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THE MINISTERIAL COUNSELING ROLE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF URBAN AND RURAL PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN.

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BY

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THESIS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY GERALD BENJAMIN GERSEY

ENTITLED THE MINISTERIAL COUNSELING ROLE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF URBAN AND RURAL PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN

BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope.

The Sociology of Religion has been described as being one of the most neglected fields of study within the discipline of sociology.[1] The following presentation is an attempt to shed light on one of the lesser known and understood aspects of this field. More specifically, it reports the findings of an exploratory study of one of the many roles the Protestant minister occupies today, i.e., his role as a counselor to his people.

In discussing the counseling role as one of several different types of roles a Protestant minister plays, the writer is utilizing the typology of roles as set forth by Samuel Blizzard.[2] He distinguished between six basic categories of role behavior which may be briefly outlined here: (1) the role of administrator, i.e., when the minister manages the business affairs connected with his church; (2) when he acts as an organizer or leader of all non-religious family-oriented functions; (3) the preparation and delivery of sermons as a preacher to his people; (4) his priestly role as liturgist, i.e., one who leads his people in worship and officiates in the rites of the church; (5) his role as a teacher of the religious life in various study groups, etc.; and (6) the role as pastor which involves interpersonal relationships with his people.

This research study gained its impetus from three sources. The absence of a systematic body of theory and general knowledge stimulated the writer

1. Gittler, Joseph B. (ed.) Review of Sociology: Analysis of a Decade. New York: Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957., and Merton, Robert K., et al. Sociology Today. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959.
2. Blizzard, Samuel W. "The Minister's Dilemma", Christian Century, 73(1956), 508-10.

to work in this nearly unexplored area. The personal beliefs of the writer were substantiated by Samuel Blizzard's suggestion of role conflicts in the Protestant Ministry.[3] Along with these reasons the writer firmly believes that "...those who wish to understand human behavior cannot neglect the study of religion."[4]

The concept of "role" has been variously used in sociological writings and, consequently, must be explicitly defined whenever and wherever a reference is made to it. For the purpose of this study, Ralph H. Turner's definition was considered most appropriate.

> "By role we mean a collection of patterns of behavior which are thought to constitute a meaningful unit and deemed appropriate to a person occupying a particular status in society (e.g., doctor or minister)."[5]

The writer hastens to add that this research is not the first of its kind into the study of counseling roles in the Protestant Ministry; however, to the writer's knowledge this study does mark the first objective sociological inquiry into this area.

Review of the Literature.

The books and articles written on pastoral counseling are few and all have been written by Protestant ministers. By this, the writer does not mean to suggest the uselessness of the existing literature, but rather to clarify more accurately the similarities between these writings. The books were written with the express purpose of instructing future ministers in their role as counselors. The literature to date is not concerned with

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3. Blizzard, op. cit., p. 509.
4. Hoult, Thomas Ford. The Sociology of Religion. New York: The Dryden Press, 1958.
5. Turner, Ralph H. "Role-Taking, Role Standpoint, and Reference Group Behavior," The American Journal of Sociology, (January, 1956) pp. 316-328.

working toward a systematic body of theory concerning pastoral counseling.[6] Instead, these writings offer examples of practical counseling problems and their solutions through countless examples, and theocentric advice by the particular writer on how to be a successful counselor.

The book that nearly approaches an insightful objective description of the counseling process is that of Seward Hiltner.[7] In it, Reverend Hiltner sets up a model of the counseling process along with numerous examples of counseling situations. Although Hiltner's book, along with the others, is fruitful, they are so in that they set up the ideal model of the counseling process. None of these writers suggests the possibility of discord either in what is expected of the minister as a counselor or in the minister's playing of the role. Samuel Blizzard is the forerunner in his field for his are the first writings that actually acknowledge possible role-conflicts in the counseling situation.[8] Mr. Blizzard's comments gain authority when we realize that he is himself a minister, the first one of which, to acknowledge the prevalence of role-conflicts in the ministry.

There would be no purpose in this research if the minister could follow faithfully the instructions given him by the literature; however, as one respondent told this researcher, "counseling doesn't come according to the book." Several other respondents made similar comments suggesting that these

6. The nucleus of writings are the following: Wise, Carroll A. Pastoral Counseling. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951: Wynn, John Charles. Pastoral Ministry to Families. Philadelphia, The Westminister Press, 1953; Wood, Leland Foster. Pastoral Counseling in Family Relationships. New York: The Commission on Marriage and the Home of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1948; Hiltner, Seward. Pastoral Counseling. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949. See also, Samuel W. Blizzard, op.cit.; "The Roles of the Rural Parish Minister, The Protestant Seminaries, and the Sciences of Social Behavior," Religious Education, 50:6(1955), pp. 383-92; and "Role Conflicts of the Urban Protestant Parish Minister," The City Church, 7:4(1956), pp. 13-15.
7. Hiltner, op.cit.
8. See all of Blizzard's articles, op.cit.

discrepancies are generally known to exist. To reiterate, the existing pedagogical literature concerning pastoral counseling provided the researcher with the ideal counseling situation and counselor, i.e., his preparedness and execution of his role. This model will be referred to, by the writer, as the results of this study are examined. We might now review the theoretical model, i.e., the ideal counseling situation as presented in the literature.

The Theoretical Model.

As stated earlier, the books found in the literature today all have a common purpose,[9] i.e., to offer an interpretation of pastoral counseling for ministers and theological students. They seek to deal with specific approaches and methods of pastoral counseling. The counseling situation is defined as,

> "...a process of communication between two persons for the purpose of helping one of them solve life's problems."[10]

The above definition proved satisfactory for the purposes of the following study. The literature regards the counseling process as a continuous one; it is represented by several distinct and successive stages each dependent upon what has happened before.

