

1-1-2012

An Investigation of the Strategies Employed by Clergy and their Spouses to Prevent and Cope with Interpersonal Isolation

Ryan C. Staley
George Fox University

This research is a product of the Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Staley, Ryan C., "An Investigation of the Strategies Employed by Clergy and their Spouses to Prevent and Cope with Interpersonal Isolation" (2012). *Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)*. Paper 127.
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/psyd/127>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Psychology at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.

An Investigation of the Strategies Employed by Clergy and their Spouses
to Prevent and Cope with Interpersonal Isolation

by

Ryan C. Staley

Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology

George Fox University

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology

in Clinical Psychology

Newberg, Oregon

December 10, 2012

An Investigation of the Strategies Employed by Clergy and their Spouses to Prevent and Cope
with Interpersonal Isolation

Ryan C. Staley

has been approved

at the

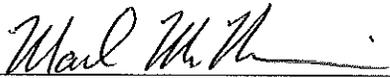
Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology

George Fox University

As a Dissertation for the Psy.D. degree

Approval

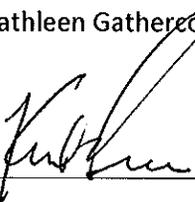
Signatures:



Mark McMinn, PhD, Chair



Kathleen Gathercoal, PhD



Kurt Free, PhD

2-10-12

Date

An Investigation of the Strategies Employed by Clergy and their Spouses
to Prevent and Cope with Interpersonal Isolation

Ryan C. Staley

Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology

George Fox University

Newberg, Oregon

Abstract

As professionals in a demanding field, clergy and their spouses face many challenges that have implications for their own health and wellbeing. Maintaining good health is critical for any service provider to be effective in his or her particular role. Numerous studies have affirmed that interpersonal isolation is 1 of the unique challenges clergy and their spouses face. This study examined the experience of interpersonal isolation among a sample of clergy serving in a senior pastor role by having them complete a modified form of the Social Support Questionnaire, Short Form (SSQSR), as well as 6 open-ended interview questions. Data on clergy spouses were not included in the final analysis due to low response rate. The interview responses of clergy participants were compared based on a median split of the SSQRS satisfaction scores. Analysis of clergy responses revealed several prominent themes in the following areas: barriers to establishing supportive relationships, strategies to establishing and maintaining supportive relationships, lack of support, and coping with loneliness. Identified themes as well as clergy

responses which exemplified these themes are discussed. Pastors with S scores at or above the median more frequently indicated that being transparent and vulnerable is a means by which they establish and maintain close, supportive relationships with others.

Table of Contents

Approval Page	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Positive Psychology: Fostering Strengths and Figuring out what Works	1
Challenges Faced by Clergy and Their Spouses	3
Boundary violations.....	3
Expectations and time demands	4
Relocation.....	6
Financial compensation	7
Social isolation	8
Coping With the Challenges of Ministry.....	10
Design of the Present Study	12
Chapter 2: Methods	13
Participants	13
Instruments/Materials	14
Social Support Questionnaire (Short Form).....	14
Open-ended questions	14
Procedure	15
Chapter 3: Results and Discussion	17
Barriers to Developing and Maintaining Close Relationships	18
Time.....	18

Expectations	19
Transparency/vulnerability	19
Relational boundaries	20
Relocation.....	20
Trust/confidentiality	21
Strategies for Developing and Maintaining Close Relationships.....	22
Intentionality.....	22
Participation in groups.....	23
Vulnerability, authenticity, and transparency.....	24
Common interests.....	25
Lack of Support	25
Self-disclosure	26
No examples	26
Expect a lack of support	27
Conflict/challenges within the Church	27
Decision making.....	28
Coping with Loneliness.....	29
Friends and family.....	29
Hobbies and recreational activities.....	30
Withdrawal	30
Spiritual discipline.....	31
Entertainment	31

Limitations.....	32
Conclusion.....	34
References	35
Appendix A Social Support Questionnaire, Short Form (SSQSR).....	39
Appendix B Demographic Questionnaire.....	42
Appendix C Open-Ended Questions.....	44
Appendix D Informed Consent.....	46
Appendix E Curriculum Vitae.....	48

Chapter 1

Introduction

Though the challenges inherent in ministry can be overwhelming and depleting at times for clergy and their spouses, many are able to thrive and experience fulfillment in their lives and ministry. A common finding among clergy and their spouses is that they often struggle with a sense of loneliness and isolation typically connected to the unique demands and occupational hazards associated with full-time ministry (Ellison & Mattila, 1983; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Warner & Carter, 1984). In a profession that requires nearly constant contact with people, it is a distressing paradox that clergy frequently feel disconnected and alone. Given this stark reality it is clear that more research is needed to investigate the specific ways in which clergy and their spouses are attempting to surmount and cope with the challenge of interpersonal isolation. The objective of this study is to ascertain the types of strategies being employed by clergy and their spouses to both prevent and cope with the experience of interpersonal isolation. Specific attention was given to the strategies applied by clergy, and spouses of clergy, who have demonstrated success or difficulty in this area as indicated by scores on a measure of social support.

Positive Psychology: Fostering Strengths and Figuring out what Works

Over the last decade, positive psychology has gained momentum and achieved recognition as an important advance in the science of human behavior. Hundreds of articles and

numerous books related to positive psychology have been published and provide indisputable evidence of the growth in this movement. Positive psychology has been a reaction to the traditional emphasis in the psychological literature on maladjustment and suffering. Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi (2000) defined positive psychology as “the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions” (p. 410). The focus of study in this burgeoning field is on what works, which provides a much needed balance to the disease and deficit model which has dominated theory, research, and practice in the discipline of psychology for many decades. How humans thrive and flourish in both benign and adverse conditions has been an important area explored in positive psychology and offers a more complete picture of human functioning that yields valuable information regarding prevention and coping (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Sheldon & King, 2001) .

The positive psychology movement has potential implications for research with clergy. Research regarding the health and functioning of clergy and their families has steadily emerged over that last few decades, even reaching the popular press. For example, two recent New York Times articles highlighted salient stressors faced by many clergy today, as well as the adverse impact of these stressors on pastors (McDonald, 2010; Vitello, 2010). But the research literature pertaining to clergy and their families has generally focused on problems and deficits. Although the information gleaned from this body of research has provided valuable information regarding the challenges and suffering experienced by many pastors and their families, it lacks an important balance achieved by research that emphasizes the strengths and resources of clergy who are thriving. Determining what works is equally as important as figuring out what is wrong and how to fix it. The following sections will present the research findings to date regarding the

stressors most often encountered by clergy and their families, as well as what has been discovered about what pastors and their spouses are doing to enhance coping and resiliency.

Challenges Faced by Clergy and Their Spouses

As recognition of the many significant capacities in which clergy and their spouses serve increases, the need to be more cognizant of and informed about the unique challenges they face has also become more apparent. In order to better serve those who have chosen to commit their lives to the service of others, it is imperative that researchers and clinicians obtain a clearer understanding of the stressors faced by clergy and their spouses so that effective and adequate support and assistance can be rendered. Blanton (1992) identified five external stressors with which clergy families are frequently challenged. These include intrusion of family boundaries, expectations and time demands, mobility (relocation), financial compensation, and social support.

Boundary violations. Reports of clergy and clergy spouses in past, as well as more recent studies have revealed that a lack of privacy is a serious concern (Gleason, 1977; Hill et al., 2003). Clergy and their families often encounter intrusions on private time in the form of work-related phone calls, unexpected visits to their home, and unanticipated encounters with church members in public settings. Lee (1999) found that more than 90% of his sample of Protestant pastors indicated that they had experienced family and private time interruptions in the past 6 months. There appears to be little opportunity for clergy and their spouses to take off their clergy hats and step out of their professional roles. The pressure to be “on” at all times is a major source of stress for clergy and their families. Other studies have confirmed that family boundary violations are a typical struggle encountered by clergy and their families (Gleason, 1977; Hall,

1997; Hill et al., 2003). The toll these intrusions take on the health of clergy and their families has been established in past research. Specifically, boundary violations have been found to be related to decreased marital, parental, and life satisfaction for both clergy and their spouses, as well as dissatisfaction with family functioning among clergy families (Morris & Blanton, 1994; Ostrander, Henry, & Fournier, 1994). Morris and Blanton (1998) found that both husbands and wives reported that their competence in family functioning was affected by various stressors, including intrusiveness. Other important findings suggest that boundary violations are negatively associated with clergy attitude and well being and serve to impede the process of differentiation in families and individualization in family members (Blanton, 1992; Lee, 1999).

