

Church Organists: Analysing their Willingness to Play

Don J. Webber^b and Martin Freke^d

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^b *School of Economics, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK
and Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK*

^d *Centre for Performing Arts, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK*

Abstract

There currently exists a scarcity of church organ players even though they have traditionally been well paid. This paper presents an empirical investigation into the factors that affect the church organ player's willingness to play. Results suggest pay does not attract the organ player to the position but being paid *in situ* increases their willingness to play, as do larger choir sizes and a better instrument quality. We also identify that organ players should be taught when they are young, as the younger the church organ player started learning the instrument then the greater their willingness to play.

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Corresponding Author: Don J. Webber, School of Economics, University of the West of England, Bristol, Frenchay Campus, Bristol, BS16 1QY, UK.
Email: Don.Webber@uwe.ac.uk; Tel: (+44) 117 344 2741; Fax: (+44) 117 344 2295

I INTRODUCTION

Economists are increasingly analysing the economics of religion and much of this research has focused on resource allocation, participation and income.¹ Participation could simply be a way of increasing the perceived rate of accumulation of religious human capital (Azzi and Ehrenberg, 1975), whether this is through their devotion of time and goods to the accumulation of religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine or friendships with worshippers.²

The effect of religion on income has been analysed by, amongst others, Heath *et al.* (1995), who stress that certain religious associations may discourage the economic development of certain sectors of the economy, such as alcohol and gambling. They also suggest that religious fundamentalism can also discourage behaviours that might impede economic development, such as drug use and illegitimacy, and encourage personal responsibility and family stability, thereby improving economic performance.³ However, income might not be a function of religion. Instead, the causality might be that participation in religious activities is a function of income; this line of thought has been examined by Azzi and Ehrenberg (1975), Sullivan (1985) and Sawkins *et al.* (1997). For example, Azzi and Ehrenberg (1975) found that high wage rates reduce church membership, implying that individuals substitute work for religious activity when the opportunity cost of church membership is higher. One theoretical idea about the effect of income on religious participation is that there is an inter-temporal allocation of resources to maximise utility where the prospect of ‘afterlife consumption’ is sensitive to a time discount factor (Azzi and Ehrenberg, 1975). Individuals will participate in religious activities more if their utility obtained from current consumption (driven by current income) is expected to be greater than the utility obtained from ‘afterlife consumption’.⁴

Even though church organ players have been traditionally well paid, there currently exists a critical shortage in the number of organ players in the Church of England and, of those who do play in church, some are willing while others are not. If an individual is a willing participant, they might tend to be *in situ* for a longer period. In this paper, we consider a specific type of religious activity – the ‘willingness’ to play an organ in a church – and empirically examine a range of factors that might influence this willingness. If the numbers of church organ players is to be increased in the future, thereby catering for the demands of the congregation for musical accompaniment, research should be carried out to identify the factors which are likely to encourage such participation and this research takes a step in that direction.

The following section presents an historical perspective of organ player participation within churches. This is followed in Section III with an outline of previous work and

¹ See Iannaccone (1998) for a review of this literature.

² Religious activities are known to reduce crime and various social pathology rates (Bainbridge, 1989; Hull and Bold, 1995) which then have the effect of reducing public expenditures on the police (Lipford *et al.*, 1993).

³ Grier (1997) finds that the growth rate of Protestantism is significantly and positively correlated with real GDP growth and that the level of Protestantism is significantly related to the level of per capita GDP levels.

⁴ Lipford and Tollison (2003) provide results that suggest that there is a bicausal link between religion and income and that a simultaneous equation system is the most appropriate type of estimation procedure.

the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Section IV discusses the data set, the econometric methodology and the model specification. The results are presented in Section V, which are followed by the conclusions in Section VI.

II AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The role of the organ player in the Church of England is unique. Whilst churches in other countries also employ the services of organ players, they do so to fulfil a different role and within a tradition distinctly apart from the Anglican Church. The principal difference is in the expectation of the organ player to be an equally accomplished choir trainer to maintain the great English choral tradition. As Freke (2003) discovered, most English organ players have a background as choristers.

For the best part of a hundred years the ‘career structure’ of organ players in the UK has been largely pyramidal. The wholesale provision of organs in churches which coincided with, and was prompted by, the Industrial Revolution, increased available wealth and the reorganisation of the interior of churches along those lines propounded by the Oxford Movement, created a demand for players of the instrument which had come to replace the church band (so beloved of Thomas Hardy), and the primitive barrel organ.

