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Depression and Anxiety in Roman Catholic Secular Clergy

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Abstract: *A nationally selected random sample of Roman Catholic secular priests was investigated using the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Form Y. Additionally, a Self-Report Inventory requested information regarding participants' demographics as well as four categories of predictor variables (i.e., Vocational Satisfaction, Social Support, Spiritual Activities, Physical Environment) potentially associated with depression and anxiety. The study yielded a return rate of 64%. Secular clergy reported significantly greater depression and anxiety (both state and trait) than are reported in the general population. Low Vocational Satisfaction was found to be predictive of depression as well as both state and trait anxiety. Additionally, low Social Support was found to be predictive of state and trait anxiety. When the significant predictor variables were conceptually collapsed, it appeared that both people and place were significantly related to Roman Catholic secular priests' experience of depression and anxiety.*

Introduction

Roman Catholic secular clergy (i.e., those who serve in parochial settings in the secular society) in the U.S. face increasing vocational demands, for as their own numbers age and decline, the numbers of parishioners continue to increase. Approximately 23% of the country's population identifies as Roman Catholic (Kenedy & Sons, 2001), translating to 64 million individuals. Serving these millions, however, are only some 30,600 secular priests, reflecting a decline of over 2,500, or 8% of the secular priest population, in the last 10 years (Kenedy & Sons, 2001). If this trend continues, a decline brought about through a combination of death,

departure from the priesthood, and low numbers of men entering the priesthood, in some 50 years there will be no Roman Catholic priests in the U.S., be they secular, religious ordered, or monastic. In the intervening period, those who remain in the vocation will be asked to provide a wider range of services to an ever-greater priest-to-parishioner ratio, and thus will experience heightened challenges in their pastoral ministry duties. Such demands may predispose priests to experience stress in many forms.

Despite the bleak picture painted by this scenario, Roman Catholic secular priests in the U.S. have received minimal empirical attention. In what little research that exists on this population, Virginia (1998) found that Roman Catholic secular clergy reported significantly greater emotional exhaustion than did monastic clergy; they also indicated significantly greater depression in comparison to both Roman Catholic religious and monastic clergy. Overall, Roman Catholic secular clergy reported the highest degree of burnout and depression in comparison to their religious-ordered and monastic brethren. Key contributing factors seemed to be secular clergy's reported lack of social support and sense of isolation.

It seemed prudent as a next step, then, to extend Virginia's research and examine not only priests' levels of depression, but also their levels of anxiety, a construct that has not been examined in this population. Both depression and anxiety may be among the signs of psychological stress that priests manifest, and may affect their professional and personal lives. It was also again prudent to examine related factors in priests' lives that may ameliorate such distress (e.g., degree of satisfaction with vocation, presence of social support from peers and superiors, time spent in spiritual activities, effects of physical environment). Additionally, while Virginia (1998) examined secular, religious ordered, and monastic clergy, the present study investigated only secular clergy. Comprising the majority of the Roman Catholic clergy, these individuals live in the secular community and thus may reflect more normative experiences. Through their work in parishes, they also carry the greatest pastoral responsibility for Roman Catholics in the U.S. Research on this population is vital if we hope to reduce priests' depression and anxiety, and thereby increase their overall psychological health. A healthier priest population may then attract more candidates to the priesthood and may assist in the retention of priests who have experienced, or might experience, depression and anxiety.

This study, then, sought to investigate the degree to which Roman Catholic secular priests report symptoms of depression and anxiety. Depression was assessed through the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) scale; anxiety was assessed through the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Form Y (STAI Form Y; Spielberger &

Krasner, 1988). Additionally, via the Self-Report Inventory (SRI; Virginia, 1998), the research examined four classes of predictor variables (i.e., Vocational Satisfaction, Social Support, Spiritual Life, and Physical Environment) and correlated each feature of each predictor variable with the measures of depression and anxiety.

Method

Participants

Participants were 500 Roman Catholic secular clergy residing in the United States, randomly selected from *The Official Catholic Directory* (Kenedy & Sons, 2000).