Expectations and time demands. A related area of concern for many clergy and their spouses is the myriad responsibilities and unrealistic expectations imposed upon them. The frequent intrusions on family and private time documented in the aforementioned studies denote the high demand for availability put on pastors. Hill et al. (2003) found that most of the clergy in their study felt overwhelmed by their workload and that the majority worked 60 hours a week or more. Additionally, spouses in the study reported that one of the biggest difficulties clergy families confront is the reality that their clergy spouse is constantly on call to handle church-related crises and as a result little time is left for family activities. Interruptions in personal and family time due to church and parishioner emergencies and augmentation of an already overwhelming work load are common experiences for clergy (Lee, 1999).

The high expectations placed on clergy and clergy families pertain to perceived character issues as well as availability. Gleason (1977) found that “perfectionism” and the “goldfish bowl” experience were two of the top rated stressors reported by clergy and their spouses. The pressure

to be the model family and paragons of virtue and spirituality are common expectations experienced by clergy and their families (Baker & Scott, 1992). Spouses in the Hill et al. (2003) study reported that they believed their families were under intense scrutiny. The expectation, as perceived by clergy and their spouses, appears to be perfection. To demonstrate anything less may incur the disapproval of others or worse, job loss, for not measuring up to this unrealistic and ideal standard. Lee (1999) found that criticism by church leaders and church members was experienced by many of the clergy participants and that criticism by church leaders was rated as having the greatest impact on self and family as compared to the other ministry-related demands. Fewer participants overall in Lee's study acknowledged having experienced criticism of family members or family spending (10% and 20%, respectively), but those who did report having these experiences rated their impact as relatively high compared to the impact scores of other ministry demands.

The deleterious effects of constant scrutiny and the imposition of unrealistic demands on clergy and their families are clear. Ellison and Mattilla (1983) found that the most significant difficulties faced by Christian leaders included anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, frustration, spiritual dryness, and disappointment. Participants in their study perceived unrealistic expectations and time demands to be the precipitants of the aforementioned difficulties. Warner and Carter (1984) examined the differences in quality of life between male pastors and their wives and that of male and female laypersons. Results of their study revealed that pastors experienced higher levels of loneliness and lower levels of marital adjustment compared to lay participants. Warner and Carter believed that the increased loneliness experienced by pastors was a result of burnout and diminished marital satisfaction, which in turn are both likely increased by

the extensive demands of the pastorate. More recent studies have provided further evidence of the negative impact of unrelenting and unreasonable expectations and demands on the wellbeing, life satisfaction and functioning of clergy and their families (Hill et al., 2003; Lee, 1999; Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Morris & Blanton, 1998).

Relocation. Many clergy and their families are confronted with the challenge of frequent job-related moves that can disrupt family functioning, be a significant source of stress, and adversely affect overall life satisfaction (Morris & Blanton, 1994; Morris & Blanton, 1998). Often relocation pulls clergy families away from relatives and other well-established support systems that provided much needed relational resources. Hill et al. (2003) found that clergy and their spouses often reported experiencing extreme stress related to relocation. Major adjustments to new people, settings, and challenges, as well as moving cost and the moving process were perceived by study participants as the most stressful aspect of relocation. Establishing strong and secure relationships with a network of friends and relatives is no doubt difficult with frequent moves. Grief and loss, as well as feelings of loneliness and powerlessness become salient and painful experiences for clergy families who are often on the move (Hill et al., 2003).

Frame (1998) sought to determine whether there was a significant difference in the level of well-being assessed in United Methodist clergy and clergy spouses who had been relocated as compared to a group of nonrelocated United Methodist clergy and clergy spouses. The study results revealed no significant difference between relocators and nonrelocators on a measure of well-being. However, clergy spouses in general were found to have significantly lower well-being than did clergy participants. These findings indicate that relocation may have a more negative impact on clergy spouses. Frame proposed that clergy spouses may experience lower

levels of well-being because they often have to cut emotional connections with established friends and forge relationships with new people when relocated, while clergy are able to maintain relationships with their clergy colleagues who work within the same denomination.

Financial compensation. Struggles and stresses related to monetary concerns is another significant challenge confronted by clergy and their families (Blanton, 1992). Mace and Mace (1982) reported that clergy rank 325 out of 432 occupations in terms of salary despite being ranked in the top 10% of the population in terms of education. Unlike other professions in which compensation is often based on years of experience, education, and performance, clergy compensation is frequently determined by other factors such as church budgets, traditions, and the visions of lay leaders (London & Wiseman, 1993).

The consequences of these financial stressors appear to take a significant toll on clergy health. Goetz (1992) presented the results of a survey of approximately 350 pastors on the broad subject of family matters. Results of the survey revealed that 70% of the clergy respondents believed their compensation contributed to marital conflicts and 22% felt forced to supplement their church income. Another interesting finding was that 53% of the respondents indicated that their self-worth was affected, both positively and negatively, by the level of financial compensation they received. Other studies have offered evidence of the adverse impact of financial stressors on clergy and their spouses. Morris and Blanton (1994) surveyed a random sample of 272 clergy husbands and their wives from six denominations and found an inverse relationship between all five major domains of stressors experienced by clergy and their spouses, including financial compensation, and life satisfaction. In a later study Morris and Blanton (1999) found that stress-related physical symptoms and emotional wellbeing in a sample of

clergy were significantly influenced by financial stresses associated with various aspects of their provider role.

Social isolation. The experience of Isolation and loneliness among clergy and their spouses, as well as its adverse impact on functioning and well being is a common finding in research pertaining to challenges frequently encountered by clergy and their spouses (Ellison & Mattila, 1983; Hileman, 2008; Lee, 2007; Morris & Blanton, 1998; Warner & Carter, 1984). Hall (1997) reviewed research pertaining to the personal functioning of clergy in various domains. The summary of his findings clearly identified a lack of social support as a significant and common stressor faced by this population and that deficiencies in this area were inversely related to marital, parental, and life satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Hill et al. (2003), in a more recent study, also found that clergy struggle with isolation issues. In particular, clergy participants reported feeling detached from the rest of the community leading to a sense of loneliness and vulnerability. Many clergy in their study asserted that they did not have close friends in whom they could confide and seek support from in times of need. A 1991 survey conducted by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth revealed a similar finding with 70% of the respondents indicating that they did not have someone they considered a close friend (as cited in London & Wiseman, 1993).

Hill et al.'s (2003) research revealed that clergy spouses also struggle with isolation. In particular, clergy spouses in their study expressed a belief that they were perceived by others as different because of their status as pastors' wives. The perceived consequence of being viewed as different by others because of their role as a male pastor's wife was highlighted in a study conducted by Valeriano (1981) in which one-fifth of clergy spouses surveyed believed that

others avoided them because they were married to a pastor. Valeriano also reported that 56% of the clergy spouses surveyed affirmed that they did have close friends. Hill et al. (2003) also found that some of the clergy spouses in their study felt isolated by virtue of the fact that they lived great distances from their families. Additionally, the clergy spouses in this study reported that it was difficult to be the only person to whom their husbands could confide. The challenge of and potential strain related to being a clergy spouse's sole confidant may have grave implications for the health of the marriage (Warner & Carter, 1984).

Results of Devogel's (1986) study of morale among United Methodist ministers in Minnesota offers some insight into possible reasons clergy spouses may frequently find themselves assuming the role of sole confidant to their clergy spouse. Devogel reported that the clergy in her study seemed unable to seek help from friends or other professionals and were reluctant to disclose intimate and personal information to peers because of feelings of distrust and competitiveness. She also found that fear of the pain associated with loss of close friendships was cited as a reason by both clergy and their spouses for not investing in new friendships.

In a profession with so many inherent challenges that are often faced without the support and nurturance of a well established social network of trusted people, it is not surprising that clergy often find themselves exhausted, depleted, and languishing in the throes of burnout. Research has shown that the presence of a well establish system of support is related to lower levels of burnout, while conversely, a lack of social support is linked to increased burnout (Hall, 1997; Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003; Virginia, 1998). Staying connected matters.