The first "stage" concerns that of the initial contact between counselor and counselee. It is strongly suggested that the approach should always be by the counselor. The writers recognize the fact that some counseling situations come about by indirect means, e.g., relatives or neighbors informing the minister of difficulty in a family; however, they don't believe much success will result when a counseling relationship is started in this way.

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9. As evidenced by the similarities in content of the various books of instruction used in the Protestant seminaries today. See footnote 6.
10. Wise, op.cit., p. 68.

> "He (the minister) will be incomparably more likely to render a real service if he has created such an atmosphere and point of view that they (the counselees) come to him. Until this approach is made, any advance made by him may be premature. They are probably not ready for his counsel."[11]

The minister who always has people bring their troubles to him directly is the one who creates a friendly atmosphere, both before and during the counseling relationship, which is conducive to such direct action. The ways a minister accomplishes this are the following: (1) the pastoral call, which enables the minister to get better acquainted with his congregation; (2) the confidence and trust he transmits from the pulpit; and (3) by having the proper perspective while engaged in the counseling relationship. The first two points are in themselves obvious, but the third calls for further elaboration. This explanation is by way of introducing another important aspect of the counseling relationship, i.e., the personality and responsibilities of the minister in the counseling situation.

While engaged in a counseling relationship, the minister is instructed to never abandon his status level or dignity of the cloth. This is to say that the minister must create an atmosphere conducive to a sound counseling relationship while he retains his position which is slightly above the counselee. A good counselor treats his counselees alike in regard to help with problems regardless of the counselee's peculiar status or personality.

> "The general relationship between the pastor and his people differ from his counseling relationships only at the point of intensity and duration. The counseling relationship is essentially the pastoral relationship which is deepened and intensified for a relatively short period in order to deal with some specific problems."[12]

Ideally, the minister should always endeavor to be a good listener asking questions only to get the entire problem out in the open so the counselee

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11. Wood, op.cit., p. 57.
12. Wise, op.cit., p. 44.

might come to understand it more clearly than before. The successful counselor re-educates the counselee in so far as the expected responsibilities the counselee must assume. This defines another aspect of the counseling relationship, i.e., the counselee's responsibilities in the counseling situation.

The minister must refrain from assuming an authoritative role thus allowing the counselee freedom to choose his own solution to a problem. The minister is expected to be a non-directive counselor who merely reviews with the counselee the various possible alternatives to the particular problem. The counselor is instructed to act in such a capacity for two reasons: (1) a belief in the theory that the counselee will only abide with a solution if he finds it agreeable to himself (as evidenced by his choosing the solution); and (2) for fear of the possible repercussions of incorrect guidance given by the minister. For example, if a minister suggests a solution that later proves to be poor judgment on his part, the counselee might develop feelings of hostility toward the minister. These negative feelings might then generalize out to the church in general, and the counselee could ultimately lose his religious faith.

As to the number of counseling situations advised by the literature, the answer remains in ambiguous statements. The minister should budget his time properly among his various pastoral duties which means that his counseling sessions must also be limited in time. He should see the counselee as many times as necessary to alleviate the pressures of the latter's difficulty, however, the counselor should not let a counselee become thoroughly dependent on him for support. Rather, it is the minister's duty to re-educate the counselee to the point where he can face and solve his problem by himself, and to get the counselee to realize this responsibility.

> "Counseling is sometimes referred to as emotional re-education, for in addition to its attempt to help people with a problem immediately confronting them, it should teach people how to help themselves with other problems."[13]

Once the counseling relationship has been established and the above requisites successfully met, it proceeds to one of three possible ends: (1) the situation is discontinued by either one or both parties before a successful solution has been reached; (2) the minister proceeds to help the counselee solve his problem; and/or (3) the minister refers the counselee to other more professional sources for help with his problem.

The minister is taught that a successful counselor disregards the first alternative end for it shouldn't happen if the relationship was built upon a firm basis. The literature urges the minister to be leery of continuing a relationship once it is learned that the minister is not competent to help with the particular problem. In this case, the minister should refer the counselee to a specialist in that problem area.

> "In the community it is almost certain that there will be other resources for counseling upon which the minister can draw for some of the cases which come to him. He will need to develop great practical wisdom in knowing when cases need to be sent to a psychiatrist, a physician, or some other specialist."[14]

If the minister intuitively feels competent to help a counselee with his problem, he has a two fold responsibility. He should help solve the immediate problem while he proceeds to strengthen religious ties between the counselee and the church.[15] The ideal way of making the counselee stronger in his faith is by using religious literature to supplement the counseling relationship, "...there can be no question that the pastor will use the Bible in counseling."[16]

13. Hiltner, op.cit., p. 19.
14. Wood, op.cit., p. 67.
15. Hiltner, op.cit., p. 19.
16. Hiltner, op.cit., p. 202.

We have now reviewed the essential qualities of the counseling situation as it is taught to theological students in seminary school today. Later, we will compare this theoretical model of the counseling situation to the actual situation as described by the respondents interviewed in the field. It now remains pertinent to examine the mechanics of the study and the findings obtained from it.

METHOD

Theory and Technique.

Along with the above theoretical frame of reference, the researcher added his own ideas concerning the minister as a counselor to his people. The writer could not conceive the idea that standardized instruction into the area of pastoral counseling would lessen the possibility of the minister experiencing conflict in the playing of this role in a real life situation. It remained the writer's contention that the minister of today very often encounters problem situations brought to him by his parishioners that cannot be dealt with the way he was instructed to do so; thus, a conflict in role playing results.

With this assumption in mind, the questions urgently requiring empirical answers were: how can we tell if a minister has experienced a conflict in role behavior, and how did he resolve the conflict if one did occur? It was at this point that the writer relied heavily upon the existing body of theory concerning role conflict and its resolution.

