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Clergy work-related satisfactions in parochial ministry:

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the influence of personality and churchmanship

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to test several hypotheses that clergy work-related satisfaction could be better explained by a multi-dimensional rather than a uni-dimensional model. A sample of 1071 male stipendiary parochial clergy in the Church of England completed the Clergy Role Inventory, together with the short-form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. Factor analysis of the Clergy Role Inventory identified five separate clergy roles: Religious Instruction, Administration, Statutory Duties (conducting marriages and funerals), Pastoral Care, and Role Extension (including extra-parochial activities). Respondents also provided an indication of their predispositions on the catholic-evangelical and liberal-conservative dimensions. The significant associations of the satisfactions derived from each of the roles with the demographic, personality and churchmanship variables were numerous, varied and, with few exceptions, small in magnitude. Separate hierarchical regressions for each of the five roles indicated that the proportion of total variance explained by churchmanship was, in general, at least as great as that explained by personality, and was greater for three roles: Religious Instruction, Statutory Duties and Role Extension. It was concluded that clergy satisfactions derived from different roles are not uniform and that churchmanship is at least as important as personality in accounting for clergy work satisfaction.

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**Clergy work-related satisfactions in parochial ministry:  
the influence of personality and churchmanship**

It has long been accepted that work is one of the more important domains of life to affect overall life satisfaction (Andrews & Inglehart, 1979; Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976; Headey & Wearing, 1992). Headey, Holmstrom, and Wearing (1985) found that work ranked third in importance of the five domains that together explained most of the variation in reported well-being, and was considered to give greater overall satisfaction than standard of living and health. There is also an extensive literature on the sources of job satisfaction - and dissatisfaction - in the work place and on the mediating influences of job-roles and individual differences in employee predispositions and personality. However, until recently, few formal studies have appeared on work satisfaction among the clergy and other religious professionals.

The clergy are commonly regarded as being exposed to relatively few work-related problems and this view is confirmed by several social surveys (Barna, 1993; National Federation of Priests' Councils, 1994). In an *ad hoc* study of work-induced stress, Cooper (1985) found that members of the clergy were the fifth least-stressed of 60 different occupations. Goetz (1997) reviewed the results of several American surveys and concluded that the clergy demonstrated a remarkably high degree of work satisfaction. Rose (1999) carried out a detailed statistical analysis of some 34,000 observations on job satisfaction collected in the British Household Panel Survey over the period 1991-99. In terms of overall work satisfaction, clergy ranked second only to medical secretaries out of 143 occupational groupings, with 72% of clergy respondents stating that their work satisfaction was "high" or "very high". Indirect evidence for the clergy's satisfaction with their work is provided by demographic data on longevity and the low incidence of stress-related diseases. Lock and

King (1980) found that US Baptist clergy lived longer than members of the general population, and King and Lock (1980) proposed white American Presbyterian ministers as a low risk population for mortality research.

Other work has been guided by a paradigm that maintains that clergy are subject to a form of sub-clinical occupational stress known as “burnout”. This syndrome is characterised by feelings of emotional exhaustion, lack of personal achievement and the development of an uncaring and cynical attitude towards others, and is principally associated with workers in the caring professions (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It has been argued that clergy are susceptible to burnout because of the peculiar demands of their ministry. Sanford (1982) drew attention to the repetitious nature of the work, the realisation that it can never be finished and the difficulty of knowing whether it is having any results. Additionally, in much of their work, ministers are required to present a public *persona* that is emotionally exhausting to maintain. Coate (1989) argued that while everyone is susceptible to occupational stress at some time or another, ministers find it difficult to admit to stress, feeling that they should be more able to cope with it than their secular counterparts. Davey (1995) identified the difficulties experienced by the clergy in matching performance to role expectations and considered that clergy are particularly susceptible to feeling overworked and unappreciated, and that their particular skills were overlooked and underused. Kirk and Leary (1994) drew attention to the problem of marginality, arguing that contemporary ministers will inevitably at some point experience their ministry and themselves as marginal to the society of the late twentieth century.