Overall, a total of 318 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 64%, including those who responded but declined to participate (n = 40) and those whose data were incomplete (n = 16). The initial mailing yielded a response rate of 50% (n = 248), and the follow-up mailing yielded an additional 14% (n = 70). Of the 64% who returned their surveys, 82% (n = 262) of those were complete and therefore usable for the study. Only 36% (n = 182) of those selected did not respond either to the initial or the follow-up mailing. Thus, data from 52% of the original sample of 500 (n = 262 participants) were used in the analyses. Overall response rates greater than 50% are generally considered satisfactory for mail surveys that include at least one additional follow-up procedure (Day, Dunt, & Day, 1995; Erdos, 1983; Fournier & Kovess, 1993; Heberlein & Baumgartner, 1978; Kittleson, 1995). Thus, both the overall (64%) and the usable response rates (52%) for this study's data are satisfactory.

Measures

A survey questionnaire packet, addressed by hand, was mailed to each potential participant. This packet contained a cover letter describing the study and explaining the individual's right to refuse participation, as well as confidentiality procedures. The enclosed instruments included the 15-item Self-Report Inventory to gather basic demographic information and assess the four classes of predictor variables; the 20 questions that comprise the CES-D (the depression instrument); and the 40 questions of the STAI Form Y to measure anxiety. Thus, there were a total of 75 questions.

The Self-Report Inventory (SRI; Virginia, 1998) consists of 15 questions, the first 4 of which ask for basic demographic information (i.e., age, race, years of priesthood, number of clergy and/or religious with whom participant currently lives). Among the remaining questions, one addresses vocational satisfaction, four address social support, four address spiritual life, and two address physical environment. These items are scored on a seven-point Likert scale,

where the lowest anchor (i.e., 0) indicates the absence/lack of the construct being measured (e.g., vocational satisfaction, social support, etc.), and the highest anchor (i.e., 6) indicates total, extreme, or great presence of the construct.

The CES-D is a 20-question self-report instrument developed to assess depressive symptomatology within the general population (Radloff, 1977). It is also used to study relationships between depression and other variables across populations (Radloff, 1977), and as such was particularly appropriate for this study. Using a four-point Likert scale where 0 = Rarely or None of the Time (Less than 1 day), 1 = Some or Little of the Time (1–2 days), 2 = Occasionally or a Moderate Amount of Time (3–4 days), and 3 = Most or All of the Time (5–7 days), participants respond to questions such as "I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me," "I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with the help from my family or friends," " I thought my life had been a failure," "I felt fearful," " My sleep was restless," or "I had crying spells," basing their responses on how they have felt during the last week. Higher scores indicate greater depressive symptomatology, with a maximum possible score of 60. Radloff (1977) established a cutoff score of 16 or higher as indicative of depressed mood. Studies have found reliability coefficients ranging from .80 to .88 for the instrument (Beeber, Shea, & McCorkle, 1998; Knight, Williams, McGee, & Olaman, 1997; Scott & Melin, 1998). In addition, convergent validity has been supported via the instrument's correlation with other measures of depression (Radloff, 1977; Weissman, Sholomskas, Pottenger, Prusoff, & Locke, 1977). Coyle and Roberge (1992) found that the CES-D had good factorial validity, and Weissman et al. found the CES-D to have an excellent rating (i.e., greater than .90) in its ability to distinguish depressed from nondepressed individuals.

The STAI Form Y (Spielberger & Krasner, 1988) is a self-report instrument designed to assess anxiety as both a state and a trait, and has been used extensively in research and practice. One 20-item section assesses state anxiety (Form Y-1); the other 20-item section assesses trait anxiety (Form Y-2). Spielberger and Krasner defined state anxiety as a varying emotional reaction, one that may fluctuate according to life circumstances, while trait anxiety is viewed as a more stable individual proneness to anxiety. The 20-item state anxiety scale is scored along a four-point intensity scale that ranges from 1 = Not At All, to 4 = Very Much So when responding to such questions as, *at this moment* "I feel calm," "I feel frightened," or " I feel pleasant." The 20-item trait anxiety scale is scored using a four-point frequency scale that ranges from 1 = Almost Never, to 4 = Almost Always when responding to questions such as *generally* "I feel rested," "I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be," or "I am content."

