

Appraisal of applicants for ministry careers

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A proposed evaluation protocol addresses the need for standards of practice in assessing candidates for ministry careers. The protocol is tailored to parish clergy psychological risk and resiliency factors articulated by personnel officers and identified in scholarly literature. It employs readily available psychological tests with demonstrated psychometric qualities. It utilises interview questions to confirm or disconfirm test-generated hypotheses and to probe for evidence of coping with challenging circumstances. The protocol generates data for appraising risk and promoting long-term resilience. Application of the protocol to 120 applicants for clergy careers in the Episcopal Diocese of the Southwest (EDSW) demonstrates that applicants respond to psychological tests in a manner different from general job applicants. Data analysis generates norms for indentifying unusual applicants who may be at risk for troubled careers. Discussion centres on identifying early markers of risk and resiliency in ministry careers.

Keywords: clergy; applicants; personality; assessment; norms

Clinicians responsible for psychological appraisal of applicants for ministry careers have limited professional guidance. There is no articulation of best practices. Criteria and expectations are often ambiguous. Publishers test norms may not be appropriate for appraising applicants for clergy careers. The lack of agreement regarding standards of practice and norms for the applicant population raises the risk for poorly informed decisions regarding suitability.

The concern about standards of practice for appraising applicants for ministry careers is long-standing. Malony and Majovski (1986) record a 40-year history of efforts to screen candidates for ministry careers, leading to a conclusion that there is a need to develop special norms for religious groups. Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony (1990) edited a collection of best practices in clergy assessment, including strategies for selecting assessment criteria. They concluded that no single criteria adequately reflected all the intended outcomes of assessment. The implication was that assessment batteries need to set explicit and transparent criteria to help users understand the intent and limits of evaluations.

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There continues to be considerable interest in appraisal of applicants for ministry careers. Batsis (1993) found that 93% of Roman Catholic vocational directors incorporated psychological assessment as part of their screening of applicants for religious orders. Directors expressed interest in “intellectual strengths and weaknesses”, “self-concept/ego integration”, “emotional integration”, “interpersonal relationship skills and deficits”, “psychosexual integration” and “substance abuse”.

There have been previous efforts to prompt development of a generic assessment protocol. Plante and Boccaccini (1998) proposed a generic clergy applicant evaluation protocol that included a resume, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2, the Cattell Sixteen Personality Factors Questionnaire, the Forer Structured Sentence Completion Test and a semi-structured interview. Unfortunately, there has been little response to their call for a standard battery of psychological tests and creation of a national database. Some denominations have attempted to establish standard evaluation protocols. Malony (2000) describes efforts by the United Methodist Church (UMC) to standardise evaluation of candidates. He notes that the UMC appoints “psychological evaluation specialists” to appraise candidates; however, the response by individual psychologists was not standardised. He describes the psychologists’ response as “idiosyncratic”.

One strategy for articulating best practices is to invite international contributions to a professional dialogue regarding best practices in appraising aspirants for ministry careers. Sharing of best practices would focus attention on criteria and intent of assessments, as well as assessment instruments with desirable psychometric qualities. Best practices would likely contribute to quality control of actual practices by a diverse group of clinicians. In addition, contributions to a common database would build understanding of how aspirants for clergy careers present psychological profiles different from typical norm groups.

The purpose of the present manuscript is to (1) propose criteria for an assessment protocol, (2) identify a battery of sound psychological tests linked to the criteria and (3) report preliminary norms for one population of aspirants. Our strategy in setting criteria is to search for criteria that could plausibly be shared by persons from different religious traditions and from diverse ministry settings. The proposed criterion for assessment is psychological health of clergy. The assessment protocol addresses psychological factors that influence psychological risk and resiliency in clergy careers. The charge is to identify and assess aspirant characteristics associated with successful psychological adaptation to professional careers in ministry, not necessarily factors associated with stellar careers. The focus of the present work is on proposing a set of psychological characteristics important for successful psychological adjustment to ministry careers and constructing test norms for an aspirant population.

Developing an assessment protocol

Risk factors in clergy careers

There is evidence that personality factors are associated with clergy adaptation to the stress of a career in ministry. The scholarly literature identifies burnout as a factor negatively associated with psychological health in the work place. Maslach and Jackson (1986) describe burnout as psychological response to chronic job stressors. The symptoms are emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment associated with reduced effectiveness on the job. Francis, Loudon, and Rutledge (2004) reported that the personality factors of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, are associated with burnout. Randall (2004) reported significant correlations between all of the Maslach burnout factors and thoughts

of leaving ministry. On the other hand, Hills, Francis, and Rutledge (2004) report that a compact version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory modified for clergy did not find clergy particularly vulnerable to burnout. Randall (2007) found early career Anglican clergy were more susceptible to burnout than more experienced peers. In a study that assessed seminary graduates and followed them into early ministry careers, Miner (2007) found three of the NEO Five Factor Inventory personality factors, neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness, were associated with early career burnout. In short, it seems reasonable to consider personality factors that may make young applicants vulnerable to burnout and, perhaps, leaving ministry.