Data-based studies on the experience of burnout by the clergy are sparse. In a survey of full-time Anglican clergy in the UK, Fletcher (1990) found that objective measures of depression, and of indicators of somatic and psychosomatic anxiety were “remarkably low”. Only 5% of the respondents considered that their work was a constant source of stress and

only 3% said that they would leave the ministry were they free to do so; the majority of respondents reported that they were largely satisfied with their jobs. Fitcher (1984) dismissed burnout among Roman Catholic clergy as a myth; finding that only 4% showed signs of being troubled by “mental illness”. Strümpfer and Bands (1996) devised a questionnaire which they factor analysed to provide three measures of stress: person/role conflict, quantitative workload and role insufficiency. Among male Anglican priests in South Africa, the first and second factors correlated significantly with emotional exhaustion, although the levels encountered were described as no more than “moderate”. Warner and Carter (1984) compared self-reported burnout of US male pastors and non-pastors, and found that pastors experienced higher levels of exhaustion than non-pastors. In a study of burnout among US clergy, Stanton-Rich and Iso-Ahola (1998) reported that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation were more often reported by younger ministers and those who were relatively new to the ministry. However, a recent study of over a thousand male Anglican stipendiary ministers in the UK has concluded that the clergy are not particularly subject to the adverse effects of burnout and that self-reported work satisfaction is high (Hills, Francis, & Rutledge, 2004).

The work so far described has related to the global satisfaction that ministers derive from their work. However, this approach may over-simplify the examination of work-related satisfaction among the clergy. It might be a mistake to assume that all clergy derive similar levels of satisfaction from each aspect of parochial ministry: job-satisfaction may well be substantially influenced by differences among individuals. So far, research evidence points to three major sources of difference in work-related satisfaction among the clergy: demographic (gender, age and marital status), psychological (individual differences in personality), and theological predispositions (churchmanship).

Regarding demographic differences, several studies have shown that in comparison with male clergy, female clergy report greater satisfaction with their work (McDuff & Mueller,

1999), although this difference is a characteristic of employees across many occupations and professions (Mueller & Wallace, 1996; Phelan, 1994). Turton and Francis (2002) have shown that work satisfaction for male clergy declines after the age of thirty, is lowest for those in their forties and then begins to climb to reach its highest levels for those in their sixties.

5 Again, this is a pattern found across many occupations, where the age of lowest job satisfaction was reported as occurring at the age of 36 years (Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996). Birdi, Warr, and Oswald (1995) suggest that the reason for the increase in job satisfaction among older workers is that they are more adjusted to their work situations and may also have lower job expectations.

10 Regarding psychological differences a series of studies has examined the influence of individual personality characteristics on work satisfaction among clergy. Working with male Anglican stipendiary clergy, Francis and Rodger (1994) explored the association between personality differences and work dissatisfaction by asking respondents whether they had ever  
15 thought of leaving the ministry on a scale ranging from “never” to “often enough to look at alternative employment”. It was found that work dissatisfaction was positively and significantly correlated with emotional instability (neuroticism) and tough-mindedness (psychoticism) but not with extraversion or the lie-scale scores. The results with respect to tough-minded neurotics were confirmed for female Anglican stipendiary clergy in a later  
20 study (Francis & Robbins, 1999), where it was also reported that satisfaction with the ministry was associated with “stable extraversion”, a combination of high extraversion scores and low neuroticism scores, which would imply that clergy work satisfaction is greater for those who are socially minded and emotionally stable. In a subsequent study (Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, & Castle, 2005) based on a large group of male and female clergy in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, it was found that work satisfaction correlated positively with extraversion,

psychoticism and the lie scale scores and negatively with neuroticism, although the correlations with psychoticism and the lie scale were weak.

