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Gendered Division of Work within Clergy Couples in Hungary

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Abstract: The division of labor within married couples in ministerial professions is a special case of gender-specific division of labor. Since their relationship is marital and professional at the same time, the divisions of professional and familiar tasks are interconnected. Previous research demonstrates that, in such cases, gender roles may override professional status, which implies that clergywomen may easily fall into the traditional role of the pastor's wife. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with female members of ministerial couples in Hungary, we explore the professional and family roles, divisions of labor, and power relations that characterize relationships where both spouses are clergy. Based on these interviews, we identify three different career strategies which clergywomen use to cope with the tension between their emancipatory role as clergywomen and the traditional expectations of a clergyman's wife: (1) the Conformist Strategy, (2) the Conformist with a Second Career Strategy, and (3) the Co-equals Strategy. Our results also demonstrate that unequal relations in professional and family tasks are reinforced by traditional gender roles typical for Hungary in general and for Hungarian clergy in particular.

Keywords: women in protestant ministry; clergy couples; women pastors; gender roles; family roles; work–life balance; gender inequality; division of labor; power relations; career strategies



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1. Introduction

Our study focuses on Protestant clergywomen whose spouses are also members of the clergy in Hungary. It should be stressed that the position of clergywomen married to clergymen is embedded in the wider context of the position of clergywomen in general. The position of clergywomen is particularly illuminating from a sociological point of view. Occupying a position from which women had been excluded for many centuries—and, in many religions and churches, this is the case even today—they, by definition, exercise an emancipatory role in a religious–social microenvironment that is more conservative compared to the value system of society as a whole. Over the past half a century, a significant number of Protestant churches have allowed women to be ordained and serve without any restrictions. A considerable proportion of these clergywomen (from a third to a half, depending on the region and the denomination) are the female spouses within clergy couples. We use the term “clergy couple” to describe this situation, though the salient literature contains several possible designations, such as “joint clergy couple” (Walrond-Skinner 1998) or CMC (clergy married to clergy) (Collingridge 2015, 2019). By “clergy couple” in this study, we mean in all cases, couples who are spouses and, at the same time, colleagues in ministerial work. Although there is an extensive amount of literature on the topic of clergywomen and on the specific difficulties or conflicts they face, the special situation of clergywomen within clergy couples—that is, their working together with husbands in the ministry—has received less attention. Moreover, a significant part of the existing research uses a psychological or therapeutic approach (Collingridge 2019); a sociological perspective is rarely employed. The peculiar situation for clergywomen within clergy couples is that their family and work systems are essentially identical (Siba 2020). Their spouse is also their colleague (and, as we will see, typically their boss), and their homes

and workplaces partially merge or overlap. Therefore, their professional and family duties are closely interconnected (Moffat 1997). Their situation is determined simultaneously by gender-specific disadvantages experienced in the ministry and by inequalities at home and in the family resulting from traditional gender roles. The unique contribution of our research is that it examines the situation of the female members of clergy couples from a sociological point of view, i.e., as the intersection of these two systems of inequality, or rather, as a dynamic interaction of these two systems. With this emphasis on clergy couples in the context of gender inequalities, our study draws attention to a little-researched topic on the field of the sociology of religion. Our assumption is that, on the one hand, the difficulties, conflicts, and challenges of gender-based division of labor are magnified and focused in this situation; on the other hand, the close intertwining of professional and private life, career and personal decisions, creates situations for which secular occupations do not offer much analogy. It is also important that, until now, minimal research has been carried out relating to the impacts that the social value system of Eastern Europe, which is typically more conservative than that of Western Europe, has on this situation, and what reactions and behavior patterns this value system engenders. The chosen qualitative methodology allows us to follow, on a micro level, the adaptive and decision-making processes that lead to these unequal situations and their persistence. In addition, the methodology permits us to show how clergywomen within clergy couples incorporate the expectations of their social environment into their personal and professional decisions, or how they consciously consider these expectations in trying to create a suitable workplace and home environment for themselves. In our study, we will investigate what strategies clergywomen living and working within a clergy couple employ—in the tension between the emancipatory role of clergywomen and the typical role expectations of the religious environment—in shaping their professional careers and their private life-roles, which are inextricably intertwined. Based on our research, we distinguish three characteristic types of coping strategies that clergywomen within clergy couples use: (1) the Conformist Strategy, (2) the Conformist with a Second Career Strategy, and (3) the Co-equals Strategy. In the next two sections, prior to presenting the results of our research, we introduce the theoretical background and methodology.

2. Theoretical Background

To understand the situation of clergywomen living as spouses within clergy couples, we must first recall a few specific characteristics of the ministerial profession. The ministerial career is often called a two-person job (Shehan et al. 1999; Hildenbrand 2013; Sammet 2013), and it actually was a two-person job in traditional church practice; the expectations related to the ministerial position were historically based on the presumption that a minister would be supported in his professional role by his wife, who performed certain well-defined, though unremunerated, tasks in the congregation. The Reformation placed the “parsonage” at the center of the congregation and the clergyman was also central as the “head” of both his family and the congregation (Gause 2006; Sammet 2013; Hildenbrand 2013). The operation of the local church was based on the complementary roles of the clergyman and the clergyman’s wife. In the traditional arrangement, the wife, as a faithful helper of the clergyman and as a role model of a good mother and housewife, typically remained in the background, providing her husband with the necessary support to carry out his ministerial duties. The image of the “classic clergyman’s wife” was formed in the 19th century at the same time as the middle-class ideal of the woman and already included auxiliary participation in the work of the clergyman appropriate to the traditional role of women. This was centered on the social sphere, church music, and dealing with women and children in the congregation, thus enabling the clergyman to perform his representative tasks (Nesbitt 1997; Hildenbrand 2013). Despite the sweeping social changes of the 19th and 20th centuries, this division of roles shaped the image of the clergyman and his family for a long time and, in certain aspects, it continues to this day. To some extent, this traditional model continues to pressure clergywomen within clergy couples to occupy a position in the

division of professional and domestic work that conforms to the traditional gender-specific division of labor and is, therefore, often very similar to the role of the traditional clergyman's wife (Offenberger 2013). As the theoretical background for our research, we will first present the most important factors determining the social and professional experience of clergywomen within a clergy couple: the position of women in ministerial professions, the position of women in religious families, and how issues around the division of labor, work–life balance, and boundary management arise in such circumstances.