> "The starting point for this theory of role-conflict resolution is the actor's definition of the situation. We assume that actors will have perceptions of whether or not the expectations to which they are exposed are legitimate. Furthermore, we assume that they will have perceptions of the sanctions to which they would be

exposed if they did not conform to these expectations."[17]

In applying this theoretical construct to our present interests, it becomes necessary to substitute words and explicitly define our concepts. In place of the word "actor's" we may put the topic of our discussion, i.e., "minister's". The writer interprets the concept "legitimate expectations" as meaning those expectations the minister acquires in his seminary training regarding the counseling relationship, i.e., his exposure to and internalization of the behavior described in the theoretical model of a counseling relationship. "Illegitimate expectations", which will be discussed shortly, are those demands, perceived by the minister, for certain acts of behavior that exist as a result of the community's location and the parishioners' expectation of the minister's behavior in the counseling relationship.

When confronted with a role incongruency, i.e., conflict, the minister will assume one of three modes of behavior each leading to a resolution of the conflict.[18] The first type characterizes the person who, when faced with a role conflict, gives most weight to the legitimacy of expectations.

> "He will be predisposed to behave in a role-conflict situation in such a way that he can fulfill legitimate expectations and reject illegitimate ones. If one of the incompatible expectations is viewed as legitimate and the other is not, he will be predisposed to conform to the legitimate expectation, regardless of what sanctions are involved."[19]

Sanction is defined as, "a permission or social approval of any act or form of behavior."[20] Applied to the present discussion, we see two different kinds of sanction: (1) a minister may receive negative sanctions from the

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Gross, Neal, et al. "Role Conflict and Its Resolution", as in Maccoby, Eleanor E., et al. Readings in Social Psychology. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1958, p. 453.

Gross, op.cit., p. 453.

Gross, op.cit., p. 453.

Defined in Fairchild, Henry Pratt. (ed.) Dictionary of Sociology. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams, & Company, 1957, p. 266.

church for nonconformity to legitimate expectations while engaged in a counseling situation; and (2) negative sanctions might be induced by his church members for nonconformity to their (illegitimate) expectations of his behavior.

The second type of behavior in a role-conflict situation is that which gives priority to the sanctions the parishioners will bring to bear if he does not conform to their expectations. If this is the case, the minister will act so as to minimize the negative sanctions involved in the situation.

> "He will try to provide the best defense for himself in view of the relative severity of the sanctions he feels others will apply to him for nonconformity to their expectations. Whether others have a right to hold certain expectations is irrelevant or of secondary importance to him."[21]

If the minister perceives strong negative sanctions for nonconformity to illegitimate expectations and weaker sanctions for nonconformity to legitimate expectations, he will conform to the illegitimate expectations.

The third type of behavior leading to conflict resolution is that which takes legitimacy and sanction dimensions equally into account and behavior results in accordance with the perceived "net balance".[22]

> "If, for example, expectation A is perceived as legitimate and expectation B illegitimate and if he perceives greater sanctions for nonconformity to B, he will conform to expectation A."[23]

It was assumed, during the course of the study, that a minister experienced a conflict in his role as a counselor if one of two situations occurred: (1) the minister's own admission and discussion of role-conflicts he had experienced in the performance of his role as a counselor; and (2) if the minister described his behavior as a counselor to be unlike that of his

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21. Gross, op.cit., p. 454.
22. Gross, op.cit., p. 455.
23. Gross, op.cit., p. 455.

original instruction in seminary school (as evidenced by comparing his responses to the theoretical model stated above).

Another pre-conceived idea of the writer's was that since each church community represents an environment peculiarly its own, we could readily observe differences between the role-playing behavior of the minister in one situation as opposed to another. The researcher was primarily concerned with the possible effects of the urban vs. rural variable on the playing of the counselor's role. Consequently, this project was constructed so as to observe a given number of ministers in both urban and rural situations and to compare the findings for possible differences between them.

The technique used to obtain the data from this field study was a guided interview with a near equal number of urban and rural ministers. The researcher used a pre-structured interview guide which asked each respondent questions about his role as a counselor so as to fully describe the counseling situation as it occurred to the respondent being interviewed. The study was conducted between October 1959, and April 1960. Twenty-one interviews were recorded by means of a tape-recorder and later transcribed verbatim; twenty-five questions composed the interview guide.[24]

The Universe of Study.

It was decided, in the formative stages of this study, to use Champaign-Urbana as the urban area from which ten ministers would be selected to be interviewed by the researcher.

Champaign-Urbana, known as the Twin-Cities, are located in the East Central part of Illinois. Urbana is the county seat of Champaign County. The Twin-City area covers 9.7 sq. miles with Champaign having a slightly larger geographical

24. See Appendix I.

area and population. The combined population for Champaign-Urbana was 70,000 as of May 1957.[25]

Employment figures for 1957 showed that 24,483 males and 10,705 females were employed in the area. Agriculture claimed to have, out of these totals, 4,378 males and 128 female employees. The remainder of this labor force was employed in the following four principal industries: (1) construction; (2) manufacturing; (3) Railroad; and (4) the University of Illinois.

An attempt was made to control two factors that might influence the results of the study. It was advantageous to have a homogeneous sample of ministers along with their respective church-class memberships. Ideally, to insure homogeneity, the ten respondents should have the same denominational affiliation; however, this was impossible owing to the lack of ten ministers with the same religious affiliations in the Champaign-Urbana area. The researcher was forced to cross denominational lines, but an effort was taken to interview respondents from denominations having the same, or as near identical as possible, Christian philosophy and practice.

The second factor controlled for in this study was that of a typical urban church community, i.e., membership, as opposed to an atypical one. It is for this reason that the campus churches were not used even though they were of the same denominational affiliation as those respondents interviewed.