Regarding theological differences, Randall (2005) proposed that Anglican clergy differ on two main theological dimensions. The first dimension concerns the tension between the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church that emphasises the continuity with the Catholic Church preserved at the Reformation, and the Evangelical wing that emphasises the Protestant tradition established at the Reformation. The second dimension concerns the tension between conservative and liberal theological positions. These two theological dimensions are often characterised as differences in “churchmanship” or “church orientation”. Rather less empirical information is available on the influence of churchmanship or church orientation on work satisfaction. Francis and Turton (2002) found that among male Anglican parochial clergy in the UK, those with charismatic leanings evinced greater work satisfaction, and Kay (2000) similarly found that work satisfaction among male British Pentecostal ministers was positively related to the extent to which respondents engaged in specifically evangelistic activities. Among a sample of female Anglican stipendiary ministers in Britain, Robbins and Francis (2000) observed that differences in church orientation influenced the relative satisfactions that they derived from particular clergy roles. For example, those with a Catholic predisposition derived greatest satisfaction from the sacramental role whereas the evangelically-inclined were more satisfied with roles that involved evangelism and teaching.

Against this background, the aim of the present study is to examine three hypotheses among a large cross-sectional sample of male Anglican clergy. The first is that clergy work-related satisfactions are better explained by a multi-dimensional rather than a uni-dimensional model. The second is that demographic (age and marital status), psychological (personality) and theological (churchmanship) factors are significant correlates of clergy work-related



satisfaction. The third is that the relative importance of personality and churchmanship will vary for different aspects of parochial ministry.

## Method

### 5 *Participants*

With the kind assistance of the Church Commissioners, a 15% random sample of male stipendiary Anglican parochial clergy in the Church of England was generated, each of whom received a postal questionnaire and of the 1476 questionnaires despatched, 1071 were returned; a response rate of 73%. Of the participants 3% (33) were under the age of 30, 19% were in their 30s, 31% in their 40s, 31% in their 50s and 16% were aged 60 or more. Only 1% (6) were aged 70 or over. In the total sample, 14% were single, 84% married and 1% (12) widowed. Typically, participants had spent some 20 years as stipendiary ministers and 45% had served in their current parishes for more than 5 years.

### *Measures*

15 *Clergy functions scale.* Rutledge (1999) devised a 55-item Clergy Role Inventory (CRI) constructed to reflect a range of activities, behaviours and aspirations typically encountered in contemporary parochial ministry. The inventory included items related to the main clergy roles as identified by Blizzard (1958) as those of priest, for example, “saying the offices every day”; pastor, “counselling people with religious problems”; preacher, “preaching at least once  
20 every Sunday”; teacher, “running confirmation classes”; organiser, “taking an active part in raising church funds”, and administrator, “being the chairman of church committees”. For the present study, a derivative scale of 34 items was formed of items that related unambiguously to clergy functions, mainly by the exclusion of those items that appeared to reflect clergy aspirations rather than roles. Participants were invited to indicate how much personal

satisfaction they derived from each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “very low” to “very high”.

*Individual differences in personality.* Participants completed the short form of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985), which includes 12 items each for extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, and a lie-scale intended to detect any tendency to “fake good”, to be answered on a categorical yes/no basis.

*Churchmanship.* In addition to demographic data, participants were invited to respond to the bi-polar questions “How catholic/evangelical (liberal/conservative) would you judge your churchmanship” on a seven-point scale. High scores reflected an evangelical (conservative) disposition.

### Results and Discussion

Principal components analysis of the clergy satisfaction data extracted eight factors with eigen values  $> 1$ , which together accounted for 53.5% of the total variance. A Scree Plot suggested the presence of no more than five factors. After Varimax (orthogonal) rotation, the first five factors were clearly interpretable. The three smaller factors were not clear cut; two items had a negative factor loading and four items loaded on more than a single factor. The first five factors, which comprised 23 items and explained 43.3% of the total variance, were retained for further consideration. Table 1 reports the item composition of the five retained factors.

Factor 1 comprises six items concerned with specific types of formal teaching and instruction (baptism, confirmation, marriage) and more general instruction in the form of regular preaching, taking part in adult house groups and counselling those with spiritual problems. These activities are mostly carried out within the parish. The items in Factor 2 relate to making an active contribution to the material and social life of the parish through, for example, fundraising activities, social events and editing the church magazine. The four items

in Factor 3 relate to the statutory duties of the clergy in conducting baptisms, marriages and funerals both for parishioners and within the wider community, for example, conducting funerals in crematoria and cemeteries. Factor 4 includes four aspects of pastoral care for members of congregations and other parishioners by being available at all times and through home and hospital visiting. Finally, Factor 5 concerns the broader relationships within and outside the parish, for example, taking part in ecumenical activity, local politics, in-service training and in encouraging wider participation in the formal life of the parish. These factors are identified as Religious Instruction (F1), Administration, (F2), Statutory Duties (F3), Pastoral Care (F4), and Role Extension (F5). The finding that clergy work-related satisfaction comprises different interpretable factors is consistent with the first hypothesis that clergy work satisfaction is better represented multi-dimensionally than uni-dimensionally.