2.1. Vertical and Horizontal Gender Segregation in Ministerial Careers

In many respects, the position of clergywomen is similar to that of women working in other traditionally male-dominated fields, since both vertical and horizontal segregation are clearly present in ministerial careers.

Clergywomen face more difficulties in their professional advancement compared to men. Countless studies confirm that women find suitable work with more difficulty or are delegated to lower-status work than men, and that the presence of women grows increasingly scarce as one proceeds vertically up the church hierarchy (Finlay 1996; Charlton 1997; Sullins 2000; Chang 2005) as if they faced a “stained-glass ceiling” (Purvis 1995). Similar to the concept of the glass ceiling as an invisible barrier to women's progress in corporate careers, the stained-glass ceiling is, according to some authors, more visible compared to its “plain” glass counterpart, and, perhaps relatedly, it is also more difficult to break through (Adams 2007; De Gasquet 2010). Clergywomen become independent leaders of congregations less often than clergymen (Hoegeman 2017), and when they are promoted to leadership positions, they are often delegated to smaller, poorer, or more difficult congregations, and end up remaining there longer than clergymen. This means that, compared to their male counterparts, clergywomen are less likely to be promoted to congregations that offer greater prestige and more professional opportunities (Sullins 2000; McDuff 2001; Hoegeman 2017). Although most of the churches involved in these studies are a long way from having women proportionally represented in leadership positions, clergywomen have increasingly appeared in higher church positions in the last few decades. However, while the appearance of female leaders is a clear sign of the shift towards equal participation, the presence of “iconic” female leaders hides the prejudices and inequalities that still exist. Their success suggests that the remaining differences between men and women are the results of individual decisions rather than of systemic processes (Nesbitt 2013). It is also important to point out that the appearance of women in leadership positions in Europe is far more common in northern and western churches. In Hungary, there are no women among the bishops of any of the relevant denominations, and women in other leadership positions (deputy bishops, deans) are also relatively rare. Gender-based vertical segregation consequently remains as a defining feature of church organizations, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

Horizontal segregation is—as with some secular professions—also widely present in the ministerial profession. Compared to men, clergywomen are less often employed in congregations and more often work in specialized, non-congregational ministerial occupations, such as school or prison chaplains (Nesbitt 1997; Chang 2005; De Gasquet 2010). Such institutional chaplaincy positions, as compared to congregational leadership roles, are considered lower prestige jobs in the ministerial professions. German sociologist Angelika Wetterer (1999) described “marginalizing integration” as the process where women are admitted to a profession but, through various direct and indirect mechanisms, are pushed towards less important, inferior, possibly occasional, “special” tasks within the profession. This redirection of women working in the given profession also devalues them with respect to power relations. Moreover, compared to the clear and unambiguous nature of exclusion from certain professions, these processes of separation within a profession are more difficult to identify as mechanisms for creating a hierarchy of gender-based exclusion (Wetterer 1999). Offenberger (2013) reiterates that the same process can be observed in ministerial careers, where institutional pastor positions, such as the prison or school chaplaincy positions

noted above, are considered to be of lower prestige than church pastor. This horizontal division of labor, therefore, also contributes to the maintenance of inequalities between women and men in churches. Previous American research has confirmed that clergywomen often move to these lower-prestige roles after an initial attempt at congregational ministry; that is, some women are placed as pastoral caregivers or institutional pastors after a period as a congregational pastor, while others seem to prefer or accept these jobs more readily even at the planning level (Charlton 1997; Finlay 1996). This vertical segregation is also typical in Hungary. The roles of hospital chaplain or religious teacher are more likely to be held by females (Fekete 2006). Similar to vertical segregation, horizontal segregation—the separation of “female” and “male” areas—is also an evident characteristic of church organization in Hungary.

Related to the above, it is also worth emphasizing that, during the transition from communism to capitalism, the gender regimes created in the post-socialist countries of Central Europe clearly tend towards familism (Leitner 2003). A familist social structure is also supported at the level of public policy in Hungary, which contributed to the marginalization of women in the labor market during this transitional period (Nagy et al. 2018). Moreover, after the political transition, churches in Hungary faced two somewhat contradictory challenges. They tried to restore the traditional roles of churches as practiced prior to the socialist period and, at the same time, to meet today’s challenges (Huszár 2011). This emphasis on restoring the pre-socialist functions of the church resulted in more traditional practices at the level of everyday church functioning in Hungary as compared to western Protestant churches. All of these factors contribute to creating or maintaining women’s positions as closer to traditional gender roles within the ministerial profession in Hungary.

2.2. Family Roles Based on Conservative Understanding of Gender Roles

Another factor that can be decisive regarding the situation of clergywomen living as a member of a clergy couple is the conservative value system characteristics of the religious environment. The value research of the past few decades unanimously confirms that religiosity is connected with a preference for conservative values and the importance of preserving traditions (Schwartz and Huismans 1995; Roccas 2005). The traditional values of religious communities typically include a traditional understanding of gender roles, and religiosity is one of the most important determinants of attitudes related to gender equality and the roles of women and men in the family and public life (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Seguin 2011). Religiosity shows a connection with patriarchal attitudes and the acceptance of unequal gender relations (Brinkerhoff and MacKie 1985; Burn and Busso 2005; Mikołajczak and Pietrzak 2014), although the strength of the relationship may weaken over time (Perales and Bouma 2019). In line with holding traditionalist gender-role attitudes and expectations, conservative religious families often tend to distribute the household tasks in an unequal way, so that wives assume the bulk of household responsibilities (Ellison and Bartkowski 2002). Moreover, women in a conservative religious environment decide more often to be a housewife, and do not (re)enter—or (re)enter only later—the workforce (Sherkat 2000). In connection with the traditional value system, families with many children are common among clergy couples. Having children, regardless of religious belief, typically shifts the division of family roles towards a traditional direction (Makay and Spéder 2018). Therefore, the presence of children within such families can also determine the career and other opportunities for clergywomen for decades.

