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Psychological type profile of ministers of word and sacrament within the United Reformed Church (URC)

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ABSTRACT

Preference within the perceiving process (sensing or intuition) is one of the main features within psychological type theory that differentiates clergy serving within different streams of the Christian Church. Previous research has identified a higher proportion of intuitive types among Church of England clergy than among clergy serving within the Free Churches (Baptist, Methodist, Salvation Army). New data from 93 ministers serving within the United Reformed Church suggest that this denomination may occupy a position between the Church of England and other Free Churches, with 55% of male ministers, and 53% of female ministers preferring intuition.

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Introduction

Psychological type theory, as developed and operationalised by instruments like the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCauley, 1985), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005) differentiate between two orientations (extraversion and introversion), two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), two judging functions (thinking and feeling), and two attitudes toward the external world (judging and perceiving). Data generated by measures of psychological type can be used and interpreted in a variety of ways, including discussion of the dichotomous preferences, discussion of the 16 complete types, discussion of the dominant types, or discussion of the four temperaments as proposed by Keirsey and Bates (1978).

The two orientations are concerned with the source from which energy is drawn; energy can be gathered either from the outside world or from the inner world. Extraverts are oriented toward the external world; they are energised by the people and events around them. Introverts are oriented toward their internal world; they are energised by their inner thoughts and ideas.

The two perceiving functions are concerned with the way in which people receive and process information. Sensing types tend to focus on specific details. They prefer to be

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concerned with practical matters. They favour the traditional and conventional way of doing things. Intuitive types tend to focus on the bigger picture. They prefer to be concerned with theoretical matters. They favour innovation and change.

The two judging functions are concerned with the ways in which people undertake evaluations and make judgements. Thinking types make judgements based on impersonal, objective logic. They prize integrity, justice, truthfulness, and fairness. Feeling types make judgements based on personal, subjective values. They prize compassion, mercy, tactfulness, and peace.

The two attitudes toward the external world are concerned with the way in which people respond to the world around them. Judging types employ their preferred judging function (feeling and thinking) that brings structure and order to their external world. Perceiving types employ their preferred perceiving function (sensing and intuition) that keeps their external world open and flexible.

Psychological type theory maintains that one of the four functions (sensing, intuition, feeling, or thinking) takes priority in an individual's development as the dominant function. The dominant function gives shape to that individual. Dominant sensing shapes the practical approach. Dominant intuition shapes the imaginative approach. Dominant feeling shapes the humane approach. Dominant thinking shapes the logical approach.

From the basic building blocks of psychological type theory, Keirsey and Bates (1978) developed temperament theory. Giving priority to the perceiving process, they distinguished two temperaments associated with sensing: sensing and judging (SJ) they styled the Epimethean Temperament (people who wish to be dutiful and useful to their communities), and sensing and perceiving (SP) they styled the Dionysian Temperament (people who want to be engaged, involved, and doing new things). They also distinguished two temperaments associated with intuition: intuition and feeling (NF) they styled the Apollonian Temperament (people who are idealistic and have great capacity for empathetic listening), and intuition and thinking (NT) they style the Promethean Temperament (people who strive to understand, to explain, and to shape their world).

Psychological type theory has provided a lens through which to view the expression and experience of religious leaders (see Osborne, 2016; Oswald & Kroeger, 1988; Ross & Francis, 2020). Psychological type theory has also played a part in the empirical science of clergy studies since the 1960s, with various early studies reporting on samples of: 319 Jewish rabbis (Greenfield, 1969), 150 professed Roman Catholic sisters (Cabral, 1984), 60 Lutheran seminarians (Harbaugh, 1984), and 146 Catholic seminarians (Holsworth, 1984). When Macdaid et al. (1986) drew together available research regarding the psychological type profile of different groups of people to compile their classic *Atlas of Type Tables*, they assembled 15 type tables profiling different groups of clergy, religious leaders, and religious educators. Of particular significance were the two type tables of 1554 Protestant ministers and 1298 Roman Catholic priests. The key finding from the comparison between these two groups concerned the perceiving process. While over half of the Protestant ministers preferred intuition (62%), over half of the Roman Catholic priests preferred sensing (54%).