Coping with the Challenges of Ministry

Given the myriad challenges clergy and their families face it is critical for them to have effective coping strategies to overcome the difficulties they typically encounter. Research that directly addresses this issue of coping is critical to enhance the understanding and increase the knowledge of clinicians, church leaders, and social scientists regarding effective strategies for dealing with the unique demands and challenges of clergy and clergy spouses. Coping is considered a domain of positive psychology, and one that fits well with the study of clergy and clergy families.

Meek et al. (2003) presented data generated by two studies that examined the resiliency of clergy in an effort to glean lessons about how to successfully manage the stresses faced by pastors from the responses of clergy who participated in the study. Many of the respondents in the two studies emphasized the importance of maintaining firm, yet flexible boundaries and striking a healthy balance in their lives. Recognition of the need to separate oneself from the role of pastor and preserve independence was also noted by many of the clergy respondents. Other factors that contributed to resiliency and effective coping among the clergy sampled in the two studies were strong family relationships, having extra-familial relationships (e.g., friends, mentors), engaging in spiritual activities, self-awareness, and complete reliance on God.

In another study related to positive coping, McMinn, Kerrick, Duma, Campbell, and Jung (2008) endeavored to identify positive coping strategies employed by clergy spouses who were determined by a mental health professional to exemplify emotional and spiritual health. Responses of many of the study participants indicated that they attributed their good health to God's love, kindness, and protection. Relationships, particularly with family and God, were also

cited as reason for good emotional and spiritual health. Other strategies for effective coping reported by study participants included interpersonal relationships and spiritual practices (e.g., prayer, meditation), setting limits, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and engaging in activities that promote growth in various domains of life.

Hill et al. (2003), in their study on boundary-related stressors encountered by clergy, identified specific coping strategies typically applied by participants in their study. Some of the strategies presented by clergy included time management, compatibility with church, mentor relationships, time away from the demands of work and sabbaticals. Clergy spouses reported on the importance of a need to stay connected with others in the community for the purpose of finding support.

Although research seems to support the notion that clergy and their spouses both rely on interpersonal coping strategies to effectively deal with the unique challenges of ministry work, clergy tend to rely more on intrapersonal forms of self-care (McMinn et al., 2005). McMinn et al. (2005) proposed that clergy may be more apt to engage in solitary forms of coping and self-care activities because of their “fishbowl” experience, as well as subtle competition with other clergy. The possible cost of disclosing personal struggles and exposing areas of vulnerability to others outside the family likely serve as deterrents to pastors who otherwise might seek the help and support of another. McMinn et al. (2005) did point out, however, that clergy solitary care frequently involves a strong and nurturing relationship with God, further confirming the importance of relational connection to effective coping.

Design of the Present Study

The importance of interpersonal connectedness and social support for clergy and clergy spouses has been established in the literature. Additionally, challenges and demands unique to the role of clergy and clergy spouses make it difficult to develop and maintain intimate relationships with others. In light of these findings, it is clear that more research is needed to examine the ways in which clergy and their spouses attempt to deal with and avoid interpersonal isolation. The aim of the current study was to obtain a clearer picture of the ways in which clergy and their spouses attempt to both prevent and cope with interpersonal isolation with an emphasis on the specific strategies they employ to accomplish this end. A grounded theory approach was utilized to identify themes from the responses of participants whose scores on a measure of social support indicated success or struggle in this area. Grounded theory refers to a method of research in which theory is developed inductively from a set of data. This approach affords researchers an opportunity to allow the stories of participants to guide their data analysis and facilitate the identification of concepts and patterns that emerge from the written responses of participants. Because of the exploratory, qualitative nature of this study, no specific hypotheses were offered. Consistent with grounded theory, the themes that emerged from the data were reported.

Chapter 2

Methods

Participants

Senior pastors ($N = 80$) representing two denominations, Evangelical Friends and Nazarene, completed a modified version of a social support questionnaire (Appendix A) and a series of demographic questions (Appendix B) online. Of the 80 pastors who completed the questionnaire, 70% represented the Evangelical Friends denomination and 30% the Nazarene denomination. An analysis of the demographic data revealed that 86.3% were male and 13.8% were female, with an overall mean age of 49.7 years ($SD = 11.23$); and that 3.8% were single, 93.8% married, 1.3% divorced, and 1.3% remarried. With regard to ethnicity, 91.3% were European American, 1.3% were Native American, 1.3% were Asian American, and 7.5% represented other ethnicities. A wide range of education levels was represented with 4% having completed high school, 10% technical training, 35% a bachelor's degree, 40% a master's degree, 10% a doctoral degree, and 8% some other form of training. The mean number of years serving as a pastor and mean number of pastors on staff were 18.5 ($SD = 12.13$) and 2.0 ($SD = 1.37$), respectively. Also, the mean number of years married and number of children were 25.6 ($SD = 11.23$) and 3.1 ($SD = 1.56$), respectively.

A brief set of six interview questions was subsequently sent via email to all pastors who completed the social support questionnaire. Half of the pastors who completed the social support questionnaire also responded to the interview questions ($N = 40$). Demographic data for this

group was similar to that of the overall sample of senior pastors. Of the 40 pastors who completed the interview questions, 67.5% represented the Friends denomination and 32.5% represented the Nazarene denomination. Regarding sex and gender, 87.5% were male and 12.5% were female with a mean age of 50.6 years ($SD = 9.10$). With respect to marital status, 2.5% indicated they were single, 92.5% married, 2.5% widowed, and 2.5% divorced. Data on ethnicity showed that 90% were European American, 2.5% were Asian American, and that 7.5% represented other ethnicities. A wide range of education levels was evident in this group as well with 5% having completed high school, 9% technical training, 30% a bachelor's degree, 40% a master's degree, 10% a doctoral degree, and 8% some other form of training. The mean number of years serving as a pastor and mean number of pastors on staff were 18.3 ($SD = 10.69$) and 2.1 ($SD = 1.40$), respectively. Additionally, the mean number of years married and mean number of children were 26.2 ($SD = 10.49$) and 3.4 ($SD = 1.34$), respectively.

Instruments/Materials

Social Support Questionnaire (Short Form) (SSQSR). The Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) is a factor analytically derived measure of social support comprised of 27 items that require a 2-part response (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarson, 1983). The respondent is asked to enumerate the names of individuals to whom he or she can turn and rely upon in various situations, and then rate the degree of satisfaction with these social contacts on a scale ranging from 1 *very dissatisfied* to 6 *very satisfied*. Two scores are yielded for each item; the number (N) score represents the number of people listed by respondents, and the satisfaction (S) score is determined using the aforementioned 6 point rating scale. The overall (N) and (S) scores are calculated by averaging the N and S scores across the 27 items. Research on the

psychometric properties of this instrument indicates that it is a valid and reliable measure; Internal reliabilities for N and S scores are .97 and .94, respectively, and test-retest correlations are .90 for N scores and .83 for S scores (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983; Sarason, Sarason, Shearin, & Pierce, 1987). An abbreviated version of the SSQ (SSQSR) was developed consisting of six items, three of which (3, 5, and 11) were used for this study (Sarason et al., 1987).

Open-ended questions. Study participants were asked to complete 6 open-ended questions that followed the demographic questionnaire and the SSQSR items in a separate email correspondence. The purpose of the questions was to gain qualitative information regarding each participant's perceptions of the barriers to establishing and maintaining social connection with others, ways in which each copes with loneliness, ways in which participants interact with identified supporters, experiences of a failure to receive expected social support, as well as the strategies each employs to establish and maintain close, supportive relationships. The six questions to which participants responded are presented in Appendix C.