Furthermore, the perception of gender roles in Hungarian society became more conservative in the post-socialist era (Tóth 1995; Braun and Scott 2009); compared to attitudes outside of the country, despite certain changes, Hungarian societal attitudes regarding gender roles can still be considered rather conservative (Pongrácz Tiborné 2011), even among younger generations (Gregor 2016). In addition, Hungary is one of the Central and Eastern European countries where the influence of religiosity on perceptions of family and family roles increased in the post-socialist era (Polak and Rosta 2016). In parallel with this, the familistic public policies that are becoming dominant in the region decisively assign

care tasks to the responsibility of families and, in accordance with traditional gender roles, women are primarily expected to perform these care tasks (Nagy et al. 2018). This coincides with Hungarian public opinion to a great extent (Gregor and Kováts 2018). Therefore, the attitude of the Hungarian churches towards gender roles is embedded in an inherently more conservative public mentality. Religiosity, especially ecclesiastical religiosity, is also unequivocally accompanied by the acceptance of traditional gender roles in Hungary (Fényes 2014; Pusztai 2020). Thus, it can reasonably be assumed that, in addition to (or in spite of) the emancipatory professional role, the family roles in the families of clergywomen living within clergy couples are based on a conservative understanding of gender roles, which lays the bulk of family tasks on women.

2.3. Characteristics of Clergy Couples Working Together: Division of Labor, Work–Life Balance, and Boundary Management

Gender-based inequality is also visible within clergy couples. Research on clergy couples has established that the female member of the couple is not only often placed in a professionally subordinate role compared to her husband (Walrond-Skinner 1998; Offenberger 2013; Collingridge 2015, 2019; Danberry 2017); even when compared to clergywomen married to laymen, she is less likely to receive greater ministerial responsibility (Walrond-Skinner 1998). Balázs Siba's research on ministers in Hungary also confirms that, in a congregation which has several ministerial positions, clergywomen working as members of a clergy couple often start from a disadvantaged position not only vis-à-vis their pastor husbands, but also against men in general. It is often the case that the female member of a clergy couple has to fight for her position in the congregation when another clergyman appears (Siba 2020). In addition to, and not independently of, the professional division of labor within clergy couples, the workshare at home is more in line with traditional gender roles (Offenberger 2013), despite the fact that clergy couples typically support marriages based on equality (Walrond-Skinner 1998).

Finding the right work–life balance and properly managing boundaries is of paramount importance to clergy couples and, given their situation, is particularly difficult. According to work–life conflict theory, the two areas compete for the same finite resources (time, energy), so conflicts necessarily arise between them. Other research draws attention to the fact that the two areas can also enrich each other, primarily where private family life resources can be used in the profession as well (ten Brummelhuis and van der Lippe 2010). In recent years, this “spillover” has become an important concept in research on the relationship between work and private family life; it is used to describe the tendency of individuals to transfer values, skills, or behavioral and mood patterns between the areas of work and private family life, which results in the two areas becoming more similar (Edwards and Rothbard 2000). The nature of the boundaries between work and private family life can range from complete integration to the strictest possible separation (segmentation) (Clark 2000; Ashforth et al. 2000). The more blurred the border between the two areas, the more frequent the spillover phenomena can be. However, these kinds of approaches are typically based on the fact that work–private life, the workplace–home, and colleagues–family members can be separated from each other at least in principle, and are also somewhat separate in practice. Yet this is often not the case with clergy couples working together. A clergy couple is a unique situation to which secular occupations offer few parallels. The parsonage is a private and public space at the same time; the family home is owned by the congregation and is usually located in close physical proximity to the church and its ministerial offices. Thus, not only the ministerial work, but also the private lives of both members of the couple, takes place partly in front of the watchful eyes of the congregation (Hildenbrand 2013; Siba 2020). Although physical proximity can have advantages—from a practical point of view—in coordinating home and work tasks (Hildenbrand 2013), the constant attention and expectations regarding the model role of the clergy family can make it difficult for the clergywoman to find a personally satisfying work–life balance and draw boundaries between these social spheres. Work and private life, especially with regard to

professional and family roles, are very difficult to separate in this situation (Moffat 1997), and this can be more burdensome for the female members of such couples. Finding a work–life balance and managing boundaries is certainly not made easier by the fact that the clergy family traditionally occupies a central role in the congregation, including being viewed by the congregation as a kind of model in terms of family life, marriage, and the internal relations of the family (Hildenbrand 2013; Offenberger 2013; Wagner-Rau 2010; Siba 2020). It follows that the clergy family is part of the clergyman’s or clergywoman’s workplace system. The traditional clergy family occupies a central role in the congregation’s network of relationships, and family members are also involved in the service of the congregation (Siba 2020). Therefore, when two pastors live and work together, not only is the clergyman’s wife connected to her husband’s work system, but both are simultaneously present in the same system in both roles. According to Moffat, they are connected by a “double relationship” (Moffat 1997).

In light of the above theoretical considerations, our research question is aimed at how clergywomen living and working within clergy couples in Hungary adapt to the presented social–institutional conditions and to the unequal relations at work and at home. We investigate whether characteristic types can be distinguished in the career strategies formed under these conditions and in the personal life decisions that are closely connected to those strategies, as well as in the arrangements of professional and private life-roles that result from these.

3. Methods

During our qualitative research, we conducted interviews with thirty-five female church pastors between 2019–2022. Twenty of them met the condition that they work or have worked within the same congregations, as members of a clergy couple, with their husbands, or, in the case of one respondent, as pastors of two neighboring churches, formally working independently of each other, but in practice serving together. In three of the twenty cases, the respondent was divorced or separated at the time of our interview, and in two cases, the joint ministerial work had ended due to developments in the careers of one or both spouses. This study is primarily based on the processing of these twenty interviews, which can be considered as a special sub-sample in the research, since the specific situation of clergywomen working within clergy couples makes a separate analysis possible and necessary. Our study includes a few quotations from interviews conducted with clergywomen who were not married to clergymen: interviewee I3 previously had a clergyman as partner and interviewee I18 is an example of a clergywoman consciously not choosing a clergyman as a potential husband to prevent limiting her future aims as a self-standing clergywoman. In addition, during our research, we conducted two exploratory focus group discussions, one with female and one with male theology students. These were not processed as part of the present study, but we also quote from one of the participants of our focus group with female theology students in order to foreground preliminary expectations regarding the relationship between the minister’s career and decisions regarding partner selection.

In our research, we used non-probability, purposive sampling, mainly via the online open access registers of the different churches. In addition, we also used snowball sampling in a few cases where our interviewees spontaneously recommended additional interviewees during the interview and the recommended persons met our sample criteria. We endeavored to compile a diverse sample in terms of age and place of service. The ages of our clergywomen interviewees are between 29 and 63 years old, and our respondents include clergy serving in congregations in the capital city of Budapest and its suburbs, as well as in rural towns and villages in various areas of the country. Our interviewees were chosen from the clergy of the Reformed, Lutheran, and Unitarian churches, which are the three most significant denominations with female clergy in Hungary.

