, confidants, and a number one priority. Roth (1988) studied couples in religious groups to gauge the relationship between marital adjustment and spiritual well-being. She found that spiritual well-being is positively related to marital satisfaction in religious groups, and that this effect is stronger for women than for men. Assuming that the clergy wife is high in spiritual well-being, this would be an added positive factor in predicting marital satisfaction. Clergy wives have indicated that sharing religious commitment and spiritual resources is at the top of their list of advantages of clergy marriages (Mace & Mace, 1980).
The average clergy couple is a Traditional type, and wives' satisfaction with the love and affection given by their spouses is high, as 82.5% of wives rate this aspect of their marriage as "it couldn't be better" or "quite satisfactory, I'm lucky" (Hartley, 1978). Perhaps surprisingly, Hartley also found that there is no relationship between marital satisfaction for the wives and the number of hours the spouse reportedly spends at work each week.

In spite of all the positive forces for marital satisfaction in the life of the clergy couple, they also face strong life stressors that work against it. Income levels for the minister fall below that of other professionals, so that money is often scarce (Bouma, 1980; Brown, 1981; Hartley, 1978). This may lead the wife to seek outside employment, or may confine her to the home and church almost exclusively (Hartley, 1978; Mace & Mace, 1980). Money stress is even more keenly felt when children arrive, as they must if the couple is to set an example of the ideal family unit. For Baptist clergy couples, there is the added insecurity of knowing that a congregation has the ability to dismiss them at any time, leaving the family with no income and often, no place to live (Magill, 1981).

Another stress for the marriage comes in the time demands on the spouses and on the family unit, as they are "on call" all day and all night, rarely having time alone (Bouma, 1980; Hartley, 1978; Mace & Mace, 1980). Even when the couple is alone, the husband is often preoccupied with church issues (Bouma, 1980; London & Wiseman, 1999; Mace & Mace, 1980), fatigued (Brown, 1981), and apparently unable to separate his marriage from his work, possibly because society does not do so. Therefore, the visibility of the marriage in the church and the community is a strain in itself (Hartley,
1978). This is evidenced by a survey in which 85% of pastors and 59% of their wives list expectations to model a perfect marriage as the top disadvantage of a clergy marriage (Mace & Mace, 1980). This may explain why 69% of these same wives and 50% of their husbands place handling of negative emotions as their number one family need. Running a close second is a lack of good couple communication, with 62% of wives and 50% of husbands saying that this is a need in their marriage. A second survey (Dobson, 1995) shows an even higher degree of concern with communication, with 75% of clergy wives saying that it is problematic in their relationship, primarily due to time demands on the spouse and his preoccupation with his work.

**Research Hypothesis and Questions**

In light of previous research findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 3: Marital satisfaction will be negatively associated with loneliness for clergy wives.

This study will ask the following research question:

RQ 4: What is the relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual well-being for clergy wives?
Chapter 5: Social Support

Social support has been defined as “an interactional process of helping, comforting, caring for and aiding others” (Albrecht, Burleson, & Goldsmith, 1994, p. 421). A large body of research exists concerning the different dimensions of giving and receiving social support. One finding that appears to be robust is that an individual’s perception of the quantity and quality of a social support network can affect her/his mental and physical health (Albrecht et al., 1994). These social support networks are not stable over time and circumstances, and support can be enhanced or depleted in accordance with life events (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1990). Social support is not always beneficial in its effects; there are risks and disadvantages to asking for help, such as the creation of a negative social impression or a negative self-image. Difficulties can also surface when providers and receivers of support are interdependent and affected by the same stressors, and when a network is overly dense, homogenous, and restricted in membership (Albrecht et al., 1994).

Loneliness has been called a social emotion (Segrin & Allspach, 1999; Wood, 1986). Therefore, it is not surprising that the experiences of loneliness and depression are also linked to one’s perception of a social support network, as having a supporting person to talk with has been called one of two essential social perceptions (Ross & Mirowsky, 1989). An increase in satisfaction with one’s social network has been shown to decrease loneliness (Carroll, as cited in Dufton & Perlman, 1986). A large body of research indicates that a perception of low social support often precedes the onset of depression, and that depressed individuals have smaller and less available and/or integrated social
networks than do nondepressed persons (Gotlib & Hammen, 1992). Both chronic depression and loneliness are hypothesized to be associated with deterioration in social support, perhaps due to social skill deficits of the depressed individual (Beach & O’Leary, 1993; Jones, Hobbs, & Hockenbury, 1982; Lewinsohn, 1974; Segrin, 1992), although the direction of causality has yet to be established. However, Spitzberg and Hurt (1987) theorize that a long-term experience of loneliness could result in atrophy of social skills, thereby creating a cycle that feeds into increased loneliness, depression and loss of social support.

One particularly important source of perceived social support is that of the marital partner (Cutrona & Suhr, 1994; Ross & Mirowsky, 1989), and support from other sources cannot always compensate for a lack of spousal support (Pasch & Bradbury, 1998). Effective spousal support means being able to respond appropriately to the partner’s support seeking behaviors, and being able to appropriately convey needs and solicit support from the partner (Pasch & Bradbury, 1998). Satisfaction with spousal support depends on both partner’s skills, but husbands’ skills are particularly important for wives, as husbands’ supportive behaviors and affective tone appear to increase marital satisfaction for wives more than wives’ supportive behavior increases husbands’ satisfaction (Julien & Markman, 1991). This may occur because women report greater levels of loneliness when they lack an intimate relationship, while men report greater levels of loneliness when they lack a network of friends (Cutrona, 1982). Wives’ supportive behaviors are key in another area, as their positive supportive behaviors are important in the maintenance of the overall marital relationship (Leatham & Duck, 1990;
Pasch & Bradbury, 1998). As important as the individual spouse’s skills may be, they do not account for all of the successes or difficulties in the relationship. The make up of networks can affect the nature of support for the couple as well. Highly stressed couples often have small support networks that are of limited availability and that significantly overlap in membership (Albrecht et al., 1994).

Social Support and the Clergy Wife

Development of a social support network can be problematic for the clergy wife. Moving from place to place makes the leaving of old friends and the establishment of new relationships a frequent necessity. Kin networks must usually be left behind as well. Both of these situations limit the size and availability of networks that persist over time. When the couple is working in a church whose atmosphere does not provide for close friendships with members, the possibilities for increasing a network decline further. Due to the nature of relating so closely to the members, a clergyman and his wife have networks that highly overlap.

Some clergy wives do work outside of the home and the church, and their social support networks might be presumed to be somewhat larger. However, societal expectations are often similar to those of the church members, and it is difficult for the clergy wife to establish relationships. Many people hesitate to become a close friend of the clergy wife perhaps because they feel that they must watch their own behavior around someone they believe might be offended or judgmental (e.g., not use profanity, not talk about drinking or sexual experiences). Others see her as a surrogate counselor, immediately disclosing highly intimate information and seeking advice. When the clergy
wife does manage to cultivate a friendship, she still faces the issue of confidentiality. Many of her problems will focus around relationships, personality clashes, and power plays in the church. These problems can be quite serious, especially in smaller churches (Wallace, 1981), and can affect her life drastically. Yet, she will be risking her spouse's job if anyone discovers that she has discussed such situations with outsiders. Even if a minister's wife dares to confide her woes to a friend, she might not find much support from an individual who does not fully understand the demands of this unusual lifestyle.