Procedure

Denominational leaders from both Evangelical Friends and Nazarene denominations were emailed a letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting assistance with participant recruitment. Denominational leaders who responded with a desire to assist in the recruitment process were asked to co-author an invitation letter with the primary investigator of this study, which was then sent to prospective participants via email. The letter contained an explanation of the purpose of the study, notification of each participant's eligibility to win a \$50 gift card should he or she choose to participate in the study, as well as a link to an online survey

which included the three SSQR items, demographic questions, requests for the email addresses of both the pastor and his or her spouse, and an informed consent statement (Appendix D). The letter also provided a specific date by which the online questionnaire needed to be completed. A similar invitation letter was subsequently sent to the spouses of pastors who completed the online questionnaire. Pastors who did not provide a separate email address for their spouse were sent a subsequent email thanking them for their participation in the study and encouraging them to invite their spouse to view the invitation letter attached to the email.

A follow-up email correspondence containing the six open-ended interview questions and instructions for responding was sent to the pastors and spouses who completed the online survey. Each participant was given the option of either sending his or her responses in a reply to the initial email or completing a phone interview. One pastor opted to respond to the questions in a phone interview while the others preferred email. A final follow-up email was sent to pastors and spouses who had not yet responded to the interview questions thanking them for their time and encouraging them to respond. Denominational leaders and study participants were given the option of being provided with a summary of the aggregate data. Once all data were collected, the names and emails of participants were removed from the data file.

Chapter 3

Results and Discussion

The lead researcher, using grounded theory, reviewed participant responses to the interview questions. Coding categories were established and a codebook developed based on this review. Two coders, the lead researcher and a research assistant, then rated the interview responses and a kappa statistic was applied to calculate the level of agreement between the two raters. Results of this calculation yielded an average kappa coefficient of .71 with a kappa coefficient range from -.04 to 1 (SD = .28). Variables with extremely low kappa coefficients raised some concern; however, an overall average of .71 is good for qualitative research. Specific categories with low kappa coefficients included: accountability partners and mentors (.29), being criticized (.026), church events (0), and adjusting expectations (.04). Results pertaining to these categories were not considered equally credible due to the low reliability.

Participants who completed the online questionnaire were divided into two groups based on a median split of the S scores for each participant (Median = 5.33). Because the relationship between perceived availability of support and satisfaction with that support may vary based on factors such as individual personality and recent experiences, it was decided that the satisfaction score would be a better indicator of how participants were doing in the area of social support (Sarason et al., 1983). Further examination of the interview responses was conducted to ascertain whether or not there were any differences between the responses of participants whose

satisfaction score was at or above the median and those whose satisfaction score fell below the median in terms of the themes that were identified. A significant difference between pastors with S scores at or above the median (5.33) and those with scores below the median was found, $X^2(1) = 4.8, p < .05$. Specifically, pastors with S scores at or above the median more frequently indicated that being transparent and vulnerable is a means by which they establish and maintain close, supportive relationships with others. No other differences were found between the two groups. Though the initial intent of this study was to include spouses, only three spouses completed questionnaires and interviews; consequently, the data analyses focused only on pastors. The responses to question 6 were not considered.

Barriers to Developing and Maintaining Close Relationships

When responding to a question about barriers to fostering close, supportive relationships in their professional role, pastors emphasized 6 primary themes: time, expectations, transparency/vulnerability, relational boundaries, relocation, and trust/confidentiality.

Time. Many of the pastors ($n = 14$) indicated that time demands were a significant barrier to establishing and maintaining close relationships with others. This finding is consistent with research that speaks to the tremendous amount of time clergy often spend engaged in activities related to their professional roles (Hill et al., 2003; Lee, 1999). Examples include:

In our case, because of my schedule and my wife's work schedule, we both put in more than full-time in our positions, and the time I spend supporting my mom who lives in the area, time is one of the greatest barriers to maintaining close relationships.

The main barrier I face in attempting to establish close relationships is time. Time for me to make contacts and a good time for the contact to meet with me. I am a bi-vocational pastor and that really makes it difficult.

Relationships take time. Most of us don't have time to form/maintain close relationships outside the congregation or we feel guilty about taking that time from away our congregation and/or families.

The time required to fulfill work and family obligations, as well as the busy schedules of others seem to make it difficult for pastors to designate the time needed to build and nurture close relationships.

Expectations. Another significant barrier identified by several of the pastors (n = 11) related to unrealistic expectations and standards often imposed upon pastors. Pastors also shared about their experience of being exalted by others, in effect, put on a pedestal. Examples include:

Expectations of congregants. There is definitely an expectation that Pastors are different or live at a higher standard than everyone else.

... persons believing that clergy have some built in connection to God or Higher Power that can be intimidating.

We had gone on a couple vacations with some parishioners, but they'd say things like, "Oh, we'd better not, our pastor is here." They were joking, but it just reminded me that we can never have an equal relationship; I will always be "one up" on them.

The experience of being put on a pedestal is a common one for many pastors (Gleason, 1977).

The pastors in this study clearly conveyed the difficulty others had relating to them because of their perception that pastors have achieved an elevated status.

Transparency/Vulnerability. The pastors in this study often shared about the difficulty they had being open and honest with others, as well as the tendency of others to stay guarded around them (n = 11). Without the ability to disclose personal information on a deeper level, relationships are unable to reach close and intimate levels. Two pastors shared the following:

I think many church goers don't want to think about the fact that their pastor has junk. On the flip side I think that people have a hard time being real with pastors.

Pastors are afraid to be real people; sometimes people are afraid to let pastors be real people.

As persons often idealized and held to a higher standard, pastors are often the target of criticism (Lee, 1999). The potential consequences of intimate self-disclosure can be significant for pastors ranging from criticism to job loss. Given this reality it is understandable that pastors may be fearful of the type of transparency often needed to forge close relationships with others.

Relational boundaries. Because pastors often find themselves assuming the pastor role in most settings it can become difficult to establish close relationships with others apart from that role. Pastors in this study shared about this challenge in their response to the question of barriers.

Examples include:

It's good to work with friends, but requires emotional nimbleness on my part to switch hats when a "friend" suddenly places me in the "pastor" role.

I am always the "pastor" and as such feel a certain pressure to fulfill that kind of role in that relationship.

Confusion about what role a pastor is assuming, friend or professional, can make it difficult for him or her to determine the most appropriate way to interact with others, as well as what and how much to disclose during these interactions. Likewise, the person with whom the pastor is interacting may experience a similar confusion about what role the pastor is assuming during an interaction making it difficult to determine the most appropriate way to relate to the pastor.

Relocation. The research literature on stressors often faced by clergy has clearly established relocations as a common stressor, often with adverse consequences, faced by clergy (Morris & Blanton, 1994; Morris & Blanton, 1998). The challenge relocation presents in terms of building close, supportive relationships was mentioned by several pastors in this study (n = 7). Here is what a couple reported about this particular barrier.

The fact that we had to move here and uproot relationships means we start over. Never fun or easy.

... but more often I have felt like an outsider coming into a church/community where roles and friendships were already established.

Relocation interferes with pastors' ability to invest the time needed to build strong and intimate relationships with others. Also, pastors who experience frequent relocation may avoid establishing close relationships with others to avoid the grief associated with losing important relationships that have been established.

Trust/Confidentiality. Several pastors commented on their struggles with the issues of trust and confidentiality (n = 8). Trusting others to be discreet with information disclosed during conversations was something pastors believed was a challenge for them, as well as those with whom they interact. The following is an example of what one pastor shared about this topic:

I try to have positive relationships with people in the congregation and do several things on a social level with them, however, it can require a lot of discernment to know how much to share with each one about your thoughts and feelings on a variety of issues. We have a church with several members of the same families and you always have to think about how far you are willing for your comments to go.

With so much pressure to be exemplars of virtuous living and spiritual health and maturity, it is understandable that pastors may be reluctant to share personal information with someone about personal struggles. Again, the consequences of such a disclosure, should it be revealed to the wrong person, may result in adverse consequences.

Other less prominent barriers to establishing and maintaining close relationships with others were also mentioned and included competition among pastors (n = 3), favoritism and jealousy on the part of congregants (n = 4), fatigue (n = 2), conflict (n = 2), and a perceived lack of need for pastors to develop close relationships (n = 2).

Strategies for Developing and Maintaining Close Relationships

Pastors' responses to the question of how they go about establishing and maintaining close relationships yielded 4 predominant themes: intentionality, participation in groups, vulnerability, and common interests/activities.