After obtaining the informed consent of the clergywomen interviewees, we conducted semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews, and the duration of each interview

was between 60 and 120 minutes. We prepared and used a detailed interview guide, the questions of which were organized into the following main topics: motivations for choosing a career as a clergyperson, experiences during theological studies, duties of a clergyperson, goals in the career of a clergyperson, relationships, the sharing of clergy duties, the sharing of family responsibilities, the harmonization of pastoral and family tasks, the presence of women in the ministerial field, and whether or not there were any disadvantages of being female in the field.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interviewees, and verbatim transcripts were made based on this material. The transcripts were analyzed using the ATLAS.ti 9.1.7 qualitative data analysis software. Within ATLAS.ti, we created a project into which we uploaded the transcripts for analysis. To be able to answer our research questions, we applied the inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006), taking advantage of the inherent benefits of using the software (Friesen et al. 2018). For the analysis, we read and reread the transcripts of the interviews in accordance with the method, noting down our initial ideas for coding and analyzing the interviews. We entered the initial codes into the project and, during the coding of the text of the interviews, we assigned the appropriate text fragments to the appropriate codes. During coding, we created additional codes as needed and applied them to the texts of the interviews. We intended to create codes that could be used to capture and group the qualitative data related to our research questions from the interviews. The codes were constantly refined and, when necessary, certain codes were merged or even divided into subcodes. During the analysis, the codes were organized into topics, after which the relationships between these topics were established. During the presentation of the results, we show the connections between the topics in detail and illustrate them with insightful quotes. After every quote from the interviews, there is a code that is made up of the ordinal number of the interview and the age of the clergywoman. In order to ensure the greatest possible anonymity, we display a minimum amount of data about our interviewees. For instance, denominational affiliation is not disclosed. Age is disclosed because in some cases it may be an important factor in interpreting the experience described in the interview excerpts. We disclose the age of the interviewees at the time the interview was conducted in parentheses following the excerpts where their age is given after the code number of the interview.

4. Results

In the following sections, we will show how the conditions and processes discussed in the theoretical section appear in the experience of Hungarian clergywomen working within clergy couples. We will also show through what individual decisions these conditions and processes are transformed into unequal situations manifested in the professional and private lives of Hungarian clergywomen. First, we analyze the interconnectedness of partner selection and professional decisions at the beginning of a career. This is followed by an analysis of career possibilities for clergywomen, and the division of ministerial duties within clergy couples. The latter analysis is complemented by a short excursion on alternative or second careers pursued by some of the clergywomen respondents. After that, we analyze the sharing of home and family duties within clergy couples as well as the management of work–life balance and boundaries by clergywomen. We conclude our analysis by defining three separate observed coping strategies used by the clergywomen interviewed: (1) the Conformist Strategy, (2) the Conformist with a Second Career Strategy, and (3) the Co-equals Strategy.

4.1. Perceived Interconnectedness of Partner Selection Decisions and Professional (Career) Decisions

Before moving on to professional and personal dynamics within clergy couples, we must briefly touch upon the development of these situations and the factors influencing their development. In light of the theories on marriage homogamy and marriage markets (Bukodi 2002; Blossfeld 2009), it is not too surprising if people working in the same pro-

fession get married, or if young people find their partner in higher education. In the case of clergypersons, though, it goes beyond that: these partner selection decisions decisively shape professional opportunities, at least in the case of women.

Based on the interviews and the focus group discussion, it is a common experience in Hungary, both in the past few decades and today, that women who are preparing to become clergy are often confronted through environmental cues with the perception that ministerial roles and traditional women's roles are not compatible in practice. Many women experience this during their studies, in which there is perceptible pressure in both the university and extra-university environments toward choosing a pastor husband to resolve this incompatibility. *"I could say what I also heard in legation, they chastised me, and I use this word deliberately, that they chastised me, that as a mother of a family, these things don't work, and that this is why I need a pastor husband, because I can't do this as a woman with children"* (female theology student focus group). Even during their time spent studying theology, it is made clear to female students that choosing a partner is a decision of such strategic importance that, although in principle only of a personal nature, it essentially affects their entire career. When a young woman preparing to become a pastor decides to connect her life with another pastor or with a secular partner, she not only defines the basic framework of her personal life, but also that of her professional career. Previous Hungarian research (Orisek 1999; Huszár 2011) demonstrates that many Hungarian female theology students envisioned and planned their future as members of a clergy couple due to the perceived difficulties.

Based on our interviews, a female strategy can be identified, according to which having a clergyman husband is the most obvious way to create a balance between work and private life, or to provide the conditions for making a career as a clergywoman possible at all. *"If my husband wasn't a clergyman, I couldn't even imagine my work as a clergyperson; it's not something I've ever taken into consideration. And now this will sound very bad or very negative, but I feel sorry for clergywomen who have secular husbands (...) Because if they are sick, if they have a small child, I don't know, then there isn't someone very close who can replace them at any time, because we can replace each other constantly and we do all the time. (...) If my years as a theology student do not end with the fact that I have a partner, that we are actually in our fourth year as an engaged couple and are preparing for a life together, then maybe I wouldn't have asked for my ordination and wouldn't have become a clergywoman, but only a Hungarian teacher, or a religious teacher, or I don't know".* (I6, 39) However, the opposite of this attitude may also develop. That is, a strategy where a female theology student consciously prepares for independent clergy service, takes this into account when choosing a partner, and seeks to exclude fellow clergy students as potential husbands. *"I don't want to be a professional assistant to a minister because I want to be the minister myself, so I kept telling myself that I don't want to have a husband who is a minister".* (I18, 43)

Such considerations also indicate that women who are preparing to become clergy are aware that, as members of a clergy couple, there is at least a chance that they will be placed in a position that fits within the traditional gender-specific division of labor, and that they can sometimes come quite close to the role of the minister's wife, not only at home, but also in the professional division of labor (Offenberger 2013). For many, this may be a perspective that coincides with their personal preferences; for others, it may be perceived a limitation of their own ambitions. In both cases, it is clear that the connection between partner selection decisions and professional opportunities appears consciously, and those involved believe that their partner selection decisions are also career decisions at the same time.

