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Women Priests in the Church of England: Psychological Type Profile

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Abstract: This study employed psychological type theory and measurement to explore the psychological profile of women priests ordained in the Church of England. A sample of 83 Anglican clergywomen in England completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The data demonstrated clear preferences for introversion (63%) over extraversion (37%), for intuition (60%) over sensing (40%), for feeling (76%) over thinking (24%), and for judging (55%) over perceiving (45%). In terms of dominant types, 37% were dominant feelers, 31% dominant intuitives, 23% dominant sensors, and 8% dominant thinkers. These findings are discussed to illuminate the preferred ministry styles of Anglican clergywomen in England and to highlight the significant differences between the psychological type profile of clergywomen and the UK female population norms.

Keywords: psychology; religion; clergy; female; Myers Briggs Type Indicator; Anglican

1. Introduction

Psychological type theory, as originally proposed by Jung [1] has been developed, extended and operationalised through a series of type indicators, temperament sorters and type scales, including the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator [2] the Keirsey Temperament Sorter [3], and the Francis Psychological

Type Scales [4]. In turn these instruments have given rise to a fruitful research tradition in mapping the connections between psychological type profile and occupational choice or occupational performance. During the 1980s a series of studies in North America began to extend the research tradition to the field of clergy studies, including profiles reported by Cabral [5], Harbaugh [6], Holsworth [7], Macdaid, McCaulley, and Kainz [8], and Bigelow, Fitzgerald, Busk, Girault, and Avis [9].

1.1. Psychological type theory

At its core psychological type theory suggests that individuals differ in terms of four bi-polar preferences: the two orientations of extraversion (E) and introversion (I); the two perceiving functions of sensing (S) and intuition (N); the two judging functions of thinking (T) and feeling (F); and the two attitudes toward the outer world of judging (J) and perceiving (P).

Extraversion and introversion are dichotomous *orientations*, that is, two different ways in which people focus their psychological energy. Extraverts focus their energy on and gain energy from the outside world of people and things. They enjoy communicating and thrive in stimulating and exciting environments. They prefer to act in a situation rather than to reflect on it and they may vocalise a problem or an idea rather than think it through privately. They may be bored and frustrated by silence and solitude. More often they focus their attention on what is happening outside them and may be influenced by others' opinions. They are usually open people, easy to get to know, and they enjoy having many friends. In contrast, introverts focus their energy on and gain energy from their inner world of ideas and reflections. They may feel drained by events and people around them and they prefer to reflect on a situation rather than to act on it. They enjoy solitude, silence, and contemplation, as they tend to focus their attention on what is happening in their inner life. They may appear reserved and detached as they are difficult to get to know, and they may prefer to have a small circle of intimate friends rather than many acquaintances.

Sensing and intuition are dichotomous *perceiving functions*, that is, two different ways in which people take in information. Sensing types gather information by focusing on the facts of a situation using the five senses. They tend to focus on specific details, rather than the overall picture. They are concerned with the actual, the real, and the practical and tend to be down to earth and matter of fact. They may feel that particular details are more significant than general patterns and they are frequently fond of the traditional and conventional. They may be conservative and tend to prefer what is known and well-established. In contrast, intuitive types gather information by focusing on wider meanings and relationships using their imagination. They may feel that perception by the senses is not as valuable as information gained from the unconscious mind; indirect associations and concepts impact their perceptions. They focus on the overall picture, rather than specific facts and data. They follow their inspirations enthusiastically, but not always realistically and they may be seen as idealistic dreamers. They often aspire to bring innovative change to established conventions.

Thinking and feeling are dichotomous *judging functions*, that is, two different ways in which people make decisions and judgements. Thinking types make decisions by using objective, analytical logic. They value integrity and justice and are often known for their truthfulness and desire for fairness. They consider conforming to principles to be of more importance than cultivating harmony. They are often good at making difficult decisions as they are able to analyse problems to reach an unbiased and

reasonable solution. When working with others, they may consider it to be more important to be honest and correct than to be tactful. In contrast, feeling types make decisions by using subjective, personal values. They value compassion and mercy and are often known for their tactfulness and desire for peace. They are more concerned to promote harmony, than to adhere to abstract principles and they may be thought of as ‘people-persons’, as they are able to take into account other people’s feelings and values in decision-making and problem-solving, ensuring they reach a solution that satisfies everyone. They may find it difficult to criticise others, even when it is necessary. They find it easy to empathise with other people, and they tend to be trusting and encouraging of others.