The liturgical requirements of the Oxford Movement included robed choirs and a reappraisal of the role of music in worship. Organ players tended to be drawn from the ranks of choirboys, especially once their voices had changed. This principle of young players being ‘articled’ to the incumbent player had remained largely unchanged until the 1960’s, and it guaranteed a relatively plentiful supply of players to meet market demands. That the standard and quality of players varied widely is unarguable, and it is likely that small country churches found it as difficult to recruit a good player, as they do today.

The use of the term ‘career structure’ is problematic in this case, since very few players have ever actually made a career out of playing the organ in a church. Cathedral organ players are an exception, but for the most part players even in the wealthiest of large parish churches make their post the principal ingredient in a portfolio of other activities – teaching, school teaching, conducting, accompanying, etc.

From the 1960’s a number of influences converged to disrupt this *status quo* and which in turn has resulted in a critical shortage of organ players willing to take on a church post. Another sweeping liturgical reform, as powerful as the Oxford Movement, introduced a series of alternative services in the Church of England, culminating in the Alternative Service Book of 1980. The effect of this in most churches was to give the Parish Eucharist centre place in the pattern of Sunday worship, at the expense of Matins and Evensong – services with a strong musical element – which are now rarely heard at parish level with full musical settings.

The general decline in church attendance has affected the ability of many churches to afford a competent player, whilst a similar decline in choirboy numbers (accelerated

in many cases by the introduction of girl choristers) has led to an ever-shrinking pool to fish from for potential organ players (Freke, 2003).⁵

III THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Given the general decline in church attendance and the lack of funds for many churches to afford a competent player, many churches draw their organ players from the congregation; such players are therefore already participating in religious activities. Where church organ players are recruited from the congregation, the organ player might be a *reluctant* (unwilling) player and this reluctance could be traced to a number of factors.⁶

Any type of participation could be driven by the desire to increase utility. Azzi and Ehrenberg (1975) examine the determinants of church attendance from which individuals obtain motivation for religious participation from the prospect of ‘afterlife consumption’.⁷ However, Sullivan (1985) contends that ‘afterlife consumption’ is an unnecessary assumption behind the model as religious behaviour can generate immediate utility. The paper by Sawkins *et al.* (1997) presents an empirical investigation into church attendance across Great Britain and found that labour income does account for some of the variation in church attendance and that educational attainment and the intensity of belief are correlated with attendance. Interestingly, Iannaccone (1998) finds that the number of services attended per year is determined by a number of factors, including education and age, and whether the individual believes in life after death also has a positive and significant effect. Such factors influence utility and could also influence the organ player’s willingness to play.

⁵ Freke’s (2003) study started with the assumption that the number of organ players learning to play was in terminal decline, yet this proved erroneous. Since 1950 the number taking Associated Board grade examinations in Organ has actually risen by 408%, reaching a high point in 1983 of 756 entries as against 185 in 1950. Whilst there has been a slight decline since then, the number of Associated Board grade examinations in Organ was still up 279% in 1998 on 1950. It was discovered that nearly all these players can be accounted for in independent schools where there is a strong musical tradition and liturgical practice is not as prescribed as at parish church level. Worryingly for the Anglican Church, few of these players intend gaining *employment* in a church post. There is evidence to suggest that many of these players will continue to play for pleasure however, and may make themselves available to play in churches on an occasional basis – particularly for weddings and funerals which are relatively well-paid, but which require no regular commitment.

⁶ Organ players were asked whether they were willing or reluctant players and we use this terminology in the normal way: to capture for determined intention, one’s own desire or choice. However, this is not the same interpretation as the interpretation used in church circles. In the church the term *reluctant* denotes someone coerced into playing the organ who has not done so previously. They are likely to be older in years, but a known quality as a pianist. They would be unlikely to use pedals at all, and would probably not be accomplished in any of the traditional skills associated with organ players – transposing, improvisation, or score reading. Yet others have described them, with a keen distinction, as “people who play the organ, as opposed to organ players.” *Reluctant* is generally a misnomer: on the whole these players are happy – flattered even – to be asked. Triangulation in the questionnaire permitted us to come to the conclusion that the respondents actually understand this phrase in the common sense, as opposed to the sense meant in church circle.

⁷ We were unable to proxy for this variable in this study and recognise that its omission might bias our results.

