



Adlerian Life-Styles among Catholic Priests

Betty J. Newlon and Erik Mansager

For more than 15 years the Catholic Church has experienced what has come to be called a vocational crisis. That is, there has been such a decline in men entering the priesthood that the church has been unable to maintain its former level of ministerial activity. Coinciding with the lack of incoming clergy is the number of priests petitioning Rome for dispensation of their vows. Even with John Paul's emphasis on the permanence of the priesthood and consequent actions to retard laicization (Catholic Almanac, 1980, 1979), there remains a number of priests who either do not wait for the proper indult or choose not to ask at all.

The American Catholic Church has not been unaffected. While between 1966 and 1968 the church reported an increase of 610 priests, 10 years later the number of ordained priests in the United States had dropped by 1,318 to 58,485 priests in 1978 (Official Catholic Directory, 1976, 1978). Seminarians in the same 12-year period were reduced by two-thirds, from 48,114 in 1966 to 14,998 in 1978 (Official Catholic Directory, 1976, 1978). The trend continues. There are 57,891 active priests in the United States today and 11,262 men studying for the priesthood (Official Catholic Directory, 1984). The diminishing number of priests prompted at least one prelate to invoke Holy Obedience against his priests, forbidding them to die or retire without his expressed permission (Casey, 1976).

The church is beginning to attend to the information provided from the secular realm. The United States bishops' "Reflections on the Pastoral Ministry of Priests" (1977, p. 56) and their particular vocational problems note that the "social

sciences have . . . helped us in recognizing identifiable stages of development in adult life. Until recently, the adult years were examined in terms of its problems; now there are reasons to understand adult life from the perspective of predictable patterns." This is not only supported by Sheehy's (1977) propositions, but it supports the holistic Adlerian contention of personality or life-style being a unifying "framework, developed early and remaining fairly constant throughout life" (Mosak, 1971, p. 35).

Statement of the Problem

The vocational crisis in the church gives rise to the following question: Are there particular personality types or life-styles that are more prevalent in this occupation?

Hypotheses to be Tested

Hypothesis 1. There will be greater than chance agreement among the judges regarding priests' dominant life-styles.

Hypothesis 2. There will be non-chance placement (or an uneven distribution) of priests' dominant life-styles among the eight life-style categories. The present study sought to determine only the priests' dominant life-style and made no attempt to determine the strength of adherence of a given priest to his predominant life-style category.

Design and Methodology

The study was primarily a descriptive survey of priests' predominant life-style. The judging procedure regarding life-styles was adopted from previous studies and lent itself to further testing the reliability of the life-style instrumentation.

Instruments. Three instruments were used in the study: the Life Style Questionnaire Inventory, the Judge's Rating Form, and a General Questionnaire designed to gather demographic information about the respondents.

The Life Style Questionnaire Inventory (LSQI). This data collecting tool is based on the conceptual work of Dreikurs (1950), Allen (1971), and Mosak (1968), and was made operational by Kern (1976). It is a

paper-pencil questionnaire that asks for information regarding birth order, sibling relationships, achievements and deficiencies, parent-child relationships, parental relationships, and family climate as well as early recollections. It was chosen because it has been used in previous studies of personality diagnosis and specifically in conjunction with Mosak's (1971) 14 life-style categories.

The categories as identified by Mosak and grouped according to similarities by Davis (1978) are:

Category A: The intellectualizers, controllers, feelings avoiders

Category B: The rebel, opposer, or negativistic life-style

Category C: The right, superior, or good life-style

Category D: The pleaser life-style

Category E: The getter, baby life-style

Category F: The victim, martyr, or inadequate life-style

Category G: The excitement-seeker life-style

Category H: The driver life-style

Judge's Rating Form. The Rating Form was similar to that developed by Kyser (1978) and Davis (1978) for their studies. Mosak's 14 life-styles (1971) were combined into eight categories. Each listed with a rating scale from zero to ten. The higher the rating, the greater the indication of the person's dominant life-style.

The General Questionnaire. To obtain descriptive information on the respondents, a general questionnaire was devised. Questions from the following categories were included: personal information (date and place of birth, years ordained, health status, etc.), and education (level completed before entering seminary, academic degrees obtained, plans for further studies, etc.).

Respondents and Procedures. Participants for this study were chosen from the Diocese of Tucson. This diocese includes eight counties of southern Arizona. Within its boundaries at the time of the survey were 148 priests, both diocesan and religious. A mailing list of the priests was made available by diocesan administrators, including a list of the 11 diocesan priests who were involved in active assignments or studying outside the diocese.

Of the 159 packets mailed, responses were received from 47 priests. Four of these respondents chose not to complete the packet for various reasons. The 43 responses from which data were collected represented 27.8% of those queried.

Judges and Procedures. Three judges were used. All had obtained

graduate degrees in counseling psychology, were familiar with obtaining life-style information, and did so regularly in private practice.

Besides the brief instructions on the rating forms themselves, each judge was given further written and verbal instructions. Operating independently, they were asked to choose a dominant life-style for each LSQI. Since the respondents were not expected to fit rigidly into a single category, the judges were free to rate the subjects on the remaining seven life-styles from zero to within the number of the dominant life-style.

Dominant life-styles for the individuals upon whom two of the three judges did not agree were chosen by computing the highest mean among the categories.

The General Questionnaire. General questionnaires were completed by the priests. The summary information is presented below.