Table 2 reports the associations between each of the retained satisfaction factor scores and age, marital status, and individual differences in personality and churchmanship. The pattern of the results is complex, with over half of the possible correlations achieving significance, although most are small in magnitude and there are marked differences between the individual factors. It appears that older clergy derive more satisfaction from their statutory duties and most strongly from the exercise of pastoral care, whereas their satisfaction with administration and role extension declines with increasing age. Marital status has a relatively limited influence on the correlations; married clergy are more likely to derive satisfaction from religious instruction and less from their administrative roles, perhaps because time spent in these activities is felt to be at the expense of family life.

The associations with individual differences in personality are small. Satisfaction with religious instruction, administration and role extension is more likely to be experienced by extraverts, which is not surprising since these are activities that are more likely to appeal to clergy with an outward looking attitude. The associations with neuroticism and the

instructional and statutory roles imply that these activities are more satisfying to those who are more emotionally stable. Psychoticism correlates negatively with the religious instruction and pastoral roles, both of which would appear to be more satisfying to those who are tender- rather than tough-minded. The associations with the lie scale scores are the strongest observed among the individual differences in personality. Although lie scale scores were designed to measure respondents' tendency to "fake good", they are widely interpreted as a measure of social conformity or acceptability. If this approach is adopted, the lie scale correlations observed could imply that clergy consider that exercising pastoral care is seen to be expected of them, whereas role extension is not.

The most notable observation from the correlation analysis is the large number and range of associations recorded with churchmanship and which, overall, are greater in magnitude than those observed with the personality variables. The results imply that clergy with an evangelical disposition gain positive satisfaction from religious instruction but that their satisfactions with the remaining roles are negative. Alternatively, those with a Catholic disposition gain positive satisfactions from all roles with the exception of religious instruction. The liberal-conservative dimension also influences clergy role satisfactions. Conservatives gain positive satisfactions from religious instruction and from pastoral care, but have more negative feelings about their statutory duties than liberals, who gain greater satisfaction from statutory duties and role extension. The above results are consistent with the second hypothesis that demographic factors, personality and churchmanship are significant predictors of clergy work-related satisfaction.

Given the diversity of results revealed by correlation, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses was conducted in order to determine which of the variables best predicted clergy role satisfactions. Each of the satisfaction factor scores was separately regressed upon the predictor variables. The demographic variables, age and marital status, were entered first,

the personality variables next and finally the churchmanship variables, and the results are summarised in Table 3.

As indicated by the  $\Delta R^2$  values, the sequential addition of each set of variables makes a significant contribution to the explanation of the total variance for each of the five factors.

5 Age is a predictor of all factors and marital status for three factors, and the directions of the corresponding beta-coefficients,  $\beta$ s, are consistent with the conclusions noted for the matching correlation coefficients in Table 1. The addition of the personality variables significantly increased the proportion of variance explained for each of the five satisfaction factors, but the increases were relatively small. The significant predictors of satisfaction were also fewer than  
10 the number of significant correlations previously observed. In summary: satisfaction in the religious instruction role was predicted, negatively, only by neuroticism; satisfaction from administration was positively predicted by extraversion and the lie scale scores; satisfaction with statutory duties was weakly predicted only by extraversion; satisfaction with pastoral care was weakly predicted by tender-mindedness (low psychoticism scores) and more  
15 strongly by conformity to social expectations as indicated by the lie scale; and satisfaction in role extension was predicted positively by extraversion and negatively by the lie scale, which would imply that those who gain satisfaction from role extension are outward-looking and least influenced by social expectations.