The finding that the psychological type difference between clergy shaped in different religious traditions resides in the perceiving process is consistent with the theorising advanced by Ross (1992, 2012) that traces differences in religious expression to the perceiving process. Subsequent empirical studies published by Ross and his colleagues began to

map specific ways in which the religious expression of sensing types and intuitive types differed. For example, Ross and Jackson (1993) found that religion tended to function as a guide to right living for sensing types, but as a source of inspiration for intuitive types. Ross et al. (1996) found that intuitive types were more comfortable with complexity of religious beliefs, while sensing types preferred clearer and more defined boundaries around religious beliefs. Intuitive types showed a more welcoming attitude toward religious change, and viewed new insights as essential for a healthy religious life. Sensing types, on the other hand, saw religious change as a problem and change in personal faith as a weakness. Francis and Ross (1997) found that sensing types displayed a greater preference for traditional expression of Christian spirituality, while intuitive types displayed a greater openness to the experiential aspects of spirituality. Ross and Francis (2015) found that intuitive types were more open than sensing types to a mystical orientation.

Building on the notion of an *Atlas of Type Tables*, as proposed by Macdaid et al. (1986), a series of interconnected studies has been compiling type tables for clergy working within different denominations in Britain. This project has taken as its benchmark the study of 626 clergymen and 237 clergywomen serving in the Church of England as reported by Francis et al. (2007). This study reported that 62% of clergymen and 65% of clergywomen preferred intuition. Two replication studies among 622 Church of England clergymen (Francis, Robbins, et al., 2010) and among 83 Church of England clergywomen (Francis, Robbins, and Whinney, 2011) confirmed the high proportion of intuitive types among Church of England clergymen (67%) and clergywomen (60%).

The suggestion that this high proportion of intuitive types was distinctive to the Church of England, rather than to Anglican clergy in general was prompted by a study of 427 Church in Wales clergy reported by Francis et al. (2001). In this study they found that 43% of Church in Wales clergymen preferred intuition. Two replication studies among 213 Church in Wales clergymen (Francis, Littler, et al., 2010) and among 268 Church in Wales clergymen (Payne & Lewis, 2015) confirmed this finding reporting preferences for intuition at 36% and 43% respectively.

Even within the Church of England, this high preference for intuition displayed by those engaged in professional stipendiary ministry is not characteristic of those employed in some other forms of ministry. Three studies that concentrated on the psychological type profile of Church of England clergy serving in Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) found a somewhat different profile. Among 39 OLMs (male and female), Francis and Holmes (2011) reported that 36% preferred intuition. Among 135 OLMs, Francis and Village (2012) found that 36% of the 56 men and 42% of the 79 women preferred intuition. Among 144 female OLMs, Francis et al. (2012) found that 30% preferred intuition.

A recent study of 190 Roman Catholic priests reported by Francis and Village (2022) also demonstrated a considerably lower proportion of intuitive types than found among Church of England clergy. This study reported 39% of Roman Catholic priests as preferring intuition.

Studies among Free Church ministers in Britain have also routinely reported fewer than half preferring intuition. In a study of Baptists, Garland and Village (2022) found among 232 male ministers 49% preferred intuition, and among 51 female ministers 47% preferred intuition. In a study of Methodists, Burton et al. (2010) found among 693 male ministers 46% preferred intuition, and among 311 female ministers 48% preferred intuition. In a study of the Newfrontiers network of churches, Francis et al. (2009) found that among

136 lead elders (male), 48% preferred intuition. In a study of Salvation Army officers, ap Siòn and Francis (2022) found among 164 male officers 38% preferred intuition, and among 269 female officers 25% preferred intuition.