Research Hypothesis and Questions

In light of previous research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 3: Perceived social support will be negatively associated with loneliness for clergy wives.

This study will ask the following research question:

RQ 6: What is the relationship of perceived social support to spiritual well-being for clergy wives?

Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions

H 1: The clergy wife will exhibit a level of loneliness higher than that of the general population.

H 2: Depression will be positively associated with loneliness for clergy wives.

H 3: Marital satisfaction will be negatively associated with loneliness for clergy wives.

H 4: Perceived social support will be negatively associated with loneliness for clergy wives.
RQ 1: What is the relationship between loneliness and spiritual well-being for clergy wives?

RQ 2: What is the prevalence of depression among clergy wives?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between depression and spiritual well-being for clergy wives?

RQ 4: What is the relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual well-being for clergy wives?

RQ 5: What is the relationship of perceived social support to spiritual well-being for clergy wives?
Chapter 6: Method

Participants

The participants in the study were females married to an ordained minister (pastor or associational director) who belongs to the Southern Baptist denomination. Mailing lists of all active SBC clergy wives were secured from Arizona, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota and three associations in the state of Florida. Due to the large number of SBC ministers’ wives in Florida, clergy wives from Pensacola, Jacksonville and West Palm Beach were chosen to represent the state. These areas are separated geographically by at least 275 miles, and can be characterized as a mix of urban, rural and ethnic populations.

A total of 785 names were obtained from the mailing lists provided, and questionnaire packets were sent. Fifteen of the packets were returned as non-deliverable, leaving a total of 770 packets sent to participants. Out of this number, 235 responses were received, for a return of 31%. While this may seem low, it is not unusual to find low response rates when requesting personal information from clergy or their wives.\(^3\) These rates may be due to loose denominational structure and disinterest (Douglas, 1965). Hsieh and Rugg (1983) add lack of time and frustration or conflict over the questionnaire contents to reasons for non-response. In the current survey, two wives wrote messages to the researcher indicating that the questionnaire was long and negatively biased. Many respondents added side notes to any answers that could be negatively interpreted, apparently to be certain that the researcher understood some special circumstance or other reason why they answered in such a way. Being positive and not revealing one’s own problems without explanation are highly valued behaviors in
this population. It is also possible that the six-page questionnaire appeared daunting to those who were very busy, not experiencing problems, not highly educated, or who experienced negative feelings while trying to answer highly personal questions about every part of her life. In support of some of these possibilities, Table 1 in the Results section shows that the respondents are primarily women who have older children, a college or post graduate education, and many years of being married to a minister.

Procedure

Participants were mailed a packet containing a cover letter, the questionnaire, and a stamped return envelope. The cover letter provided an introduction to the research and identified the researcher as an SBC clergy wife. Instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaire and how to return it in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope provided in the packet. Since anonymity is vital for such individuals, participants were advised to watch their applicable state Baptist newspaper for “debriefing” on the study sometime within six months of the survey.

Page one of the questionnaire asked demographic questions. Participants were asked to give their age, years of marriage, years of marriage spent in ministry, number of children, level of education, size of congregation, and the number of waking hours the husband spends in the home weekly. In addition, the participants were asked to indicate whether or not this was a first marriage for her and a first marriage for her spouse, and whether or not she works outside the home and church. Two final questions asked the wife to rate the difficulty of her role as a minister’s wife and the difficulty of her husband as a minister on a Likert-type scale. Possible values on the scale range from one to ten,
with one indicating extremely easy and ten indicating extremely difficult. A copy of the full questionnaire is available in the Appendix.

Measures

Loneliness. The original and revised UCLA Loneliness scales of Russell and Cutrona (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980; Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978) have been used in hundreds of research studies over the years (Shaver & Brennan, 1991). The UCLA scales are Likert-type measures that focus on the quality of the participant’s relationships with others. Version 3 (Russell & Cutrona, 1988) has been chosen for this study as it was designed for use with nonstudent populations. It consists of 20 items, none of which include “lonely” or “loneliness” terminology. Scores on the UCLA scale can range from a possible low of 20 to a high of 80. Reliability for this scale in the present study was measured as a coefficient alpha of .85.

Depression. The Self-Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965) or SDS is a widely used measure of depression (Shaver & Brennan, 1991). It is a 20-item measure that asks respondents to rate the frequency of symptoms associated with depression. Like the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1967, as cited in Shaver & Brennan, 1991), the SDS is one of the most widely used depression scales for research and for clinical work. By 1986, it had already been used in over 300 studies and translated into thirty languages (Shaver & Brennan, 1991). A recent clinical review of depression diagnosis and treatment cites the Zung SDS scale as one of the most commonly used self-report scales (Preboth, 2000). The Zung scale is the scale of choice for the National Depression Screening Day, held annually in over 2,800 sites in the United States and Canada (Greenfield, Reizes, Muenz,
Scores on the SDS can range from a possible low score of .25 (no discernible depression) to a top score of 1.00 (extreme depression). Reliability for the scale in the present study was measured as a coefficient alpha of .86.

**Marital Satisfaction.** Marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction were assessed through the Relationship Assessment Scale or RAS (Hendrick, 1988). Consisting of seven items, the RAS has good internal consistency, with an alpha of .86. The RAS correlates well with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale of Spanier for concurrent validity, and distinguishes well between couples who stay together and those who separate for good predictive validity. Scores on this instrument can range from a possible low of 7 to a top score of 35.

**Social Support.** The perception of social support was measured by six items from the Social Support Questionnaire or SSQ (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). The SSQ yields a number score and a satisfaction score for each item, which allows it to tap the separate components of perceived available support network numbers (SSQ Num) as well as the satisfaction with that support (SSQ Sat). For the full 27 item SSQ, the Number (SSQ Num) scale has an alpha coefficient of .97 and the SSQ Sat scale has an alpha coefficient of .94. Possible scores on the SSQ Sat range from a 1 (very satisfied) to a 6 (very dissatisfied). Possible scores on the SSQ Num range from 0 to 9 individuals in a network. In the present study, the six item SSQ Sat has an alpha coefficient of .88, and the SSQ Num scale has an alpha coefficient of .94. Sarason et al. (1983) report findings of two studies in which the two halves of the SSQ were positively correlated. In study
one, the correlation was .34. In study two, correlation was .31 for men, and .21 for women. Correlations of the SSQ scales of women with a depression measure were -.31** for SSQ Num and -.43** for SSQ Sat (**p < .001).

**Spiritual Well-Being.** Typical measures of religiosity tend to tap behaviors that are either key to performing the role of clergy or clergy wife (e.g., church attendance and participation), or that would be very difficult for these individuals to do (e.g., ask another minister for advice with personal problems). Therefore, this study employed the Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) Scale of Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) which defines religiosity in terms of an inner state (Ellison, 1983) instead of a behavior, and, as such, provides a measure of spirituality. It is a non-sectarian scale that is intended for use with any religion that meaningfully interprets having a relationship with God.

