

Book Chapter

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The Psychological Type Profile of Singaporean Pentecostal Pastors: A research report

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Abstract

This study compares the psychological type profile of pastors who lead Pentecostal churches in Singapore with wider population norms. Data provided by 117 pastors who completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: Francis, 2005) demonstrate that, compared with the wider population norms, these leaders were more likely to prefer introversion, sensing, feeling and judging. The implications of these findings are briefly discussed in relation to ministry, missionary training and mission.

Keywords: Psychological type, Pentecostal, clergy, Singapore

Introduction

The history of the growth of Christianity, and Pentecostalism in particular, within Singapore, and Southeast Asia more widely, has been documented and partially summarised, among others, by Kay (2012; 2013a; 2013b). Protestant missions in the 19th century had resulted in a wave of denominational activity in many parts of the world including what was called the Far East (DeBarnadi, 2001). By the beginning of the twentieth century Christianity had been long established in the region even though it never reached more than about 5% of the population. This was mainly because the various denominations (Methodists, Anglicans and Presbyterians) aimed to cater for the spiritual needs of the colonial expatriates rather than the large mixed indigenous population.

In 1928 an Assemblies of God missionary couple, having left China to avoid anti-Western opposition, arrived by boat in Singapore and stayed to start a Cantonese congregation and then in 1932 an English-speaking one (Abeysekera, 1992). From these beginnings the Assemblies of God numbers increased at a steady though unspectacular rate, with the exception of the years of the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), up until 1972 when the charismatic movement began to have an impact and a number of evangelistic meetings were held including those preached by Billy Graham (1978) and David Yonggi Cho (Wong, 1996).¹ The influence of both the charismatic movement and the nation-wide crusades was to raise the profile of Christians and eventually to promote a significant growth in numbers of Singaporean Pentecostals. Recent figures (Ong, 2008) report a total of 51 Assemblies of God congregations with some 21,500 members.

Research into the personality profiles of Pentecostal pastors has largely focused on samples drawn from the UK. A number of studies have employed the Hans Eysenck's model of personality while others have employed the Jungian model of personality operationalised by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), The Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978) and the Francis Personality Type Scales (FPTS: Francis, 2005).

Eysenck, in a long and productive series of studies dating back to the 1940s, came to the conclusion that personality was best described by reference to a series of traits that could be grouped together into three main factors. These factors are extraversion/introversion, neuroticism/stability and tough-mindedness/tender-mindedness (or psychoticism verses non-psychoticism). The extravert is outgoing, sociable and adventurous while the introvert is

¹ <http://billygraham.org/story/tens-of-thousands-in-singapore-open-homes-to-share-christ/>

quieter, retiring and cautious. The neurotic is prone to anxiety and emotionally labile while at the other end of the scale the stable person remains unworried in the face of risk. The psychoticism scale is concerned with attitudes to other people, the high scorer being seen as troublesome, solitary, aggressive and without empathy. The low scorer has the opposite of these tendencies (see for example Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991).

Eysenck's model was used by Kay (2001) in a survey of 930 Pentecostal pastors in the UK. These pastors were drawn from the four main classical Pentecostal denominations in the country: the Apostolic Church, Assemblies of God, Church of God and Elim Pentecostal Church. Kay found that Pentecostal ministers score significantly lower on the neuroticism scale than the general population. In other words they were more stable than the general population. With regard to extraversion/introversion there were no significant differences between Pentecostals and the population norms although it is true both that Pentecostals were more likely to be extraverted than the more liturgical denominations (e.g. Anglicans) and that the most successful Pentecostal pastors were extraverted. This is not surprising given the theology of Pentecostal worship could be considered to be more extraverted; it does help to explain the different ethos in churches of different kinds. Whereas Pentecostals tend, in personality terms, to reflect the general population insofar as it is extraverted or introverted, the more introverted Anglican churches with their printed liturgies may provide a spiritual home for more introverted individuals.