The scholarly literature identifies personality factors associated with misconduct.

Plante and Aldridge (2005) studied the MMPI profiles of 21 Roman Catholic clergy credibly accused of sexual misconduct. They found offenders tended to have profiles that were defensive, repressive, mistrustful, isolative and irritable.

In another study, Plante, Aldridge, and Louie (2005) studied successful applicants to a Roman Catholic religious order. The authors summarise the MMPI-2 and 16 PF test profiles as reflecting a group of applicants who are responsible, interpersonally sensitive and sociable. The profiles had elevated scales for defensiveness and over-controlled hostility.

In addition to identifying personality factors that increase risk for troubled careers, it is important to consider job-related sources of stress. As noted by Doolittle (2007), unique sources of stress for clergy include modelling exemplary behaviour for congregations with unusually high expectations. Miner (2007) comments on the stress

created for clergy by the increasing secularisation of society, particularly for persons with modest internal ministry orientation. Other authors (Kemery, 2006; Ngo, Foley, & Loi, 2005) report a negative relationship between role stressors and job satisfaction. Hill, Darling, and Raimondi (2003) identify a list of external stress factors, which include

mobility, congregation fit, space, and intrusions. Family factors add poignancy to job-related stressors (Lee, 2007; Lee & Iverson-Gilbert, 2003). These authors comment on the role of family and personal perceptions of congregational criticism, presumptive expectations and boundary violations in generating stress for clergy.

Resiliency factors in clergy careers

The scholarly literature identifies the importance of intentionality and balance in coping with stress. Rogerson and Piedmont (1998) examined the contribution of environmental circumstances, personality factors and religious problem solving to career burnout for clergy. They found that religious problem solving made a modest and unique contribution to predicting burnout. Golden, Piedmont, Ciarroucchi, and Rogerson (2004) pursued the contribution of spirituality in moderating burnout. As a measure of spirituality, they employed the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (Piedmont, 1999), which purports to measure “Connectedness”, “Universality” and “Prayer fulfillment”. Responses of United Methodist clergy to a composite of tests found that the Spiritual Transcendence Scale generated modest incremental validity for predicting burnout. Meek et al. (2003) found that exemplary clergy often comment on coping with stress through intentional management of “connectedness” with family and friends. Doolittle (2007) found that active coping strategies and spirituality moderate the experience of burnout. Beebe (2007) comments on the role of collaborative conflict management in clergy tenure. Francis, Hills, and Rutledge (2008) examined the nuanced role experiences of 1071 Anglican clergy and

concluded that churchmanship is as important as personality factors in influencing job satisfaction. Spirituality, intentionality and collaboration emerge as potentiality important factors in clergy coping with stress.

The senior author's reading of the scholarly literature, coupled with 15 years of professional experience in clergy formation with the Episcopal Church, generates a plausible list of psychological risk and resiliency factors for psychologically healthy clergy careers. Psychological risk factors for career derailment include personality factors associated with maladaptation, child abuse and substance abuse. Psychological resiliency factors include established strategies for coping with stress and adversity, intentionality in using available strategies, assertiveness in managing role ambiguity and collaborative conflict management.

Methods

Application of the proposed assessment protocol

The purpose of the present study is to propose an assessment protocol for conducting psychological fitness for ministry evaluations, and to demonstrate application of the protocol in a practical setting. The proposed assessment protocol is composed of a history form, seven psychological tests and two interviews. The tests are used to generate hypotheses for confirmation in clinical interviews.

We propose that protocols for assessing risk and resiliency include the following:

- (1) A comprehensive history form to be completed by the aspirant before an initial appointment with the psychologist or other professional evaluator. The Church Pension Fund Life History Questionnaire addresses family of origin history, childhood trauma, education and job history, abusive relationships, medical and psychological treatment and outcomes, romantic relationships, stress and coping in challenging circumstances and ministry experiences.
- (2) The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2) (Butcher et al., 2001), which assesses a broad band of personality patterns and psychological disorders.
- (3) The State Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2 (STASI-2) (Spielberger, 1999) screens applicants for experience and expression of anger.
- (4) The Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory-3 (SASSI-3) (Miller, Roberts, Brooks, & Lazowski, 1997) purports to identify individuals with a high probability of having a substance abuse disorder.
- (5) The Coping Resources Inventory (CRI) (Hammer & Marting, 1988) offers information about coping resources.
- (6) The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2003) prompts discussion of potential sources of stress and intentional stress management.
- (7) The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behaviour (FIRO-B) (Hammer & Schnell, 2000) generates data regarding emotional resources for maintenance of personal boundaries and for responding appropriately to presumptive expectations
- (8) The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (Thomas, 2002) purports to measure tendencies in managing interpersonal conflict.
- (9) An initial and follow-up clinical interview. The first interview expands on issues raised in the history form and probes for response to obstacles, intentional stress

Table 1. Proposed assessment protocol for use in fitness for ministry evaluations.