In the rural setting, the control for homogeneity in the sample of ministers with respect to their respective social class membership did not present as much as a problem as in the urban area. Outside of the urban areas, Central Illinois is predominately Methodist in religious affiliation. The

25. Wales, Hugh G., et al. The Champaign-Urbana Metropolitan Area. University of Illinois Bureau of Economic and Business Research, May, 1959.

biggest problem that faced the researcher regarding the rural respondents was that of defining exactly what constitutes a rural area. "Rural" as defined by the United States Census is, "inhabitants of incorporated places of less than 2,500 and residents in the open country or unincorporated territory".[26] This is in itself useless for sheer population figures are not necessarily indicative of a rural community. Many small suburbs of larger cities fall into this category, but they cannot be actually considered as "rural".

The Dictionary of Sociology offers the following definition of a rural community.

> "An area of face-to-face association larger than a neighborhood in which a majority of the people use a majority of the social, economic, educational, religious, and other services required by their collective life in which there is general agreement on the basic attitude and behaviors, usually village or town centered."[27]

The researcher decided to use this definition of a rural community with the following qualification kept in mind. The greatest single factor that seemed to distinguish a rural community from the study's urban area was that of employment location, i.e., where do the majority of people, who are residents of a particular community, earn their livelihood? Regardless of the community's population, if the majority of the people earn their living within the town or city limits, it was considered to be an urban area, e.g., Champaign-Urbana. Conversely, if the majority of the residents of a community or of the church membership earn their livelihood outside the town limits, it was considered to be a rural area.

Due to a need to economize both time and expense, a strict geographical area was constructed around the Twin-Cities, and the rural respondents were

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26. As defined in Fairchild, Henry Pratt, (ed.) Dictionary of Sociology. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams, & Co., 1957, p. 262.
27. Fairchild, op.cit., p. 263.

chosen within these pre-determined limits. The boundary lines were U.S. highways that intersect each other forming a near perfect square having Champaign-Urbana directly in the center. These highways are: U.S. 136 to the North; U.S. 49 to the East; U.S. 36 to the South; and U.S. 48 to the West.

The researcher then visited a random selection of rural communities, and, if the community satisfied the denominational requirements and the definition of a rural area, a Protestant minister was contacted and the interview questions asked.

In both sample groups, the entire interview was recorded on a tape-recorder. The researcher had his interview questions typed on 5 x 8" notecards to insure asking each respondent all of the questions. The interviews were conducted in one of three places, i.e., the minister's office, his home, or in the Church itself.

The following data were received from a total of twenty-one ministers interviewed. The urban denominational breakdown was: four Methodist ministers; two Presbyterian ministers; two Lutheran ministers; two Baptist ministers; and one Episcopal minister. All but one of the rural respondents, i.e., ten out of the eleven, were Methodist ministers; the other minister was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church.

FINDINGS

Urban vs. Rural Responses.

It is necessary to examine the respondents as individuals. They were all males; their relative ages were from young graduate students (acting as part time ministers) to elderly gentlemen. There were five graduate student ministers, four in rural churches and one in the urban area.

The biggest single factor affecting the number of counseling situations

or hours a minister had was the length of time he served as Pastor in the community. One of the elderly rural ministers volunteered the following:

> "I think in a rural area the longer you stay in a charge the more counseling you'll do. The first six or eight months you're there you don't do much counseling."

Of course, this inactivity is not restricted to just the counselor's role. Basic to the minister's execution of role (except that of being a preacher to his people) behaviors is the building of trust and confidence between himself and his congregation. When the minister becomes involved in counseling his people this is merely an overt manifestation of the fact that these desired goals have been reached, i.e., trust and confidence have been established.

The average number of years the respondents were already in the community when interviewed are as follows: urban ministers were in the community 3.5 years as compared to 2.5 years for the rural minister. Two ministers from each group were in the community for only one year. Any atypical results that might be recorded here are negligible in so far as both groups affect the conclusions equally.

As to their academic and theological training, no noticeable difference was revealed in these samples. Almost all of the respondents had a baccalaureate degree from both a secular college or university and a theological seminary. The few remaining ministers in each group had either baccalaureate degree and were in the process of attaining the other.

The findings seem to suggest that there is no connection between the number of members in a congregation and the number of counseling hours they had with their pastor. However, an attempt to find a definite correlation here is difficult because these variables do not lend themselves easily to empirical measurement. For example, a congregation of one hundred members

might have the same number of problems generated within the membership as a much larger congregation of five thousand, however, the pastor of the former congregation might spend more hours in counseling per week than the latter because the people confide more readily to him. Also, there was no apparent difference in the size of the rural church memberships as compared to the urban memberships. This may be due, in part, to the inability of the interviewer to get many of the urban ministers to declare their membership rolls, and to the small number of respondents in each sample.

The first distinguishable difference between the urban and rural samples may be seen in the number of helpers (if any) who assist the minister and in whether or not he had an office in the church. Two of the eleven rural ministers claimed to have helpers (volunteer or paid) who assist in church affairs. These helpers were not qualified nor did they do any counseling on their own. On the other hand, seven urban ministers had either salaried or volunteer workers. These people act as secretaries, janitors, parish visitors, etc. However, only two of these seven have assistants who have some counseling situations. The largest number of counseling hours were spent by the pastor, i.e., the person interviewed for this study. Two of the eleven rural ministers had offices in the church as compared to nine urban ministers out of ten who did.

This brings to light an important point; namely, in the future when more churches are built should all of these buildings include plans for an office for the minister? Possibly the following comment made by a rural respondent will help to indicate an answer to this question. (The interview was taken in the Parsonage.)

Interviewer: Do you have an office in your church?
Respondent: No, I don't know if having one would be much good... You must understand that in a rural situation people know each other pretty well. When they come to me (as evidenced by their automobile being parked outside of the parsonage on any day other than Sunday) many people think he is in trouble or she's in trouble and that (by being in the parsonage) is an open indication that they do have a problem if they go to their minister. The troubled people believe this to be true and shy away from seeing me at home.