Total scores for both scales range from 20–80. Clinically, trait anxiety scores at the 80th percentile or above are indicative of significant anxiety, while scores below the 20th percentile are indicative of low anxiety or the use of psychological defenses (e.g., repression, denial). Scores in the middle range depict an average, nonclinical status (Demos & Prout, 1994). Based on two different samples, one involving 424 10th-grade high school students, and the other 1,728 U.S. Air Force recruits, Spielberger (1983) found that four factors provide the best explanatory model of the STAI's structure: State Anxiety Present, State Anxiety Absent, Trait Anxiety Absent, Trait Anxiety Present. Spielberger and Krasner (1988) have reported high internal consistency (.86 to .95) for both scales, based on large, independent samples of students, working adults, and military recruits. Furthermore, both scales' alpha coefficients for younger, middle-aged, and older working adults remained high over the age range. Additionally, Spielberger and Krasner found good test-retest reliability in the trait scale (.65 to .86). Thus, the internal consistency of both scales of the STAI Form Y is high. With regard to validity, the high correlations between the trait scale and other measures of anxiety (i.e., Cattell & Scheier's Anxiety Scale Questionnaire, 1963; Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale, 1953), which range from .73 to .85, suggest high concurrent validity. The trait scale has also demonstrated good ability to distinguish psychiatric patients from normal controls (Spielberger, 1983).

Results

Upon reviewing the demographic data (i.e., age, race, years in priesthood, number of priests with whom one lives), we found that the only significant differences in participants' responses occurred with regard to age and years of priesthood. Specifically, Hispanic/Latino respondents (a very small portion of the total sample, as indicated below), were significantly younger than their White/European American peers, and also reported fewer years in the priesthood. These data, arising from less than three percent of the sample, were deemed to be descriptive of who these individuals were, but were not considered salient with regard to their actual experiences of depression or anxiety. Thus, we considered the sample as homogenous and conducted all statistical analyses on the collective data.

The Self-Report Inventory (SRI)

With regard to basic demographics, the mean age of the sample was M = 50.13 (SD = 8.96) years. White/European Americans comprised 95% of the sample, Hispanic/Latino Americans less than 3% of the sample, and Asian Americans less than 1% of the sample; 2% marked "Other" for race. The sample reported a mean of M = 20.72 (SD =

10.19) years in the priesthood and lived with a mean of *M* = 1.40 (*SD* = 5.11) other religious or clergy.

The first of the four predictor variables assessed Vocational Satisfaction. Using a Likert scale where 0 = No Satisfaction and 6 = Total Satisfaction, respondents reported a vocational satisfaction of *M* = 4.80 (*SD* = 0.90).

The second predictor variable measured the presence of Social Support. Using a Likert scale where 0 = No Support and 6 = Total Support, the sample indicated support from superiors at *M* = 3.70 (*SD* = 1.66) and from peers at *M* = 4.26 (*SD* = 1.31). Using a Likert scale where 0 = No Opportunity and 6 = Great Opportunity to be in the company of other priests outside of formal ecclesiastical or liturgical duties, the mean for participants was *M* = 3.37 (*SD* = 1.66). On a Likert scale where 0 = Not Easy at All and 6 = Great Ease to discuss a concern about work or vocation with someone who will help, the sample's mean was *M* = 4.09 (*SD* = 1.64).

The third predictor variable examined priests' Spiritual Life. On a Likert scale where 0 = No Importance and 6 = Great Importance of the role of silence in life, the mean was *M* = 4.91 (*SD* = 1.11). When responding to a question about degree of difficulty completing the Divine Office daily, where 0 = No Difficulty and 6 = Great Difficulty, the mean was *M* = 3.83 (*SD* = 1.99). In rating the degree of use of a spiritual director, where 0 = Very Little and 6 = Very Great, the mean was *M* = 2.69 (*SD* = 2.10). Finally, respondents' indicated that they engaged in a mean of *M* = 35.14 (*SD* = 31.64) minutes of nonduty spiritual reading daily.

The fourth predictor variable assessed the importance of the Physical Environment. When rating the perceived degree of importance of the physical environment on vocation as a priest, where 0 = No Importance and 6 = Extremely Important, the mean was *M* = 4.34 (*SD* = 1.28). When assessing priests' perception of the impact that the physical environment plays in prayer life, where 0 = No Importance and 6 = Great Importance, the mean was *M* = 4.27 (*SD* = 1.22).