Assessment procedure	Risk and resiliency construct	Applicant time
History	Record history pertinent to risk and resiliency, including childhood, trauma, education, romance, marital, job and medical	2.0 hrs
Interview 1	Review history, probing for abusive relationships, emotionally troublesome relationships, stress and intentional stress management, coping with obstacles and response to presumptive expectations	2.0 hrs
MMPI-2	Personality factors in burnout & misconduct	1.5 hrs
STASI-2	Anger management	0.25 hrs
SASSI-3	Substance abuse	0.25 hrs
CRI	Resources for coping with stress	0.25 hrs
MBTI (M)	Prompts discussion of intentional stress management	0.25 hrs
FIRO-B	Factors in managing role ambiguity and intrusive demands	0.50 hrs
TKI	Conflict management	0.25 hrs
Interview 2	Confirm/disconfirm test hypotheses regarding risk Review resiliency, including coping with stress and obstacles, role ambiguity and intrusive demands and conflict management Wellness planning	1.5 hrs

management, sources of joy and disappointment. The second interview observes changes in personal presentation and probes for clarity in all areas. In particular, the psychologist probes for evidence to confirm or disconfirm test hypotheses. The interview raises possible implications of test findings for parish ministry and engages the aspirant in proactive planning for stress management.

Table 1 displays the assessment procedures related to risk and resiliency factors, as well as time for candidates to complete procedures.

The protocol generates data for drafting a Risk Factors Report, which is one of many factors considered by persons responsible for formation and deployment in the Episcopal Diocese of the Southwest (EDSW).¹ Psychological tests keyed to risk and resiliency factors generate hypotheses for confirmation or disconfirmation in a follow-up interview. History and clinical interviews generate information for describing (1) personal presentation, (2) family of origin and early development, (3) educational history, medical history, relationship history, obstacles overcome and ministry experiences. The Risk Factors Report concludes with an estimate of risk (low, modest, moderate and high) for psychopathology, child abuse, anger management and substance abuse.

In addition, the evaluation produces a Wellness Issues Report, which is primarily intended for the aspirant to use in maintaining psychological fitness for ministry. The psychologist uses the test battery to prompt discussion regarding potential sources of stress and stress management in a ministry career, the role of emotional needs in influencing work-related behaviour and conflict management options. The Wellness Issues Report is forwarded to the applicant and to the Canon for Formation.

During the years 2004 through 2008, the protocol has been applied in evaluating 120 applicants for ministry careers in the EDSW. Table 2 displays the demographic profile of EDSW applicants. As compared to the general population, EDSW applicants are older and unusually well educated.

Table 2. EDSW applicant demographic characteristics.

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%	Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender			Academic educ.		
Female	67	56	Less than HS	1	1
Male	53	44	HS or GED	5	4
Age			13–15 yrs	13	11
20–29	16	13	16/BA/BS	47	39
30–39	16	13	Masters	33	28
40–49	31	26	Doctorate	21	18
50+	57	48	Acad. min. educ.		
Order			No formal AME	69	58
Presbyterate	98	82	Enrolled AME	29	24
Diaconate	22	18	Compl. Seminary	6	5
			Mdiv. not Sem.	6	5
			Sem. & Mdiv.	10	8

Results and discussion

We combine results and discussion to clearly demonstrate how each test contributes to a comprehensive evaluation of risk and resiliency factors for a career in ministry. For each test, we provide a rationale, findings pertinent to applicants for ministry careers in EDSW and implications for further work.

The MMPI-2 is widely used in personnel screening (Viswesvaran, Deller, & Ones, 2007), particularly for airline pilots (Butcher, 1994) and police officers (Detrick, Chibnall, & Rosso, 2001) and clergy (Plante, Aldridge, & Louie, 2005). The MMPI-2 has 567 statements marked true or false by respondents. Graham (2006) reports internal consistency indices ranging from 0.34 (Pa) to 0.87 (Pt) and test re-retest coefficients ranging from 0.54 (Sc) to 0.92 (Si). A re-organisation of the items into a group of scales titled, “The Personality Psychopathology Five” (PSY-5) addresses both normal functioning and psychopathology (Graham, 2006). The Pearson Seminary Student Interpretative Report (Butcher, 2001) offers comparison between an applicant’s scores and scores obtained by a group of general job applicants ($n = 6000$) who are likely to have motivation similar to applicants for ministry careers. In addition, the publisher compares an applicant’s profiles with seminary student applicants ($n = 600$). There is evidence MMPI scores are related to subsequent job performance (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007).