While Eysenck based his account of personality in physiological differences between individuals (i.e. in reactivity to stimuli), an alternative tradition for measuring personality starts from a basis that draws on clinical experience. A growing body of research has employed psychological type theory derived from the work of Carl Jung (Jung, 1971). The theory is based on 'preferences' between four psychological processes. There processes are constituted by two perceiving functions: sensing (S)/intuition (N) and two judging functions: thinking (T)/feeling (F). Sensing and intuition are concerned with the way in which people take in information. A person with a preference for intuition takes in information through making links between ideas and so tends to focus on the big and often abstract picture. A person with a preference for sensing takes in information through the five senses and tends to focus on detail. Thinking and feeling are concerned with how people make decisions from the information they absorb/observe. A thinking person has a preference for making decisions by employing objective logic; a person with a preference for feeling makes decisions by considering the impact decisions have on others, and will often seek consensus.

Alongside the functional pairs the two other pairs are: judging (J)/perceiving (P) and

introversion (I)/extraversion (E). These indicate how people relate to and organise their outer world. Extraversion and introversion indicate a preference either to turn out to the social or physical world in the case of extraversion or to turn in towards the world of thoughts and ideas in the case of introversion. Judging refers to a tendency to approach the outer world in a planned orderly manner whereas a person with a preference for perceiving prefers to approach their outside world in a spontaneous flexible manner. These four preferences combine to give a total of sixteen psychological types (e.g. ESTJ, INFP).

There is a growing body of literature applying type theory to churches in the hope that it will be possible to more effectively train those called to ministry and thereby to increase ministerial effectiveness and reduce ministerial breakdown. In the UK psychological type theory has been employed within a number of evangelical contexts using two different operationalisations of the theory. For example three studies have employed the 126-item Form G (Anglicised) of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI: Myers & McCaulley, 1985) to explore the type profile of 92 male evangelical missionary personnel, 190 male Pentecostal Bible College Students and 81 male evangelical Anglican seminarians. While two studies have employed the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: Francis, 2005) to explore the type profiles of 134 Newfrontiers lead elders and 154 Newfrontiers leaders.

Craig, Horsfall, and Francis (2005) found the 92 male evangelical missionary personnel were classified as ESTJ; with percentages of 55% for extraversion; 60% for sensing; 70% for thinking; 75% for judging. Francis, Craig, and Butler (2007) found the 81 male evangelical Anglican seminarians demonstrated a preference for ESTJ; with percentages of 58% for extraversion; 57% for sensing; 56% for thinking and 78% for judging. Kay, Francis, and Craig (2008) found the same preferences among 190 male Pentecostal Bible College students. They demonstrated a preference for ESTJ: with percentages of 52% for extraversion; 74% for sensing; 56% for thinking and 65% for judging.

A study among 134 lead elders in the Newfrontiers neo-Pentecostal network of churches in the UK employed the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, Gubb, & Robbins, 2009). In this study elders (who hold an ecclesiological position similar to that held by elders among traditional Baptists) were found mainly to belong to ISTJ and ESTJ groups. Just over half reported a preference for extraversion (52%), sensing (52%) and thinking (54%) while over three-quarters (78%) reported a preference for judging. Francis, Robbins and Ryland (2012) found among a sample of 154 Newfrontiers leaders preferences for extraversion (52%), sensing (71%), thinking (60%) and judging (86%).

The type profiles from the evangelical and Pentecostal groups are different from their

Anglican counterparts particularly in respect of the judging functions of thinking and feeling. Anglican leaders elevate the feeling function (see for example Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, & Slater, 2007) whereas the evangelical and Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal groups consistently elevate the thinking function, that is, they are more dispassionate than consensual in their decision-making.

Relatively little is known about the psychological type profile of evangelical groups in other cultural contexts. The present study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the psychological type profile of Pentecostal pastors in Singapore. This paper considers two research questions. First what is the psychological type profile of Pentecostal pastors in Singapore given the unique cultural context in which they exist? Second, are the Pentecostal pastors in Singapore representative of the population norms or do they depart from these norms?

Method

Procedure

The ministerial questionnaire was distributed by the Assemblies of God National Office in Singapore to 170 ministers with a request that the booklet be completed and returned anonymously. Six ministers from City Harvest also participated. Respondents who completed the questionnaire were allowed to claim a small voucher that entitled them to purchase coffee and food. The response rate was 71% (n=117). Just over 95% of the Singaporean respondents were affiliated to Assemblies of God and all answered in English.

Instrument

Psychological type was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: Francis, 2005). 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, Craig, and Hall (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 among a religious sample.