The CES-D

The mean for the CES-D was *M* = 10.04 (*SD* = 8.80). The sample revealed that 20% (*n* = 51) met or exceeded the established cutoff for depression.

The STAI

The mean for the STAI Form Y-1 (State) was *M* = 31.60 (*SD* = 10.08) and for STAI Form Y-2 (Trait) *M* = 33.63 (*SD* = 9.62). These data were compared to normative data provided by Spielberger (1983) for a normal adult population of males aged 50–69. Using the recommended 80th percentile cutoff score as being indicative of significant anxiety, 15% (*n* = 38) of our sample

met this criterion for state anxiety. Using the same comparison, 20% ($n = 51$) of the present sample met the criterion for trait anxiety.

CES-D Multiple Regression with SRI Predictor Variables

A stepwise regression was performed using SPSS^{x} to ascertain which SRI predictor variables accounted for the greatest variance in CES-D scores. Three significant predictor variables emerged. After step 1, with Vocational Satisfaction in the equation, $R^2 = .31$, $F(1, 212) = 95.96$, $p < .001$. After step 2, with Importance of Physical Environment on Vocation in the equation, $R^2 = .02$, $F(2, 211) = 7.22$, $p < .01$. After step 3, with Importance of the Role of Silence entered in the equation, $R^2 = .02$, $F(3, 210) = 5.24$, $p < .05$.

STAI Form Y Multiple Regression with SRI Predictor Variables

A stepwise regression was also performed using SPSS^{x} to ascertain which SRI predictor variables accounted for the greatest variance in STAI Form Y scores. Looking first at state anxiety scores (Form Y-1), two significant predictor variables emerged. After step 1, with Vocational Satisfaction in the equation, $R^2 = .22$, $F(1, 212) = 58.7$, $p < .001$. After step 2, with Support from Peers in the equation, $R^2 = .02$, $F(2, 211) = 6.28$, $p < .01$.

Looking now at trait anxiety scores (Form Y-2), two significant predictor variables again emerged here. After step 1, with Vocational Satisfaction in the equation, $R^2 = .24$, $F(1, 212) = 68.55$, $p < .001$. After step 2, with Support from Peers in the equation, $R^2 = .02$, $F(2, 211) = 5.08$, $p < .05$.

Correlations Between Predictor (i.e., SRI) and Outcome Measures (i.e., CES-D; STAI Form Y)

A multiple correlations matrix is presented for SRI, CES-D, and both the state and trait scales of the STAI (see Table I). Note that for the CES-D, eight SRI variables were found to be significantly correlated. With regard to STAI Form Y-1 (State), there were seven significant correlations with the SRI. Finally, with regard to STAI Form Y-2 (Trait), there were six significant correlations with the SRI.

Correlations Between Outcome Measures (i.e., CES-D and STAI Form Y)

Significant correlations were also found between the outcome measures. The correlation between the CES-D and the STAI Form Y-1 (State) was $r = .77$ ($p < .01$); between the CES-D and the STAI Form Y-2 (Trait), $r = .75$ ($p < .01$); and between the STAI Form Y-1 (State) and the STAI Form Y-2 (Trait), $r = .80$ ($p < .01$).

Discussion

As a brief overview, this sample of Roman Catholic secular clergy consisted predominantly of White/European American, middle-aged men who had been in the priesthood for over two decades, and who lived with only one other member of the clergy. As a group, they were generally satisfied with their vocation and experienced moderate degrees of social support. Silence generally had an important role in their spiritual lives (showing the highest mean for the SRI predictor variables), they reported moderate difficulty completing the Divine Office daily, and engaged in just over one-half hour of nonduty spiritual reading each day. Relatively few participants reported using a spiritual director (showing the lowest mean for SRI predictor variables). Finally, they reported that their physical environment was moderately important to their lives.