Judging and perceiving are dichotomous *attitudes toward the outside world*, that is, two different ways in which people approach the world around them. Judging types present a systematic, ordered attitude toward the outside world. They enjoy routine and established patterns. They prefer to follow schedules in order to reach an established goal and may make use of lists, timetables, or diaries. They tend to be punctual, organised, and tidy and they may find it difficult to deal with unexpected disruptions of their plans. Likewise, they are inclined to be resistant to changes to established methods. They prefer to make decisions quickly and to stick to their conclusions once made. In contrast, perceiving types present a spontaneous, explorative attitude toward the outside world. They enjoy change and spontaneity and they prefer to leave projects open in order to adapt and improve them. They may find plans and schedules restrictive and tend to be easygoing about issues such as punctuality, deadlines, and tidiness. Indeed, they may consider last minute pressure to be a necessary motivation in order to complete projects. They are often good at dealing with the unexpected and they may welcome change and variety as routine bores them. Their behavior may often seem impulsive and unplanned.

1.2. Profiling clergymen and clergywomen in the UK

A growing number of recent studies have begun to chart the psychological type profile of men in the United Kingdom (UK) who are engaged in Christian ministry, training for Christian ministry, enrolled as seminarians, or studying as Bible College students. Although these studies have identified significant differences from one group to another or from one denomination to another, there has been the consistent finding that these groups of men differ from the psychological type profile of the male population in the UK in one specific way. The preference for feeling is much higher among men involved in Christian ministry than among men in general. According to the UK population norms published by Kendall [10], 35% of men preferred feeling, compared with 65% who preferred thinking. By way of contrast, the preference for feeling was expressed by 79% of Roman Catholic priests reported by Craig, Duncan, and Francis [11], 69% of Church of Scotland male ministers reported by Irvine [12], 69% of Church in Wales clergymen reported by Francis, Payne, and Jones [13], 55% of male Christian youth workers reported by Francis, Nash, Nash, and Craig [14], 54% of Church of England clergymen reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15], 50% of male students in an Evangelical Bible College reported by Francis, Penson, and Jones [16], and 44% of male students in a Pentecostal Bible College reported by Kay, Francis, and Craig [17].

This preference for feeling among men engaged in Christian ministry in the UK is consistent with Brown’s theory regarding the feminisation of the Christian churches in Britain [18]. According to the

UK population norms provided by Kendal [10], 70% of women preferred feeling, compared with 35% of men. Those men most likely to be strongly attracted to ministry in a highly feminised environment are likely to have developed the feminine side of their own personality.

Data on the psychological type profile of women in the UK who are engaged in Christian ministry, training for Christian ministry, enrolled as seminarians, or studying as Bible College students are less plentiful, largely because women have only recently been welcomed into ordained ministry in some denominations like the Church of England [19] and still remain excluded from ordination as priests in some denominations like the Roman Catholic Church [20].

The recent study of 237 clergywomen serving in the Church of England, reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15] found that that these clergywomen reported no significant difference from the UK population norms for women in terms of their preferences on the judging functions or in terms of their preferences on the attitudes toward the outside world, but these clergywomen did report significant differences from the UK population norms for women in terms of their preferences on the perceiving functions and in terms of their preferences on the orientations. Thus, 70% of the UK female population preferred feeling and so did 74% of the clergywomen; 62% of the UK female population preferred judging, and so did 65% of the clergywomen. On the other hand, 65% of the clergywomen preferred intuition, compared with 21% of the UK population; 54% of the clergywomen preferred introversion, compared with 43% of the UK population.

The clear preference for intuition among Church of England clergywomen is noteworthy for two reasons. First, this preference is close to the preference expressed by Church of England clergymen in the study reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15], where 62% preferred intuition. Second, the other five studies that report on women involved in Christian ministry in the UK consistently found less pronounced preference for intuition: 53% of 134 female Christian youth workers reported by Francis, Nash, Nash, and Craig [14], 45% of 192 female evangelical lay church leaders reported by Francis, Craig, Horsfall, and Ross [21], 38% of 122 female Pentecostal Bible college students reported by Kay and Francis [22], 34% of 213 female Bible College students reported by Francis, Penson, and Jones [16], and 28% of 135 female church leaders reported by Craig, Francis, and Robbins [23]. Further research is needed to confirm whether such a strong preference for intuition is really characteristic of Church of England clergywomen.