Sample

Of the 117 pastors who completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales, 59% were male and 41% were female; 4% were in their 20s, 19% were in their 30s, 19% were in their 40s,

41% were in their 50s, 17% were in their 60s, and 1% were aged 70 or over.

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 to allow the findings from this study to be located easily alongside other relevant studies in the literature. In these tables the psychological type profiles of the pastors are compared with the population norms for Singapore. The statistical significance of differences between the present sample and the population norms are tested by means of the Selection Ratio Index (*I*), an extension of the classic chi-square test. This ratio is given on the right hand side of the tables presented below and significant results are indicated.

Results

The alpha coefficients for the four scales of the Francis Psychological Type Scales reached a satisfactory level: Extraversion/introversion, 0.77; sensing and intuition, 0.61; thinking and feeling, .68; judging and perceiving, .0.72.

Table 1 presents the type distribution for the Singaporean Pentecostal pastors compared to the Singapore population norms (Hemisphere Consulting, 2010). The data demonstrate that the Pentecostal pastors have a preference for introversion (63%) rather than extraversion (37%); for sensing (75%) rather than intuition (25%); for feeling (57%) rather than thinking (43%); for judging (83%) rather than perceiving (17%). The two most common types are ISTJ (24%) and ISFJ (23%).

Table 1 demonstrates that the Pentecostal pastors are significantly different from the population norms with respect to all four dichotomous types. The Singaporean Pentecostal pastors are significantly more likely to be introverts (63%) than the population norms (47%); significantly more likely to be sensing (75%) than the population norms (62%); significantly more likely to be feeling (57%) than the population norms (29%); and significantly more likely to be judging (83%) than the population norms (67%). With the exception of sensing and intuition all the differences are at the $p < 0.001$; sensing and intuition are at the $p < 0.01$.

Discussion/Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the psychological type profile of Pentecostal/charismatic pastors in a different cultural context to previous research and to compare the Singaporean pastors to

wider population norms. Five main findings emerge from this study.

First, the Singaporean pastors share many characteristics with their counterparts in the UK. Both groups have the SJ temperament in common. Type theory describes the SJ temperament as the 'guardian' and summarise this in the following way:

Guardians need to know they are doing the responsible thing. They value stability, security, and a sense of community. They trust hierarchy and authority and may be surprised when others go against these. Guardians prefer cooperative actions with a focus on standards and norms. Their orientation is to their past experiences, and they like things sequenced and structured. (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, pp59-60).

These are pastors who value the tradition of their church and may work hard to maintain it. On the downside, they may find it difficult to initiate and manage institutional or organisational change.

Second, the Singaporean pastors, in part, are distinct from their UK counterparts. The Singaporean pastors prefer to function as introverts and to make decisions drawing on feeling leading to consensus unlike the UK neo-Pentecostals who are both more extraverted and more analytical and logical in their decision-making. Type theory describes the introverted feelers as the 'reflective harmonisers' and summarise this in the following way.

They have a concern for deep and enduring values, as well as for people and the way people feel. These types feel things quite intensely and in a manner that can sometimes be puzzling to others. The depth of feeling about individual values can make them appear overly serious and excessively sensitive to their own and others' emotional state. (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, p59).

These pastors prize harmony and may find it difficult to confront difficult people or polarised situations. Having said this, it is clear that within an Asian culture the quest for consensus is valued, probably more valued than the individualism to be routinely found in the UK. In this respect these pastors are going with the grain of their culture rather than standing against it.

Third, the Singaporean pastors are significantly different to the general population of Singapore. Those people outside of the Pentecostal church may find the Pentecostal pastors difficult to understand. Type theory suggests that others may see ISFJs as 'quiet, serious, and conscientious' (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, p68); whereas others may see the ENTJ as 'direct, challenging and decisive' (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, p91). It is clear from these brief descriptions how easy it is for misunderstanding to occur between these two different types. The pastors and those who are outside the church may find it

difficult to find 'common ground'. Having said this, it is clear that there will be differences between small and large churches in the sense that the ordinary member of a congregation is unlikely to have much personal contact with the pastor if the congregation exceeds about 250 people.

Fourth, the differences between the type profiles of the Singaporean pastors and the population norms demonstrate that it might be difficult for pastors to relate to the wider population and this might well be an obstacle to mission and ministry. An awareness of type theory may help the ministers to relate to those whose personality profiles differ from their own. Unfortunately, there is little attention given to personality differences in the typical training of Pentecostal pastors because the emphasis is upon theology and doctrine. The only exception to this generalisation is likely to occur in the case of pastors who have been trained for counselling.