Thirty-eight of the respondents described themselves as being involved in "active assignments." The priests in this study were predominantly over 55 years of age. Almost 14% of the priests were over 70 and almost one-fourth were under 36. The remaining 62% were between 36 and 69 years old. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents had been in the priesthood for over 30 years.

Slightly over one quarter of the respondents were members of a religious order. All of these had been ordained for over 10 years and were over 45 years of age. More than half of the religious were over 55.

The majority of priests described themselves to be in "good health" (62.8%). Almost 28% said they were in "excellent" health, and the remainder (9.3%) stated that their health was "fair." The options "poor" and "very bad" were not used by the priests.

Forty of the priests were born United States citizens. One was a naturalized citizen and all the respondents were born Catholic. Almost 56% of the priests said they had received all their pre-college education in Catholic schools. Thirty-two percent of the clergy had completed the eighth grade or less before entering the seminary or novitiate. Thirty-seven percent completed some college education before entering—ranging from one year to having completed master's work. By the time of their ordination, almost 35% had received state accredited bachelor's degrees and 23% had received state accredited master's.

Methods of Analysis. The hypotheses were designed to indicate which, if any, of the life-styles were predominant among the study's population, and whether the judges' rating of these priests' life-styles was reliable. The methods used to test these hypotheses included the binominal test in conjunction with the M(I) index, the chi-square (X^2) test, and the Pearson "r" (Popham, 1967).

Hypothesis 1:

Ho: There will be chance agreement among judges regarding priests' dominant life-styles.

Ha: There will be greater than chance agreement among judges regarding priests' dominant life-styles.

The statistical null hypothesis was rejected. At least two of three judges agreed on one of eight life-styles for a subject in 29 of 36 cases. The "z" statistic was computed to be 5.75, which indicated the results were significant beyond the .01 level. When the M(I) index was applied it was computed to be .70, indicating that the agreement proportion was 70% better than chance agreement.

The results indicated that the judges agreed on life-style types at a proportion above chance, which was statistically significant. Since the null hypothesis was rejected, the results support the idea that the technique for determining priests' dominant life-styles was reliable to some degree (see Table 1).

Table 1
Binomial Test of Proportion of Judges' Agreement on Priests' Dominant Life-Styles

No. of Judges Agreeing	Chance Probability	Observed Proportion	M(I) Index	Statistical Significance
At Least Two out of Three	.34	29/36 = .80	.70	p < .01

Hypothesis 2:

Ho: There will be chance placement of priests' dominant life-styles among the eight life-style categories.

Ha: There will be non-chance placement of priests' dominant life-styles among the eight life-style categories.

The statistical null hypothesis was rejected since the expected frequency within each cell of the contingency table did not match the observed frequency. The raw X^2 value was computed to be 103.741 for the one-way contingency table. With seven degrees of freedom, X^2 values of 14.067 and 18.475 were necessary at the .05 and .01 levels of significance, respectively.

Table 2
Dispersion of Priests Among Eight Life-Style Categories

Number of Priests	Life-Style Categories								Raw χ^2 Value	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H		
Computed According to Interjudge Agreement (N = 35)	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	103.74*
Determined by Judge I (N = 36)	3	1	24	2	4	1	1	1	3	70.66*
Determined by Judge II (N = 36)	1	28	28	4	3	3	3	3	3	143.99*
Determined by Judge III (N = 30)	3	2	12	2	3	5	3	3	3	24.41*

*Significant beyond .01 level with 7 degrees of freedom.

Twenty-four of the 35 priests received dominant life-style ratings in Category "C", which represented 68.6% of those rated. This represented a statistically significant non-chance placement throughout the categories. It appeared that Category "C" was the predominant life-style in this population (see Table 2).

Summary of Purpose, Procedures, and Results

Purpose. The purpose of this study was to examine the identification of Catholic priests' dominant Adlerian life-style. To achieve this, two investigations were necessary. First, the study determined that Adlerian judges could agree on the priests' dominant life-styles at a level far greater than that of chance, and second, that the eight categories of life-styles were not evenly distributed among the priests.

Procedures. Priests within a single diocese were chosen for the study. Forty-four of the priests responded by completing questionnaires designed to obtain life-style and demographic information. Each Life-Style Questionnaire Inventory was interpreted by each of three Adlerian-trained judges who selected a dominant life-style for each priest.

Results. 1. It was hypothesized that there would be greater than chance agreement among judges regarding priests' predominant life-styles. The hypothesis was supported beyond the .01 level of significance. The Adlerian judges reliably discerned dominant life-styles of priests by using information from the Life-Style Questionnaire Inventory.

2. It was hypothesized that there would be non-chance placement of priests' dominant life-styles among the eight life-style categories. The hypothesis was supported beyond the .01 level of significance. The priests' life-styles were found to be unevenly distributed, and it appeared that one category was predominant.

The degree to which the independent judges agreed in their assessments of this specialized population and the fact that the priests were predominantly found to be in Category "C" may have further implications in vocational studies of similarly specialized careers.

The results of this study add support to conjectures about the priesthood that have previously been considered but not empirically substantiated. The Adlerian framework, with its emphasis on social interaction from a child's earliest years, offers insight into the area of family relations that may have influenced the individual's decision to seek out the priesthood (The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, 1970, p. 135). While Adlerian psychology is primarily interested in the individual, the fact

that 66% of the priests were categorized in a single life-style could offer insight into the personality type of those who most frequently are ordained to the priesthood.

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