Applicant personality profiles are significantly different from personality profiles of general job applicants. As illustrated in Table 3, applicants mean MMPI-2 scaled scores are significantly different from the mean MMPI-2 scaled scores obtained by general job applicants on the Defensiveness (K) scale and on seven of the nine clinical scales.

The findings offer evidence that applicants for clergy careers in EDSW are sufficiently different from general job applicants to warrant preparation of separate norms for evaluating their psychological status. For example, applicants’ mean scaled scores on the Defensiveness (K) scale are well above the mean for general job applicants. Butcher et al. (2001) observe that validity scaled scores higher than 65 are unusual in clinical settings, although more common in personnel settings. They report that individuals who elevate the K scale are unlikely to acknowledge significant psychological problems. This does not

Table 3. EDSW applicants and general job applicant (GJA) mean scale scores on the validity and clinical scales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2).

MMPI-2 scales	Applicant T score Mean	GJA T score Mean	Difference Applicant & GJA Mean T score	<i>P</i>
Defensiveness (K)				
Females (N)	62.83	57	+5.83	0.000
Males	61.09	58	+3.09	0.008
Hypochondriasis (Hs)				
Females	50.70	48	+2.69	n/s
Males	51.38	48	+3.37	0.000
Depression (D)				
Females	43.73	46	-2.23	0.006
Males	45.81	46	-0.18	n/s
Hysteria (Hy)				
Females	53.38	50	+3.37	0.002
Males	55.26	50	+5.26	0.000
Psychopathic deviate (Pd)				
Females	53.17	52	+1.16	n/s
Males	53.30	51	+2.30	n/s
Paranoia (Pa)				
Females	48.77	49	-0.22	n/s
Males	52.74	48	+4.73	0.000
Psychasthenia (Pt)				
Females	48.44	48	+4.39	n/s
Males	50.28	48	+2.28	0.014
Schizophrenia (Sc)				
Females	50.97	49	+1.97	0.005
Male	50.66	47	+3.66	0.001
Hypomania (Ma)				
Females	47.26	51	-3.74	0.002
Males	47.85	50	-2.15	0.046
Social Introversion (Si)				
Females	42.24	43	-0.75	n/s
Males	41.38	43	-1.62	n/s

necessarily mean there are problems being covered up. Francis, Loudon, Robbins, and Rutledge (2000) report many descriptive insights regarding clergy test profiles, including the speculation that often-observed defensiveness reflects desire to project a clerical persona of integrity and stability. In short, applicants' relatively high validity scores are not unusual in personnel settings and may be understood as reflecting some special career-related characteristics of clergy candidates.

It is probably not appropriate to hypothesise that an applicant with $K = 65$ is defensive, even though this would be a plausible interpretation based on MMPI norm group. As illustrated in Table 4, an aspirant K score of 65 is well within one standard deviation for applicants on the K scale. An unusual K score for EDSW applicants (mean + 1.5 standard deviation units) would be 77 or higher for females and 73 or higher for men.

One can analyse scale content and infer reasons why clergy mean scaled scores are different from general job applicant mean scaled scores; however, the salient point for the

Table 4. EDSW applicant MMPI-2 scaled scores identified as unusual in the applicant population.

MMPI-2 Scale	Applicant Mean <i>SS</i>	Applicant <i>SD</i>	Unusual in population Applicant Mean + 1.5 <i>SD</i>
Defensiveness (K)			
Females	62.8	9.6	77
Males	61.1	8.2	73
Hypochondriasis (Hs)			
Females	49.8	5.6	58
Males	51.4	6.0	60
Depression (D)			
Females	43.7	6.5	53
Males	45.8	5.6	54
Hysteria (Hy)			
Females	53.4	6.0	62
Males	55.3	6.4	65
Psychopathic deviate (Pd)			
Females	53.1	6.7	63
Males	53.3	10.0	68
Paranoia (Pa)			
Females	48.8	6.6	59
Males	52.7	8.3	65
Psychasthenia (Pt)			
Females	48.4	5.7	57
Males	50.3	6.5	60
Schizophrenia (Sc)			
Females	51.0	5.5	59
Male	50.1	7.7	62
Hypomania (Ma)			
Females	48.0	7.7	60
Males	47.8	7.7	59
Social Introversion (Si)			
Females	42.2	7.3	53
Males	41.4	7.2	52

present paper is that EDSW applicants for clergy careers typically respond to psychological tests in a manner significantly different from general job applicants and need to be evaluated with different norms.