Participants' responses in this study yielded a rate of depressed mood approximately seven times greater than that reported in the general population. Point prevalence for Major Depressive Disorder, which lists depressed mood in its first criterion, in an adult community sample has varied from 2–3% for men (DSM-IVTR, 2000). As stated in the DSM-IV-TR (2000), this prevalence rate appears to be unrelated to ethnicity, education, income, or marital status. Virginia (1998) also found elevated rates of depression among his sample of Roman Catholic clergy. Thus, both studies have found secular priests to be significantly more depressed than the general population, a finding that may appropriately cause concern for the Roman Catholic church. Depressed clergy may be rendered less effective in performing a vocation whose demands continue to increase. Such impairment may also likely affect those whom priests serve (i.e., parishioners).

Similarly, these participants reported rates of state anxiety that were five times greater than the general population, and rates of trait anxiety that were approximately seven times greater than the normal population. Because the STAI Form Y assesses anxiety as a global concept, rather than as a specific form of anxiety, we considered Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) the most appropriate comparison for prevalence rates. The first diagnostic criterion for this disorder is "excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least six months" (DSM-IV-TR, p. 476). This criterion appears to capture both the state and trait of anxiety as measured by the STAI Form Y. The DSM-IV-TR (2000) reports that the one-year prevalence rate for GAD in a community sample was approximately 3%. Thus, not only is this sample more depressed than the general population, but it is also more anxious, suggestive of marked psychological distress that, as posited above, may well affect the

performance of their vocational duties.

With regard to the predictor variables of the SRI, Vocational Satisfaction was most predictive of depression: Those respondents who reported being less vocationally satisfied also reported higher scores (i.e., greater depression) on the CES-D. This SRI variable appears to be the most salient in predicting depression among Roman Catholic secular clergy, and makes intuitive sense, for clergy who are vocationally satisfied are less likely to experience depression. In addition, two other SRI variables were found to be predictive of depression: Importance of Physical Environment and Importance of Role of Silence. It would seem, then, that contentment with the physical environment and with the role of silence in one's life ameliorate the potential for depression among Roman Catholic secular clergy. Perhaps the presence of a pleasant physical environment, especially one in which they may find needed moments of silence, reduces the potential for priests' psychological distress.

When examining SRI variables that are predictive for state anxiety, the results again indicate that Vocational Satisfaction is the greatest predictor of state anxiety scores: Low Vocational Satisfaction was predictive of greater state anxiety. Only one other variable, Support from Peers, was found to be similarly predictive of state anxiety. Trait anxiety was also best predicted by Vocational Satisfaction, again in the same direction (i.e., low Vocational Satisfaction predicted greater trait anxiety). A second SRI variable also demonstrated similarly directioned predictive power: Support from Peers. Both forms of anxiety, then, appear to be affected by priests' sense of being vocationally content, as well as the presence of support from colleagues. Perhaps the potential for anxiety is held at bay when priests feel good about what they do, and enjoy relationships with peers who are nurturing and supportive during the inevitable periods of stress and challenge.

Several SRI variables were also significantly correlated with depression: Vocational Satisfaction, Support from Superiors, Support from Peers, Opportunity for Company with Other Priests, Ease of Discussion about Work or Vocational Concerns, Difficulty in Completing the Divine Office Daily, Importance of Physical Environment on Vocation, Impact of Physical Environment on Prayer Life. Thus, all four classes of SRI predictor variables (i.e., Vocational Satisfaction, Social Support, Spiritual Life, Physical Environment) significantly correlate with depression in this sample. Depression, therefore, is likely influenced by a constellation of factors for this population, findings consistent with those reported by Virginia (1998). Not only is satisfaction with one's vocation important, but so, too, is the presence of social support, the ability to attend to one's daily spiritual life, and the nature of the physical environment. While not

necessarily causative of depression, the absence of or difficulty in engaging in these factors appears related to depression in Roman Catholic secular priests. Those, however, who are able to access social support in a pleasing environment while remaining connected to their daily spiritual tasks may be buffered from depression.

Significant correlations also emerged between SRI variables and the state anxiety subscale of the STAI Form Y: Vocational Satisfaction, Support from Superiors, Support from Peers, Opportunity for Company with Other Priests, Ease of Discussion about Work or Vocational Concern, Difficulty in Completing the Divine Office Daily, and Importance of Physical Environment on Vocation. State anxiety was also found to correlate signifcantly with depression. These same SRI variables were also significantly correlated with depression, reinforcing their importance in maintaining the psychological well-being of Roman Catholic secular priests. Such factors appear important, then, not only for depression, but also for state anxiety.