The SWB Scale is a twenty-item scale that has good face validity. It has two subscales of Religious Well-Being (RWB) and Existential Well-Being (EWB) that are summed to form overall SWB. Prior test-retest reliability has been shown as .93, and internal consistency was indexed at a coefficient alpha of .89 (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). It shows good discriminate and convergent validities. The SWB Scale is described as having “a high correlation with intrinsic religious motivation” (Roth, 1988, p. 154), and has been used in studies in a variety of educational, health and therapeutic settings. Scores on this instrument can range from a possible low of 20 to a high of 120. Reliability for this scale in the present study was measured at a coefficient alpha of .93.

**Loneliness Experiences.** To capture the subjective nature of loneliness in the experience of clergy wives, the last section of the questionnaire requested that the
participant respond to the following: Everyone feels lonely from time to time. Think of a recent time when you felt lonely and explain the circumstances.

A simple coding system based on current concepts of loneliness was set up to categorize the responses. The system is detailed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No response or “can’t think of a time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Circumstantial and one time or only occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Internal reasons and recurrent or long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Internal reasons and one time or only occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Circumstantial and recurrent or long term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coding was done by the researcher and one assistant, both coding 100% of the responses. Intercoder reliability was assessed with a kappa of .857. A check of discrepancies indicated that the majority of coder disagreements fell in determination of the difference between occasional and recurrent experiences. Differences were settled with a definition of occasional as an event that occurred from one to three times, and recurrent experiences as those that occurred more than three times.
Chapter 7: Results

Correlations Between Variables

A matrix showing the results of Pearson Product Moment (PPM) bivariate correlations between test and major demographic variables is provided in Table 1. Reliabilities for the test variables are indicated on the diagonals for variables numbered 1 through 6.

Participant Characteristics

Page one of the questionnaire yielded demographic information about the participants. Table 2 reports these demographic characteristics plus the results of the role difficulty questions.

Although there is considerable variation in the sample, respondents in general tend to be middle-aged women in their first marriage. The respondents average twenty years of marriage, work outside the home or church, and have been in ministry nearly all their married life. While their congregation size ranges from six to 9000 members, most respondents indicate that their church averages 100 members. Twenty-two of the women have ministry husbands not currently serving as a church pastor (i.e., chaplains, associational directors who are former pastors, or men seeking employment). Some women offered the information that the spouse is bivocational. Over 98% of the wives have children, and about 1% volunteered the information that they have stepchildren as well. Overall, the sample is highly educated, with college graduates and those with postgraduate study accounting for 56% of the respondents, and only 15% indicating that...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Loneliness</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Depression</td>
<td>.51***</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.35***</td>
<td>-.44***</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Social Support Sat</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>-.39***</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Social Support Num</td>
<td>-.63***</td>
<td>-.36***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>-.427</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.48***</td>
<td>-.61***</td>
<td>.54***</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Age</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Years of Marriage</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.84***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Years in Ministry</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.73***</td>
<td>.82***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Number of Children</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Level of Education</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Size Congregation</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Waking Hours Home</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Difficulty Wife Role</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
<td>-.33***</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Difficulty Husb Role</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
<td>-.30***</td>
<td>-.29***</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.57***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001  two-tailed  

Note: Numbers on diagonals of 1-6 are reliabilities.
Table 2: Participant Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>47.45</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24-80</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Married</td>
<td>24.84</td>
<td>11.89</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1-57</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife 1st Marriage?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(91% yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husb 1st Marriage?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(91% yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Ministry</td>
<td>20.44</td>
<td>11.48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1-57</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Size</td>
<td>260.79</td>
<td>707.96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6-9000</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outside Home?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(54% yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husb Home Hours</td>
<td>39.23</td>
<td>24.64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0-120</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Wife Role</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Husb Role</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
they have not studied after high school graduation. Although the full range of 1-10 was used for difficulty of both wife and husband roles as in the church, overall, wives feel that their role is of medium difficulty (a five on a scale from one to ten), while their husbands’ roles are more difficult (a seven on a scale from one to ten).

Husbands spend an average of forty waking hours at home, but at least 15% of the sample wrote in the information that their spouse has an office in the home. A large range of hours was noted, beginning with one wife whose husband was away at school and who, therefore, spends zero hours at home currently, up to one office-in-home worker at 120 hours. There was no indication of how many of those hours the spouse was available to the wife, or if the wife was involved in his work (such as “gatekeeping” for him while he wrote sermons). Pearson Product Moment (PPM) bivariate correlations showed no significant correlations of weekly waking hours in the home with any of the measured variables of interest. Table 1 details these correlations.

**Respondent Scores on Variables of Interest**

The respondents’ scores on each instrument are detailed in Table 3.
Table 3: Global Variable Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>44.54</td>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>24-74</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>29.93</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>14-35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSQ Satisfaction</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>1-5.16</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSQ Number</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Well Being</td>
<td>104.74</td>
<td>13.49</td>
<td>53-120</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.26-.81</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Loneliness scores were gathered to test H1. There are several notable features of this data. First, the modal loneliness score for this sample fell at 35, a score that is within the normal range for subjects of the UCLA Loneliness Test. However, only 30% of the data are accounted for in scores of 35 and lower. The median score of 43 indicates that many scores fall in the upper ranges of possible scores. Mean for the sample was 44.5. Seventy per cent of the scores are in the 36 to 74 range on a scale that tops out at 80, with 25% of the respondents scoring from 55 to 74. The full range and frequencies of scores needs to be viewed to understand the data as a whole, as they are skewed toward the middle and upper ends of the scale. Figure 1 shows this range and frequency in histogram form.
Figure 1: Loneliness Scores

LONELINESS SCORES

X axis = number of participants with score indicated
Y axis = score on UCLA Loneliness measure
A series of t-tests was run to compare the current loneliness scores with those of women in previous studies (Flora & Segrin, 2000; Fox et al., 1994; Sadava & Matejcic, 1987; Segrin & Flora, 2001; Warner & Carter, 1984). Comparison data is shown in Table 4. Loneliness scores of the present sample are significantly higher than those of all groups except the one comparable group of pastor's wives. The sample mean scores and these comparison data with other married women confirm H1 that clergy wives are higher in loneliness levels than the general population.

Table 4: Comparison Data for UCLA Loneliness Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Female Subjects</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flora &amp; Segrin</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>36.046</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6.60**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox et al.</td>
<td>88% married</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>.986(SE)</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>4.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadava &amp; Matejcic</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segrin &amp; Flora</td>
<td>Married prisoners</td>
<td>37.76</td>
<td>8.066</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.87**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warner &amp; Carter</td>
<td>Pastor's wives</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01 (two-tailed) when compared to the mean of 44.5 and the SD of 12.15 from the present sample.
PPM bivariate correlations between loneliness and some demographics of interest are shown in Table 5. In addition, a partial correlation was run between Loneliness and Years of Ministry controlling for Age. The correlation was -.06 (ns). This indicates that the original correlation between Loneliness and Years of Ministry becomes non significant when controlling for Age.