The EDSW data allow local clinicians to evaluate applicants based on norms created by previous applicants. Following the practice of Butcher et al. (2001), clinically significant scores are 1.5 standard deviation units above the sample mean for a scale. Persons conducting fitness for ministry evaluations for EDSW can use Table 4 to identify individual applicants whose MMPI response patterns are unusual in the local population of applicants. Unusual scores prompt hypotheses for confirmation or disconfirmation in clinical interviews

The State Trait Anger Expression Inventory -2 (Spielberger, 1999) generates scores to compare an individual's experience with anger and level of emotional effort devoted to anger control. The revised STAXI-2 is a 57-item self-report instrument. Spielberger (1999) reports alpha coefficients of internal consistency in the 1980s. D.G. Forgays,

Table 5. STAXI-2 raw scores unusual in applicant pool.

STAXI-2 scales for Anger experience & anger expression	Applicant raw score mean	Applicant raw score SD	Unusual in applicant sample (Mean + 1.5 SD)
State anger			
Females	15.8	0.7	16.5
Males	15.3	1.2	16.5
Trait anger			
Females	13.7	2.7	16.2
Males	12.3	2.1	14.4
Anger Expression Out			
Females	12.6	2.4	15.0
Males	12.7	2.9	15.6
Anger Expression In			
Females	12.6	3.4	16.0
Males	12.3	3.0	15.3
Anger Control Out			
Females	27.4	4.1	31.5
Males	27.8	3.8	31.6
Anger Control In			
Females	27.4	4.1	31.5
Males	26.7	3.9	30.6

D.K. Forgays, and Spielberger (1999) validated the factor structure of the test. Clinical interview questions probe for experience of poorly moderated anger in ministry settings.

Table 5 identifies STAXI-2 raw scores that are unusual in the EDSW applicant population. Unusual scores signal the need for clinical probing to elicit circumstances likely to prompt poorly moderated anger. Clinicians in any setting can prepare similar tables for determining unusual scores in their applicant pool. Contributing local de-identified scores to larger applicant pools would be immediately helpful for making more thoughtful interpretations of unusual scores and begin the process of developing a more broadly useful database.

The SASSI-3 (Miller, Roberts, Brooks, & Lazowski, 1997) purports to identify individuals with a high probability of having a substance abuse disorder. The SASSI has 26 face valid items, rated for frequency of experience, and the 67 subtle statements, rated true or false. It yields nine T scores for Obvious Attributes and Subtle Attributes. Decision trees categorise probability of having a substance dependence disorder. Lazowski, Miller, Boye, and Miller (1998) report internal consistency coefficients of .93 and test re-test reliability coefficients of .92. The decision rules yield 97% agreement with independent clinical diagnoses. Lazowski and Miller (2007) report clinical utility in identifying clients who do not recognise the importance of alcohol in their lives.

Clinicians in EDSW can use Table 6 to identify applicants whose SASSI scores are atypical for the applicant population, but will still need to follow the publisher's decision rules to determine probability of substance abuse disorder.

SASSI-3 is most appropriately used for early intervention with vulnerable persons. The SASSI-3 is not intended as a marker for substance abuse. The SASSI-3 test scores, similar to all test scores, are hypotheses for confirmation in clinical interviews. The clinical

Table 6. SASSI scaled scores unusual in applicant pool.

SASSI scales for substance abuse risk	Aspirant Mean SS	Aspirant <i>SD</i>	Unusual in population Aspirant Mean + 1.5 <i>SD</i>
Symptoms			
Females	43.4	7.6	55
Males	44.6	9.0	58
Obvious Attributes			
Females	40.42	7.7	52
Males	39.00	6.2	48
Subtle Attributes			
Females	46.3	8.1	58
Males	44.8	9.4	59

interview questions probe for understanding the role of alcohol use in life experiences, particularly circumstances that might make one vulnerable to alcohol abuse.

The CRI (Hammer & Marting, 1988) is a 60-item self-report inventory is intended to measure coping resources in five domains: physical, spiritual, self-esteem, social and emotional. The test has small norm groups and none are similar to applicants for ministry careers. The author reports reliability coefficients for college students ranging from .77 to .91. The domain scores offer opportunity to identify relative strength of coping resources. The authors state that scores less than 16 signal an area of needed improvement. The author reports promising results in discriminating between groups defined as “high stress healthy” and “high stress ill”. Karlsson and Archer (2007) present additional evidence that the CRI domain and total scores discriminate between groups with high and low coping resources.

The CRI mean scores for applicants displayed in Table 7 are well above the author’s cut score of 16, suggesting that typical applicants have much better coping strategies than the author’s norm group. The EDSW applicant raw score means and standard deviations identify unusual scores for discussion in clinical interviews. The test is useful for prompting discussion of applicant’s present coping resources.

