The psychological type profile of Anglican clergymen: are rural clergy different?

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Abstract

This study employs psychological type theory to discuss the profile of Anglican clergymen serving in the Church in Wales and to explore whether there are distinctive characteristics among those serving in rural ministry. Data provided by 94 clergymen serving in rural ministry and by 135 clergymen serving in non-rural ministry revealed no significant differences between the two groups in terms of the two orientations (introversion and extraversion), the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), the two judging functions (thinking and feeling) and the two attitudes (judging and perceiving).

Keywords: personality, psychological type, clergy, rural
Introduction

Since the late 1990s a series of six empirical studies has systematically addressed the question as to whether the distinctive characteristics, demands and opportunities of rural ministry in the Anglican Church in England and Wales attract a distinctive kind of clergy significantly different from their colleagues who do not serve in rural environments. The sampling employed by these six studies varies in important ways. In the first study, Francis and Lankshear (1998) drew on a study conducted in the Diocese of Chelmsford to compare 81 clergymen in charge of rural benefices with 72 colleagues in charge of urban benefices. In the second study, Francis and Littler (2001) drew on a study conducted throughout the Anglican Dioceses in Wales to compare 92 clergymen in charge of rural benefices with 109 colleagues in charge of urban benefices. In the third study, Francis, Smith, and Robbins (2004) drew on a study conducted in the Dioceses of Worcester and Litchfield to compare 94 clergymen engaged in rural ministry with 219 clergymen engaged in ministry in non-rural parishes. In the fourth study, Francis and Rutledge (2004) drew on a study conducted throughout the Anglican Dioceses in England to compare 316 clergymen working in rural ministry with 741 clergymen serving in other geographical environments. In the fifth study, Robbins, Littler, and Francis (2009) drew on a study conducted throughout the Anglican Dioceses in Wales to compare 94 clergymen working in rural ministry with 135 clergymen serving in other geographical environments. In the sixth study, Robbins (2011) drew on a study conducted throughout the Church of England to compare 561 clergywomen engaged in rural ministry with 685 clergywomen serving in other geographical environments.

Although the sampling strategies differed among these six studies, in another important way they followed closely the same model of research. They all agreed to base their analyses on the dimensional model of personality proposed by Hans Eysenck and operationalised through the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975).
and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). Eysenck’s dimensional model of personality proposes that individual differences in personality can be most adequately and economically summerised in terms of three higher-order orthogonal factors, characterised by the high scoring poles as extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. The Eysenckian family of personality measures also routinely includes a lie-scale.

The first dimension of Eysenck’s dimensional model of personality is defined by the extraversion scale. This continuum moves from introversion, through ambiversion, to extraversion. In the test manual, Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) characterise the high scorers on the extraversion scale as sociable individuals who like parties, have many friends, need to have people to talk to and prefer meeting people to reading or studying alone. Typical extraverts crave excitement, take chances, act on the spur of the moment, are carefree, easygoing and optimistic. The low scorers on the extraversion scale are characterised by the opposite set of traits.

The second dimension of Eysenck’s dimensional model of personality is defined by the neuroticism scale. This continuum moves from emotional stability, through emotional lability, to neurotic disorder. In the test manual, Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) characterise the high scorers on the neuroticism scale as anxious, worrying individuals who are moody and frequently depressed, likely to sleep badly and to suffer from psychosomatic disorders. The low scorers on the neuroticism scale are characterised by an absence of these traits.

The third dimension of Eysenck’s dimensional model of personality is defined by the psychoticism scale. This continuum moves from tendermindedness, through toughmindedness, to psychotic disorder. In their foundation text on psychoticism, Eysenck & Eysenck (1976) characterise the high scorers on the psychoticism scale as not caring for people, lacking in feeling and empathy and altogether insensitive. The low scorers on the
psychoticism scale are characterised as empathetic, unselfish, altruistic, warm, peaceful and generally pleasant, although possibly socially indecisive individuals.