Table 5: Loneliness and Demographic Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Size</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Husband's Role</td>
<td>.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Wife's Role</td>
<td>.33***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Marriage</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Ministry</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outside the Home</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 (two-tailed), ** p < .05 (two-tailed), *** p < .001 (two-tailed)
**Marital Satisfaction**

Marital Satisfaction (RAS) scores also exhibit a similar skew to the upper end of the scale, with a 31 out of 35 possible points as the median and 80% of respondents scoring 27 or higher. The mean score of 29.92 is close to the mean score of 29.14 reported by Hendrick (1988) on initial samples of couples in relationships. Figure 2 is a histogram showing the range and frequency of marital satisfaction scores. Correlations between marital satisfaction and the demographic variables of interest are shown in Table 6.

**Social Support**

Social support as measured by the SSQ includes two subscales, one for satisfaction and one for network size. SSQ Satisfaction scores ranged from 1 to 5.16 out of a possible low score of 6, with twenty-five percent of respondents indicating a 1 (extremely satisfied). Mean score was 1.96. Sixty-six percent of respondents fall within the 1 to 2 satisfaction ranges. The SSQ Satisfaction scale mean for the Sarason et al. (1983) study was 5.38, with a narrow range of 5.12 to 5.57 (when using the full 27 item instrument with undergraduate students).

SSQ Number scores indicate a full range from zero to nine individuals in the social networks. Eight individuals did not fill out this portion of the scale, while two wrote zeroes under all six questions. Mean number of social network others for this study is 4.06. Sarason et al. (1983) report mean scores for the SSQ Number scale of 4.25, but show a range of only 2.92 to 5.46. PPM correlations on both subscales were performed with demographic variables of interest. The results are reported in Table 7.
Figure 2: Marital Satisfaction Scores

MARSAT

MARITAL SATISFACTION SCORES

y axis = number of participants with score indicated

x axis = score as measured by the RAS
Table 6: Marital Satisfaction and Demographic Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Size</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Husband's Role</td>
<td>-.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Wife's Role</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Marriage</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Ministry</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outside Home</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 (two-tailed),  *** p < .001 (two-tailed)
Table 7: Social Support and Demographic Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>r SSQ Sat</th>
<th>r SSQ Num</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Size</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Husband’s Role</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Wife’s Role</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Marriage</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Ministry</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outside Home</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 (two-tailed), ** p < .01 (two-tailed), *** p < .001 (two-tailed)

**Spiritual Well-Being**

The overall Spiritual Well-Being scores appear to be high. Although the range of scores runs from 53 to the top possible score of 120, over 60% of the respondents score in a range of 105 to 120, with nearly 10% scoring the full 120 points. Perusal of the questionnaires indicates that for those who score in the 110-119 range, two questions most often keep scores from being a full 120. These are questions number 6 and 16: 6. I feel unsettled about my future; 16. I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness.
PPM correlations indicate that spiritual well-being is not significantly correlated with years of marriage, years in ministry, education level, or age of respondent. Results of correlations between SWB and demographic variables are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Spiritual Well-Being and Demographic Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Wife's Role</td>
<td>-.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Husband's Role</td>
<td>-.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Marriage</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Ministry</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outside the Home/Church</td>
<td>.17**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01 (two-tailed), ***p < .001 (two-tailed)

Depression

To answer RQ 2 regarding the prevalence of depression in this population, the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale was employed. Although the Zung Scale is used mainly for determining a cut off point for depressed vs. nondepressed individuals, recent generalized ranges have been published for all scores. These are: < .50 = normal; .50 to .59 = mild depression; .60 to .69 = moderate to marked major depression; .70 and up =
severe or extreme major depression (Moses, 2001). The mean score for respondents is .45, within the normal or nondepressed range with a modal .43 confirming the nondepressed status of most participants. However, these scores fall at the high end of the continuum. Further examination of the data shows that just over 31% of respondents fall in the upper range of the scale, with approximately 24% scoring in the mild depression range, 5% in the moderate or marked major depression range, and 3% in the severe major depression range, indicating little variance from statistics gathered from the general population. Table 9 details the results of bivariate correlations between depression and demographic variables of interest.

Experiential Participant Reports

The last item on the questionnaire asks respondents to describe a situation in which she has felt lonely. Table 10 shows the results of the quantitative coding of these responses.

These data indicate that 71% of the respondents recall lonely times in which external circumstances have lead to the perception of loneliness. Examples of such external experiences include a move to another state or new church field, a short-term health crisis, death of a loved one, sitting alone during church services, having little in common with congregants, or being neglected by the spouse on holidays.
Table 9: Depression and Demographic Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>$r$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Size</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Wife Role</td>
<td>.36***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Husband Role</td>
<td>.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Marriage</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outside Home</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** $p < .001$

Table 10: Loneliness Experience Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None or Not Lonely</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstantial/Occasional</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/Long Term</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/Occasional</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstantial/Long Term</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only ten percent of the wives indicate that their experiences of loneliness are due to internal causes (both short term and long term combined). Examples of these responses include such statements as the following:

“I’ve felt lonely because I’ve been pushing people away from me.”

“I am basically a sad and inward person.”

Another twenty percent of the subjects left this last portion blank or stated that they do not ever feel lonely or can not think of such a time.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Results of the overall findings of a priori tests are presented in Table 11.

**Loneliness and Spiritual Well-Being**

A PPM bivariate correlation between loneliness as measured by the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale reveals a statistically significant negative correlation \( r (229) = -.477, p < .001 \). Therefore, to answer RQ 1, a rise in spiritual well-being is strongly associated with a decline in loneliness for clergy wives.

**Spiritual Well-Being and Depression**

Correlation results for the PPM correlation between the Spiritual Well-Being Scale and the Zung Depression Scale also indicate a statistically significant negative correlation \( r (232) = -.612, p < .001 \). To answer RQ 3, a rise in spiritual well-being is strongly associated with a decline in depression rates for this sample.
Table 11: Research Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1 Loneliness / Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3 Depression / Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.61***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4 Marital Satisfaction/ Spiritual Well Being</td>
<td>.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 5a Social Support Satisfaction /Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.40***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 5b Social Support Number /Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2 Depression / Loneliness</td>
<td>.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 3 Marital Satisfaction / Loneliness</td>
<td>-.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 4a Social Support Satisfaction /Loneliness</td>
<td>.52***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2b Social Support Number/Loneliness</td>
<td>-.63***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support Satisfaction / Social Support Number</td>
<td>-.43***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)
Spiritual Well-Being and Marital Satisfaction

Statistical analysis of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale and marital satisfaction as measured by the RAS reveals that the two variables are positively correlated \( (r \ (231) = .536, p < .001) \). In answer to RQ 4, a rise in spiritual well-being is strongly associated with a rise in marital satisfaction in this sample.

Spiritual Well-Being and Social Support

Research question five must be answered by two separate analyses, one for the SSQ Satisfaction scores, and one for the SSQ Number scores. The PPM correlation between SSQ Satisfaction and Spiritual Well-Being is a negative statistically significant one \( (r \ (231) = -.40, p < .001) \). This indicates that a rise in spiritual well-being is strongly associated with a rise in dissatisfaction with one's social network. The same correlation for SSQ Number and Spiritual Well-Being indicates a significant positive relationship \( (r \ (225) = .41, p < .001) \). In this case, a rise in spiritual well-being is strongly associated with a rise in the number of the wives' social contacts.