However, the most notable feature of the results explained by the model is the relatively  
20 large contribution to the total variance made by the addition of the churchmanship variables, even when the effects of age, marital status and personality variables are accounted for. In particular, the churchmanship variables account for the largest  $\Delta R^2$  contribution in factors 1, 3 and 5. The relative effects of the catholic-evangelical and liberal-conservative variables are: that religious instruction gives greater satisfaction to clergy with evangelical and conservative  
25 predispositions; that satisfaction in the administrative role is significantly and strongly related

to an evangelistic predisposition but the relationship with the liberal-catholic dimension does not achieve significance; that satisfaction from statutory duties is greater for those with a catholic and liberal outlook; that pastoral care gives greater satisfaction to those with catholic and conservative predispositions; and that satisfaction from role extension is not significantly associated with the catholic-evangelical variable, but is strongly associated with a liberal rather than a conservative outlook, and this relationship is the largest of any observed in the multiple regression analysis.

The diversity of significant predictors for each of the work satisfaction factors is consistent with the third hypothesis that the relative importance of personality and churchmanship varies for different aspects of parochial ministry.

#### Summary and Conclusions

The principal aim of this study was to demonstrate that levels of clergy work satisfaction are variable and influenced by a range of circumstantial and personal factors. It was hypothesised that a) the range of clergy work satisfactions is better represented by a multi-dimensional rather than a uni-dimensional model, b) that demographic, personality and churchmanship factors are significant correlates of individual satisfaction, and c) that personality and churchmanship are of different relative importance for different aspects of parochial ministry. Each of these hypotheses was supported by the data.

Exploratory factor analysis of the clergy satisfaction data revealed the presence of five distinct clergy roles (religious instruction, administration, statutory duties, pastoral care and role extension). Clergy satisfactions in four of the roles are influenced by age, both positively and negatively, and the positive correlation with satisfaction derived from pastoral duties is substantial. This suggests that the satisfactions associated with caring for parishioners are greater for older clergy. The effects of marital status are less apparent, although it would

appear that the administrative function is less welcome to married men, perhaps because the demands of running a parish are seen to conflict with family responsibilities.

The significant associations of individual personality differences and the satisfactions derived from different roles are numerous although small in magnitude, and operate both positively and negatively. In general, extraversion has a positive effect and neuroticism a negative effect on role satisfactions, but the largest (negative) influence on any role satisfaction is the association between the lie scale scores and “role extension” duties, which include extra-parochial activities and encouraging lay participation. This would imply that the clergy may not regard such activities to be socially expected of them. The negative association between role extension and age, however, indicates that these activities give greater satisfaction to the younger clergy. The strongest associations, however, are between role satisfactions and the churchmanship dispositions, which would suggest that differences in churchmanship are at least as influential as the Eysenckian personality variables.

To establish the most important predictors of work satisfactions, hierarchical multiple linear regressions were conducted for each of the five clergy roles. For three roles, religious instruction, statutory duties (conducting marriages and funerals) and role extension, the churchmanship variables explained more of the total variance than either the demographic or personality variables. To a first approximation, the liberal-conservative dimension was more influential overall than the catholic-evangelical dimension. Where the influence of the churchmanship variables did not predominate, as for satisfactions from administration and pastoral care, the demographic variables, age in particular, made the greatest contribution.

It can therefore be concluded that work satisfactions among the clergy are not the same for all clergy roles, and that individual differences in churchmanship are at least as important as the personality dimensions in explaining clergy work satisfactions, and for some roles the influence of churchmanship is predominant. These conclusions have two important

implications. First, concentration on global measures of work satisfaction among the clergy may give misleading results, and future studies need to pay more attention to the differential satisfactions that the clergy experience in the variety of roles that they regularly fulfil.

Second, among the individual differences that influence work satisfaction, predispositions to particular religious traditions would appear to be at least as important as the personality dimensions of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism that are more commonly studied.