Fifth, further research is necessary in order to establish if those who attend the Pentecostal churches in Singapore present a similar type profile to their pastors. Research within the UK context would suggest that congregations and pastors tend to present similar psychological type profiles. Again, however, one needs to note that there are significant variations in size between congregations in Singapore. The megachurches will attract congregations of more than 5,000 people each Sunday but will break up their congregations into sub-groups for midweek cell or home meetings to create the possibility of distributing ministers and people into situations where they are psychologically comfortable. Indeed one could argue that this is one of the reasons for the growth of Pentecostal churches in Singapore. There is a big group/small-group dynamic that allows church environments to be tailored to personality differences.

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Table 1: Type distribution for Singapore Pentecostal pastors, compared with the population norms
 N = 117 (NB += 1% of N)

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences			
ISTJ n = 28 (23.9%) I = 1.29 ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ +++	ISFJ n = 27 (23.1%) I = 4.13*** ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++	INFJ n = 5 (4.3%) I = 1.75 ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++	INTJ n = 7 (6.0%) I = 0.86 ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++	E n = 43 (36.8%) ***I = 0.70	I n = 74 (63.2%) ***I = 1.34	S n = 88 (75.2%) **I = 1.21	N n = 29 (24.8%) **I = 0.65
ISTP n = 1 (0.9%) I = 0.18 +	ISFP n = 1 (0.9%) I = 0.35 +	INFP n = 2 (1.7%) I = 0.52 ++	INTP n = 3 (2.6%) I = 0.57 +++	Pairs and Temperaments			
ESTP n = 1 (0.2%) I = 0.18* +	ESFP n = 6 (5.1%) I = 2.04 ++++ +	ENFP n = 3 (2.6%) I = 0.49 +++	ENTP n = 3 (2.6%) I = 0.42 +++	IJ n = 67 (57.3%) ***I = 1.77	IP n = 7 (6.0%) **I = 0.40	EP n = 13 (11.1%) *I = 0.60	EJ n = 30 (25.6%) *I = 0.75
ESTJ n = 3 (2.6%) I = 0.14*** +++	ESFJ n = 21 (17.9%) I = 3.91*** ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ +++	ENFJ n = 2 (1.7%) I = 0.52 ++	ENTJ n = 4 (3.4%) I = 0.44 +++	ST n = 33 (28.2%) ***I = 0.60	SF n = 55 (47.0%) ***I = 3.11	NF n = 12 (10.3%) I = 0.72	NT n = 17 (14.5%) *I = 0.61
				SJ n = 79 (67.5%) ***I = 1.42	SP n = 9 (7.7%) *I = 0.54	NP n = 11 (9.4%) **I = 0.49	NJ n = 18 (15.4%) I = 0.81
				TJ n = 42 (35.9%) ***I = 0.71	TP n = 8 (6.8%) ***I = 0.34	FP n = 12 (10.3%) I = 0.76	FJ n = 55 (47.0%) ***I = 2.95
				IN n = 17 (14.5%) I = 0.92	EN n = 12 (10.3%) **I = 0.46	IS n = 57 (48.7%) ***I = 1.56	ES n = 31 (26.5%) I = 0.87
				ET n = 11 (9.4%) ***I = 0.25	EF n = 32 (27.4%) **I = 1.75	IF n = 35 (29.9%) ***I = 2.18	IT n = 39 (33.3%) I = 1.00

Jungian Types (E)			Jungian Types (I)			Dominant Types						
n	%	I	n	%	I	n	%					
E-TJ	7	6.0	0.23***	I-TP	4	3.4	0.37*	Dt. T	11	9.4	0.26***	<i>M. Robbins and W.K. Kay Singapore Pentecostal Pastors</i>
E-FJ	23	19.7	2.49***	I-FP	3	2.6	0.45	Dt. F	26	22.2	1.63**	
ES-P	7	6.0	0.83	IS-J	55	47.0	1.94***	Dt. S	62	53.0	1.68***	
EN-P	6	5.1	0.46*	IN-J	12	10.3	1.27	Dt. N	18	15.4	0.80	