4.2. The Clergywoman Career within a Clergy Couple

Marriages entered into during studies or at the beginning of a career determine the professional opportunities of the parties in many respects; this, according to experience, means more limitations for women, although this is not how it usually appears in the narratives of clergywomen. Clergy couples naturally look for ministerial work together,

and church leaders also think about their placement “as a couple” from the start. In practice, however, this often means that the husband’s career begins to be “developed”, and the wife follows him; that is, she adapts her career decisions—often as a matter of course—in line with traditional female roles, completely to the husband’s decisions or career options. *“Very soon, one, well, it wasn’t within one year that we got married. And then, of course, we kept in line to him”. (I21, 43)* This implicitness was usually characteristic of all the actors involved in these decisions, including church leaders: *“After I graduated the bishop simply told my bridegroom that both of you are to move to town X because there are two jobs there. And I only had one request, I was ready to go anywhere but town X. (. . .) And I wasn’t even there at that meeting”. (I5, 63)*. Furthermore, this tendency also prevailed when the wife would have had other professionally attractive opportunities. It is important to note that, in some of these cases, the clergywomen realized only later, looking back, that theoretically she could have made a different decision. At that time, they unreflectively followed the internalized “natural” path set by expectations in their environment. *“But it didn’t even come up that I should go for it [the PhD]. I only realized recently that the question wasn’t raised at all. I mean that I wasn’t asked about what I was going to give up, if I wanted to give it up at all or not. It was self-evident that he was going for the scholarship, and the baby is coming, and I do what I have to”. (I20, 45)*

One manifestation of conforming to these expectations is the decision made by a clergy couple to take a job in a so-called “single-minister congregation” (that is, where the congregation can hire only one clergyperson in paid status). The congregation almost always hires the male member of the clergy couple as the minister. In such cases, the congregation receives an additional worker at no additional cost in the person of the clergy wife (Nesbitt 1997; Hildenbrand 2013). If the clergy wife happens to be an ordained clergyperson herself, then she can also help her husband in the actual ministerial work, i.e., marry, bury, and preach if necessary—all this often (at least for a while) without remuneration. This “single-minister” situation is also problematic due to the low salaries of pastors, and severely limits the professional opportunities of clergywomen who otherwise have the same education and knowledge as their husbands. *“I didn’t have a job, yet I had a lot of work. I was working full time for zero wage. (. . .) We had very little money. So we had difficulties, and my parents supported us”. (I19, 53)*

For members of the clergy, the beginning of their career also often coincides with the period of having children, and this period of having small children may last quite a few years in the case of large clergy families. With the birth of a child (as is also the case in non-pastoral families), even for couples who have previously agreed to a relatively egalitarian division of labor, domestic tasks tend shift to women (Makay and Spéder 2018). Many clergywomen, in addition to taking on a heavier workload at home, after the birth of a child, regard it as a matter of course that they permanently accept playing a supporting role in professional work, and this may even become the main motivation for them. *“I obviously support him, and I wanted to be his supporting partner. This is one of the reasons why I didn’t drop out. As time passed by, this feeling became even stronger, that I am a supporting partner. That you know, he needs you”. (I19, 53)*

It has to be stated, however, that in most places, both the congregation and the church itself strive to give clergywomen at least a partial clergy status or religious teacher status in such cases. However, clergywomen typically have to fight individually for such positions involving a level of status. It should also be mentioned that, in certain rare cases, the assigned roles are demeaning to the clergywoman, as the following interview shows: *“Then the diocese delegated me a job, there was a little cottage house and I became the cleaning lady. The janitor. It was in my job description, that I was supposed to take out the weeds among the curbs, and this offended me”. (I23, 55)*

If the congregation grows as a result of the effective ministerial work carried out by the clergy couple, over time they can create a half or even a full subordinate pastor status for the clergywoman. These cases largely depend on the supportive attitude of the husband and the church regarding whether it is possible to construct clergy status around

the clergywoman's work: *"And then, I also had to work full time, and I worked very hard. And there was no wage. At least there was opportunity for my development. And so, after a couple of years, we began to build up my status. First it was a kind of half-position, and after several years I had a full-time position"*. (I19, 53)

It is obviously much more appropriate for clergy couples to join a "multi-minister congregation" where they both have status. In most cases, however, one of the two must be the "boss", i.e., the lead pastor. It is very rare for a woman to be her husband's boss; there were none among our interviewees. Even in cases where it was possible for the clergywoman to fill the role of boss within the ministerial work environment, none of our respondents made that choice. The reasons for this state of affairs lie in different decision-making mechanisms, and this ultimately leads to different justifications for accepting unequal situations. One such is the rational consideration of expected gains and losses (on both sides), and the conflicts that arise: *"Will you take it? I told him: Listen! What impact do you think it would have on my marriage, if I were his boss?"* (I22, 51) In such cases, not only was the tension arising in marriage a subject for consideration; some interviewees thought that going against the traditional gender order would mean too great a symbolic loss for the husband, and thus would not be worth it. The other very common response was that they do not particularly like leadership tasks and are glad that the responsibility for such tasks does not rest on their shoulders: *"Because I am afraid that I would have to make serious decisions. I'm doing very well on my place right now"*. (I6, 39) This type of response is often linked to the traditional belief that men are better leaders. Common concepts in this regard were "strength", "presence of mind", "determination", which is necessary for leadership: *"Men are more equipped to lead, to have concrete plans, to be forward looking, and it is not certain that every woman could do that"*. (I6, 39). The third type of reason given for the decisions resulting in a traditional male-dominated professional hierarchy within such couples is a kind of acceptance of the fact that, in addition to the traditional division of domestic tasks by gender, this is simply what seems possible: *"But I think that, for example, as a mother of a family, having children, as a wife, it would be difficult for me to imagine (...) that I don't think I can fully be a mother and, at the same time, somebody who leads a congregation, and a pastor doing who knows how many tasks. It would be too much"*. (I20, 45)

Overall, for clergywomen working within clergy couples, their identities as women, wives, and mothers pose clear limits to their professional progress as clergy. Although the mediating mechanisms can be diverse, from the unreflective internalization of social expectations or the conscious, value-based appropriation of traditional gender roles, to the rational considerations arising from an assessment of the circumstances, the result in all cases is that women are at a disadvantage in their ministerial careers compared to the male member of the married couple.