Further work needs to be done to determine whether the results of this study, which was based solely on the responses of male stipendiary parochial clergy, can be generalised to other groups. Of particular importance is the need to test the findings over a more comprehensive range of clergy roles. The roles used in this study were established *ad hoc* from data that were available, but there are some obvious omissions, in particular the sacramental role. The findings also need to be tested for other clergy categories. Those ordained later in life, after experience in other working environments, may view the satisfactions available to the clergy differently from those who have never experienced other forms of employment. Married female clergy may take another view of the relative values of the satisfactions they derive from their work and their families, and non-stipendiary ministers may derive satisfactions from their work that are different to those whose profession is also their livelihood. These issues need to be examined further.



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*Table 1. Orthogonal factor analysis of clergy role-satisfactions*

ID	Label	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	$h^2$
01	Running preparation classes for infant baptism	.73					.57
02	Running confirmation classes	.66					.53
03	Running marriage preparation classes	.62					.47
04	Taking an active part in adult house groups	.60					.51
05	Counselling people with spiritual problems	.49					.43
06	Preaching at least once every Sunday	.39					.41
07	Taking an active part in raising church funds		.78				.64
08	Being in charge of parish fetes/Christmas fairs		.72				.60
09	Taking an active part in maintaining the church fabric		.70				.57
10	Taking an active part in church social events		.46				.38
11	Editing the parish magazine		.45				.28
12	Conducting funerals in church			.77			.67
13	Conducting funerals in crematoria/cemeteries			.72			.58
14	Conducting baptisms			.65			.60
15	Conducting weddings			.63			.57
16	Visiting all parishioners in hospital				.74		.67
17	Visiting every home in the parish				.70		.55
18	Being available to parishioners at all times				.66		.53
19	Visiting members of your congregation in hospital				.66		.58

*Table continues*

20	Involving yourself in ecumenical activity	.67	.50			
21	Participating in 'in-service' training	.60	.49			
22	Taking an active part in local politics	.59	.40			
23	Encouraging a lay person to chair the PCC.	.50	.49			
Eigen value		5.74	3.13	2.46	1.85	1.54
Variance explained before rotation (%)		16.87	9.21	7.23	5.43	4.54
Variance explained after rotation (%)		7.86	7.65	7.59	7.47	6.33

Factor loadings < .35 not shown.

F1 = Religious instruction, F2 = Administration, F3 = Statutory duties,

F4 = Pastoral care, F5 = Role extension.

*Table 2. Correlations of factor scores with age, marital status, personality and churchmanship*

Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Age	-.06	-.10**	.17***	.33***	-.13***
Marital status	.06*	-.10***	.05	-.02	.04
Extraversion	.08**	.11***	.05	.00	.10***
Neuroticism	-.10***	-.03	-.09**	-.02	.03
Psychoticism	-.06*	-.01	-.06	-.12***	.03
Lie scale	.04	.06	.06	.16***	-.17***
Catholic-evangelical	.16***	-.11***	-.16***	-.10***	-.11***
Liberal - conservative	.18***	.01	-.16***	.06*	-.32***

F1 = Religious instruction, F2 = Administration, F3 = Statutory duties,

F4 = Pastoral care, F5 = Role extension.

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 3. Regression of age, marital status, personality and churchmanship upon satisfaction factor scores

Variable	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3		Factor 4		Factor 5	
	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$
<i>Step 1</i>										
Age	-.067*		-.112***		.143***		.309***		-.089**	
Marital status	.035	.008*	-.075*	.019***	.044	.029***	-.045	.115***	.050	.018***
<i>Step 2</i>										
Extraversion	.055		.101***		.044*		.043		.077*	
Neuroticism	-.078*		-.021		-.086		.026		-.002	
Psychoticism	-.059		-.006		-.057		-.065*		-.003	
Lie scale	.030	.019***	.092**	.019***	.007	.010*	.084**	.014**	-.141***	.026***
<i>Step 3</i>										
Catholic-evangelical	.093**		.116***		-.121***		-.103**		-.016	
Liberal-conservative	.139***	.036***	.049	.011**	-.126***	.040***	.091**	.011***	-.320***	.104***

F1 = Religious instruction, F2 = Administration, F3 = Statutory duties,

F4 = Pastoral care, F5 = Role extension.

$\beta$  values are derived from the final model.

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .