Psychological type profile of Methodist churchgoers in England

Christopher Alan Lewis
School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Leeds Trinity University, Leeds, UK

Leslie J. Francis*
Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Alison M. Geary
Methodist Church, Birmingham District, Birmingham, UK

Author note:
*Corresponding author:
Leslie J. Francis
Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR)
The University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL United Kingdom
Email: leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk
Abstract

The present study draws on data provided by 263 adults attending seven services held in Methodist churches who completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales. The profile of these Methodist churchgoers is then set alongside the profile of 3,302 Anglican churchgoers reported in an earlier study. While the two groups shared preferences for introversion (54% and 55%) sensing (80% and 86%), feeling (60% and 64%), and judging (86% and 89%), the proportion of sensing types was significantly higher in the Methodist churches. While 72% of Anglican churchgoers reported the SJ temperament, the proportion rose significantly to 80% among Methodist churchgoers.

*Keywords*: congregation studies, Methodist Church, psychological type, temperament theory
Introduction

Psychological type theory has played a part in the developing science of congregation studies from the 1980s with relatively small studies reported in the USA by Gerhardt (1983) and Rehak (1998) and in Canada by Delis-Bulhoes (1990) and Ross (1993, 1995). Psychological type theory, with its roots in the work of Carl Jung (1971), was further operationalised and developed through a series of instruments, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS; Francis, 2005). When applied to church congregations, psychological type theory enables insights to be generated into four core areas of church life.

First, psychological type theory distinguishes between two orientations, styled introversion (I) and extraversion (E). The orientations are concerned with the ways in which individuals are energised. Introverts tend to be energised by the inner world of ideas, reflection and solitude. Extraverts tend to be energised by the outer world of activity, engagement and company. The social world of introverts and extraverts work quite differently. Introverts feel comfortable with a small number of established friends. Extraverts feel comfortable with meeting strangers and engaging with them. The difference between introverted and extraverted congregations may be reflected in the openness and welcome to newcomers.

Second, psychological type theory distinguishes between the ways of perceiving, styled sensing (S) and intuition (N). The perceiving process is concerned with the ways in which individuals perceive the world around them, take in information and build up a picture of how things are. Sensing types tend to be concerned with facts and data. They are rooted in the reality of the present. Intuitive types tend to be concerned with ideas and possibilities. They are rooted in shaping things for the future. What sensing types and intuitive types are
looking for in the local church may be quite different. Sensing types tend to want to preserve what they know from the past. Intuitive types tend to want to try out new things for the future. This difference between sensing type and intuitive type congregations may be reflected in the openness to change and development.

Third, psychological type theory distinguishes between two ways of judging, feeling (F) or thinking (T). The judging process is concerned with the ways in which individuals evaluate situations and make rational decisions on how to behave. Feeling types tend to place the weight of their decision on issues to do with personal values and interpersonal relationships. They are people oriented. Thinking types tend to place the weight of their decisions on issues to do with objective logical analysis. They are systems oriented. Feeling types may be attracted to the God of mercy and long for a gospel that is open and forgiving. Thinking types may be attracted to the God of justice and long for a gospel that is more clearly focused on right teaching and right behaviour. This difference between feeling type and thinking type congregations may be reflected in different standards of inclusivity and exclusivity.