Five other rural respondents stated something of the same idea during the course of their interviews. As one would expect, in a small community the whereabouts of neighbors and friends is known much more so than what you will find in a larger urban area. The implications here seem obvious, i.e., if the troubled person will not go to his minister, the minister must find a way to go to him. This places a great deal of importance and stress on the "pastoral call". For the pastoral call, i.e., the minister stopping by for a casual chat with a person and/or the family is an expected occurrence in both the rural and urban settings. When, as in the case in many rural situations, the counselee is leery about going to the minister for fear of advertising he has a problem, the minister can safely counsel the troubled person under the guise of a normal pastoral call.

The results seem to indicate that there was no difference between the urban and rural respondents in regard to the number of pastoral calls they respectively make in a given period of time. This may be due to two reasons: (1) two urban churches with unusually large membership rolls reported extremely large numbers of pastoral calls made during the predetermined measuring unit, i.e., a week's time. Since the two groups were compared by the average number of calls the entire sub-sample makes during this time period, we may have a mathematical bias present; and (2) the content of the pastoral

calls may be entirely different between the two sample groups, i.e., rural ministers might make more counseling calls while the urban ministers might be reporting many social calls, etc.

When asked how many of their pastoral calls were for counseling situations, none of the rural respondents felt that they could estimate the number, and the urban ministers claimed that upon coming across a potential counseling situation, they asked the people to visit them at their office. The urban ministers handled all counseling situations in their office, with the only exceptions being death in the family and physical illness. The matter of counseling in an office as compared to seeing a counselee in the home suggests possible professional counseling aspirations on the part of the urban ministers.

Question five proved to be a disappointing one as the research unfolded. The rationale behind its existence was to have it possibly act as an indicator of professional aspirations held by the ministers. The findings show that only three urban ministers keep card files containing information and progress of their counseling relationships. The remaining eighteen ministers said they kept any and all information concerning a counseling relationship in their heads. Professional counselors, e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, etc., keep written reports concerning their counseling situations, but it seems that the ministers interviewed do not emulate professional counselors in this manner.

When asked what socio-economic levels most often go to their ministers with problems - six of the eleven rural ministers indicated the "average" and "needy" people come to them more often, as compared to only one urban minister agreeing to this. The other urban ministers noticed no particular socio-economic class coming to them more often than the others.

The responses to the question of whether the minister refers difficult cases to other more professional sources for help seem to indicate that such professional sources are out of the reach of many church members who need counseling help. Six of the eleven rural ministers do not make referrals to other sources for help whereas all of the urban ministers readily admit sending difficult cases to other counseling agencies. The probable reasons for this are many. In the first place, aside from sheer cost for such professional help, the rural ministers are all aware of the inaccessibility of such agencies.

> "I think this (responsibility of referring people to other sources for help) is one of the problems. The difficulty in referring people is that there is no one in our town who can help them. The people would have to travel great distances to other cities and then, when they got there, it's usually an expensive venture."

This is but one of several role-conflicts (ministers are taught in seminary school to make referrals when necessary) uncovered or suggested by this study. This particular one will be discussed in greater detail, along with the others, in a later section.

Further examination of the counseling practices of rural vs. urban ministers seems to suggest even greater differences in method and techniques they use in their respective situations. When asked how long the average counseling session lasts, the rural ministers answered (eight to three) that they do not attempt to limit the sessions. The remaining three ministers agree with nine urban ministers that they prefer to limit each session to an hour if they possibly could. One urban minister complements the eight rural ministers with saying he has no set time limit. Closely associated with these results are the responses to the question of the use of one time as opposed to extended counseling sessions. The ministers in both groups unanimously claim

they do engage in extended counseling. These findings seem to suggest that the urban minister views his role as a counselor as quasi-professional in so far as they prefer to engage in time-structured counseling sessions. The rural minister, on the other hand, seems to conduct an unstructured relationship and has not, as of yet, developed noticeable professional inclinations regarding the execution of his role as a counselor to his people.

In regard to the types of problem areas people bring to their respective ministers, we can notice, with few exceptions, unanimous agreements in the responses from both samples. The types of problems, in order of their occurrence, are the following: (1) Marriage and Family Problems; (2) Economic Difficulty; (3) Pre-Marital counseling; (4) Alcoholism; (5) Individual Mental Problems; and (6) Religious Problems. It is interesting to note, in passing, that the respondents all reported very few counseling relationships resulting from religious problems. It is possible that more people, than what the ministers reported, come to their minister with questions and doubts of a religious nature, but the ministers might have been reluctant to admit this for fear that it would cast doubts on their ability and effectiveness as a preacher of the faith. The rationale behind this fear is that a good minister would obviate religious problems from the pulpit rather than from his counselor's chair.

One noteworthy difference between urban and rural counseling is a tendency for individual mental problems to come up in the urban situation more often than admitted in the rural communities. Here again, the fear of possibly stigmatizing one's congregation might have caused the rural minister to rate this problem category to a low position. The following excerpt gives still another reason for the possible difference in the number of mental problems

found in urban vs. rural situation while, at the same time, offers a greater insight into the reason why more urban ministers might excel their rural counterparts in numbers of hours spent in counseling sessions. These remarks were made by an urban minister who, until a few years ago, served in a rural community.