With regard to trait anxiety, the following significant correlations emerged with SRI variables: Vocational Satisfaction, Support from Superiors, Support from Peers, Opportunity for Company with Other Priests, Ease of Discussion about Work or Vocational Concern, and Importance of Physical Environment on Vocation. Here again, these same variables were also significantly correlated with depression, as well as with state anxiety. Additionally, trait anxiety was significantly correlated with state anxiety, as well as with depression.

Interestingly, Spiritual Life, one of the four classes of predictor variables from the SRI, did not emerge here as a significant correlation. It seems that the activities encompassed by this variable (i.e., role of silence, daily completion of Divine Office, daily spiritual reading, use of spiritual director) are more related to fluctuating (i.e., state) forms of anxiety than to the potentially more chronic trait anxiety. Thus, Spiritual Life does appear to be related to the more variable state anxiety, but appears intriguingly unrelated to the more stable trait anxiety. Time may be a component here, but its precise contribution merits further investigation.

The emerging picture, then, is one in which a range of factors appears to affect the psychological health of Roman Catholic secular clergy. The distress they may experience, whether in the form of depression and/or anxiety, may be powerfully influenced by their sense of vocational satisfaction, the presence of supportive peers and superiors, the ability to engage regularly in their spiritual life, and a pleasant physical environment. As we look at the collective findings, Vocational Satisfaction alone was found to be most predictive for depression, as well as for both state and trait anxiety. Support from Peers was also found to be a significant predictor for both forms of anxiety.

These results affirm the importance of two factors that contribute to the psychological well-being of Roman Catholic secular priests: the more vocationally satisfied they feel, and the more support from both peers and superiors they experience, the less they report psychological distress. Thus, not only is their contentment with their vocation, or calling, as a priest highly salient to these participants' mental health, but so is their sense of having support from those who share that calling, from those who understand the unique challenges of that very calling.

Clearly, then, Vocational Satisfaction appears to be a highly important variable with regard to depression and anxiety among Roman Catholic secular priests. At this point in time, however, no working definition of this construct yet exists in the literature. One might hypothesize that perhaps Vocational Satisfaction is an overarching concept that is more specifically defined by the other variables that were also revealed as statistically significant concepts in explaining depression and/or anxiety. For example, it may be that without support from both superiors and peers, Roman Catholic secular clergy experience less vocational satisfaction. Additionally, when they have the opportunity to be in the company of other priests and to experience ease in discussing work and/or vocational concerns with their confreres, vocational satisfaction may be enhanced. The physical environment also appears to be an important element in increasing vocational satisfaction. At this point, we do not know how the specific parish assignment and/or the physical facilities themselves, or other factors of the physical environment, may contribute to this finding. Further research is warranted. Thus, it might be posited that these variables are further characterized as representing the importance of both people and place in affecting Vocational Satisfaction. The people, be they superiors or peers, and the place (i.e., physical environment) appear to be the elements that consistently contribute to Vocational Satisfaction. Further research would do well to examine what "Vocational Satisfaction" means within this population, and whether, indeed, it may be composed of factors such as those suggested above.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the lower response rate than has been reported in previous research conducted on Roman Catholic clergy (Virginia, 1994, 1998). Although identical methodology was employed across the studies, with the only variant that the present study did not include a $2 stipend, the current study's response rate was lower than its predecessors. Relatedly, approximately 47% of the present sample did not return a usable response. We do not know what may have contributed to the lack of response, and thus do not know these

Roman Catholic secular priests' possible experiences of depression or anxiety.

Previous findings (Virginia, 1998) reported a markedly higher rate of depression (i.e., 72%) for Roman Catholic secular clergy. When compared to this study's reported rate of depression (i.e., 20%), and noting the use of the same instrument (CES-D), it is uncertain what may explain the disparity between the two studies' reported rates of depression. Although the present participants reported a rate of depression lower than those of Virginia (1998), they nevertheless still reported rates of depression approximately seven times higher than those found in the general population.