Fourth, psychological type theory distinguishes between two attitudes toward the outer world, judging (J) and perceiving (P). The attitude toward the outer world is concerned with the ways in which individuals relate to the outer world, either with their preferred judging function (thinking or feeling) or with their preferred perceiving function (sensing or intuition). Judging types tend to prefer their outer world to be well organised and regulated. Perceiving types tend to prefer their outer world to be open and flexible. Judging types like to prepare for things in advance and are uncomfortable with last minute changes to their plans. Perceiving types find it difficult and restricting to do too much planning and preparation. This difference between judging type and perceiving type congregations may be reflected in the kind of structures surrounding local church life.
Psychological type theory was introduced to the science of congregation studies in England and Wales in the early 2000s. In the first study, Craig, Francis, Bailey, and Robbins (2003) reported on a sample of 101 churchgoers from three Church in Wales benefices. They found preferences for introversion (61%), sensing (85%), feeling (65%), and judging (92%). Two predominant types were ISFJ at 30% and ISTJ at 20% of the sample. In the second study, Francis, Duncan, Craig, and Luffman (2004) reported on a sample of 327 churchgoers from five Anglican churches in central England. They found preferences for introversion (59%), sensing (72%), feeling (64%), and judging (68%). Two predominant types were ISFJ at 17% and ISTJ also at 17%. In the third study, Francis, Robbins, Williams, and Williams (2007) reported on a sample of 185 rural churchgoers within the Church in Wales. They found that ISFJ accounted for 32% of the women and for 19% of the men. In the fourth and largest study, Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) reported on a sample of 3,302 churchgoers drawn from 140 Anglican congregations. They found preferences for introversion (54%), sensing (80%), feeling (60%), and judging (86%). Two predominant types were ISFJ at 22% and ISTJ at 18%.

Another way of reflecting on type theory is by identifying an individual’s dominant (or strongest) function. This approach to type theory distinguishes among dominant sensing types, dominant intuitive types, dominant feeling types, and dominant thinking types. Dominant sensing types present as practical people. Dominant intuitive types present as imaginative people. Dominant feeling types present as humane people. Dominant thinking types present as logical people. The concentration of like-minded individuals helps to shape the communities of which they are part.

The large study of 3,302 Anglican churchgoers reported by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) provides a key profile of the comparative strength of the four dominant types within the congregations surveyed. According to these data 44% of Anglican churchgoers
presented as dominant sensing types followed by 29% who presented as dominant feeling types, 16% as dominant thinking types, and 11% as dominant intuitive types.

**Psychological temperament theory**

A fresh way of looking at the components of psychological type theory was proposed by Keirsey and Bates (1978) in an interpretative framework they styled as temperament theory. Temperament theory prioritised the perceiving process by distinguishing between two expressions of the preference for sensing (SJ and SP) and by distinguishing between two expressions of the preference for intuition (NT and NF). In the language shaped by Keirsey and Bates (1978) the Epimethean Temperament characterises the SJ profile, people who long to be dutiful and exist primarily to be useful to the social units to which they belong. The Dionysian Temperament characterises the SP profile, people who want to be engaged, involved, and doing something new. The Promethean Temperament characterises the NT profile, people who want to understand, explain, shape and predict realities, and who prize their personal competence. The Apollonian Temperament characterises the NF profile, people who quest for authenticity and for self-actualisation, who are idealistic and who have great capacity for empathic listening. Oswald and Kroeger (1988) built on Keirsey and Bates’ (1978) characterisation of the four temperaments to create profiles of how these four temperaments shape four very different styles of religious leadership. Subsequently, Francis, Wright, and Robbins (2016) built on Oswald and Kroeger’s (1988) profiles of four different styles of religious leadership to propose four different styles of church congregations.

According to the analysis proposed by Francis, Wright, and Robbins (2016) the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) would tend to shape the most traditional of all churchgoers, the people who long for stability and continuity in the life of their church. They want to protect and conserve the traditions that they have inherited from a previous generation. For them, change emerges slowly over time and new things are seriously tested before they are
adopted. They prize order and stability and are willing to serve a stable community with loyalty. They tend to be realistic and practical people who may distrust innovation and experimentation. A congregation structured by and for the Epimethean Temperament would have a reliable and traditional feel about it.

The Dionysian Temperament (SP) would tend to shape the most action-oriented and fun-loving of all churchgoers, the people who long for the church to engage them in activities. They have little interest in the abstract, theoretical and non-practical aspects of theology and church life. They can bring their local church to life when they are allowed to take initiatives, although they are better at starting new things than at seeing them through. A congregation structured by and for the Dionysian Temperament would have a spontaneous and innovative feel about it.