Research problem

A major stream among the Free Churches so far missing from the developing atlas of clergy type tables are ministers serving within the United Reformed Church (URC). The URC has its origins in the 1972 union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales. As successor to the Presbyterian Church of England, the URC may share emphases in common with The Presbyterian Church (USA). Although as yet there are no data on the psychological type profile of clergy serving within the URC, Francis, Robbins, and Wulff (2011) have data on the profile of 561 clergy serving in The Presbyterian Church (USA) where they reported a preference for intuition among 55% of clergymen and 64% of clergywomen, figures somewhat closer to the position occupied by clergy serving within the Church of England.

Against this background, the present paper reports the findings from an initial small-scale study conducted among ministers serving in the URC. The aim of this initial study is to provide indicative data in order to test whether a larger study were likely to be of scientific interest.

Method

Procedure

A total of 93 minister serving within the United Reformed Church in England accepted the invitation to complete a measure of psychological type as part of a survey concerned with personality, ministry, and spiritual experiences. The invitation was issued by post to 51 ministers serving in one Synod (32 returned) and then made available in other Synods to ministers attending Summer Schools. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

Instrument

Psychological type was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005; Francis et al., 2017). This 40-item instrument comprises four sets of ten 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 this instrument to function well in church-related contexts. For example, Francis et al. (2008) reported alpha coefficients of .83 and for EI Scale, .76 for the SN Scale, .73 for the TF Scale, and .79 for the JP Scale.

Participants

The 93 participants comprised 38 female ministers and 55 male ministers; 3 were in their thirties, 15 in their forties, 43 in their fifties, 29 in their sixties, and 3 in their seventies.

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

Table 1. Type distribution for male URC ministers.

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences				
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 6 (10.9%) +++++ +++++ +	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 6 (10.9%) +++++ +++++ +	INFJ <i>n</i> = 6 (10.9%) +++++ +++++ +	INTJ <i>n</i> = 2 (3.6%) ++++	E <i>n</i> = 25 (45.5%) I <i>n</i> = 30 (54.5%) S <i>n</i> = 25 (45.5%) N <i>n</i> = 30 (54.5%) T <i>n</i> = 17 (30.9%) F <i>n</i> = 38 (69.1%) J <i>n</i> = 38 (69.1%) P <i>n</i> = 17 (30.9%)				
ISTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ISFP <i>n</i> = 2 (3.6%) ++++	INFP <i>n</i> = 8 (14.5%) +++++ +++++ +++++	INTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	Pairs and Temperaments IJ <i>n</i> = 20 (36.4%) IP <i>n</i> = 10 (18.2%) EP <i>n</i> = 7 (12.7%) EJ <i>n</i> = 18 (32.7%) ST <i>n</i> = 12 (21.8%) SF <i>n</i> = 13 (23.6%) NF <i>n</i> = 25 (45.5%) NT <i>n</i> = 5 (9.1%)				
ESTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ESFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ENFP <i>n</i> = 5 (9.1%) +++++ ++++	ENTP <i>n</i> = 2 (3.6%) ++++	SJ <i>n</i> = 23 (41.8%) SP <i>n</i> = 2 (3.6%) NP <i>n</i> = 15 (27.3%) NJ <i>n</i> = 15 (27.3%) TJ <i>n</i> = 15 (27.3%) TP <i>n</i> = 2 (3.6%) FP <i>n</i> = 15 (27.3%) FJ <i>n</i> = 23 (41.8%)				
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 6 (10.9%) +++++ +++++ +	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 5 (9.1%) +++++ ++++	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 6 (10.9%) +++++ +++++ +	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 1 (1.8%) ++	IN <i>n</i> = 16 (29.1%) EN <i>n</i> = 14 (25.5%) IS <i>n</i> = 14 (25.5%) ES <i>n</i> = 11 (20.0%) ET <i>n</i> = 9 (16.4%) EF <i>n</i> = 16 (29.1%) IF <i>n</i> = 22 (40.0%) IT <i>n</i> = 8 (14.5%)				
Jungian Types (E)			Jungian Types (I)		Dominant Types			
	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
E-TJ	7	12.7	I-TP	0	0.0	Dt.T	7	12.7
E-FJ	11	20.0	I-FP	10	18.2	Dt.F	21	38.2
ES-P	0	0.0	IS-J	12	21.8	Dt.S	12	21.8
EN-P	7	12.7	IN-J	8	14.5	Dt.N	15	27.3

Note: *N* = 55 (NB: + = 1% of *N*).