The MBTI (Meyers, McCauley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2003) prompts discussion of potential sources of stress and intentional stress management. The MBTI Form M is a 93-item self-report inventory with word pair and phrase questions designed to elicit preferences. The test authors propose that the MBTI measures respondents’ preferences in four areas: (1) Extraversion or Introversion, (2) Sensing or Intuition, (3) Thinking or Feeling and (4) Judging or Perceiving. Scoring yields a code that represents a dynamic personality type. Schaubhut, Herk, and Thompson (2009) review data accumulated in the Consulting Psychologists Press database to estimate reliability coefficients in the 1980s and to identify expected relationships with other measures. Furnham, Jensen, and Crump (2008) report that the MBTI is a poor predictor of managerial effectiveness due to psychometric and conceptual problems; however, the present author has found the MBTI clinically useful for identifying possible sources of work site stress. Hirsh and Kise (2000) comment on common sources of stress for each type and make suggestions regarding how each type might effectively deal with stress.

As illustrated in Table 8, the most common type for male applicants in EDSW is ENFJ. Hirsh and Kise (2000) describe ENFJ’s as “Values Spokespersons” and identify common sources of stress as “violation of core values, perception that a problem is their

Table 7. Coping Resources Inventory (CRI) raw scores unusual in the applicant pool.

Coping resources	Applicant mean RS	Applicant <i>SD</i>	Unusual in population applicant mean (–) 1.5 <i>SD</i>
Physical			
Females	22.43	3.7	18.7
Males	24.25	4.1	20.1
Spiritual			
Females	29.22	4.1	25.1
Males	30.18	4.7	25.5
Self-Esteem			
Females	28.30	2.8	25.5
Males	29.06	5.1	24.0
Social			
Females	28.44	2.4	26.4
Males	29.04	5.1	23.9
Emotional			
Females	26.41	3.3	23.1
Males	26.22	3.1	23.1

Table 8. MBTI psychological type codes for female and male applicants in EDSW.

Preference code	Female frequency	Female percent	Female freq. rank	Male frequency	Male percent	Male freq. rank
ISTJ	3	4.5		1	1.9	
ISFJ	3	4.5		2	3.8	
ESFP	1	1.5		1	1.9	
INTJ	1	1.5		4	7.5	4
INFJ	8	11.9	4	3	5.7	
ENTP	3	4.5		2	3.8	
ENFP	13	19.4	1	10	18.9	2
INTP	2	3.0		2	3.8	
ESTJ	1	1.5		3	5.7	
ENTJ	2	3.0		1	1.9	
ISFP	1	1.5		0		
INFP	10	14.9	3	6	11.3	3
ESFJ	4	6.0		3	5.7	
ENFJ	11	16.4	2	13	24.5	1
ESTP	0			0		
ISTP	0			0		

fault, contentious situations, pursuit of harmony to the point of enmeshment”. The most common type for female applicants in EDSW is ENFP. Hirsh and Kise describe ENFP’s as “Sparks of Energy” and identify common sources of stress as “immediate decisions requiring focus on facts, barrage of activity that takes focus off what is important”, “loss of relationships”, “isolation in the midst of illness or tragedy”. The type characterisations and potential sources of stress are starting points for engaging applicants in examining their present and possible future sources of career stress and needed stress management

strategies. The intent is to articulate plans for intentional stress management in a ministry career.

The FIRO-B addresses the relationship between emotional needs and behaviour on the job. The FIRO-B is a 54-item self-report tool popular with organisational psychologists, but less well-known in clinical circles. The authors propose that persons have interpersonal needs for inclusion, control and affection. The test identifies how these interpersonal needs are expressed in work site behaviour. The test seems to have adequate test-re-test and internal consistency reliability (Mahoney & Stasson, 2005). With regard to validity, the test authors report relationships between the FIRO-B scales and a range of criteria, including spirituality, values, job satisfaction and managerial behaviour. A unique feature is assessment of wanted and expressed behaviour related to each of the three needs.

Dancer and Woods (2006) report that factor analysis identified control as a unique dimension not measured by other tests. In a series of studies, Furnham (2008) collected evidence of FIRO-B construct validity from executives attending assessment centres. He found FIRO-B captures unique variance not accounted for by personality measures. Furnham highlights the Control dimension as perhaps uniquely measured by FIRO-B and, according to his data, related to interpersonal strategies important at work. In particular, Furnham observes that the Wanted Control dimension of the FIRO-B may be related to dysfunctional behaviour at work. The interview explores how an applicant's work site behaviour may reflect her/his interpersonal needs for inclusion, control and affection. The psychologist uses the FIRO-B to generate data regarding emotional resources for maintenance of personal boundaries and for responding appropriately to presumptive expectations. The intent is to build applicants' understanding of how their emotional needs may influence their work site behaviour.