Taken together the six studies that employ the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality to test whether rural ministry attracts a distinctive kind of clergyman, indicate that any differences found are neither strong nor consistent. All six studies agree that there are no significant differences between rural clergy and other clergy recorded on the neuroticism scale. Only one of the six studies (Francis and Rutledge, 2004) found significant difference on the psychoticism scale, where rural clergy recorded lower scores than other clergy. Four studies reported significant differences on the extraversion scale, but not all in the same direction: Francis and Lankshear (1998) reported higher extraversion scores among rural clergy while Francis and Littler (2001), Francis and Rutledge (2004) and Robbins (2011) reported lower extraversion scores among rural clergy. Finally three studies (Francis & Lankshear, 1998; Francis, Smith, & Robbins, 2004; Francis & Rutledge, 2004) reported the consistent finding that rural clergy recorded higher scores than other clergy on the lie scale, indicating a greater tendency toward social conformity.

Reflecting on these findings, the idea that clergy attracted to rural ministry may display a higher level of social conformity resonates with the notion that rural ministry still nurtures a more conventional and established model of Anglican identity than that found in suburban and urban contexts. The three studies that suggest that rural ministry may attract more introverted clergy is consistent with the notion that rural ministry may rely less heavily on the social engagement that is more appealing to extraverts, but this finding is also clearly contradicted by Francis and Lankshear (1998) who found a higher level of extraversion among rural clergy. There are no good theoretical reasons for hypothesising differences between rural clergy and other clergy on the two personality dimensions of neuroticism and psychoticism.
While the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality provides one helpful conceptualisation of individual differences that may be useful to illuminate aspects of Christian ministry, another model of personality has gained prominence in the field of ministry studies over the past decade, namely psychological type theory (see Francis, 2009). Psychological type theory has its origins in the observations and conceptualisations of Carl Jung (1971) and has been further developed, refined and operationalised through a series of psychometric instruments, including the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005). At its heart psychological type theory distinguishes between two orientations (introversion and extraversion), two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), two judging functions (thinking and feeling) and two attitudes (judging and perceiving).

In psychological type theory, the two orientations are concerned with contrasting energy sources. Introverts (I) are energised by the inner world. When tired they prefer to go inward to regain energy. Extraverts (E) are energised by the outer world. When tired they prefer to congregate with other people to regain energy. Introverts enjoy their own company and appreciate silence. Extraverts enjoy the company of others and prefer to engage in conversation. While psychological type theory and Eysenckian theory both employ the same language of extraversion and introversion, they use that language in somewhat different ways.

In psychological type theory, the two perceiving functions are concerned with contrasting ways of taking in information. Sensing types (S) are concerned with the details of a situation as perceived by the five senses. Intuitive types (N) are concerned with the meaning and significance of a situation. Sensing types feel comfortable with the familiar and with the
conventional. They tend to dislike change. Intuitive types feel comfortable with innovation and with new ideas. They tend to promote change.

In psychological type theory, the two judging functions are concerned with contrasting ways of evaluating situations. Thinking types (T) are concerned with objective evaluation of a situation, and with identifying the underlying logic. Feeling types (F) are concerned with the subjective evaluation of a situation, and with identifying the underlying values. Thinking types are more concerned with supporting effective systems. Feeling types are more concerned with supporting interpersonal relationships.

In psychological type theory, the two attitudes are concerned with which of the two processes is employed in the outer world. Judging types (J) employed their preferred judging function (thinking or feeling) in the outer world. Perceiving types (P) employ their preferred perceiving function (sensing or intuition) in the outer world. Judging types display a planned, orderly and organised profile to the outer world. Perceiving types display a flexible, spontaneous and unplanned profile to the outer world.

Although as yet no study has employed psychological type theory to explore whether the distinctive characteristics, demands and opportunities of rural ministry in the Anglican Church in England and Wales attract a distinctive kind of clergy significantly different from their colleagues who serve in other geographical environments, one study, reported by Craig (2005), has explored whether rural churchgoers record a psychological type profile different from churchgoers in other geographical environments. Craig (2005) draws on a sample of 2,658 people attending church services in 95 congregations across the United Kingdom who completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales. This sample was divided into two groups, 991 who attended rural churches and 1,607 who attended churches in other geographical areas. Comparing the mean scale scores recorded by the two different groups of churchgoers across the eight scales, Craig (2005) found significant differences in terms of sensing and
intuition: rural churchgoers recorded significantly higher scores on the sensing scale and significantly lower scores on the intuition scale. There were no significant differences between the two groups on the scales of extraversion and introversion, thinking and feeling, judging and perceiving. Craig concluded that the higher level of sensing among rural churchgoers may reflect a more conservative approach to issues of faith, belief and practice in the rural church.