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.

Results

The eight continuous scales proposed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales to underpin the assignment to discrete type categories all achieved alpha coefficients in excess of

Table 2. Type distribution for female URC ministers.

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences			
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 4 (10.5%) +++++ +++++ +	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 4 (10.5%) +++++ +++++ +	INFJ <i>n</i> = 2 (5.3%) +++++	INTJ <i>n</i> = 4 (10.5%) +++++ +++++ +	E <i>n</i> = 18 (47.4%) I <i>n</i> = 20 (52.6%) S <i>n</i> = 18 (47.4%) N <i>n</i> = 20 (52.6%) T <i>n</i> = 15 (39.5%) F <i>n</i> = 23 (60.5%) J <i>n</i> = 26 (68.4%) P <i>n</i> = 12 (31.6%)			
ISTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ISFP <i>n</i> = 1 (2.6%) +++	INFP <i>n</i> = 3 (7.9%) +++++ +++	INTP <i>n</i> = 2 (5.3%) +++++	Pairs and Temperaments			
				IJ <i>n</i> = 14 (36.8%) IP <i>n</i> = 6 (15.8%) EP <i>n</i> = 6 (15.8%) EJ <i>n</i> = 12 (31.6%) ST <i>n</i> = 8 (21.1%) SF <i>n</i> = 10 (26.3%) NF <i>n</i> = 13 (34.2%) NT <i>n</i> = 7 (18.4%) SJ <i>n</i> = 15 (39.5%) SP <i>n</i> = 3 (7.9%) NP <i>n</i> = 9 (23.7%) NJ <i>n</i> = 11 (28.9%) TJ <i>n</i> = 11 (28.9%) TP <i>n</i> = 4 (10.5%) FP <i>n</i> = 8 (21.1%) FJ <i>n</i> = 15 (39.5%)			
ESTP <i>n</i> = 1 (2.6%) +++	ESFP <i>n</i> = 1 (2.6%) +++	ENFP <i>n</i> = 3 (7.9%) +++++ +++	ENTP <i>n</i> = 1 (2.6%) +++				
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 3 (7.9%) +++++ +++	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 4 (10.5%) +++++ +++++ +	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 5 (13.2%) +++++ +++++ +++	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	IN <i>n</i> = 11 (28.9%) EN <i>n</i> = 9 (23.7%) IS <i>n</i> = 9 (23.7%) ES <i>n</i> = 9 (23.7%) ET <i>n</i> = 5 (13.2%) EF <i>n</i> = 13 (34.2%) IF <i>n</i> = 10 (26.3%) IT <i>n</i> = 10 (26.3%)			
Jungian Types (E)			Jungian Types (I)			Dominant Types	
	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%		
E-TJ	3	7.9	I-TP	2	5.3	Dt.T	5 13.2
E-FJ	9	23.7	I-FP	4	10.5	Dt.F	13 34.2
ES-P	2	5.3	IS-J	8	21.1	Dt.S	10 26.3
EN-P	4	10.5	IN-J	6	15.8	Dt.N	10 26.3

Note: *N* = 38 (NB: + = 1% of *N*).

the threshold of .65 suggested by DeVellis (2003): introversion and extraversion, .84; sensing and intuition, .74; thinking and feeling, .69; judging and perceiving, .82.