> "In a rural setting . . the church is part of the total community and the people were more active in church affairs. You have a lot of people that come to church not because of some fellow need but, rather, because it is a community center. However, in the city, people come to church because of a need. In many cases in my church the friends (of members) live far away and this brings them together every week. City people don't feel that by coming to church they are fulfilling a social obligation, rather, because of some basic desire for need satisfaction.
>
> Also, urban life is "stepped up" a bit and crises come about more often in urban life more so than what you'll find in a rural setting. At any rate, I've always found that in my rural church . . people had just as many problems as urban people, but these problems didn't come as quickly in a rural setting. Adjustments could come more gradually when problems did occur. Or, in certain cases they could simply avoid meeting the problem, e.g., a difficult neighbor could be avoided by purposely keeping out of his way, etc.
>
> Consequently, with the ability to isolate oneself away from meeting a lot of problems, I was usually the last person to hear about any difficulty one of my church members was having. Another thing, a lot of rural problems were tied up with guilt feelings, i.e., people thought they weren't supposed to have any real problems because they were church members and God-fearing people.
>
> In a city situation, just the opposite is true. In a time of real trouble instead of running to their friends first, they will go to their minister and talk about it."

Initiating the Counseling Relationship.

The findings show that the rural and urban ministers were equally divided in their responses. Six rural ministers said that the initial contact was made by the respondent getting in touch with the minister; four claimed they

learned of a need for their services and then made themselves available to approach by the counselee with a pastoral call. One rural respondent said both methods were used equally in his situation. The urban ministers were equally divided, i.e., five claimed most of their counseling was made by direct contact, and five ministers said they learned of potential counseling situations by indirect sources, e.g., friends, neighbors, and relatives of the counselee. Six rural ministers claim that women, more often than men, contact them directly and seven urban ministers report similar occurrences. The remaining ministers in both groups have noticed no difference in sex as to their counseling relationship, either in the number of hours of counseling per sex or in the way a counseling situation gets started.

Supportive Elements to the Counseling Relationship.

Regarding the use of religious literature to supplement the counseling relationship, the findings are not as favorable as one would intuitively expect. Five of the eleven rural ministers make occasional references to religious literature, while six out of the ten urban ministers claim to use some literature on occasion. This could possibly suggest a tendency toward meeting secularized problems (which for the most part they are) with more secularized methods of help.

When asked if there was any noticeable response, in requests for counseling time, due to particular sermons, seven urban ministers admit some sort of connection exists between them; two ministers claim there is no direct relationship, and one minister said that occasionally someone would ask a question of a general nature regarding some particular thing mentioned in the sermon. One rural minister said questions were of a general nature. Seven ministers claimed counseling situations did arise as a result of some sermons, and three expressed doubts as to any direct relationship at all.

It now becomes pertinent to review some comments made by two rural ministers who hold different views as to the probable relationship between counseling and sermons, but show, however, some evidence of an important similarity and possibly trends in sermon content.

> "I hesitate to say there is a relationship between counseling and sermons. However, I assume the more aware we are of our peoples' problems surely the more appropriate our sermons ought to be pertinent to the problems of life."

> "Oh yes, there is a very definite tie-in, in probably three-fourths of your cases. In many instances, people will come to church seeking a solution to their problem. Anything they can grasp will help. The average minister will try to give the type of sermons that befit his congregation."

This could possibly support the suggestion that the religious belief systems are, at still another point, stepping out from their ascetic plane to that of helping man face the ultimate problems of life with more secularized methods.

The rationale behind the writer asking Question thirteen, i.e., do people other than your own church members come to you for counseling, was that the researcher was curious as to whether rural people went to an urban minister for counseling and if the converse was also true. As one minister phrased it:

> "The counselee doesn't want to gain a counselor and lose a friend (the minister)."

The answer to this question proved to be the most valuable of all the assumptions prompting the construction of the interview guide. Three rural ministers counsel people other than their own members; however, they all declined to say whether these people came from an urban area. Three rural ministers claim they occasionally get townspeople who have no church, of which they are a member, and the remaining five ministers have not counseled anyone other than

their own members. Also, the rural ministers believe their people readily go to others for help.

> "...I think more people go to the urban areas for counseling. Very few come from the urban area to a rural church."

Other comments made by various respondents might help to throw more light on the reasons why people go to urban areas for counseling.

> "In the smaller churches, the pastor's office is usually in his home. People go more readily to a church office than to the minister's home. This is considered to be one of the most important factors affecting counseling relationships in rural areas. Present building plans include an office for the minister somewhere in the church."

> "In a smaller community, the people feel that going to their minister is like advertising their difficulties so it isn't at all uncommon for them to 'go to town' and see a minister there for counsel."

> "Sometimes, for various reasons, the pastor isn't on a full time basis in a community, i.e., he holds some other form of employment elsewhere or he services two or more churches and lives in another community."

> "Often, the younger ministers or graduate students are assigned the rural churches, and the people feel reluctant to going to a young person for advice or counseling in their problems."

The researcher was interested in learning how the minister terminates his counseling relationships after he has seen a counselee over an extended period of time. Nine rural ministers said they had no particular way of ending a counseling situation, i.e., it usually terminated by mutual consent. One minister claimed he didn't make himself available for counseling appointments, and one minister described the following:

> "I tell the person, 'I feel you've done so well you don't have to come back for a while.' I try to let them know I have confidence in them that they can work their problems out now, on their own."

We may compare these responses to three urban ministers who claim no set technique for ending a relationship; five ministers give the counselee a "pep talk", and two ministers believe a counseling relationship never really ends.

All of the ministers interviewed in both samples have no objective criteria upon which a judgment as to success or failure of a relationship can be made. They all made similar comments to the following: (1) they look for telltale facial and verbal expressions when they meet the counselee on the street, after Sunday Services, or in their home; and (2) they keep informed through indirect sources as to the counselees' progress. All of the ministers claim they follow up their relationships with a pastoral call. This gives them an opportunity to intuitively judge the merit of their counseling.

The Counseling Role in Reality.