Against this background the aim of the present study is to examine whether the distinctive psychological type profile observed among rural churchgoers is also reflected among Anglican clergymen who serve in rural ministry.

**Method**

**Procedure**

A questionnaire was mailed to all full-time stipendiary parochial clergy serving in the Church in Wales. A total of 593 questionnaires were successfully delivered and 391 were returned generating a response rate of 66%. Not all respondents, however, completed the personality measure included at the end of the survey. The present analysis is based on the 229 male respondents who provided full data on the relevant scales used in the study and who were engaged in parish ministry. The sample comprised 22 clergy under the age of forty, 42 in their forties, 107 in their fifties, 56 in their sixties, and 2 in their seventies.

**Instrument**

*Psychological type* was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: 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: 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, Craig, and Hall (2008) reported alpha coefficients of .83 for the EI scale, .76 for the SN scale, .73 for the TF scale, and .79 for the JP scale. Participants were asked for each pair of characteristics to check the ‘box next to that characteristic which is closer to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you. Tick the characteristics that reflect the real you, even if other people see you differently’.

**Data analysis**

The research literature concerning the empirical investigation of psychological type has developed a highly distinctive method for analyzing, handling, and displaying statistical data in the form of ‘type tables’. This convention has been adopted in the following presentation in order to integrate these new data within the established literature and to provide all the detail necessary for secondary analysis and further interpretation within the rich theoretical framework afforded by psychological type. Type tables have been designed to provide information about the sixteen discrete 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 will, however, be restricted to those aspects of the data strictly relevant to the research question. In the context of type tables the statistical significance of the difference between two groups is established by means of the selection ratio index ($I$), an extension of chi-square (McCaulley, 1985).

**Results**

The eight indices of the Francis Psychological Type Scales achieved satisfactory levels of internal consistency reliability among the sample of 229 Anglican clergymen, achieving alpha coefficients in excess of the threshold of .65 proposed by DeVellis (2003): extraversion and introversion, $\alpha = .81$; sensing and intuition, $\alpha = .73$; thinking and feeling, $\alpha = .72$; judging and perceiving, $\alpha = .81$. 
Table 1 presents the psychological type distribution for the 135 clergymen working in non-rural environments. These data demonstrate clear preferences for extraversion (32%) over introversion (68%), for sensing (62%) over intuition (38%), for feeling (53%) over thinking (47%), and for judging (76%) over perceiving (24%). The hierarchy of dominant preferences are dominant sensing (42%), followed by dominant feeling (21%), dominant thinking (19%), and dominant intuition (18%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the two predominant types are ISFJ (19%) and ISTJ (19%).

Table 2 presents the psychological type distribution for the 94 clergymen working in rural ministry. These data demonstrate clear preferences for introversion (70%) over extraversion (30%), for sensing (66%) over intuition (34%), for feeling (56%) over thinking (44%), and for judging (81%) over perceiving (19%). The hierarchy of dominant preferences are dominant sensing (47%), dominant feeling (23%), dominant intuition (19%) and dominant thinking (11%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the two predominant types are ISFJ (23%) and ISTJ (19%). Although there are some differences in the percentages reported between the two groups, the selection ratio index shown in table 2 confirms that none of these differences reach the level of statistical significance. The conclusion derived from these data is that there are no significant differences in the psychological type profile of clergymen in the Church in Wales serving in rural ministry compared with clergymen serving in other geographical environments.

Conclusion

Building on six earlier studies that had employed the Eysenckian three dimensional model of personality, the present study employed psychological type theory among a sample of Anglican clergymen serving in the Church in Wales (94 in rural ministry and 135 serving in other geographical environments) to explore whether the distinctive characteristics,
demands and opportunities of rural ministry attract a distinctive kind of clergy significantly different from their colleagues who do not serve in rural environments. Two main conclusions emerge from the findings generated by this study.

The first conclusion concerns a direct answer to the core research question addressed by the study. According to these data there is no evidence to suggest that Anglican clergymen serving in rural ministry in the Church in Wales differ in terms of their psychological type profile from their colleagues serving in other geographical areas. Adding this new study to the findings from the six earlier studies employing the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality, the overall consensus is that the election for rural ministry is not something that reflects personality predisposition either on the part of the candidates or on the part of the appointing authorities.