Table 1 presents the type distribution for the 55 male URC ministers. In terms of the dichotomous preferences, these data demonstrate preferences for introversion (55%) over extraversion (46%), for intuition (55%) over sensing (46%), for feeling (69%) over thinking (31%), and for judging (69%) over perceiving (31%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the most frequently occurring type was INFP (15%). In terms of dominant types, the most frequently occurring type was dominant feeling (38%), followed by dominant intuition (27%), dominant sensing (22%), and dominant thinking (13%). In terms of the four temperaments, the most frequently occurring temperament was NF Apollonian (46%), followed by SJ Epimethean (42%), NT Promethean (9%), and SP Dionysian (4%).

Table 2 presents the type distribution of the 38 female URC ministers. In terms of the dichotomous preferences, these data demonstrate preferences for introversion (53%) over extraversion (47%), for intuition (53%) over sensing (47%), for feeling (61%) over thinking (40%), and for judging (68%) over perceiving (32%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the most frequently occurring type was ENFJ (13%). In terms of dominant types, the most frequently occurring type was dominant feeling (34%), followed by dominant sensing (26%), dominant intuition (26%), and dominant thinking (13%). In terms of the four temperaments, the most frequently occurring temperament was SJ Epimethean (40%), followed by NF Apollonian (34%), NT Promethean (18%), and SP Dionysian (8%).

Conclusion

The aim of the present paper was to report the findings from an initial small-scale study conducted among ministers serving in the United Reformed Church to provide indicative data in order to test whether a larger study were likely to be of scientific interest. There are two main limitations with this initial study. The method of data collection through Summer Schools may have failed to attract a representative group of URC ministers. The small sample size (38 female ministers and 55 male ministers) renders statistical comparisons, both between female and male participants and with other groups of clergy, uncertain. Nonetheless, these indicative findings are of considerable interest.

Set within the context of the development of an atlas of psychological type tables for clergy serving within different denominations within Britain, the present study has added to the cumulative picture by providing the profiles of clergymen and clergywomen serving within the United Reformed Church (URC). The primary research question addressed to these data concerned the location of URC ministers in terms of the perceiving process (sensing and intuition). The data suggest that on this construct ministers within the URC occupy a position closer to clergy within the Church of England than is the case for clergy within other Free Churches for which data are available. Thus, 55% of clergymen and 53% of clergywomen within the URC preferred intuition. According to Ross (1992, 2012), it is the perceiving process that most clearly differentiates differences in religious experience and expression. This finding suggests that URC ministers may find more natural alliances with Church of England clergy than with other Free Churches.

This difference in the perceiving process may also carry implications for the temperaments, although this is dependent on preferences for the attitudes as well (judging and

perceiving). The temperament often most prevalent within Christian leaders tends to be the SJ Epimethean Temperament. It is the Epimethean Temperament that, according to Oswald and Kroeger (1988) characterises the 'conserving, serving pastor'. They argue that this temperament shapes traditional clergy who bring stability and continuity to their churches. They serve as protectors and conservers of the traditions inherited from the past. They are not clergy who promote and foster change. In their study of Methodists, Burton et al. (2010) found that 44% of male ministers and 43% of female ministers displayed the Epimethean Temperament. In their study of Baptists, Garland and Village (2021) found that 46% of ministers (they did not differentiate male and female) displayed the Epimethean Temperament. By way of contrast, among Church of England clergy, Francis et al. (2007) found that 31% of clergymen and 29% of clergywomen displayed the Epimethean Temperament. On this criterion URC ministers are closer to the Free Church profile than to the Anglican profile with 42% of male ministers and 40% of female ministers displaying the Epimethean Temperament. Thus, while many URC ministers may align with Church of England clergy in terms of spotting the opportunities for and advantages of innovation and change, the wider Epimethean culture of their denomination may render innovation and change less easy to procure.

It is these intriguing questions about the precise location of ministers serving within the United Reformed Church, set within the context of the development of an atlas of psychological type tables for clergy serving within different denominations within Britain, that strengthen the case for the scientific merit of a more substantial and more systematic investigation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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