Table 9 compares applicants' FIRO-B mean scores with national norms for reported behaviour preferences. Applicants in EDSW are significantly different from the FIRO-B norm group in "Wanted Inclusion" (wI), "Wanted Control" (wC) and in "Expressed Control" (eC). The test authors (Hammer & Schnell, 2000) propose that elevated scores on "Wanted Inclusion" are associated with wishing to be included other's activities and to be noticed. Elevated scores on "Wanted Control" suggest that EDSW applicants are quite comfortable working in settings with well-defined expectations. The EDSW applicants "Expressed Control" scores are significantly higher than the norm group and purportedly reflect a desire to influence and direct others and to assume responsibility. It would be interesting to explore how high need for "Wanted Control" and "Expressed Control" are related to success in ministry, particularly in view of Furnham's findings regarding the relationship of "Wanted Control" to dysfunctional behaviour at work.

Table 10 presents applicant FIRO-B raw score values that signal significant difference from other applicants. An applicant's FIRO-B "Expressed Control" score above 8 (the maximum score is 9) would prompt some probing about how the applicant behaved in previous job settings and how the history might influence success in parish ministry. The FIRO-B scores prompt discussion of how an applicant's preferences for inclusion, control and affection may play out in parish conflicts.

The TKI (Thomas, 2002) purports to measure tendencies in managing interpersonal conflict. The TKI is a 30-item self-report inventory. Reliability seems acceptable and validity studies suggest expected relationships with criterion measures. Van de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) reported reliability ranging from .37 to .90 (average .63) with mixed results for validity. Respondents receive a score that reflects their tendency to use each of five conflict management modes: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating. The score informs the respondent of her/his typical choices in managing

Table 9. EDSW applicant FIRO-B average scores compared with national norms.

FIRO-B Scale label	Applicant mean RS	Natl. norm mean RS	Difference Asp & Natl	<i>P</i>
Expressed Inclusion				
Females	2.86	3.41	−0.553	n/s
Males	2.95	3.03	−0.077	n/s
Wanted Inclusion				
Females	3.20	2.33	0.866	0001
Males	2.95	2.22	0.733	001
Expressed Control				
Females	5.30	1.62	3.68	0001
Males	4.77	2.38	2.39	0001
Wanted Control				
Females	5.59	2.90	2.689	0001
Males	5.53	2.63	2.905	0001
Expressed Affection				
Females	3.05	3.71	−0.66	n/s
Males	3.49	3.29	0.198	n/s
Wanted Affection				
Females	5.7	4.86	0.9	n/s
Males	5.8	4.42	1.6	n/s

Table 10. FIRO-B raw scores unusual in the applicant pool.

FIRO-B measure of interpersonal needs	Applicant Mean RS	Applicant <i>SD</i>	Unusual in population Applicant Mean + 1.5 <i>SD</i>
Expressed Inclusion			
Female	2.86	2.6	6.7
Male	2.95	2.2	6.3
Wanted Inclusion			
Female	3.20	1.5	5.5
Male	2.95	1.6	5.4
Expressed Control			
Female	5.3	2.1	8.5
Male	4.8	2.2	8.1
Wanted Control			
Female	5.6	1.8	8.3
Male	5.5	2.1	8.7
Expressed Affection			
Female	3.0	1.8	5.7
Male	3.5	3.8	9.2
Wanted Affection			
Female	5.7	4.4	7.9
Male	5.8	4.5	12.5

Table 11. TKI raw scores unusual in the applicant pool.

TKI scales for conflict management	Applicant raw score mean	Applicant <i>SD</i>	Unusual in population Applicant mean + 1.5 <i>SD</i>
Competing			
Females	2.9	2.9	5.8
Males	3.4	2.9	6.3
Collaborating			
Females	6.3	2.3	8.6
Males	6.6	2.3	8.9
Compromising			
Females	7.3	2.8	10.1
Males	7.4	2.1	9.5
Avoiding			
Females	6.6	2.2	8.8
Males	5.7	2.0	7.7
Accommodating			
Females	6.9	2.1	9.0
Males	6.9	2.0	8.9

conflict, as well as available options for managing conflict. Shell (2001) discusses how the TKI is helpful in teaching executives about bargaining. In a study grounded in Bowen's (1978) notion regarding role differentiation, (Beebe, 2007) reports that clergy with high self-role differentiation tended to use collaborative and competing styles of conflict management. He interprets the findings as consistent with Bowen's theory that increased self-role differentiation observed in collaboration and competition is associated with less emotional reactivity. Volkema and Bergmann (1994) concluded that the TKI was related to observed strategic and tactical use of assertiveness in conflict situations. A match between ideal and actual conflict management style was associated with lower job-related distress (Reich, Wagner-Westbrook, & Kressel, 2007). The interview uses the TKI test scores to help applicants build a repertoire for conflict management tailored to parish settings.

Table 11 identifies TKI raw scores that are unusual in the EDSW applicant population. Recognising that the demands of parish ministry are different from most occupations, identifying applicants with TKI scores significantly different from other applicants may be more important than comparison with publisher's norms. The psychologist engages applicants in discussion of appropriate and inappropriate uses of their preferred mode in managing conflict, particularly in parish ministry.