The clear preference for introversion among Church of England clergywomen is also noteworthy for similar reasons. First, this preference is close to the preference expressed by Church of England clergymen in the study reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15], where 57% preferred introversion. Second, the preference for introversion varies among the other five groups of women involved in ministry for whom profiles are available: 54% of 213 female Bible College students reported by Francis, Penson, and Jones [16], 50% of 192 female evangelical church leaders reported by Francis, Craig, Horsfall, and Ross [21], 46% of 122 female Pentecostal Bible College students reported by Kay and Francis [22], 41% of 135 female church leaders reported by Craig, Francis, and Robbins [23], and 41% of 134 female Christian youth workers reported by Francis, Nash, Nash, and Craig [14]. Further research is needed to confirm whether such a strong preference is really characteristic of Church of England clergywomen.

Against this background, the aim of the present study is to report on a replication of the study reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15] of clergywomen serving in the Church of England.

2. Method

2.1. Procedure

Over a period of seven years, 83 clergywomen serving in Church of England dioceses in the West Midlands accepted Michael Whinney's invitation to complete a recognised form of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [2]. The first half of these clergywomen completed the 126 item Form G (Anglicised) before this edition was replaced by Step One. The second half of these clergywomen completed the newly developed instrument Step One. Both instruments employ self-report, forced-choice questions to identify psychological type preferences between extraversion and introversion, sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling, and judging and perceiving.

2.2. Data analysis

The scientific literature concerned with psychological type has developed a highly distinctive way of presenting type-related data. The conventional format of 'type tables' has been employed in the present paper 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. Type tables are also designed to test the statistical significance of differences between groups (in the present study specifically between women priests in the Church of England and the normative data for women in the UK population). These differences are tested by means of the selection ratio (I), an extension of the chi-square test [24].

3. Results

Table 1 presents the psychological type profile of the 83 clergywomen serving in the Church of England tested against the population norms for women in the UK provided by Kendall [10]. The population norms (which are protected by copyright) are not published in this table but employed as the data with which the clergywomen have been compared. According to these data, clergywomen serving in the Church of England preferred introversion (63%) over extraversion (37%), intuition (60%) over sensing (40%), feeling (76%) over thinking (24%), and judging (55%) over perceiving (45%).

Table 1. Type distribution of Anglican clergywomen in England compared with the female population norms.

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences								
ISTJ n = 5 (6.0%) I = 0.70 +++++	ISFJ n = 13 (15.7%) I = 0.89 +++++	INFJ n = 7 (8.4%) I = 4.86*** +++++	INTJ n = 5 (6.0%) I = 13.03*** +++++	E n = 31 (37.3%) ***I = 0.65	I n = 52 (62.7%) ***I = 1.47	S n = 33 (39.8%) ***I = 0.50	N n = 50 (60.2%) ***I = 2.91					
				T n = 20 (24.1%) I = 0.81	F n = 63 (75.9%) I = 1.08	J n = 46 (55.4%) I = 0.90	P n = 37 (44.6%) I = 1.16					
ISTP n = 1 (1.2%) I = 0.47 +	ISFP n = 4 (4.8%) I = 0.61 +++++	INFP n = 15 (18.1%) I = 6.51*** +++++	INTP n = 2 (2.4%) I = 2.32 ++	Pairs and Temperaments								
				IJ n = 30 (31.1%) I = 1.27	IP n = 22 (26.5%) **I = 1.86	EP n = 15 (18.1%) I = 0.74	EJ n = 16 (19.3%) **I = 0.58					
				ST n = 11 (13.3%) *I = 0.55	SF n = 22 (26.5%) ***I = 0.48	NF n = 41 (49.4%) ***I = 3.21	NT n = 9 (10.8%) *I = 2.04					
ESTP n = 1 (1.2%) I = 0.33 +	ESFP n = 0 (0.0%) I = 0.00***	ENFP n = 12 (14.5%) I = 1.92 +++++	ENTP n = 2 (2.4%) I = 1.16 ++	SJ n = 27 (32.5%) ***I = 0.60	SP n = 6 (7.2%) ***I = 0.29	NP n = 31 (37.3%) ***I = 2.79	NJ n = 19 (22.9%) ***I = 3.14					
				TJ n = 14 (16.9%) I = 0.83	TP n = 6 (7.2%) I = 0.77	FP n = 31 (37.3%) I = 1.28	FJ n = 32 (38.6%) I = 0.93					
ESTJ n = 4 (4.8%) I = 0.51 +++++	ESFJ n = 5 (6.0%) I = 0.33** +++++	ENFJ n = 7 (8.4%) I = 2.52* +++++	ENTJ n = 0 (0.0%) I = 0.0 ++	IN n = 29 (34.9%) ***I = 5.81	EN n = 21 (25.3%) **I = 1.72	IS n = 23 (27.7%) I = 0.76	ES n = 10 (12.0%) ***I = 0.28					
				ET n = 7 (8.4%) *I = 50	EF n = 24 (28.9%) *I = 0.72	IF n = 39 (47.0%) **I = 1.56	IT n = 13 (15.7%) I = 1.24					
Jungian Types (E)			Jungian Types (I)			Dominant Types			LJ Francis, M Robbins and M Whinney Psychological types of Anglican clergywomen in England			
n	%	Index	n	%	Index	n	%	Index				
E-TJ	4	4.8	0.43	I-TP	3	3.6	1.01	Dt.T		7	8.4	0.57
E-FJ	12	14.5	0.66	I-FP	19	22.9	2.15***	Dt.F		31	37.3	1.15
ES-P	1	1.2	0.08***	IS-J	18	21.7	0.83	Dt.S		19	22.9	0.56***
EN-P	14	16.9	1.76*	IN-J	12	14.5	6.58***	Dt.N	26	31.3	2.66***	