Loneliness and Depression

UCLA Loneliness scores and the Zung SDS scores were entered into the PPM correlation analysis. Results indicated that loneliness and depression are positively correlated in this sample \( (r \ (230) = .51, p < .001) \), just as in the population at large. Therefore, hypothesis H 2 is supported by the data.

Marital Satisfaction and Loneliness

It was hypothesized that in this population, as in the population at large, marital satisfaction as measured by the RAS would be negatively associated with loneliness as
measured by the UCLA Loneliness Scale. A PPM bivariate correlation supported this hypothesis. The two variables showed a statistically significant negative correlation \( r (229) = -.35, p < .001 \) to support H 3.

**Loneliness and Social Support**

As with the other social support measures, this hypothesis was further split to accommodate the two separate scores of each subject on the SSQ measure. The first analysis was between SSQ Satisfaction and the UCLA Loneliness Scale. A statistically significant positive correlation resulted from this analysis \( r (229) = .52, p < .001 \). The first part of the hypothesis, H 4a was not supported by the data, indicating that social support satisfaction is positively, not negatively associated with loneliness in this population.

The second analysis was between SSQ Number and Loneliness. Results from this correlation indicate that hypothesis H 4b is supported by the data, as a significant negative relationship was obtained from the analysis \( r (223) = -.63, p < .001 \).

**Social Support Satisfaction and Social Support Number**

The unusual nature of the correlations for SSQ Sat and SSQ Num with other test and demographic variables prompted a look at the relationship between the two halves of the SSQ instrument. A PPM bivariate correlation indicated a statistically significant negative correlation between SSQ Satisfaction and SSQ Number \( r (225) = -.43, p < .001 \). This is unexpected due to the previously cited relationship between the two portions of the SSQ instrument in the Sarason et al. (1983) studies in which positive correlations were reported.
Multivariate Predictors of Loneliness

A multiple regression (MRC) was conducted to determine the contributions to loneliness by other variables of theoretical interest. The forced block entry method of variable selection was used. Variables included in the regression model were depression, social support number, social support satisfaction, spiritual well-being, and marital satisfaction. Results are listed in Table 12.

Table 12: MRC: Correlates of Loneliness for Clergy Wives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable = Loneliness</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>3.89***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSQ Number</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>-7.52***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSQ Satisfaction</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>4.75***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

df = 224  Overall $R^2$ for model = .54  Adjusted $R^2 = .53$

*** $p < .001$

The multiple regression results indicate that 53% of the variance in loneliness can be explained by a model that includes all the test variables of Depression, SSQ Number, SSQ Satisfaction, Spiritual Well-Being and Marital Satisfaction.
Two further MRC analyses were completed to test for Spiritual Well-Being as a moderator variable in the relationship between Loneliness and Depression, or between Loneliness and Marital Satisfaction. Results are shown in Table 13 and Table 14. For each analysis, Loneliness was the dependent variable. For the first analysis, the Depression variable was entered at the first step, as a covariate with Spiritual Well-Being. The Depression by Spiritual Well-Being interaction term was entered on the second step. The second analysis was done using the same procedure with the Marital Satisfaction variable.

Table 13

MRC: Spiritual Well-Being and Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables Entered</th>
<th>beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable = Loneliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1. Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2. Spiritual Well-Being x Depression</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** $p < .001$
Table 14

MRC: Spiritual Well-Being and Marital Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables Entered</th>
<th>beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1. Spiritual Well-Being</td>
<td>-.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2. Spiritual Well-Being x Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-significant betas for the interaction variable in the second step indicate that Spiritual Well-Being does not moderate the relationship between Loneliness and Depression or between Loneliness and Marital Satisfaction in this sample.**
Chapter 8: Discussion

This study adds to the literature on loneliness, spirituality, social support, and the life situation of the clergy wife. The resulting data indicate rather high levels of loneliness, normal to low levels of depression, relatively low social support networks, high social support satisfaction, high marital satisfaction, and high spiritual well-being for the sample. Since 53% of the variance in loneliness scores can be explained through looking at depression, marital satisfaction, social support and spiritual well-being, it appears that the variables were well chosen. The analysis indicates that depression, the number of individuals in the social support network, and the satisfaction with that network are the strongest predictors of loneliness in the model.

The Clergy Wife and Loneliness

Women who are married to an ordained clergyman face many unusual life situations. The typical participant in this study is happily married, is high in spiritual well-being, is not depressed, yet has few friends and is lonely. Comparisons of the present UCLA scores with married women in other research have indicated that clergy wives are lonelier than the average married woman, even those physically separated from the spouse (Segrin & Flora, 2001). The UCLA Loneliness Scale mean score for this study was 44.5, near to the mean score of 47.7 for divorced adults (Russell, 1982). Overall, 37% of clergy wife respondents scored above this mean loneliness score for divorced adults, and yet marital satisfaction scores indicate that these clergy wives are happily married. The current data and the results of statistical analyses provide verification of primarily anecdotal or nonscientific survey evidence to indicate that loneliness is a
disadvantage of the clergy marriage for wives. This finding in and of itself may be useful to those interested in establishing a dialogue with minister's wives' groups or with churches. Workshops or self-help books may be able to be provided for the clergy wife to help her make choices in how she will approach her role. Outside social support groups can be encouraged for wives who do not feel comfortable with trying to establish friendships within the congregation. Perhaps the subject of depression can be discussed more freely, allowing wives to seek treatment when necessary. Sometimes, hearing the results of a scientific study allows for more dialogue than does the presentation of a refutable opinion or anecdotal evidence. The average church attendee may have no idea that he or she is placing such pressure on the clergyman and his wife. Although ingrained beliefs and attitudes may be resistant to change, giving clergy and congregants information may help to gradually change some aspects of the current situation. Practical applications aside, there is more to be gleaned from this data in information about loneliness and how it may operate in both expected and unexpected ways with its normal correlates.

**Loneliness and Depression**

The positive association between loneliness and depression has been well established in previous studies. The current findings confirm that the two are positively correlated in this sample as well. Wives who are depressed are also lonely. However, the frequencies of the two in this population do not follow expectations. The 9% depression rate in this group of clergy wives equals that of the male and female population at large, while the 70% loneliness rate far outstrips that of the 25% general population or 20% of
married wives as reported earlier in this paper. Such an exceedingly large number of lonely wives would lead to an expectation that many more than the normal percentage would be found in depression. That they are not leads to consideration of a possible explanation for this unusual relationship between loneliness and depression.

First, the loneliness experiences that were described by the wives indicate that it is circumstances that raise feelings of loneliness. Both short term and chronic situational influences restricted the ability of the women to have open communication and long term relationships with church members, those people with whom they have the most social contact. They are often penalized for disclosing their thoughts and feelings. Reis and Patrick (1996) believe that self-disclosure is less a personal characteristic and more a relationship characteristic. The relationship of the clergy wife to church members and perhaps to society in general is one in which self-disclosure is kept superficial and reciprocity is restricted. It may well be that these situational restraints keep the clergy wife lonely, but not depressed since she is able to make an external attribution for her loneliness rather than an internal one.