4.3. The Division of Ministerial Duties: Marginalizing Integration on a Small Scale

In the division of ministerial work performed as a married couple, the division of labor corresponding to traditional gender stereotypes, and the previously mentioned marginalizing integration (Wetterer 1999) are reflected to a large extent in our sample. Within ministerial work, less prestigious tasks are more often assigned to wives, including those that do not necessarily require a pastoral education. Female members of clergy couples working as assigned pastors mostly take on the "traditionally female" jobs in the church, such as women's Bible class, or work with children; for example, young mothers and babies groups, youth groups, and Sunday school for children. In addition to working with children within the congregation, they also participate in religious education at school, which can be an important supplement to their assigned pastor's salary. In some cases, it is their task to organize religious education at school, to plan their own and other religious teachers' assignments, and to serve as school chaplain in the school belonging to the congregation. The spiritual care of members of the congregation, who are struggling with difficulties and turn to them, is also a job that clergywomen are usually happy to undertake.

In ministerial work, the most prestigious task is clearly the preaching, which is done more often by the husband. However, many clergywomen emphasize that they are happy to preach but cannot, or that they can only rarely provide themselves with the calm conditions necessary to prepare a sermon, and which are naturally available to the husbands in the same families. This is a point where the division of labor at work and at home is closely connected, since clergywomen typically cannot prepare a sermon due to their home and maternal responsibilities. *“My husband prepares [for the preaching] by retreating to solitude, he is getting prepared, there is silence, and he has enough time. While a woman, or me as a mother, does not get prepared like that, I keep sitting among the children while reading the commentaries, or while cooking I listen to some talk that helps in preparing for the preaching”*. (I16, 53) This uneven workload at home almost naturally pushes clergywomen with families towards professional tasks that “fit in” anyway: *“I can’t prepare for preaching if a child runs in and out and runs in again after half an hour. But I was able to prepare for a bible course or some small group activity that way. I’m the type who needs to do a lot of preparation”*. (I19, 53) Among the reasons for being less willing to undertake preaching, the comparison with the husband also arose: *“He is a great mind. He has a fantastic biblical vision. It is amazing, how he communicates with the Word and about the Word. I think he is terrific. And then comes my minority complex, that I’m not good enough”*. (I20, 45)

Some clergy couples, on the other hand, consciously pay attention to the equal division of tasks, even if they are formally in very different positions. However, it is clear from the interviews that this type of division requires a conscious, reflective attitude. In these cases, there are typically some simple rules (taking turns, or whoever is there when the invitation comes in the case of occasional services), which prevents the division of tasks from “spontaneously” moving in the direction of inequality and allows the female member of the clergy couple to perform the services considered to be of higher prestige in a similar proportion to her husband, sending a clear message to the congregation as well. *“It is characteristic of our relationship, that we take turns in preaching. [Was this the case even when you were a religion instructor?] Yes. He had a Bible lesson, and I had the next one. We kept count of which of us did the last funeral. Sometimes he was asked to do it, because he was the senior minister, or because he was a man. But they liked listening to me a lot. They asked me to do the funeral many times. So, my appointment was formally a change, but in our relationship, we are two equal ministers, and our congregation sees that, too”*. (I22,51) It should be added, however, that even within couples following an equal division of ministerial duties, typically the husband is the formal leader of the congregation.

The division of professional tasks can therefore follow two clearly different patterns: one that shows two pastors in an equal relationship, and one where the division of tasks reflects the hierarchical relations of the traditional gender order. In the latter case, a clergywoman’s activity in certain aspects resembles the typical duties of a clergyman’s wife (Offenberger 2013) and pushes the female member of the clergy couple towards marginal, less prestigious tasks within the ministerial work. It is important to point out that, in the narratives of the clergywomen in our study, this unequal situation typically appears as a naturally formed division of labor in accordance with personal preferences. *“It was kind of spontaneous, each of us gravitated to those tasks to which we felt affinity. And it worked in a way that the other then began to give support. So, we balanced and complemented each other. We sort of felt which tasks suited me or him. (. . .) That he would take, let’s say, most of the preaching, and I would do the Bible instruction. And for me, as a minister it was not derogatory, it was not a burden that I was religion instructor”*. (I19, 53) Although the interviewee emphasizes preferences and different strengths, the hierarchy of activities is also clearly evident from this wording: religious education is a “lower-order” task, which could even be demeaning for a pastor. As we have seen, the division of labor between clergy couples often reflects this hierarchy, with the women being given the less prestigious tasks and the men within such couples being given the higher prestige and leadership tasks.

4.4. Alternative or Second Careers

Some of the clergywomen who find themselves in a more or less marginal position in their ministerial work begin to look for the possibility of professional development in other areas that are more or less closely related to ministerial activity. This search often occurs or intensifies when the children are older or adults, and thus the home–family workload of the clergywoman is reduced. It is not typical for such clergywomen to consciously move in a significantly different career direction in search of professional “compensation”, and they may not necessarily perceive the previous situation as marginal or unequal. Rather, clergywomen seeking a “second career” characterize the experience as having the opportunity or capacity to develop their pre-existing interests and talents in some way in another field: *“it happened in life that, that if something really started to interest me, then these usually became trainings”* (I14, 44). The chosen directions often mean training in spiritual care, mental health, family therapy, or enhancing knowledge and skills in a more specific field, such as grief processing. There were, however, those who, after completing a religion teacher training course, turned more directly towards religious education as a career. There have also been cases where an independent career or more independent work in the congregation was made possible by a change in the husband’s career: *“now my husband was elected dean. So now I feel like I’ve got space. I will have so much to do that I will work myself into the congregation’s life”*. (I21, 43).

The common feature of these “second careers” is that the clergywomen typically took advantage of opportunities arising from changes in circumstances, be it the growing up of their children or even the progress of the husband in his own career.

4.5. Sharing the Work at Home

In line with the above, clergy couples most often encounter a traditional, gender-specific division of labor in terms of household and family tasks. Several clergywomen emphasized that they specifically adhere to the traditional division of labor at home. Our interviewees very often explained this situation with their own preferences, partly by saying that they “like” these tasks, partly by saying that it does not suit the man, or that he has strengths in other areas. In the latter case, it is as if they feel the traditional order is in danger if the man gets involved in tasks considered feminine. *“A tender man is a good thing, and no man can be more tender than my husband, but I wouldn’t want him to use the vacuum-cleaner and to show his tenderness this way. That wouldn’t be enough for me, you know? He should be tender in that he kisses my hand when I descend from the pulpit, and thanks me for the service”*. (I23, 55) It is a typical attitude among respondents that, in relation to household tasks, they specifically emphasize that they assume their conservative role in opposition to contemporary trends: *“now many women would stone me for this”*, (I21, 43) said one of them.