N = 83 (NB += 1% of N); * p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Comparison with the UK population norms replicated the findings reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15] in their study of 237 clergywomen. On the one hand, no significant differences were found between the group of clergywomen and the UK female population norms in terms of their preferences for the judging function and in terms of their preferences for the attitudes towards the outside world. Thus, 70% of the UK female population preferred feeling and so did 76% of the clergywomen; 62% of the UK female population preferred judging and so did 55% of the clergywomen. On the other hand, significant differences emerged between the clergywomen and the UK female population norms in terms of their preferences for the perceiving functions and their

preferences for the orientations. While 21% of the UK female population preferred intuition, the proportion rose to 60% among the clergywomen; while 43% of the UK female population preferred introversion, the proportion rose to 63% among the clergywomen. In terms of dominant types, compared with the UK female population norms there are significantly more dominant intuitives among clergywomen (31% compared with 12%) and significantly fewer dominant sensors among clergywomen (23% compared with 41%),

In terms of temperaments, it is the clear preference for the NF that sets the clergywomen apart from the UK female population as a whole. While 15% of the UK female population preferred NF, the proportion rose to 49% among the clergywomen. In terms of specific types, this is reflected in there being significantly higher proportions among clergywomen of the following four types: INFP (18% compared with 3%), ENFP (15% compared with 8%), INFJ (8% compared with 2%), and ENFJ (8% compared with 3%).

4. Conclusions

The present study set out to replicate the study reported by Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater [15] in order to check whether the distinctive characteristics of the psychological type profile of Anglican clergywomen in England found in the original study remained consistent among another sample of clergywomen. The conclusion is that the two studies provided reasonably similar findings. According to both studies, Anglican clergywomen in England did not differ significantly from the UK population norms in their preferences for the judging functions (thinking and feeling) or in their preferences for the attitudes towards the outside world (judging and perceiving). According to both studies, Anglican clergywomen differed significantly from the UK population norms in their preferences for the perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) and in their preferences for the orientation (introversion and extraversion). While just 21% of women in general preferred intuition, among clergywomen the proportion rose to 60% and 62% in the two studies. While just 43% of women in general preferred introversion, among clergywomen the proportion rose to 57% and 63% in the two studies.

The practical implications of these clear preferences for intuition and for introversion are worth consideration. The first practical implication concerns the particular emphases and perspectives that Anglican clergywomen in England may bring to their ministry. Preferences for intuition are likely to be associated with promoting the visionary rather than the practical aspects of ministry. Preferences for introversion are likely to be associated with pursuing the inward and prayerful path of spirituality rather than the outward and social path of spirituality. Moreover, in both of these respects Anglican clergywomen in England share the psychological preferences and ministry emphases of their male colleagues. It is these psychological preferences and ministry emphases of the ordained clergy that may both reflect and shape the dominant and observed characteristics of the local Anglican churches and of the wider public image of the Church of England.

The second practical implication concerns the disparities between the psychological profile of the Anglican clergywomen in England and the psychological profile of the female population of the UK as a whole. Compared with women in general, these clergywomen are both more likely to prefer intuition and to prefer introversion. In a society where women are more likely to prefer sensing, clergywomen

who prefer intuition are, by way of comparison, likely to appear to be impractical day-dreamers, dreaming about future possibilities and failing to make the most of and to enjoy fully the present moment. In a society where women are more likely to prefer extraversion, clergywomen who prefer introversion are, by way of comparison, likely to appear to be withdrawn, unsociable, difficult to get to know and somewhat disapproving of the extraverted lifestyle of their secular counterparts.

The conclusions drawn from the present study are, however, limited by the relatively small sample and deserve further testing and development among a much larger group of Anglican clergywomen.

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