Intentionality. A large proportion of the pastors (62.5%) indicated that being intentional about making time for and meeting with others was an important part of developing and maintaining close relationships. The paucity of free time available to pastors because of high expectations and time demands can make this a challenging endeavor (Hill et al., 2003; Lee, 1999). Here are a few thoughts shared by pastors regarding the importance of intentionality.

I am intentional about sustaining long distance relationships with colleagues or former colleagues. It takes time and effort. I call them. I also maintain and work to build close relationships with several people in my church and in my city.

Another important step in forming support relationships is to put yourself in places where you might find people who will support you. I have sought out relationships with my fellow ministers, and in fact have regular fellowship with a small prayer group and two minister's associations in my town. Not everyone at those meetings is someone I would count as a support relationship, but I would like to think that some are forming and the reason they began is that I chose to involve myself with these groups.

Take the initiative, seek them out and not waiting for someone to approach us.

Due to our time crunch, it's important for us to schedule our social lives and each month we identify people we want to spend time with and schedule time to be with them.

Being intentional about setting up regular meetings and creating opportunities to engage with others requires time and effort. Unfortunately, as many of the pastors in this study noted and the research indicates, time is something of which pastors tend to have little. With this in mind, it seems that making relationships a priority in terms of time and effort allocation is an essential part of being able to foster close relationships for pastors.

Participation in groups. Another prominent theme that emerged in response to the question of how pastors go about establishing and maintaining close relationships involved the importance of participation in groups (n = 8). The following are examples of pastors' comments on this topic.

I meet with two different men's groups during the week. One is for my accountability and the other is to invest in the lives of some younger guys. I've been meeting with one of these groups for 8 years and I can be pretty transparent with them.

I have become involved in clergy groups (local and denominational) and become part of ... pastors peer group.

Right now I meet regularly with two groups of pastors for the purpose of support and prayer. I am new to this community and this position so these relationships are new as well. It will take some time but I would say that at this point, these are my primary supportive relationships outside my family. I have to be intentional about engaging in these kinds of relationships or they won't happen for me. That is the reason I meet with those groups.

The responses of pastors in this study seem to denote the importance of establishing a network of relationships with other pastors and peers for the purpose of shared support and accountability. However, as McMinn et al. (2005) suggested, pastors tend to rely more on intrapersonal forms of coping and that this may be a result of subtle competition among pastors. As noted in the section on barriers, competition among pastors was identified as a perceived obstacle to fostering close relationships. The following is a response by one of the pastors in this study who alluded to this notion of competition among pastors, yet, also in his response, affirmed the importance of peer relationships.

Just have to cultivate relationships with pastors and peers. Talk about ministry from different perspective. Most of the time my best friends are in ministry, just not my ministry.

Pastors who recognize the value of close, supportive peer relationships may be navigating the potential obstacle of competition between pastors by establishing relationships with other pastors who are not involved in a shared ministry or who may not answer to the same denominational authorities.

Vulnerability, authenticity and transparency. Several pastors in this study (n = 10) indicated that being able to communicate openly and allow for vulnerability with others was important to fostering intimate relationships. The following are examples of pastors' responses regarding openness and vulnerability as a means of promoting intimate relationships.

To be who I am, genuine, not portraying someone I'm not. Just because I pastor or preach does not mean I have to always look or speak "holy" things.

Typically I am pretty much an open book, so I think it helps when folks realize that if I can be open and honest maybe they can too.

I think the first step in finding support relationships is simply to allow others to know that you are vulnerable. I don't pretend to have it all together, whether with people in my church or fellow ministers.

By being open and honest with who I am. I find relationships that are based on truth and honesty to be the most beneficial for support.

A willingness to be open and reveal oneself is required for developing intimate relationships with others. This can be a challenge for most people to varying degrees. However, this may be particularly difficult for pastors because of the high expectations and demands often imposed upon them to be exemplary. As discussed earlier, the consequences of not living up to these high standards and expectations are potentially serious and may deter pastors from engaging with others more openly. As the results of this study have demonstrated, pastors are often confronted with the tension between recognizing the need for vulnerability and fearing the related consequences.

Common interests. Several pastors (n = 8) reported that finding interests and activities they have in common with others is a way they cultivate close relationships. Here is what a few of the pastors shared about common interests and activities.

We find that doing the activities that we have in common are excellent ways to develop close relationships and it also helps set healthy boundaries around those relationships. For example, there is one man that I go snowmobiling with. It is our thing and we expect to play in the snow. There is a group that enjoys camping and fishing once a summer but the snow mobile man is not in this group.

I try to find common ground and participate in the things they enjoy and spend their time doing. This makes it easier to get into their schedules.

I'm better at maintaining them than establishing them, but if I establish them it's usually by seeking out people I share interests with in common.

As the pastor in the second example noted, finding common interests and activities may be a strategy that can negate the barrier of limited time for both the pastor and people with whom the pastor is attempting to foster relationships. Being able to engage in activities that are already built into busy schedules can make opportunities for connection possible without increasing time demands.

Less prominent strategies that emerged in the responses of pastors included: use of social networking technology (n = 3), establishing relationships with people outside of the church served by the pastor (n = 3), fostering relationships with mentors/accountability partners (n = 2), and being generous and forgiving toward others (n = 2).

Lack of Support

Pastors in this study were asked to report on experiences in which they expected support from others and did not receive it. Prominent themes that emerged in the responses to this

question included: self-disclosure, no examples, expecting a lack of support, church issues, and decisions.

Self-disclosure. Multiple pastors (n = 5) shared about experiences in which personal self-disclosures resulted in unsupportive, and in some instances, critical responses from others. The following are examples of what some of these pastors reported.

On one occasion shared with an elder that I was going through down time/struggles and asked for prayer. The elder said I needed to just toughen up and that I just needed to have a thick skin. This doesn't happen often and most stand with me. This was one of the most hurtful moments as a pastor.

I was leading a book club study that had about 8 people attending (some followers of Jesus and others not yet). One "friend" of mine that was there had been in my home, and we had been in theirs. We played racquetball regularly, prayed together, shared thoughts about parenting etc. The book was by an author who was questioning a lot about the faith of his youth; how many things he was raised to believe just didn't make sense anymore. I made the comment about how many of the things the author was saying I could identify with. After the study, he cornered me and told me how, as a pastor, I am held up to a different standard than others and that even if I did have some doubts, I should never speak them because of how others would take it. That was the last night we talked.

The experiences described by these two pastors illustrate the challenge many clergy face regarding high expectations (Baker & Scott, 1992). To reveal personal information carries with it the potential risk of evoking criticism from others for not meeting the "different standard" to which pastors are often held. Such reactions likely serve to reinforce for pastors the notion that they should be immune to the vulnerabilities typical of most people, and, therefore, likely decrease their willingness to be vulnerable to others in times of need.

No examples. There were multiple pastors (n = 5) who could not recall a time when they expected support and were surprised when they did not receive it from others. Most of the pastors who responded to the interview questions (n = 36) reported being at least a little satisfied with the level of social support they were receiving, as evidenced by their satisfaction scores on

the SSQSR items. This seems to indicate that the experience of no support was likely an infrequent occurrence among pastors who completed interview questions. For some, however, a lack of support may not be surprising, and was even expected by a few of the pastors in this study.

Expect a lack of support. There were pastors (n = 4) whose responses conveyed, either explicitly or implicitly, an expectation of a lack of support from others. Here are a couple of the comments offered by pastors who communicated this expectation.

I really don't have too many expectations, and tend to be fairly independent anyway. So support is not something I depend on. I am surprised more often in the other direction.

No. I do not expect the support of others. In fact, I am surprised when I hear that other pastors are surprised by their lack of support.

Again, the research has clearly established isolation and loneliness as a common stressor faced by many clergy (Hall, 1997; Hill et al., 2003). The experience of these pastors seems consistent with what research has shown regarding the level of social support among clergy.

Conflict/challenges within the Church. Another prominent theme regarding the circumstances under which pastors in this study were surprised to experience a lack of support related to challenging issues occurring within the church (n = 4). The following are examples of what two pastors reported.

When I thought there was true loyal friendship, a church issue or decision on my part proved otherwise.