The Promethean Temperament (NT) would tend to shape the most academically curious and intellectually grounded of all churchgoers, people who are motivated by their search for truth and for possibilities opened up by their faith. They tend to be visionaries who expect their local church to look for new ways of doing things and to apply rigorous testing of strategies and teaching. They tend to be advocates for social justice and expect their churches to be places of integrity, truth and forgiveness, rather than centres for harmony and compromise. A congregation structured by and for the Promethean Temperament would have an academic and enquiry feel about it.

The Apollonian Temperament (NF) would tend to shape the most idealistic of all churchgoers, people concerned with making life better for others. They want to meet the needs of others and to find personal affirmation in the process. They can be articulate people, with good empathetic capacity and interpersonal skills. As members of the congregation they want to be engaged in a visionary and pastorally effective community, and may take on an unobtrusive pastoral role in that community. Here are the people who may see the potential
for ministries with young people, among the elderly, among the homeless and among the hungry. A congregation structured by and for the Apollonian Temperament would have a pastorally caring feel about it.

Reviewing the four studies that have employed psychological type theory among Anglican churchgoers through the lens of temperament theory produced the following picture. In the first study among 101 churchgoers, Craig, Francis, Bailey, and Robbins (2003) found 82% identified as SJ, 8% as NF, 7% as NT, and 4% as SP. In the second study among 327 churchgoers, Francis, Duncan, Craig, and Luffman (2004) found 56% identified as SJ, 20% as NF, 17% as SP, and 7% as NT. In the third study among 185 churchgoers, Francis, Robbins, Williams, and Williams (2007) found 75% identified as SJ, 10% as NF, 8% as NT, and 6% as SP. In the fourth study among 3,302 churchgoers, Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) found 72% identified as SJ, 12% as NF, 8% as NT, and 8% as SP. All four studies agree that the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) is predominant among churchgoers, although the strength of this predominance varies somewhat from study to study.

Research question

This small body of research reported by Craig, Francis, Bailey, and Robbins (2003), Francis, Duncan, Craig, and Luffman (2004), Francis, Robbins, Williams, and Williams (2007), and Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) offer a consistent picture of church congregations in England and Wales sharing preferences for introversion, sensing, feeling, and judging, and for the Epimethean Temperament (SJ), although with some variations in the strength of these preferences. A clear limitation with this body of research concerns the focus entirely on Anglican congregations. Against this background, the present study has two clear aims. The first aim is to identify the psychological type profile of a sample of Methodist churchgoers in England. The second aim is to compare this profile of Methodist churchgoers
with the largest available profile of 3,302 Anglican churchgoers reported by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011).

**Method**

**Procedure**

Every adult who attended seven services held in Methodist churches in Cumbria, Lancashire, Leicester, and Yorkshire were invited to complete a short survey at the end of the service. They were informed regarding the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation. A total of 263 participants returned fully completed surveys.

**Measure**

Psychological type was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of 10 forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type theory: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (judging or perceiving). Recent studies have demonstrated that this instrument functions well in church-related contexts. For example, Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2017) confirmed the factor structure among a sample of 722 Anglican clergy. Among another sample of 364 Anglican clergy, Francis, Payne, and Emslie (2018) reported alpha coefficients of .83 for the Extraversion and Introversion Scales, .79 for the Sensing and Intuition Scales, .76 for the Thinking and Feeling Scales, and .83 for the Judging and Perceiving Scales.

**Participants**

The 263 participants came from congregations that varied considerably in size, ranging from 10 to 80 individuals. In order to protect anonymity, especially in the smaller
congregations data were not collected on sex and age. In accordance with the wider profile of church congregations there was a majority of women and older people.