The prospect of afterlife consumption might be one reason why some individuals are more willing to play an organ in a church, implying that monetary concerns might not be an important contributory factor. In a survey of organ players in two dioceses, Freke (2003) found that salary was the *least* important criterion for taking on a church post, and that there were problems encountered in organ player recruitment: two-thirds of clergy had tried to replace their organ player in the past five years. Different rates of participation in religious activities could be explained by their opportunity costs after taking account of differences in ‘tastes’ (Stigler and Becker, 1977). Willingness can be a function of the opportunity costs of participation and, in essence, it can also be a function of the factors that make participation enjoyable. Given the current critical shortage in the number of church organ players, the following sections present a statistical analysis of the factors thought to be influential in the decision to play the organ in a church and then notes policy implications.

IV DATA AND ESTIMATION

Although research in the area of organ player recruitment and satisfaction is scarce, the relationship between organ players, choirs and church music has been researched by Hill (1982) while the organ player-clergy relationship has been explored by Rees (1991). Hill was only able to survey those churches belonging to the Royal School of Church Music, which accounts for 32% of the total number of churches. Given that these churches took a sufficient interest in Music to make membership of the RSCM worthwhile, Hill’s results (as he freely admits) are heavily biased and cannot be generalizable countrywide, and hardly relatable either.

Whilst both studies contribute much to the debate on this subject both have serious omissions which impact upon their findings. Both studies are largely observational and quantitatively based and fail to ask the ‘why’ questions. Neither author puts the data in the context of those churches that do not have an appointed organ player, unlike Freke (2003) who demonstrates that the response rate from organ players of 91% for the Bristol diocese is set against the fact that nearly half the churches there (46%) do not have an appointed organ player at all.

The analysis in this study draws from the same data set as used by Freke (2003). The data were collected as part of ongoing research project on the socialisation of organ players in the context of liturgical reform in the Church of England and the effects of the Organ Reform Movement. The two dioceses chosen for the study are contiguous and together account for a large swathe of the South-West of England. They were chosen for their contrasted characters which, it was hoped, would provide the necessary spread of ability, background, experience and age.

The Diocese of Bath and Wells embraces the whole of Somerset and parts of the new unitary authorities of North-West Somerset and BANES (Bath and North-East Somerset). It has one parish in Wiltshire and two in Dorset. The diocese covers 1619 square miles with a population of approximately 800,000 people. Serving this area are 516 churches and 217 benefices. There are few major centres of population: the county town of Taunton numbers 61,400 and the area encompasses England’s smallest city – that of the cathedral city of Wells (with a population of 10,400). Otherwise the main centres are Bridgwater/Highbridge (mainly industrial) Weston-

Super-Mare (mainly tourism), Yeovil (services, manufacturing and distribution) and Frome (manufacturing and services).⁸

The Diocese of Bristol is geographically relatively long and thin. It stretches from the mouth of the River Avon, including Portbury and Avonmouth Docks and the highly industrial Severnside area north of the river, eastwards along the M4 corridor to Swindon. It embraces the historic City and County of Bristol with its population of 414,000 (Census, 2001) at one end of the diocese and Swindon at the other. Although nominally still a town, Swindon is remarkable for its post-war growth: in the 1990's it was described as the fastest growing town in the European Community.

A series of postal questionnaire surveys were undertaken and the individuals in this sample are all the organ players in the diocese of Bristol, and those in seven out of the thirteen deaneries in Bath and Wells. The response rate from Bristol was 91% and 70% from Bath and Wells. In total, 201 replies were received from 256 letters sent. The questionnaire consisted of fifty questions covering age, sex, qualifications, age at which they started playing, chorister experience, plus enquiries about their current post: how long they had been in it, did they apply or were they asked to play, and what were the principal reasons for wanting to play in that particular church. After data attrition, the number of individuals analysed in the sample here is 106. The data set analysed is, to the knowledge of the authors, the first on a large scale that engages with players at all levels of ability and is therefore arguably one of the most important.

There is a strong case to be made for the generalization of the results: the Archbishops' survey (1992) presented data from 4.25% of Anglican churches in England; Rees's (1991) survey was based on 36% of churches in the Oxford diocese, and Hill's (1982) on 22.3% of the RSCM membership, i.e. 8% of all Anglican churches. The results from the Bristol diocese (91%) do not represent a sample or focus group, but almost an entire population from one diocese. Since the results from Bath and Wells were strikingly similar (70%) it is contended that Freke's findings are generalizable to the whole population of organ players.⁹

Like many studies that investigate participation, a discrete (1, 0) dummy variable is employed in the analysis, which is equal to one if the individual is willing and equal to zero otherwise. The question that the organ players were asked is:

*“Not all organ players are ‘willing’!
Would you say that you were a willing or reluctant organ player?”*

A problem arises in the definition of what a 'reluctant' is. Here we refer to a reluctant as an individual who is not a willing organ player and we assume playing the organ does not maximise their utility. However, the precise meaning of the term reluctant is elusive: it is a term in common usage in church music circles where it implies someone who is not a trained organ player, is probably a competent pianist and

⁸ Data and economic summary statistics originate from the Somerset County Council (2001) web-site.