On a few occasions (primarily as a result of situations of conflict or challenge within the churches I have served), I've been surprised to discover that other ministerial peers and colleagues have been unwilling (or incapable) of maintaining a public relationship with me because it may not have been "politically" expedient for them to do so. The surprise of this to us was to learn that those we had perceived as friends and colleagues turned out to be "competitors" in the sense that apparently their leadership capital or "stock" was considered to be on the rise if my own was in decline.

Dissent and strife can weaken any relationship if mishandled or left unresolved. For pastors, this can be further complicated by the fact that they are often involved in both work and personal relationships with church leaders and congregants. How pastors respond to or deal with issues that may arise within the church likely has grave implications for both their personal and professional relationships with church leaders and members.

Decision making. Because of the leadership role pastors assume in their churches they are often called upon to make important decisions or assist church leaders in a decision making process. Pastors (n = 4) shared about their experiences feeling unsupported by others when they made a decision or as a member of a group of individuals involved in a decision making process.

Examples include:

More often than not this happens when we make uncomfortable but necessary decisions. Occasionally those who are your top supporters and appear to be mature ministry partners can turn on a dime when things don't go their way.

I have been surprised how quickly some can "turn" on you when making a decision they do not agree with even if you have been very supportive of that person through some difficult times.

These experiences can be accompanied by hurt and a sense of betrayal, as was alluded to in the two previous examples. The impact of these unsupportive, and at times painful, responses is likely amplified when the pastor has established both a personal and professional relationship with the unsupportive individual. Both relationships may be adversely affected, possibly leading to a sense of increased isolation by the pastor.

Other less salient themes reported by pastors included lack of support from significant others (i.e., family/friends; n = 3), periods of loss or personal crisis (n = 2), conveying expectations/vision for church (n = 2), and church events/social gatherings (n = 2).

Coping with Loneliness

Pastors were also asked to report on the specific ways in which they cope with loneliness. Five prominent themes emerged in their responses and included: interaction with family and friends, hobbies and recreational activities, withdrawal, spiritual disciplines, and entertainment.

Friends and family. Over half of interview respondents (n = 24) indicated that spending time with family and friends was a strategy they used to cope with feelings of loneliness. The following are a few examples of what pastors shared about the use of this approach to coping with loneliness.

My wife, parents, and 2 close friends (other pastors) are my closest friends. I hang with them when I am feeling lonely and in need of people. It is not uncommon for me to go hang at my parents' house for a night and to begin the night by stating that church conversation is off limits because I need a break.

I used to have a pity party for myself because I didn't really have friends that were close. I would isolate and spend time feeling sorry for myself. That got old and I grew tired of being discouraged and ineffective. Now I make the calls to friends when I need to. Friendships are stronger and I don't struggle with discouragement as much.

I spend as much time as possible with my wife. She really lifts me up.

Spending time with significant others was the predominate strategy identified by pastors in this study for coping with loneliness. This is consistent with what research has demonstrated on the topic of coping among clergy and their spouses (Hill et al., 2003; Meek et al., 2003). The findings of this study appear to provide further confirmation of the importance of staying connected as a means of effectively coping with the unique stressors inherent in the work of pastors.

Hobbies and recreational activities. Several pastors in this study (n = 8) reported that engaging in hobbies and other recreational activities was a preferred method for coping with feelings of loneliness. Here are comments shared by pastors on this topic.

Do things that energize and encourage me. Take a little extra time to do something for me such as, golf or hunt. Things that give me inner peace and strength.

I also find that investing time in some of my "energizing" personal hobbies (as a musician, writer, outdoorsman, etc.) can help me "re-frame" my sense of emotional health.

Another pastor stated that he went fishing when he felt lonely. In a profession where scrutiny is high and feelings of inadequacy are common, it seems that engagement in activities that can provide needed distraction, as well as potentially enhance one's sense of mastery, competence, and vitality is important (Ellison & Mattilla, 1983; Gleason, 1977).

Withdrawal. Several of the pastors in this study identified withdrawal and solitude as a coping strategy they often used in response to feelings of loneliness (n = 7). Here is what two pastors had to say.

My default is to get discouraged and withdraw. But I have learned to do some activities that help. These are ... spend time with friends.

Short periods of withdrawal followed by reaching out to trusted friends.

Responding to loneliness with disengagement from others may provide opportunities to reengage and rediscover aspects of self, personal values, and interests that can bring renewal and revitalization. Additionally, this strategy may also offer opportunities to strengthen connection with and reliance on God. Enhanced self awareness and reliance on God has been shown to be associated with resiliency and effective coping among pastors (Meek et al., 2003). However,

when withdrawal involves complete disconnection, its use as a way of coping with loneliness, or other stressors, becomes potentially problematic.

Spiritual disciplines. The application of spiritual disciplines was another approach to coping with loneliness identified by pastors (n = 6). Specific disciplines mentioned included prayer, meditation, scripture reading and solitude. Examples of pastors' comments include:

I find myself drawing closer to God through prayer and meditation and usually I will be directed to some book or reading that fills some void that centers in the loneliness.

I go to the Lord in prayer for strength....

I guess my primary way to cope is to pray. God knows my heart and my needs and so I seek him.

The use of spiritual activities and intrapersonal forms of coping to deal with the stressors commonly encountered by clergy, such as loneliness, has been established in past research (Meek et al., 2003; McMinn et al., 2005). The emergence of spiritual disciplines as a prominent theme associated with coping in this study is consistent with the findings of the aforementioned research.

Entertainment. Pastors in this study (n = 5) also indicated that engaging in various forms of entertainment was a way in which they coped with loneliness. Here is what two of them shared about this approach.

When I feel melancholy, I like to escape through reading or video games.

I distract myself by listening to music, reading, or watching a movie.

Entertainment can be an effective means of escape and distraction from unpleasant experiences, such as loneliness. Other times, creative forms of entertainment, like books and music, can be

sources of inspiration, affirmation, and validation during difficult times. This is what one pastor had to say about the ways reading has helped her cope with loneliness.

When there seems to be a lack of kindred spirits available in the flesh, books become a huge support system. To read the words that another soul has written to express the deep longings of my own soul brings great affirmation, encouragement, sometimes rebuke, and fellowship of sorts.

Other less prominent themes that emerged included eating (n = 4), engagement in physical work (n = 3), shifting one's focus to others (n = 3), and exercise (n = 2). Also, several pastors (n = 10) indicated that loneliness was seldom experienced or not an issue for them.

Limitations

The original intent of this study was to also include an examination of clergy spouses' experiences in the area of social support. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, only a small number of spouses responded and, hence, this data could not be included in the final analysis. Reasons for this diminutive number may be related to the procedure employed for recruitment of the participants. Contact with the spouses of clergy depended on clergy participants' willingness to provide a means to access their spouses. Having a more direct means of contact that did not rely on an intervening person may have increased the chances of a higher spouse response rate. Also, some clergy participants, who are likely sensitive to potential intrusions on the private time of their spouses and family, may have preferred not to provide a means of access in an effort to guard against further intrusion. However, the email addresses of several spouses were provided, so other factors also contributed to the low spouse response rate. Such factors may have included time limitations, lack of interest, possible concerns about confidentiality, and difficulties with the mode of correspondence; some emails were undeliverable. Research specifically focused on the ways in which clergy spouses attempt to prevent and cope with interpersonal isolation is needed.

Developing an effective recruitment strategy in which direct contact with prospective spouse participants will likely be important.

Another limitation of the study relates to the fact that only two denominations were represented. Obtaining information from clergy and clergy spouses from diverse denominational backgrounds could have strengthened the present study by providing an opportunity to examine possible qualitative differences in the responses of clergy and clergy spouses from various denominations. Future research in which the experiences of social support among clergy and clergy spouses from different denominations, and other religious traditions, are explored and compared may provide valuable information regarding how denominational and religious systems possibly contribute to or protect against interpersonal isolation.

The relatively small sample size, as well as the possibility of response bias, limited the degree to which comparison could be made between individuals who demonstrated success or struggle in the area of social support. Only a small portion of the participants (10%) interviewed scored less than a 4 on the SSQSR indicating dissatisfaction with their current level of social support. Future studies in which two more clearly distinct groups of clergy participants, those who demonstrate struggle or success in terms of social support, are compared may provide an opportunity for clarity regarding possible differences in the ways members of these two groups attempt to prevent and cope with interpersonal isolation.