A second explanation could be of the possible effects of spiritual well-being on loneliness. Spiritual well-being is also very high in this sample, and although it is negatively correlated with both loneliness and depression, an examination of the nature of the loneliness may lead to the assumption that the spiritual well-being has a much different relationship with loneliness than with depression. Since the loneliness of the group has been primarily expressed in circumstantial terms as role imposed, having an internal sense of rightness in a relationship with God might not make much difference in
feeling lonely for social contact with other humans. People are social beings, and loneliness for relationships with other humans has been proposed as something quite apart from loneliness for God. Therefore, it was thought possible that spiritual well-being may help give consolation or solace for the loneliness. However, the findings of this study do not support this idea of spiritual well-being as being a moderator variable for the sample for loneliness. Depression is a different matter as it is an affective disorder that disrupts relationships. Spiritual well-being should not be expected to “cure” a depression that is biologically based, but it was thought that it might help buffer against the stresses that can help trigger the depression. Receiving help and comfort through a spiritual relationship might help avoid or delay the feelings of helplessness and distress that life difficulties create. However, the findings of this study do not support spiritual well-being as a moderator for depression either.

A third possible explanation for the relationship between loneliness and depression in this sample is that of the wife’s perception of the difficulty of her role and of her spouse’s role. When a couple’s livelihood, social system, and professional standing are all based on one congregation in which there is conflict or power struggles, the perception of role difficulties will be strong. With these negative perceptions in place, loneliness may seem all the more poignant, and the situation may strengthen a sense of togetherness for the couple as they provide support and comfort for one another. One strong and intimate relationship is often enough to help guard against depression for women.
Loneliness and Marital Satisfaction

As expected, there is a negative correlation between loneliness and marital satisfaction for this sample. Those wives who are more satisfied with their marriages are less lonely. However, the high loneliness scores are somewhat difficult to interpret in light of the high satisfaction of these wives. It is unexpected to find both high marital satisfaction and high loneliness in the same group. Marriage is supposed to help buffer both men and women from loneliness when the partners are satisfied with their marriage. Perhaps the answer to this paradox lies in the explanation given by one participant who took the time to draw a second scale on the UCLA Loneliness instrument and indicate that one side referred to her relationships with others while the second side referred to her relationship with her spouse. Two other women wrote in that their answers pertained to spouse and kin relationships, not to relationships in general. These women may not feel lonely when they are with their spouses, and so they make a sharp distinction between that relationship and the “outside world.” One wife writes, “I believe there are two types of loneliness. A physical (outer) loneliness and an inner (soul) loneliness. I can be in a room full of people and feel lonely.” These appear to be good examples of the social and emotional isolation distinctions made by Weiss (1973). This finding is further strengthened by examining all the experiences to find that the most cheerful sounding wives are those who have lonely times, but who also have supportive, loving, “best friend” husbands to share in their difficulties. The only wives who say that they feel “completely alone” in life are those who also say that their husbands ignore them or are too distracted by or absorbed in the work of the church to pay attention to them.
The high marital satisfaction scores for this group support the idea that the clergy wife is loyal to her spouse and happy with her marriage. She reports a sense of happiness with her spouse and happiness in her relationship with God. The data indicate that the number of years that the couple has spent in ministry is positively correlated with marital satisfaction at a statistically significant level. However, this sample of wives is older and has been married a substantial amount of time. Some unhappy or dysfunctional couples may have been previously filtered out in that 4% of SBC couples who divorce.

Loneliness and Social Support

Perhaps the most unusual findings of this research are in the area of social support. First, the use of the full range of possible network members from zero to nine is unusual in comparison to the Sarason et al. (1983) study. Second, although the mean number in the network is about four individuals, 41% of the women have three or fewer members in their network, while only 10% have from 7-9 members. Although a small network does not equate to loneliness, this skew towards the bottom end of the scale certainly underscores the potential for loneliness of some clergy wives. That the problem may lie in the situation and not the individuals is suggested by the three participants who volunteered the information that the survey would have been filled out quite differently earlier in life when they were in a different ministry setting. When resources such as trust and openness are present in the climate of the church, relationships are able to flourish. Years of experience with conflict in ministry may help the clergy couple to learn to cope with or to reduce conflicts, or the couple may learn to choose situations in which they can be most effective with their particular ministry style. This appears to be
supported by the data as older wives who have been married longer and whose husbands have been in ministry longer, have larger networks with which they are less satisfied, and see the couple’s roles as less difficult. In contrast, those wives who are lonelier are younger, have fewer years of spouse in ministry, and see their roles as more difficult ones. Working outside the home does help fend off some loneliness, but it only slightly raises social support satisfaction and network numbers.

The third unusual finding of this study is that social support satisfaction and larger social support networks are negatively correlated. This means that the wives who have fewer people in their support networks say that they are very satisfied with this number, and yet these women are the very ones who score the highest in loneliness. This seems paradoxical until considering the fact that these women also say that they see the couple’s roles as very difficult ones. Satisfaction, to these women, may not have the same meaning as it does to the social scientist. Bad experiences with attempted friendships may lead these wives to believe that not having friends is better than risking hurt, betrayal and the husband’s job. They may believe that their need for meaningful social contact cannot be met within the social group available to them, and so convince themselves that things really are better this way for the time being. They might as truly be content with the current situation since it means less conflict. An attitude of this type is reflected in one wife’s comments about a difficult time with the church. She says of her spouse, “He shares the heartache and I in turn carry the hurt also. We are thankful that there is no one to share this with because we must remain totally dependent on God.” For some of these wives, satisfaction may not be the happiness or contentment that scientists assume they
are measuring. Satisfaction may be more of a ceasing of hurtful relationships and a means of conflict avoidance.

Aside from the specific interpretations of satisfaction by the participants, the negative correlation between the two portions of the Social Support Questionnaire may be important in social support research. This finding strongly supports the contentions of Sarason et al. (1983) that SSQ Satisfaction and SSQ Number do measure separate components of social support, and that both are necessary to a full understanding of the concept.

Loneliness and Spiritual Well-Being

The vast majority of clergy wives in this study score high on spiritual well-being. It might be argued that this is due to social desirability, and this may certainly be a factor in the high scores, although some patterns of answers throughout the scale may question this assertion. Two questions in particular seem to elicit answers that honestly reflect the situational constraints for the clergy wife. Question 6 deals with feeling unsettled about the future. Forty percent of the wives agree that they feel unsettled about their future. Question 16 states that life is full of conflict and unhappiness, and 48% of the wives agree with this statement. Such answers appear to indicate that the participants thought through the questions and answered to the best of their ability.