In addition, Vocational Satisfaction emerged as a highly salient predictive variable for both depression and anxiety in this study, findings that echo previous research (Virginia, 1998). In both of these studies, however, this construct was measured by a single question: "Please circle one of the numbers below to rate your self-evaluation of your personal degree of vocational satisfaction as a priest in your present situation." We do not yet have a definition of vocational satisfaction relevant for Roman Catholic secular priests, and thus do not know upon what basis our respondents answered this question. Though this variable continues to emerge as significant, we are limited at the present time in understanding exactly what our participants considered when they responded to this query.

Finally, the SRI was designed specifically for a previous study (i.e., Virginia, 1998). While it possesses face validity, the operationalization of its constructs has not been substantiated empirically. The instrument also as yet lacks psychometric data regarding its reliability and validity.

Implications and Future Directions

As Roman Catholicism faces declining numbers of priests, these results might be useful in helping to reverse this trend. The importance of Vocational Satisfaction cannot be overstated: this construct has repeatedly emerged as highly salient, and thus merits appropriate consideration. A first step, as indicated above, would be to ascertain what Vocational Satisfaction means to this population. Once the construct is more definitively understood, then steps can be taken to enhance Roman Catholic secular priests' vocational lives. Additionally, the presence and support of both superiors and peers may well ameliorate the potential for depression and anxiety among the secular clergy. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the physical environment in which secular clergy live and work, for attention to this domain may also diminish potential psychological distress.

These results are important not only for individual clergy to consider, but also for the Church corporate. Perhaps broad-based diocesan programs targeted at increasing the awareness of Roman Catholic secular clergy to the significantly higher rates of depression and anxiety found within their ranks might be an initial way to approach the problem of their psychological distress. Understanding those components of daily life that appear to ameliorate depression and anxiety and therein may contribute to greater vocational satisfaction may enhance priests' psychological functioning. Additionally, evaluating the degree and quality of personal interactions and supportive interchange between fellow priests and their superiors could also be addressed, for our results suggest that healthy relationships with superiors and peers are related to lower levels of depression and anxiety. Furthermore, conversation pertaining to the quality of the physical environment wherein their ministry is performed, and the impact of that environment on their psychological well-being, may also be worthwhile to examine.

These results also have implications for the training of future Roman Catholic secular clergy. Faculty at theologates may find it prudent to foster an appreciation and awareness of the psychological utility of good relationships with superiors and peers among the seminarians. Likewise, ongoing educational presentations directed toward creating an appreciation and understanding of the role of the physical environment and its impact on the psychological well-being of the minister may be advised.

Clearly, there are many roads to Rome, as revealed in this study. It is incumbent upon the Church to begin exploring, and traversing, these paths for the sake not only of their secular clergy, but also of their parishioners.

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Appendix

Table I

Correlations of Predictor Variables (i.e., SRI) with Depression (i.e., CES-D) and Anxiety (i.e., STAI Form Y) Scores

SRI	*N*	CES-D	STAI Y-1	STAY Y-2
AGE	260	-.08	-.04	-.07
YEARS	260	-.10	-.06	-.09
CONF	257	.01	.02	-.01
VOCSAT	227	-.56**	-.47**	-.50**
SUPER	260	-.23**	-.29**	-.26**
PEERS	261	-.25**	-.28**	-.28**
PEVOC	261	.16*	.13*	.14*
PRAY	260	.12*	.08	.05
SIL	258	.07	.00	.01
DIVOFF	255	.19**	.18**	.08
COMP	259	-.16*	-.14	-.19**
READ	257	-.04	-.04	-.10
CON	259	-.19**	-.22**	-.22**
DIR	258	-.03	-.09	-.04

Note. SRI = Self-Report Inventory; CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Study—Depression Scale; STAI Y-1 = State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Form Y-1 (State Anxiety); STAI Y-2 = State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Form Y-2 (Trait Anxiety). SRI Items: AGE = age; YEARS = number of years of ordained priesthood; CONF = number of confreres with whom one lives; VOCSAT = vocational satisfaction; SUPER = support from superior; PEERS = support from peers; PEVOC = impact of physical environment on vocation; PRAY = impact of physical environment on prayer life; SIL = role of silence; DIVOFF = divine office; COMP = opportunity for company of other clergy; READ = daily spiritual reading; CON = ease of discussing concerns; DIR = use of spiritual director.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.