**Data analysis**

The research literature concerning empirical studies in psychological type has developed a distinctive method for displaying statistical data in the form of type tables. This convention has been applied in the present paper in order to interrogate these new data within the established literature and to provide all the detail necessary for secondary commentary and further interpretation within the rich theoretical framework afforded by psychological type theory. Type tables have been designed to provide information about the 16 complete psychological types, about the four dichotomous preferences, about the six sets of pairs and temperaments, about the dominant types, and about the introverted and extraverted Jungian types. Commentary on this table, however, will be restricted to those aspects of the data most relevant to addressing the research questions posed by the present study. In the context of type tables the statistical significance of the differences between two groups is established by means of the selection ratio index ($I$), an extension of chi-square (McCaulley, 1985). In table 1 the data displayed for Methodist churchgoers are compared with the data on Anglican churchgoers as originally collected by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) and presented for males and females combined by Francis, Wright, and Robbins (2016).

**Results**

- insert table 1 about here -

Table 1 employs the conventional type table to present the psychological type profile of the 263 Methodist churchgoers who participated in the survey. In terms of dichotomous type preferences, these data record preferences for introversion (55%) over extraversion (45%), for sensing (86%) over intuition (14%), for feeling (64%) over thinking (36%), and for judging (89%) over perceiving (11%). In terms of dominant type preference, these data
record the strongest preference for dominant sensing (51%), followed by dominant feeling (30%), dominant thinking (14%), and dominant intuition (5%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the three predominant types are ISFJ (27%), ESFJ (23%), and ISTJ (19%). In terms of the four temperaments, 80% presented as SJs, 9% as NFs, 7% as SPs, and 5% as NTs.

Table 1 also tests the profile of these 263 Methodist churchgoers against the profile of 3,302 Anglican churchgoers published by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011). In terms of the dichotomous preference the one significant difference between these two groups resides in the perceiving process. While 80% of Anglican churchgoers preferred sensing, the proportion increased significantly among Methodist churchgoers to 86%. In terms of the 16 complete types there were no significant differences between Anglican and Methodist churchgoers. In terms of the dominant type preferences there were two significant differences between the two groups. While 44% of Anglican churchgoers presented as dominant sensing types, the proportion rose to 51% among Methodist churchgoers. While 11% of Anglican churchgoers presented as dominant intuitive types the proportion fell to 5% among Methodist churchgoers. In terms of the four temperaments the one significant difference between these two groups concerned the SJ temperament. While 72% of Anglican churchgoers report the Epimethean temperament (SJ), the proportion rose significantly to 80% among Methodist churchgoers.

**Conclusion**

The present study set out to address two research aims. The first aim was to identify the psychological type profile of a sample of Methodist churchgoers in England. A survey conducted among those who attended seven services held in Methodist churches in Cumbria, Lancashire, and Yorkshire, generated 263 responses. The overall psychological type profile of the 263 Methodist churchgoers was basically consistent with the profile of Anglican churchgoers reported in the four studies by Craig, Francis, Bailey, and Robbins (2003),
Francis, Duncan, Craig, and Luffman (2004), Francis, Robbins, Williams, and Williams (2007), and Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011). This sample of Methodist churchgoers reported preferences for introversion (55%), for sensing (86%), for feeling (64%), and for judging (89%). In terms of temperament theory this sample of Methodist churchgoers reported an overwhelming preference for the Epimethean temperament (80%).

The second aim was to compare this profile of Methodist churchgoers with the largest available profile of 3,302 Anglican churchgoers reported by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011). This comparison drew attention to two significant differences that distinguished Methodist churchgoers from Anglican churchgoers. While Anglican congregations were clearly shaped by the preference for sensing (80%), this preference was significantly higher within Methodist congregations (86%). While Anglican congregations were clearly shaped by the presence of the Epimethean temperament (72%), this presence was significantly higher within Methodist congregations (80%).