The pattern of scores on one question is particularly interesting. Question 15 reads “My relationship with God helps me not to feel lonely.” With such high loneliness scores in this sample, we should expect the majority of women to disagree with this statement, but, in fact, 95% of them agree with it. This is another counterintuitive finding.
Perhaps the word “lonely” was perceived negatively enough for social desirability to kick in on this particular question. However, it is also possible that they were answering quite honestly. Those who are not lonely answered as expected. Those who are lonely may have lived with the situation long enough for the “feeling” aspect of the loneliness to diminish somewhat, or they may have just learned to cope. One wife wrote under the question her statement that God meets all her needs totally. Another indicates in her description of loneliness experiences that, “I don’t mind being alone. Often it is easier.” A third indicates that loneliness is just a fact of life for the minister’s wife. She says, “Loneliness is part and parcel of the ministry. How we respond to loneliness though is the real test of our faith.”

For many of these women, it may be that the spiritual aspect of life complements the physical. While they still feel the need for human contact and comfort, they are able to operate with a minimum of intimate social contact and relationships as long as their spiritual relationship with God is a good one. This would seem to be an important point. Human relationships range from mere acquaintance to very intimate. It could be argued that a human’s relationship to God could cover the same range. An individual with only an acquaintance relationship to God would reap few benefits from it, while spiritual maturity and resources could spring from a deep and intimate relationship to God. The spiritual well-being scores for these wives could indicate that they may have the kind of relationship with God that would provide the resources necessary to cope with the situation in which they are living. The clergy wife highest in spiritual well-being is slightly older and has been married a little longer, works outside of the church and home,
and does not see the couple’s roles as very difficult. Perhaps it is the relatively higher
degree of spiritual well-being that helps her to discount some of the problems of the
clergy marriage and reframe them into advantages. However, these trends are not
definitive, and more research is suggested.

Qualitative Research

The inclusion of the question soliciting experiences of loneliness provided a rich
source of information about loneliness in this population. Each response is unique to the
woman herself, although some patterns emerge. As expected, loneliness is felt when a
parent or other close loved one dies, when children move away from home, when the
couple moves far away from seminary friends or kin, and when health problems keep one
or both spouses from living a normal life. Most women write of lonely times as ones in
which external circumstances keep them from being with friends and loved ones,
especially when they are surrounded by church families enjoying each other’s company.
Some women write of false accusations by factions within the church and perceived
betrayal by other clergy who seem quite willing to believe the worst. Those few who feel
that their loneliness comes from their own character flaws or failings write of the anguish
and perhaps anger of having let down themselves, their spouses, and God, but perhaps the
saddest words come from the wives who have absolutely no one to turn to. They are
denied access to old friends and kin, to the people around them in the church, and to the
husband whose relationship with the church takes all his time and energy. These personal
glimpses exemplify the social and emotional loneliness of life, and add depth and
interpretation to the instruments used in research.
Limitations

There have been some limitations to this research. The response rate, low for mailed questionnaires in general, may be deemed problematic. Results may have been different if more of the sample had chosen to respond. There may be some systematic influences in the lives of clergy wives that cannot be gauged without a higher response rate. Some features of the respondents can be examined for possible biases. Age of those who responded seems to be fairly well spaced, with 25% under the age of 40 and 75% under the age of 55. Geographic considerations could have been a factor although the percentages of return rates from each area are similar. Arizona, a mix of urban and rural populations showed a 34% return rate. Minnesota and Wisconsin, part of the same local convention as they are considered “pioneer” areas for SBC churches, showed a 31% return rate. Ohio had a 35% return rate, while the more highly urban and ethnic Florida showed only a 29% return rate. Education may have been a factor as it was for Douglas (1965), since 85% of the respondents to this study have at least some college. Less educated wives may not have seen the questionnaire as valuable or may have been intimidated by it. All but 3 of the respondents have children (1% of the sample). About half of the wives (54%) work outside the home, so the sample is fairly balanced on time restraint issues. Finally, 55% feel that their role as a clergy wife is from medium difficulty to easy, so the scores are not weighted toward those who see their roles as overly difficult. In short, speculation about any systematic differences for those who did not respond can only repeat those possibilities mentioned earlier of some time limitations,
disinterest in the topic, or intimidation at the length, complexity, intimacy, and seeming negativity of the scales.

As with any study of this type, questionnaire research is limited in its scope and in its ability to gain information outside of the individual instruments used and at more than one point in time. In addition, richer data could have been gleaned in the social support portion of the questionnaire by specifying that respondents identify the relationships of the supporting individuals in place of initials. It would have been useful to know if the support networks of wives was made of up primarily church friends, work friends, family, spouse, or others. Future research should include this specification in the instructions for use of the Social Support Questionnaire. The use of varying methods such as interviews is also suggested for more in depth information than is possible with paper and pencil measures.

The use of specific denominational subgroups may also limit the generalizability of the findings to more conservative or more liberal Protestant wives, wives of Jewish rabbis, or the few wives of Catholic clergy who have converted from Protestant denominations. It is recommended that future research include other subgroups for the sake of comparison and better generalizability. Due to the need for social and church acceptance, social desirability and need for self-protection are two aspects that should always be considered when evaluating the responses of clergy wives. The use of any of the clergy subgroups may limit the generalizability of findings to women in general. Comparisons of this group to women such as physician’s wives or
politician's wives would also be useful to examine the parallels among the groups.

**Conclusion**

In spite of its seemingly obvious importance in the human experience, loneliness was virtually ignored by researchers for many years until Weiss brought the concept to the fore, and a reliable measurement instrument was produced. The study of spirituality, a concept deemed important by many people, has also been virtually ignored by those who study human behavior, and may be waiting the advent of a good theoretical treatise before it is more thoroughly investigated. Although this study did not show the direct effects of spiritual well-being, further study is necessary to a more complete understanding of the phenomena. The probability that a group of women who are subjected to extreme social and marital pressures still measure relatively low in depression and high in marital satisfaction seems unlikely. Future research needs to be carried out to continue the investigation into this unusual situation.

Loneliness has been identified as an important component of the daily lives of clergy wives, in spite of their high levels of marital satisfaction and spiritual well-being. We have shown that this population has a rather small network of social support in spite of being immersed in a group of social contacts at church and at work, but yet claims to be highly satisfied with that network. We have found that those who are highest in spiritual well-being are happier with their marriages, less lonely and less depressed than those lower in spiritual well-being. Future research into the specific nature and workings of both loneliness and spiritual well-being is indicated. Perhaps some of the more complex processes studied in social science will begin to form a coherent pattern once we
are able to inculcate the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of every human being into our research.

Loneliness is an experience that is hard to bear, hard to describe and hard to quantify. In spite of its seeming universality, or perhaps because of it, little is known about the specific workings of loneliness in daily life. Loneliness may have many causes, many manifestations, and many solutions. Studies such as this that seek a beginning understanding of loneliness as experienced by specific subgroups may lead to a fuller understanding of this complex phenomenon.
Footnotes

1 Only 5% of ordained clergy are female (Barna, 2000). The life situation of female clergy appears to be distinct, whether she is part of a dually ordained family unit, or whether she is the sole individual who is ordained (Chang, 1999). This paper will deal only with the most common situation in American society, that of the ordained male Protestant clergyman who is married to a female who has not been ordained.

2 Future studies with other subgroups of clergy wives have been planned. These include looking at the spiritual well-being and loneliness of wives of clergymen in liberal Protestant denominations, Jewish Rabbis, and the (as of yet) rare wives of married Catholic priests (clergymen who have been accepted into the priesthood after being previously affiliated with other denominations).