Probably the most critical question of this study was the one asking the ministers to describe the role they like to play in a counseling relationship. Both urban and rural ministers said they tried to be good listeners and get the entire picture out into the open for all concerned to see. They continued to agree that by doing this it was hoped that the counselee might come to see a new definition of his problem. Three rural ministers said they let the counselee talk the problem out, see the possible alternative solutions, and choose for themselves the best solution. A fourth minister, who belongs in this group, termed his role as a supportive one. He further added that if he gave advice, and it was wrong, he might lose the individual and possibly his family from the church as well. Five of the eleven rural ministers said they indirectly lead the counselee to what they feel is the best solution to their problem, and two claimed to play a more directive role.

"I tell them what I think they ought to do."

"I suppose my training has been the indirect method of counseling. The proper track to follow is to inquire into what the problem is and let them talk until they begin to see a definition of it. However, I usually find that people want advice, and they wouldn't be happy if I just asked questions never offering any suggestions."

Looking at the urban situation, there seems to be a tendency for the average minister to assume a more directive role than his rural counterpart. Three of the ten ministers claim to act in a non-directive manner, and one minister claimed to be extremely non-directive, i.e., he remains thoroughly detached from the counseling situation acting as nothing more than an interested listener. The remaining six respondents indicated they prefer to assume a directive role, i.e., decide for the counselee what is the best solution to the problem.

"I never like to be fully directive, only strongly suggest."

"...my role is to encourage the people to make the right choice."

"A good bit of my counseling is that they (the counselees) desire pastoral judgment."

"I think of myself as joining with them as an outsider with personal experience and training to help them find out what their problem is and how they can get out of it. I am not a non-directive counselor. I think that's weak. I feel there is no such thing as a non-directive counselor."

The one respondent, out of the two samples, was the only minister who claimed he didn't necessarily try to speak on the same level as the counselee, i.e., he preferred to remain a little above the counselee at a point befitting his status as a religious leader. The other ministers said they "Try to speak on the same level and use the same language" as the counselee in order to be of some help with the problem.

CONCLUSIONS

This concludes a summary of the individual results and findings to the interview questions. It is now possible to piece together a typical situation, in both the urban and rural settings, and offer it up for comparison to the theoretical (or ideal) model.

The above findings seem to suggest that the urban minister, as compared to his rural counterpart, sees his role as a counselor in a more professional light. The urban minister tends to act accordingly with this self image. He usually has an office readily available for consultation with troubled parishioners. Partially due to lack of time as a result of having a large membership, more group activities to attend, weddings and funerals, etc., the minister of the city sets up prescribed hours and days in which he counsels his people. The larger membership hinders the development of intrapersonal relationships between the minister and his parishioners. This absence of emotional friendship possibly helps to foster a more directive role playing nature on the part of the minister. Very often it is only when a counseling situation begins that a member ceases to be a statistic and becomes a real person to the minister. This, along with a prevalent innate feeling of respect and admiration for the ministry, does not lead to establishing strong friendship ties while the counseling situation is in process.

In other words, these things give the minister, if he so desires, the freedom to be more dogmatic in his counseling. If his advice proves to be inappropriate, the presence or absence of a person and/or his family from the membership role is the least of a busy urban minister's worries.

Even in a religious denomination, it is possible to find a certain degree of politics. There are influential people in the church that the minister

must please if he plans to remain in his present position. It is possible, since all but one of the respondents claimed to speak on the level of the counselee, that the minister has a tendency to be directive with all but the more influential people of the church when he counsels them. Unfortunately, this assumption does not readily lend itself to empirical testing.

The rural minister, on the other hand, cannot always remain both in and out of the counseling situation on a level above his congregation. Having somewhat of a smaller membership, the rural minister is more apt to develop strong intrapersonal relationships with his parishioners. As one respondent suggested, this might account for the rural member going into a larger urban community when he needs counseling.

Aside from these relationships in the rural community, the minister's actions are more widely known to his congregation. His success or failure in a counseling relationship stands as a threat to the basic foundation of trust and confidence his people might have in him. He cannot risk the possibility of giving the wrong advice for a counseling problem.

Again, as we have seen, making proper referrals to other sources for help produces problems in itself. What does a minister do when a troubled counselee needs expensive treatment for his problem? How does the minister feel about suggesting a source of assistance when he knows the nearest help is a great distance from the community? Answers to these questions produce conflict in what the minister was taught to do in seminary school. His responsibility is to refer the counselee for fear of possible negative repercussions if he tries to handle the situation himself.

If we examine the ideal theoretical model mentioned earlier it becomes easier to see the possible points of strain and conflict in the execution of

ministerial role. The resolution of conflict in each instance is, as one might expect, the conformity to the illegitimate expectations of the role. To economize effort, the minister is instructed to make sure the counselee really desires to be helped with his problem. This is more or less guaranteed when the person makes the initial contact with the minister. We have seen, however, that a good percentage of the counseling situations come about by indirect means; how does the minister act in such a situation? Where can he go in the literature for instruction in such matters? There is an alternative of refusing to counsel under such circumstances, but can the minister exercise this right when an influential member of the church makes the request that he look into a situation?

The counselor is still, first and foremost, the spiritual leader of his people. He is taught that his is a dual task in counseling, i.e., help solve the problem and strengthen religious ties between the counselee and the church. Why then, is there an indication of the reluctance on the part of some ministers to use religious literature in their counseling situations? Could it possibly be due to the fact that people are only interested in their more mundane problems and the alleviation of them by sound worldly means? The writer cannot express this more clearly than what did one respondent during the course of his interview.

> "People have a tendency to regard their religion like they would a spare tire. They'll put it out at times to make sure it will work for them if they need it, but beyond that, they don't care."

An interesting, but hypothetical metaphor? Why is it then that many religious denominations are increasing the number of affiliated agencies for assistance in secular problems, e.g., old peoples' homes, hospitals, homes for unwed mothers, etc.?