At the same time, there is another type of task sharing at home: there are couples who consciously pay attention to the proportional division of household tasks, and these are typically the same couples who also strive for equal participation in ministerial service. To some extent, in such cases, the time schedule of equally divided ministerial duties forces these couples to equally divide household tasks as well. *“So that, we share this among ourselves. So, if I do the Sunday service, he prepares the Sunday lunch or things in the house. But the same is true the other way around. It is divided in this way, so that he also fully participates [in the work at home]”*. (I7, 31) This also confirms the experience discussed earlier that, in the case of clergy couples, the division of professional and family work, the personal and work relationship, as well as professional and family roles, mutually define each other and cannot be interpreted without reference to the other (Moffat 1997; Siba 2020). In the next section, we will discuss how work and private life not only cannot be interpreted without reference to the other, but are practically inseparable.

4.6. Work–Life Balance and Boundary Management for Clergy Couples Working Together

From the point of view of managing the boundaries of work and private life, based on our research, different patterns can be clearly observed according to the family status of

clergywomen. Compared to clergy couples, clergywomen living with lay husbands prefer to separate their work and private life, and the husband sometimes helps them maintain this separation by acting as a “border guard”. In the case of single clergywomen, on the other hand, it is typical that their work “sucks in” their private life as well. If both members of the couple are pastors, work and private life clearly move in the direction of integration along the integration–segmentation continuum (Clark 2000; Ashforth et al. 2000). For some interviewees, work and private life are not only areas that mutually presuppose and shape each other, but are actually the same, and can only be partially separated at best. *“They completely flowed into each other, so actually the clergy family, who lives there in the parish, completely intertwines its life with the life of the congregation”*. (I1, 50)

In the case of clergy couples, the integration of the two areas often means that the couple’s free time spent together is interwoven with discussions about work. This appears in two ways in the experience of the clergywomen. For many, it is a natural part of being a clergy couple, which they do not experience as problematic. *“It is not separated. So very often, when we go shopping in the morning on our day off, which is Friday, or sit down for a coffee, or have lunch somewhere, or cook together. (. . .) Then we often talk about which church group, people, tasks, the evaluation of those tasks ahead of us and those behind us, but it doesn’t bother us”*. (I6, 39) For others, however, it can be a source of tension and a strain on the relationship if they cannot maintain a private sphere free of professional problems: *“we kept taking our work home . . . we discussed at dinner what happened to Aunt Mary or Judy or whoever. It wasn’t good because you go crazy if you always keep discussing the matters of the congregation”*. (I3, 29)

Work and private life are not only not clearly separated in time, but they are not clearly separated in space either, which further complicates the separation of roles. It may happen that the members of a couple interpret a given situation differently regarding whether or not that situation falls into the work or private sphere using the typical divisions of time and space, which can lead to conflicts: *“How awful that is! Especially when I’m coming down from upstairs. I’m still in my pajamas, haven’t even had my coffee. And P., who wakes up an hour earlier than me, cause I’m a night owl . . . says that the carpenter called again to say that we should have a look. And then I say: P., I haven’t arrived at my workplace yet. I’m still at home. Could you just let me drink my coffee and light a cigarette. I’m begging”*. (I22, 51)

A particular characteristic of joint ministerial work in cases of married couples is that workplace conflicts are also family conflicts. This situation is complicated by the fact that, due to the privileged role of the clergy couple within the congregation, the possibility for the parties to discuss their problems with somebody from the congregation is very limited: *“It is a problem, if your spouse is your boss. Imagine, that your boss annoyed you at your workplace. You go home, and you tell your partner that your boss is an asshole. Now I can’t go home, and do this. Because my boss and my husband are the same. And as a minister I cannot behave as a teacher would in such a situation. I cannot complain to anyone about my husband, who is my boss, because he is the minister around here. So, I used to be very, very lonely. For a long time, for almost one and a half decades”*. (I19, 53) As in most professional fields, rivalry also occurs among pastors. However, in the case of clergy couples, due to the integration of work and private life, this puts a strain not only on the professional, but also on the private relationship: *“I felt, that my fiancé was jealous if I preached a better sermon, or if they said, oh she preaches so much better, than . . . These are small things, but they can damage a relationship”*. (I3, 29)

The traditional division of professional and domestic work presented in the previous sections also confirms the impression that the most common way to prevent or resolve conflicts arising in a “double relationship” (Moffat 1997) is for the female member of the couple to withdraw into the background. In most cases, this does not happen consciously, but rather by “naturally” conforming to expectations. However, sometimes this tendency is also formulated explicitly: *“I should be more careful not to be stronger”* (I22, 51).

Overall, it can be concluded that, in the case of clergy couples who live and work together, a large degree of integration between work and private life and a blurring of boundaries are typical. Accordingly, the spillover phenomenon, namely the transfer of

moods, behaviors or even conflicts (Edwards and Rothbard 2000) is very common, according to the experience of the interviews, and primarily in the direction of work to family.

4.7. Three Types of Career Strategies for Clergywomen within Clergy Couples

Based on the patterns of professional and family cooperation presented above and the interconnectedness of professional and private life decisions, three characteristic methods can be distinguished on the basis of which Hungarian clergywomen living and working within clergy couples organize their professional and family activities in order to cope under given social–institutional conditions. These methods essentially comprise three different career strategies the clergywomen within clergy couples adopt in the ministerial field: (1) the Conformist Strategy, (2) the Conformist with a Second Career Strategy, and (3) the Co-equals Strategy.

The first type we term “conformist” strategy. In this strategy type, the clergywoman and the clergy family completely conform to traditional gender role expectations. In such cases, the clergywoman aligns her career decisions, whether consciously or not, with her husband’s from the beginning, and she is his subordinate in her work. Her role most closely resembles the supporting role of the clergy wife, helping from behind. The ministerial work is typically divided in such a way that she takes on the traditionally feminine—and typically less prestigious—pastoral tasks. In the opinion of our interviewees, this is often a strategy that is satisfactory for all concerned, and one which coincides with the clergywomen’s own preferences and results in a harmonious cooperation between spouses within the ministerial work. The narratives describing this strategy often placed an emphasis on cooperation, mutual support, and complementing each other. In the clergywomen’s own interpretations of this arrangement, the fact that adopting this particular strategy also meant limiting or partially sacrificing their own professional opportunities was a concern to only a few respondents and usually a minor one. Along with this general satisfaction among most adopters of the Conformist Strategy, there was also an interview where, looking back on the decades spent in this set-up, the interviewee remarked: “*And looking back now, I’m not sure that it was worth it*”. (I19, 53)

The second type of strategy can be defined as “conformist with a second career”. This strategy type is a variant of the previous one. In these cases, in the common ministerial work, the clergywoman essentially adopts the conformist strategy, but with changing circumstances, such as the cessation of childcare duties or a change in her husband’s career, she starts to develop a second, “own” career, in some field more or less closely related to the ministerial profession, typically choosing the direction of mental health, family therapy, or religious education. In these cases, in addition to working together by adapting to the husband’s career, the clergy woman creates a professional space where she performs activities independent of her husband.