3 Martin (as cited in Pugh, 1987) randomly sampled 1,400 minister’s wives and received only 200 replies for a 14% return rate. Warner and Carter (1984) studied clergy and wives, and received a 28% return rate for questionnaires. Douglas (1965) compared SBC data with his respondents, and found that while 75% of the wives of better-trained ministers returned the survey, only 10% of the wives of less-trained ministers responded. Of the large denominations, the SBC wives had the lowest overall response rate (Douglas, 1965).

4 The education scale values are listed below.

1 = high school graduate  2 = some college  3 = college degree  4 = postgraduate

5 Occasionally, a subject wrote in “God” or “only God” in her list of individuals who provide her with social support. Since the scale was meant to measure human social
support, these answers were not counted. However, since the women were allowed to choose between a system of initials or listing relationships (e.g., husband, friend), it is possible that occasionally a "G." or "J. C." indicating deity was counted in error as the investigator could not distinguish these initials from human relationships. This occurred in less than 1% of the data. Future research instruments would be better designed to use relationship indicators for measures of social support when working with such subgroups.

To compensate for multicolinearity, the independent variables in these analyses were first centered such that their mean was zero. The interaction terms were created by multiplying the centered variables. See Segrin and Flora (2000, p. 509) for references detailing this approach.
Appendix: Clergy Wife Questionnaire

Part I. Please circle or fill in the blank to answer the following questions about your situation.

1. Your age: _____

2. How many years have you been married? _____

3. How many years of your marriage have been spent in ministry? _____

4. How many children do you have? _____

5. Is this a first marriage for you? Yes No ...for your husband? Yes No

6. Circle your highest level of education: high school some college college degree postgraduate

7. Size of congregation: 0-100 101-200 201-500 501-999 1000+

8. Are you employed outside the home/church? Yes No

9. In an average seven-day period, how many WAKING hours is your husband at home? (This includes all waking activities such as eating, dressing.) _____ hours

10. On a scale of one to ten, rate the difficulty of your role as a minister’s wife.

   | Extremely Easy | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | Extremely Difficult |

11. On a scale of one to ten, rate the difficulty of your husband’s role as a minister.

   | Extremely Easy | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | Extremely Difficult |
Part II: Please indicate how often you have felt the way described in each statement using the following scale. Write the number of your answer next to each statement.

4 = I have felt this way often.
3 = I have felt this way sometimes.
2 = I have felt this way rarely.
1 = I have never felt this way.

1. I feel in tune with the people around me.
2. I lack companionship.
3. There is no one I can turn to.
4. I do not feel alone.
5. I feel part of a group of friends.
6. I have a lot in common with the people around me.
7. I am no longer close to anyone.
8. My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me.
9. I am an outgoing person.
10. There are people I feel close to.
11. I feel left out.
12. My social relationships are superficial.
13. No one really knows me well.
14. I feel isolated from others.
15. I can find companionship when I want it.
16. There are people who really understand me.
17. I am unhappy being so withdrawn.
18. People are around me but not with me.
19. There are people I can talk to.
20. There are people I can turn to.

Part III. Please circle the letter that best describes the answer for you to the following questions.

1. How well does your husband meet your needs?
   A  B  C  D  E
   poorly average extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your marriage?
   A  B  C  D  E
   unsatisfied average extremely satisfied
3. How good is your marriage compared to most?

A poor  B average  C D E excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this marriage?

A never  B average  C D E very often

5. To what extent has your marriage met your original expectations?

A hardly at all  B average  C D E completely

6. How much do you love your partner?

A Not much  B average  C D E very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

A very few  B average  C D E very many

Part IV: The following questions ask you about people in your life who provide you with help or support. Each question has two parts. First, list all the people who you know who you can count on for help or support in each situation. List people by their initials, or by their relationship to you. (Do not list more than nine persons per question). Second, use the scale provided and circle how satisfied you are with the overall support that you have in the situation. Even if there is no one you can list for a question, please still circle your satisfaction with the situation.

1. Whom can you really count on to listen to you when you need to talk?

List:

1 2 3 4 5 6
very satisfied very dissatisfied
2. Whom could you really count on to help you out in a crisis situation, even though they would have to go out of their way to do so? 
List:

1 2 3 4 5 6
very satisfied very dissatisfied

3. Whom can you really count on to be dependable when you need help?
List:

1 2 3 4 5 6
very satisfied very dissatisfied

4. With whom can you be totally yourself?
List:

1 2 3 4 5 6
very satisfied very dissatisfied

5. Who do you feel really appreciates you as a person?
List:

1 2 3 4 5 6
very satisfied very dissatisfied

6. Whom can you count on to console you when you are very upset?
List:

1 2 3 4 5 6
very satisfied very dissatisfied
Part V: For each of the following statements, circle the choice that best indicates the extent of your agreement or disagreement as it describes your personal experience.

SA = Strongly Agree  D = Disagree
MA = Moderately Agree  MD = Moderately Disagree
A = Agree  SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I don’t find much satisfaction in private prayer with God. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
2. I don’t know who I am, where I came from, or where I’m going. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
3. I believe that God loves me and cares about me. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
4. I feel that life is a positive experience. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
5. I believe that God is impersonal and not interested in my daily situations. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
6. I feel unsettled about my future. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
7. I have a personally meaningful relationship with God. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
8. I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
9. I don’t get much personal strength and support from God. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
10. I feel a sense of well-being about the way my life is headed. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
11. I believe that God is concerned about my problems. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
12. I don’t enjoy much about life. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
13. I don’t have a personally satisfying relationship with God. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
14. I feel good about my future. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
15. My relationship with God helps me not to feel lonely. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
16. I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
17. I feel most fulfilled when I’m in close communion with God. SA  MA  A  D  MD  SD
18. Life doesn’t have much meaning. SA MA A D MD SD

19. My relation with God contributes to my sense of well-being. SA MA A D MD SD

20. I believe there is some real purpose for my life. SA MA A D MD SD

Part VI: The following are statements about you. Next to each statement, please write the number (1, 2, 3, or 4) of the response that MOST CLOSELY describes you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>none or a little of the time</th>
<th>some of the time</th>
<th>a good part of the time</th>
<th>most or all of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

__1. I feel downhearted, blue and sad.
__2. Morning is when I feel the best.
__3. I have crying spells or feel like it.
__4. I have trouble sleeping through the night.
__5. I eat as much as I used to.
__6. I enjoy looking, talking to and being with attractive women/men.
__7. I notice that I am losing weight.
__8. I have trouble with constipation.
__9. My heart beats faster than usual.
__10. I get tired for no reason.
__11. My mind is as clear as it used to be.
__12. I find it easy to do the things I used to.
__13. I am restless and can’t keep still.
__15. I am more irritable than usual.
__16. I find it easy to make decisions.
__17. I feel that I am useful and needed.
__18. My life is pretty full.
__19. I feel that others would be better off if I were dead.
__20. I still enjoy the things I used to do.

Part VII: Please use the space provided to briefly answer the following question.

1. Everyone feels lonely from time to time. Think of a recent time when you felt lonely and explain the circumstances.
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