How does the minister judge his effectiveness or success as a counselor to his people? The literature in this respect is vague. All criteria for judging probable success is left to intuition and observation over time. Consequently, the minister is forced to rely on two additional means for making judgments, i.e., the pastoral call and indirect sources of information. Some of the respondents have "parish visitors" make calls to the home who later report back to the minister what they observed. This doubles the likelihood of discovering any serious maladjustment still present as a result of not completely solving the original problem.

To summarize what has been said, the ministerial counseling role is revised away from the idea behavior, as taught in seminary school, to that which conforms to the exigencies found respectively in urban and rural settings. Needless to say, there still remains much to be learned and substantiated concerning the behavioral patterns of ministers when they are playing the role of a counselor. If further research is to be conducted in this area, the writer hopes the following suggestions will be of some help in raising the significance level of such an endeavor.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It should be obvious that the most serious handicap to this study was the inadequate sample size of both rural and urban respondents. The findings and conclusions cannot but help being tentative. However, given a larger sample, and random selection of the respondents (so as to control the extraneous variables that might possibly bias the findings), the present research design could be used again and draw more positive results. Of course, this is not to say that the questions, asked in this study, thoroughly exhaust the probe and subsequent measuring of all the factors affecting the counseling

relationship, but rather, that the questions, along with the above suggestions, should be improved upon. Where this study was weak, the next endeavor should compensate for its weaknesses. To economize both time and effort, possibly a pre-structured questionaire could be devised and sent through the mail in place of the person-to-person interview. Given more accurate measuring devices of the various aspects of the counseling relationship, meeting the requirements of a larger sample and randomization could be met more easily using this technique.

In reviewing the responses to the interview guide, several aspects of the ministerial counseling role justified their inclusion in further research into this area. A probe should be made into the minister's personality, which leads to the much larger area of recruitment into the ministry. Such an interest might shed light onto the question of whether the successful counselor is due to theological training or if he is successful as a result of previously held personality traits?

We have seen the importance of the pastoral call. More refined leading questions concerning this vital aspect would lead to a better understanding of, not only its content, but also, its function in regard to the counseling relationship.

The present writer hopes that this study might some day prove to be the heuristic device for further exploration into role-conflicts in a minister's life when he counsels his people, and what type of resolutions he makes to these conflicts. If this cannot be achieved, the writer will be equally well pleased if this research stimulates further study in the larger field of the Sociology of Religion.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Guide

1. The first question I ask of the respondent cannot be stated succinctly. I begin by commenting about the minister's office, whether it is in the church or the parsonage, and casually slip into a few non-threatening questions about himself and his congregation.
   A. How long has he been with this particular church?
   B. What is his education background?
   C. A description of his congregation, their socio-economic level, the size of the congregation, average age of the members, number and types of church groups, etc.

2. Do you have any assistants who help you with church affairs? If so, who?
   A. Does anyone help you with counseling situations? If so, who? How do you judge their competency to help in such situations?

3. Could you give me an approximation of the number of pastoral calls you make in a month's time, or during each quarter?
   A. What types of calls are they? (examples)
   B. Does anyone assist you in making pastoral calls? If so, what happens if they come upon a prospective counseling situation?

4. How many pastoral calls are for counseling situations?
   A. Do you do all of your counseling in the office? If not, I ask, under what circumstances do you counsel elsewhere?

5. Do you require prospective counselees to fill out a questionaire or personal history chart either before or during a counseling relationship?
   A. If so, what does it consist of and how do you use it?

6. Could you give me an estimate as to the number of hours per week you spend in counseling situations?
   A. What is your total work week when speaking in terms of hours?

7. How much time do you allow for a counseling situation?
   A. Is this the average for all of your counseling situations?

8. Do you counsel people more than once? If so, what is the average number of times you see any one counselee?
   A. Does this vary in individual cases? If so, why? What are some examples?

9. Do you get more demands for counseling situations with different times of the year? If so, when do these increased counseling periods occur? Why do you think this happens?

10. Have you ever noticed a change in the number of couseling situations as a result of your sermons? If so, what is the content of the sermons that causes this phenomenon?

11. How does a counseling situation come about? Who initiates the action?
    A. Direct - the counselee himself.
    B. Indirect - friends, neighbors, or relatives who suggest you see the person about his or her problem.
    Does one means of action occur more often than the other? If so, why do you think this is the case?

12. Do people, other than members of your church, come to see you for counseling?
    A. Do they tell you who suggested they see you? If so, what do they say?
    B. Do you ever get requests for counseling time from people who live in other communities? If so, where do they come from?

13. What is the general socio-economic level of the people who come to you for counseling?

14. Do you treat the people from higher socio-economic levels any differently than those at the opposite end of the social scale? If so, could you give me some examples of how you do it?

15. What are some of the kinds of problems people usually bring to you in counseling situations?
    A. Would you say these problem areas are typical for your congregation?

16. Does one sex come to you more often than the other? If so, which one?

17. Does the sex of the counselee at all influence the way a counseling situation gets started?
    A. Does the socio-economic level of the counselee affect the way a counseling relationship gets started?

18. Do you use religious literature in your counseling situations?
    A. Do you refer counselees to the literature for the answer to their problem?
    B. Do you use readings from the literature as a supplement to extended counseling situations?

19. Do you sometimes refer counselees to other sources for help with their problems? If so, where and why do you refer them?
    A. When you first came to this church, did you make up a list of possible sources for referrals in counseling matters?

20. Do you ever seek advice from one of your superiors in a particular counseling situation? If so, whom do you ask?

21. Could you describe the part you play in a counseling situation, i.e., where do you sit when you counsel someone?

22. What do you consider to be a good counseling situation? Could you describe an ideal counseling situation for me?

23. What is your technique for ending a counseling relationship?

24. What are some of your criteria for judging whether or not a counseling situation was successful?

25. Do you follow up your counseling situations with some sort of check? If so, how do you do it?