In the case of the third strategy type, the male member of the clergy couple is still the lead (or director) pastor most of the time, but both spouses consciously strive for a de facto equal sharing of the ministerial duties and make sure that they demonstrate this to the congregation as well. The married couples, in these cases, deliberately make their career decisions while ensuring equal consideration for both parties’ career goals. We term this the “co-equal” strategy.

The analysis of the interviews conducted demonstrates that those clergywomen who connect their lives with a fellow pastor very easily, almost “naturally” drift into the Conformist Strategy. Public opinion in Hungary can be considered more conservative in relation to gender roles in comparison to Western Europe (Tóth 1995; Pongrácz Tiborné 2011; Braun and Scott 2009; Gregor 2016), and religiosity, as everywhere in the world, also goes hand in hand with a more traditional understanding of gender roles in Hungary (Fényes 2014; Pusztai 2020). The clergywomen themselves often emphasized that they were “conservative” or that they believed in the “classic female-male arrangement” (I21, 43). Thus, the expectations of the narrower and broader social and ecclesiastical environment as well as the practical circumstances (for example, single-minister congregations) almost imperceptibly push

clergywomen in the direction of a division of roles closely resembling the traditional clergy family model, both in work and in private life. Adoption of the Co-equal Strategy requires more awareness and reflection (for example, in the equal sharing of professional tasks), but it usually remains formally within the traditional framework; that is, formally, the man is typically the leader. Finally, it is also important to state that the strategies, separated in this way, constitute “pure” analytical types and are the types of career strategies that can be unfolded from the narratives of the clergywomen, not types of persons. Therefore, elements of several of these strategies can find expression in an individual life path, and different strategies may be adopted at different stages of a clergywoman’s life and career.

5. Discussion

In the case of clergy couples working together, the role of the formally equal clergywoman resembles, to a greater or lesser extent, the supporting role of the traditional clergy wife, helping from the background. The mechanisms for and the extent of this resemblance are very diverse: some clergywomen feel it corresponds to their own values and nature, some drift into it with the birth of children and the resulting unequal division of household tasks, and there are those for whom withdrawal constitutes the prevention of personal and professional conflicts or the conscious way of handling them, or a combination of these. What they have in common is that compliance with the classic clergy family model is typically not perceived as an external constraint.

As a result, the female members of clergy couples are often given the less prestigious, marginal tasks within the ministerial work, and the preaching, which is traditionally rated as more prestigious, is often the task of men. In almost all cases, the congregations are typically formally led by the male spouse. Clergy couples thus reflect, on the level of their marital relationship, horizontal segregation—which implies a hierarchical structure as well—characteristic of other formerly male-dominated professions (Wetterer 1999; Offenberger 2013). With some of the clergy couples, though, there is also a conscious effort to share professional and domestic tasks equally, but in these cases too, they typically conform to the traditional gender-specific division of roles.

Thus, both the professional and the domestic division of labor, on the whole, typically correspond to traditional roles and are generally accepted by all actors. The majority of clergywomen/wives in our study describe these conditions as balanced and suitable for them. In some cases, however, we found that the traditional model (over time) causes a sense of frustration and discontent among clergywomen. In such cases, it is important to note that these clergywomen have few opportunities to receive external support and/or to change their situation.

Interpreting the results of our research is subject to potential limitations. Due to the methodology chosen, our research results cannot be generalized, but the validity of the research is high. The focus of our research was the situations, decisions, and strategies of clergywomen within clergy couples. Therefore, the interviews demonstrate, from the respondent’s subjective point of view, the process by which external and social-institutional influences reproduce unequal relations through personal decisions and career strategies. The next phase of our research will be an important addition to this study, in which we include additional points of view in the understanding of these processes, partly through interviews with clergymen and partly through case studies.

6. Conclusions

Two characteristic narratives and two different “framings” of the joint ministerial work could be observed in our research among the clergywomen. One is that, on the one hand, this is very convenient from a practical work organization point of view (they can substitute for each other, they can adapt flexibly to unexpected situations), and on the other hand, it allows everyone to take on the tasks of the ministerial work that are dearer to them. According to this framing, clergy couples are harmonious complements to each other. In practice, however, this arrangement typically involves the traditional

and gender-specific hierarchical division of labor presented above. The other narrative emphasizes the Janus-faced character of this situation. On the one hand, it is good to work together, have a common interest, and help each other, but on the other hand, this harbors many challenges that the young clergymen and clergywomen are not prepared for. Such challenges include finding a division of professional and housework suitable for both parties, managing the interconnectedness of private life and work, harmonizing with the congregation's expectations, or managing possible competition. All this can be a source of conflict. *"Married couples would have to be prepared for the joint work. Because it is very, very difficult. It can be a lot of blessing, but it can be a lot of burden. When looking from the outside, it probably seemed that it was more blessing and success. But if I want to be sincere to myself, then I have to say, it brought about a lot of wounds, too". (I19, 53)*

A very common way of dealing with problems arising during work and private life (sometimes unreflectively, but often well thought out) is for the clergy woman/wife to retreat into the background. Based on the analysis of our interviews, we distinguished three types of characteristic strategies that clergywomen use to cope in their professional and private lives within a clergy couple. In the Co-equal Strategy, receding into the background is not a salient characteristic, or only a formal one (for example, in an administrative sense, the husband is the head of the congregation). In the Conformist Strategy, however, receding into the background is decisive; the clergywoman's own professional career is basically determined by adapting to her husband's career. In another version of this strategy, the Conformist with a Second Career, common professional work is characterized by the same strategy of adaptation and receding into the background, but the clergywomen strive to develop a second or alternative career that is at least partially independent, especially as changing life circumstances permit.

Even though, as church pastors, clergywomen appear in an emancipatory role and, therefore, in principle, weaken gender stereotypes by their mere existence (Jost 2019), the Hungarian female pastors within clergy couples participating in our research typically chose career strategies and developed cooperation arrangements with their husbands in work and private life that tended to reflect and strengthen the traditional social gender order rather than to undermine it.

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