Finally, the qualitative nature of the present study limits the generalizability of the results to a wider, more diverse population of clergy. The information obtained in this study represents the ideas and experiences of a small sample of clergy, and likely does not completely or sufficiently represent the experiences of most clergy. Future studies with more representative

clergy samples in which social support can be operationalized more precisely using quantitative methods, would improve the sophistication with which the topic of social support among clergy and clergy spouses could be studied.

Conclusion

As the body of literature on the topic of clergy and their families continues to grow more is understood about the struggles and challenges faced by individuals in these unique roles and circumstances. To date most of the research conducted on clergy and their families has emphasized problems and deficits with little attention being paid to what helps individuals in these challenging roles thrive. The present study attempted to explore how clergy and their spouses cope with and prevent interpersonal isolation. Responses of participants provided valuable information about how clergy who indicated satisfaction with their level of social support go about establishing and maintaining supportive relationships, as well as how they cope with loneliness when it does occur. Continued research which further explores what does and does not work as it relates to developing strong social support networks among clergy and clergy spouses is needed to better understand how individuals in these roles successfully get and stay connected with others.

References

- Baker, D. C., & Scott, J. P. (1992). Predictors of well-being among pastors' wives: A comparison with nonclergy wives. *Journal of Pastoral Care, 46*, 33-43.
- Blanton, P. (1992). Stress in clergy families: Managing work and family demands. *Family Perspective, 26*, 315-330.
- DeVogel, S. H. (1986). Clergy morale: The ups and downs. *The Christian Century*, 1149-1152.
- Ellison, C. W., & Mattila, W. S. (1983). The needs of Evangelical Friends Christian leaders in the United States. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 11*, 28-35.
- Frame, M. W. (1998). Relocation and well-being in United Methodist clergy and their spouses: What pastoral counselors need to know. *Pastoral Psychology, 46*, 415-430.
- Gleason, J. J. (1977). Perception of stress among clergy and their spouses. *The Journal of Pastoral Care, 31*, 248-251.
- Goetz, D. (1992). Is the pastor's family safe at home?. *Leadership, 13*(4), 38-44.
- Hall, T. (1997). The personal functioning of pastors: A review of empirical research with implications for the care of pastors. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 25*, 240-253.
- Hileman, L. (2008). The unique needs of Protestant clergy families: Implications for marriage and family counseling. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health, 10*, 119-144.
- Hill, E. W., Darling, C. A., & Raimondi, N. M. (2003). Understanding boundary-related stress in clergy families. *Marriage and Family Review, 35*, 147-166.
- Lee, C. (1999). Specifying intrusive demands and their outcomes in congregational ministry: A report on the ministry demands inventory. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 38*, 477-489.

- Lee, C. (2007). Patterns of stress and support among Adventist clergy: Do pastors and their spouses differ? *Pastoral Psychology, 55*, 761-771.
- Lee, C., & Iverson-Gilbert, J. (2003). Demand, support, and perception in family-related stress among protestant clergy. *Family Relations, 52*, 249-257.
- London, H. B., & Wiseman, N. B. (1993). Pastors at risk: Help for pastors, hope for the church. Wheaton, IL: Victory Books.
- Mace, D., & Mace, V. (1982). Marital enrichment for clergy couples. *Pastoral Psychology, 30*, 151-159.
- McDonald, J. (2010, August 7). Congregations gone wild. *The New York Times*, p. WK9.
- McMinn, M. R., Kerrick, S. P., Duma, S. J., Campbell, E. R., & Jung, J. B. (2008). Positive coping among wives of male Christian clergy. *Pastoral Psychology, 56*, 445-457.
- McMinn, M. R., Lish, R. A., Trice, P. D., Root, A. M., Gilbert, N., & Yap, A. (2005). Care for pastors: Learning from clergy and their spouses. *Pastoral Psychology, 53*, 563-581.
- Meek, K. R., McMinn, M. R., Brower, C. M., Burnett, T. D., McRay, B. W., Ramey, M. L., Swanson, D. W., & Villa, D. D. (2003). Maintaining personal resilience: Lessons learned from evangelical protestant clergy. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 31*, 339-347.
- Morris, M. L., & Blanton, P. W. (1994). The influence of work-related stressors on clergy husbands and their wives. *Family Relations, 43*, 189-195.
- Morris, M. L., & Blanton, P. (1998). Predictors of family functioning among clergy and spouses: Influences of social context and perceptions of work-related stressors. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 7*, 27-41.

- Morris, M. L., & Blanton, P. W. (1999). Work-related predictors of physical symptomatology and emotional well-being among clergy and spouses. *Review of Religious Research, 40*, 331-348.
- Ostander, D. L., Henry, C. S., & Fournier, D. G. (1994). Stress, family resources, coping, and adaptation in ministers' families. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 13*, 50-67.
- Sarason, I. G., Levine, H. M., Basham, R. B., & Sarason, B.R. (1983). Assessing social support: The social support questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44*, 127-139.
- Sarason, I. G., Sarason, B. R., Shearin, E. N., & Pierce, G. R. (1987). A brief measure of social support: Practical and theoretical implications. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4*, 497-510.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55*, 5-14.
- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirically validated interventions. *American Psychologist, 60*, 410-421.
- Sheldon, K. M., & King, L. (2001). Why positive psychology is necessary. *American Psychologist, 56*, 216-217.
- Valeriano, P. (1981). A survey of minister's wives. *Leadership, 2*, 64-77.
- Virginia, S. G. (1998). Burnout and depression among Roman Catholic secular, religious, and monastic clergy. *Pastoral Psychology, 47*, 49-67.
- Vitello, P. (2010, August 1). Taking a break from the Lord's work. *The New York Times*, p. A1.

Warner, J., & Carter, J. D. (1984). Loneliness, marital adjustment, and burnout in pastoral and lay persons. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 12*, 125-131.

Appendix A

Social Support Questionnaire (Short Form) Items

Social Support Questionnaire (Short Form) Items

Instructions: The following questions ask about people in your environment who provide you with help or support. Each question has two parts. For the first part, list all the people you know, excluding yourself, whom you can count on for help or support in the manner described. Give the persons' initials, their relationship to you. Do not list more than one person next to each of the numbers beneath the question.

For the second part, circle how satisfied you are with the overall support you have.

If you have had no support for a question, check the words "No one," but still rate your level of satisfaction. Do not list more than nine persons per question.

Please answer all the questions as best you can. All your responses will be kept confidential

1. Whom can you count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure or tense?

- | | | | |
|----|----|----|---------|
| 1. | 4. | 7. | No one. |
| 2. | 5. | 8. | |
| 3. | 6. | 9. | |

How satisfied?

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 6- very
satisfied | 5-fairly
satisfied | 4-a little
satisfied | 3-a little
dissatisfied | 2-fairly
dissatisfied | 1-very
dissatisfied |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|

2. Who accepts you, including both your worst and best points?

- | | | | |
|----|----|----|---------|
| 1. | 4. | 7. | No one. |
| 2. | 5. | 8. | |
| 3. | 6. | 9. | |

How satisfied?

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 6- very
satisfied | 5-fairly
satisfied | 4-a little
satisfied | 3-a little
dissatisfied | 2-fairly
dissatisfied | 1-very
dissatisfied |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|

3. Whom can you count on to console you when you 're upset?

- | | | | |
|----|----|----|---------|
| 1. | 4. | 7. | No one. |
| 2. | 5. | 8. | |
| 3. | 6. | 9. | |

How satisfied?

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 6- very
satisfied | 5-fairly
satisfied | 4-a little
satisfied | 3-a little
dissatisfied | 2-fairly
dissatisfied | 1-very
dissatisfied |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
-

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
2. Age: _____
3. Ethnicity: Asian American ___ African American ___ European America ___
Native-American ___ International ___ Other: _____
4. Marital Status: Single ___ Married ___ Widow ___ Divorced ___ Remarried ___
Separated _____
5. Length of Marriage: _____ years
6. Number of Children _____
7. Highest Educational Degree: High School/GED ___ 2-year/technical ___
Bachelor's Degree ___ Master's Degree ___ Doctoral Degree ___ Other _____
8. Number of years serving as a pastor: _____ years
9. Denominational Affiliation: _____
10. Total number of pastors serving in the church: _____

Appendix C
Open-Ended Questions

Open-Ended Questions

- 1) What do you believe are the barriers individuals in your role (senior clergy or clergy spouse) typically encounter when attempting to establish and maintain close/supportive relationships with others?
- 2) What are the specific ways in which you go about establishing and maintaining close/supportive relationships with others?
- 3) When have you expected social support from someone, and then been surprised when the person did not support you?
- 4) When you feel lonely how do you cope?
- 5) You identified [initials], [initials], and [initials] as supportive people in your life. How far away do each of these people live and, and how do you typically interact with them?
- 6) On a scale of 1 to 10, with 0 being no social support and 10 being outstanding social support, how much social support is your spouse currently experiencing?