Knowing the psychological type profile and temperament profile of Methodist congregations may help the Methodist Church to make realistic assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and challenges concerning appropriate styles of ministry and mission. With four out of every five members shaped in the Epimethean temperament, Methodist congregations are likely to want to protect and conserve traditions that they have inherited from previous generations. With a strong preference for feeling Methodist congregations are likely to strive for harmony and compromise rather than face tough decisions.

Within this environment the real strength of these congregations shines through the two predominant complete types, the ISFJ and the ESFJ, which account for one out of every two Methodist churchgoers. Together these two types bring the combination of dominant introverted sensing with auxiliary extraverted feeling and dominant extraverted feeling with auxiliary introverted sensing. According to the analysis offered by Ross and Francis (2020),
introverted sensing is a perceiving function that uses past experience as a guide to perceiving current experience. For introverted sensing types memories of past experiences are clear and detailed, but also subjective in ways that may conflict with another’s recollection of the same events. As a consequence for introverted sensing types:

accepting another version of an event is usually resisted because that would involve changing the memory, or even the original experience itself. When an individual is operating with introverted sensing, only the individual concerned can change the internal frame, and outside pressure is met with resistance. (Ross & Francis, 2020, p. 21)

Change may not be easy to effect in such congregations.

Extraverted thinking is an evaluating or judging function that is concerned with harmony, values and human relatedness. As a consequence extraverted feeling types: experience the wish to nurture and take care of others and to enjoy positive impact on them. Extraverted feeling enables us to know the right things to say to people and may drive us at times to surprising lengths to maintain external harmony, sometimes at significant personal cost. (Ross & Francis, 2020, p. 35)

Critique and tough decisions may not be easy to implement in such congregations.

The generalisability of findings from the present study is clearly limited by the nature of the sample, namely 263 participants drawn from seven congregations. They findings may, nonetheless, be sufficiently intriguing to warrant testing through replication studies among other congregations. It is in this way that a cluster of relatively small-scale studies may begin to generate a secure basis of empirical data capable of informing reflection, evaluation, and strategy within the Methodist Church.
References


Francis, L. J., Robbins, M., Williams, A., & Williams, R. (2007). All types are called, but some are more likely to respond: The psychological profile of rural Anglican churchgoers in Wales. *Rural Theology, 5*, 23-30. doi.org/10.1179/rut_2007_5_1_003


Table 1

Type distribution for Methodist churchgoers, compared with Anglican churchgoers as reported by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Sixteen Complete Types</th>
<th>Dichotomous Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISTJ</td>
<td>ISFJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 49</td>
<td>n = 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18.6%)</td>
<td>(27.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = 1.03</td>
<td>I = 1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++++</td>
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<td>++++</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| ISTP | ISFP | INFP | INTP | P |
| n = 2 | n = 3 | n = 4 | n = 4 | n = 28 |
| (0.8%) | (1.1%) | (1.5%) | (1.5%) | (10.6%) |
| I = 0.70 | I = 0.43 | I = 0.82 | I = 1.86 | I = 0.74 |
| + | + | ++ | ++ | |
| | | | | |

| ESTP | ESFP | ENFP | ENTP | J |
| n = 3 | n = 10 | n = 2 | n = 0 | n = 82 |
| (1.1%) | (3.8%) | (0.8%) | (0.0%) | (31.2%) |
| I = 1.71 | I = 1.08 | I = 0.28 | I = 0.00 | I = 0.98 |
| + | ++++ | + | | |

| ESTJ | ESFJ | ENFJ | ENTP | J |
| n = 28 | n = 61 | n = 10 | n = 4 | n = 86 |
| (10.6%) | (23.2%) | (3.8%) | (1.5%) | (32.7%) |
| I = 0.90 | I = 1.16 | I = 0.97 | I = 0.59 | I = 0.90 |
| ++++ | ++++ | ++++ | ++ | |
| + | ++++ | + | | |
| | | | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jungian Types (E)</th>
<th>Jungian Types (I)</th>
<th>Dominant Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-TJ</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-FJ</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN-P</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N = 263$ (NB: + = 1% of $N$)

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001