This relatively consistent finding leads to a set of further research questions. Does this finding suggest that there are no distinctive characteristics, demands and opportunities within rural ministry? Or, if there are distinctive characteristics, demands and opportunities within rural ministry are these features quite independent of the psychological characteristics of the clergy called to serve there? Do extravert clergy, who may be energised by social interaction and who may prioritise ministry through arranging group activities, find equal stimulation in serving a town church or a group of scattered rural churches? Do intuitive type clergy, who may see opportunities for change, development and innovation, flourish equally well in serving a town church or in serving multiple small congregations? Do thinking type clergy, who may prioritise dealing with structural issues in church life and may value a ministry of teaching and education, exercise their ministry to equal effect in town churches or in rural churches? Do perceiving type clergy, who may respond well to shifting needs and demands and who may find strategic planning and management irksome, find their ministry equally
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effective in contributing to the life of a well staffed and busy town parish or managing the regular demands of a complex pattern of commitments to multiple rural parishes?

The second conclusion concerns interpreting the strengths and weaknesses for rural ministry of the personality profile of clergymen currently active in this field. The data demonstrate preferences for introversion, for sensing, for feeling, and for judging. Each of these four preferences will be examined in turn.

There is a strong weighting toward introversion among rural clergymen, with two introverts (70%) for every one extravert (30%). There are many positive characteristics in an introverted approach to rural ministry. Here are clergy who appreciate time alone for reflection, who prefer working in small groups rather than in large crowds, who get on best working with individuals, who are able to see things through without needing other people, who can identify what needs to be done and can get on and do it. On the other hand, here are people who may not be most skilled in drawing different communities together, in reaching out to local community initiatives, and in pioneering community regeneration.

There is a clear weighting toward sensing among rural clergymen, with two sensing types (66%) for every one intuitive type (34%). There are many positive characteristics in a sensing approach to rural ministry. Here are clergy who appreciate the need for consistency and continuity with the tradition, who have an eye for detail and who may care about the environment and buildings in which they work, who tend to wish to conserve and to keep things as they are. On the other hand, here are people who may not be most skilled in grasping the bigger picture, in formulating a vision for a changing future, and in promoting and managing changes.

There is a slight weighting toward feeling among rural clergymen, with 56% preferring feeling, compared with 44% preferring thinking. There are many positive characteristics in a feeling approach to rural ministry. Here are clergy who appreciate the
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need for good relationships in the local church and who want to make other people feel valued and loved, who tend to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, and who will exercise an effective ministry of pastoral care. On the other hand, here are people who may be reluctant to challenge and to confront others, and who may fail to deal with structural issues that stand in the way of the health, wellbeing and development of the local church.

There is a very strong weighting toward judging among rural clergymen, with four judging types (81%) for every one perceiving type (19%). There are many positive characteristics in a judging approach to rural ministry. Here are clergy who appreciate the need for good organisation and for planning ahead, who may establish rotas and schedules embracing provision across many churches, and who prize predictability and reliability. On the other hand, here are people who may find it difficult and frustrating to work alongside others who may not be in a position to operate with such clarity of forethought, whose availability is more constrained by unpredictable work schedules and shifting family commitments.

The present study has been based on data collected in the Church in Wales at one point in time. Similar analyses conducted within the Church of England are needed to test the extent to which such findings may be generalised and to explore the extent to which there may be variations from one rural diocese to another related to local contexts and to diocesan policies and practices.
References


Table 1

Type distribution for Anglican clergymen serving in non-rural environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Sixteen Complete Types</th>
<th>Dichotomous Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISTJ 78</td>
<td>ISFJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 26</td>
<td>n = 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(19.3%)</td>
<td>(18.5%)</td>
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<td>++++</td>
<td>++++</td>
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<td>++++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| E | n = 43 | (31.9%) |
| I | n = 92 | (68.1%) |
| S | n = 84 | (62.2%) |
| N | n = 51 | (37.8%) |
| T | n = 64 | (47.4%) |
| F | n = 71 | (52.6%) |

<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>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-TJ 18</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>I-TP 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-FJ 14</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>I-FP 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES-P 6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>IS-J 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN-P 5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>IN-J 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 135 (NB: + = 1% of N)
Table 2

*Type distribution for Anglican clergymen serving in rural ministry compared with those serving in non-rural environments*

<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>
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<td>7.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-FJ</td>
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<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES-P</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN-P</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 94 (NB: + = 1% of N)