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Participation

Informed Consent for Participation

I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. I understand that I will be afforded an opportunity to request and receive a summary of the results of this study pertaining to my particular denominational group. I understand that this material will be used solely for Ryan Staley's (investigator) Doctoral Dissertation and may be published in a scholarly journal. I further understand all data will be kept confidential with only the investigator of this research, research assistant, and a faculty advisor having access to my name and identifying information. The demographic information that will be published will be gender, age, race, education level, number of years married, number of years in ministry, denominational affiliation, total number of pastors serving in the church, and number of children. There will be no reference to my name on any of the research material or public indication that I participated in this project. I understand that I may contact Dr. Mark McMinn at (503) 554-2380 if I have questions or concerns about my participation in, or any part of, the research project.

By clicking start, I agree to participate in the research project, under the terms noted above.

Appendix E
Curriculum Vitae

Ryan C. Staley

Education

Student in Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) Program **2007- Present**

Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology: APA Accredited
George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon (Degree Anticipated May 2012)
GPA: 3.9

Master of Arts, Clinical Psychology **2007-2009**

Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology: APA Accredited
George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon
GPA: 3.9

Master of Science, Counseling Psychology **2001**

University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas
GPA: 3.7

Bachelor of Science, Human Services/ Psychology **1999**

Minor: Sociology
Friends University, Wichita, Kansas
GPA: 3.7

Clinical Training Experience

August 2011- Present **Predocloral Internship in Clinical Psychology: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), University of Kansas**

Conduct individual, group, and couples therapy, as well as crisis intervention/assessment, and ADHD evaluations with undergraduate/graduate students at the University of Kansas.

August 2010 – Present

Five Rock Ranch

Co-facilitating a 12-week art therapy group comprised of male adolescents residing at a facility which provides support services to single mothers.

August 2010 –

George Fox University Health and Counseling Center

- Present** Conducted individual therapy, assessment, and crisis intervention 16 hours a week with graduate and undergraduate students enrolled at George Fox University.
- September 2009 – June 2010** **Rural School District Consortium**
Worked 16 hours a week providing individual and group therapy to male and female high school students. Also, conducted evaluations to assess for learning and psychological disorders with elementary and high school students.
- August 2008 – May 2010** **Preventative Care for Pastors**
Served on a 3-member team of graduate students providing assistance to a licensed psychologist with the analysis and interpretation of assessment data gathered from clergy clients with whom the psychologist worked.
- August 2008 – June 2009** **Lutheran Community Services**
Worked 16 to 20 hours a week providing Individual/Family therapy and assessment services to clients of an outpatient community mental health agency ranging in age from 7 to 67.
- September 2000 – December 2000** **Leavenworth Penitentiary**
Provided 8 hours of counseling services per week to inmates requesting psychological services at a United States Penitentiary.

Publications

- McMinn, M. R., Bearse, J. L., Heyne, L. K., & Staley, R. C. (2011). Satisfaction with clinical training In Christian psychology doctoral programs: Survey findings and implications. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, Vol. 30(2), 156-162.
- McMinn, M. R., Staley, R. C., Webb, K., & Seagobin, W. (2010). Just what is Christian counseling anyway? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. Vol 41(5), 391-397.
- Younes, L.K., & Staley, R. C. (2001). Career Counseling with Multipotential Students. *Journal of Contemporary Counseling*, Vol. 18(1), 43-48.

Research Experience/Presentations

Dissertation

This is a qualitative study investigating the specific strategies employed by clergy and their spouses to cope with and prevent interpersonal isolation. The proposal was successfully defended in May of 2010. Data collection and analysis for this project was completed in August of 2011. The defense date will be February of 2012.

Literature Review and Presentation

Collaborated with a peer on a literature review concerning career counseling with gifted students. The review examined specific challenges and techniques related to career counseling with this unique population. We presented the research at the Psychological and Educational Research in Kansas (PERK) Convention. The manuscript received first place in the Graduate Literature Division and was later published in the Journal of Contemporary Counseling.

November 2001

Research Study and Presentation

Conducted a research study that examined the relationship between student-professor rapport and academic performance. Presented results of this study at the Great Plains Students' Psychology Convention and was awarded first place in my research area.

March 1999

Professional and Teaching Experience

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| August 2010 –
May 2011 | Graduate Teaching Assistant: Clinical Foundations of Treatment
Provided oversight and guidance to first year clinical psychology doctoral students working with analogue clients. Reviewed videotaped sessions students conducted with analogue clients and provided evaluative feedback. |
| August 2008 –
May 2010 | Graduate Teaching Assistant
Served as a teaching assistant for clinical psychology faculty members providing assistance with literature reviews and research writing. Also lectured on various topics covered in a graduate level Theories of Personality course. |

- July 2002 – July 2007** **Clinical Director: Kings Achievement Center**
 Provided individual, group, and family therapy at a residential facility that served male adolescents who had been adjudicated for one or more crimes. Served as site supervisor to marriage and family therapy practicum students providing various mental health services to program residents. Provided training for staff members on various developmental and psychological topics relevant to their work with residents.
- August 2005 – May 2007** **Internship Director: Friends University**
 Monitored internship experiences of undergraduate psychology students. Facilitated and assessed student learning through course assignments, class discussions and performance evaluations provided by students' on-site supervisors.
- August 2004 – December 2004** **Adjunct Professor: Friends University**
 Served as an instructor for an undergraduate level Introduction to Psychology course.
- August 1999 – June 2002** **Teaching Assistant: Brookcreek Learning Center**
 Provided supervision, guidance, and direction to preschool aged children during structured learning and recreational activities.

Professional Development

- Current Guidelines for Working with Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Clients: The New APA Practice Guidelines (2010-6 hrs.)
- Multicultural Counseling: An Alternative Conceptualization (2009-6 hrs.)
- Treatment/Teaching Interventions of Children with Autism (2009-6 hrs.)
- Psychology of Forgiveness (2008-6 hrs.)
- Assessment of Risk (2007-6hrs)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Children and Adolescents (2007-6 hrs.)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (2007-6 hrs.)

- Coping with Grief (2007-6 hrs.)
- Today's Difficult Child and Adolescent: Effective Interventions for Oppositional, Defiant, and Challenging Behaviors (2007- 6 hrs.)
- Treating Compulsive Sexual Behaviors (2006- 6 hrs.)
- Diagnosis and Treatment of the Major Psychological Disorders: Depression, Anxiety, Psychosis (2006-6 hrs.)
- Anxiety Disorders: Strategies for Assessment and Comprehensive Treatment (2006-6 hrs.)
- Mental Status and Risk Assessments (2006-6 hrs.)
- Self-Mutilation in Youth and Adults: Causes, Treatment and Prevention (2006-6 hrs.)
- Innovative Strategies For Treating Child/Adolescent Behavior Disorders (2006-6.25 hrs.)
- Spirituality in Clinical Practice: Current Resources, Concepts, and Skills (2006-1 hr.)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (2005-6 hrs.)
- Introduction to Neuroscience (2005-1 hr.)
- KS Psychopharmacology: Medication Management of Mental Disorders (2005- 6.25 hrs)
- Oppositional Defiant and Conduct Disorder (2005- 6 hrs.)
- Childhood Developmental Disorders (2004-6 hrs.)

Affiliations/Memberships

- American Psychological Association (APA)- Graduate Student Affiliate (2000-2001) (2007-Present)
- American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC)- (2006-2007)

Licensure/Certifications

- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Kansas- License # 909 (December 2005- December 2007)