Conclusions

Findings in the present study are limited to applicants for ministry careers in the Episcopal Diocese of the Southwest. Other studies need to demonstrate whether the EDSW applicants are similar to applicants for ministry careers in other religious traditions and in other countries.

Another self-imposed limit lies in the use of test scores for candidate screening. Test scores are appropriately used in forming hypotheses for confirmation in clinical interviews. Unusual test scores simply signal the need for probing to discover possible areas of psychological vulnerability.

One goal of the present study is to start a dialogue regarding best practices in psychological assessment of candidates for careers in ministry. The study identifies a set of psychological risk and resiliency factors relevant to psychologically healthy careers. The list is based on a review of the literature and experience in one large Episcopal Diocese. The perspective and experience of persons in other ministry settings can refine and supplement the proposed list of important factors in psychologically healthy careers. An important issue is to achieve some consensus regarding salient criterion variables to guide new practitioners in their choice of assessment protocols.

The study identifies tests that purport to measure psychological characteristics associated with healthy psychological adjustment. The test authors offer evidence of test reliability and construct validity. A dialogue regarding other relevant tests would enhance the battery and could point to a common core of tests for developing national norms to assess candidates for ministry careers.

It is important to develop special norms for ministry candidates because the present study demonstrates that applicants for clergy careers respond to psychological tests in manner different from other job applicants. The applicants in EDSW are sufficiently different from general job applicants to warrant preparation of separate norms for evaluating their psychological status. It can be misleading to use publisher's norms in evaluating applicants for ministry careers. The study offers guidance for developing local and international norms for interpreting applicant's responses. Norms based on data contributed from diverse settings would provide a more robust opportunity for understanding psychological factors important in ministry careers.

It would be interesting to describe psychological characteristics associated with ordination decisions. As Malony and Majovski (1986) noted, psychological predictor tests need to be independent of ordination decisions. In the present circumstances, most decision makers were aware of a psychologist's impression of risk factors, but not informed about test scores. The psychologist's observation of meetings suggests that psychological risk factors were not the most important consideration in ordination decisions. Subsequent studies will pursue assessment protocol correlates of ordination decisions.

The test battery may help to improve screening; however, another objective is to associate applicant test profiles with stress and coping in the development arc of ministry careers. The identification of early signals of risk and vulnerability in ministry careers could mobilise and target needed support for vulnerable careers.

Follow up studies need to focus on associating applicant characteristics with psychologically healthy clergy behaviour. In addition to assessment of applicants, this requires measurement of clergy experience of stress stemming from personal practices and from congregational sources. There are published tests to measure experience of stress and coping strategies. The Stress Profile (Nowack, 1999) purports to measure stress and coping strategies. Stress comes from health, work, personal finances, family, social obligations and environmental concerns. The Ministry Demands Survey (Lee, 1999) reliably measures common congregational demands, including personal criticism, presumptive expectations, boundary ambiguity and family criticism. Knowing clergy experience of stress, researchers can proceed with tests and interviews to assess effectiveness of coping strategies.

A well-researched response to job stress is burnout, typically measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). The authors identify burnout symptoms as exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. Lewis, Turton, and Francis (2007) comment on the importance of work-related burnout among clergy. Miner (2007) has given attention to aspirant psychological characteristics associated with burnout. She identifies an important predictor as weak internal orientation to ministry. Turton and Francis (2007) point to the importance of prayer in moderating burnout. More studies are needed regarding the relationship between aspirant psychological characteristics and burnout.

Another dimension of response to stress is self-compassion, a matter often neglected by clergy. The Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) reliably measures self-compassion in three dimensions: (1) self-kindness versus self-judgement, (2) common humanity versus isolation and (3) mindfulness versus over-identification. It would be interesting to study the applicant psychological characteristics associated with later practice of self-compassion. Self-compassion may be an important factor in psychological resilience.

The Stress Profile (Nowack, 1999) measures additional coping strategies, including: (1) effectiveness of health habits, (2) social support network, (3) interpersonal relationships, (4) positive and negative self-appraisal, (5) threat minimisation and (6) problem focus. In addition, the Stress Profile measures cognitive hardiness, a psychological construct potentially of value in buffering the impact of stress and generating positive coping strategies. Authors of the coping strategy tests (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Neff, 2003; Nowack, 1999) offer evidence that their scales are associated with positive health outcomes.

Follow-up studies of applicant psychological characteristics associated psychological vulnerability and resilience in ministry careers could lead to improved targeting of efforts to support clergy at times of increased stress. Identification of early signals for risk and resiliency in ministry careers offers the prospect of early intervention to enhance clergy health.

Note

1. The Episcopal Diocese of the Southwest is a pseudonym for a large Episcopal Diocese in the Southwestern United States.

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