⁹ There might be issues of self-selection here. A church organ player might be the only organ player in the church and therefore there was no alternative. Alternatively an organ player who attends a church might not admit to being capable of playing an organ because they are so unwilling.

someone who has been asked to ‘fill-in’ whilst a trained organ player is found.¹⁰ Technically, these players would have no concept of how to play an organ but would muddle through somehow. The pedals would be beyond them, as would the accompaniment of psalms, and the usual practice of being choirmaster. For this paper, however, we assume that those who replied that they are ‘reluctant’ really are so: they are unwilling players in their churches.¹¹

One potential drawback of studies that use response data is that individuals may not completely appreciate the actual impact of various factors in their decision making process, and that natural heterogeneity means that different factors influence different individuals to different extents. For instance, the influence of the vicar on the willingness to play may be both positive and negative, depending on the quality of interaction and the respect that an organ player (vicar) has for a vicar (organ player). As an example, a paradox could exist if an excellent and enthusiastic organ player is adversely affected with respect to the willingness to play if a vicar has a high expectation of the organ player but the organ player does not have the self-confidence to play at the required level.¹²

This study adds to the literature on the factors that influence the willingness of an organ player to play. Factors considered include the age that the organ player started learning the instrument (*Age Start Playing*), ability controls in organ playing (*Formal Qualifications*) and gender. These are expected to be inter-related according to the hypothesis propounded earlier that organ players traditionally rose from the ranks of choristers. The presence of girls in choirs is a relatively recent phenomenon, but for them – since their voices do not ‘break’ as boys’ do – there would be no naturally enforced hiatus from singing. It was also assumed that higher qualifications would be a natural corollary from an earlier starting age.

The model includes, among others, whether the organ player was originally asked to play the organ in the church (*Asked to Play*), the size of the choir in the church (*Size of Choir*) and the perceived importance of the quality of the instrument (*Quality of Instrument*). These variables are included on the theoretical grounds that it was believed that those who started learning from an early age are more likely a) to want to continue playing, b) to resume playing after a lacuna (raising a family, retiring from work, etc.), and c) to be more currently proficient or to have been more proficient in the past. The more proficient a player becomes the more likely, it was believed, they would seek to expand their musical opportunities through the medium of choir and better quality instruments. From the empirical perspective, the inclusion of these variables and the omission of other factors are driven from the subsequent availability of data. It was also believed that organ players are little different from other sections of society where advancement is dependent upon a meritocracy. In general, a better player is likely to be more highly qualified, and as such would seek out superior employment as an organ player. The factors determining this type of

¹⁰ Freke’s (2003) study found such ‘fill-in’ periods to have lasted up to 50 years or more.

¹¹ The other taxonomic groups are more self-evident: someone who ‘applies’ has probably done so in response to an advertisement, whilst someone ‘headhunted’ may have been coerced into leaving a similar post elsewhere. Both of these latter groups represent the ‘willing’ classification.

¹² Another potential drawback, which typifies many economists’ reaction to subjective data, is the suspicion that what organ players say might not actually reveal their true preferences (and thus their willingness).

employment would include a finer instrument (larger, better maintained, finer quality, etc.), better choir and greater musical opportunities.

The '*Churchmanship x Incumbent*' variable was included believing that these may have strong influences upon organ players' willingness to accept a post at any level. *Churchmanship* relates to the placing of a church on an ill-defined, but in general usage well-understood, continuum which places Evangelical churches as 'low' church and Anglo-Catholic ones as 'high' church. The musical requirements for institutions spread over this spectrum are likely to be very wide-ranging and unlikely to appeal to all types of organ players. Thus 'low' churches are equated with 'happy-clappy' musical styles in a lighter, populist genre and often embracing music groups in conjunction with the organ, whilst by their very traditionalist nature 'high' churches eschew the former styles in favour of plainsong, chanting, and more formal high-art music delivered by a trained choir and organ player. The role of the *Incumbent* (vicar) in determining a player's willingness to accept a post was also thought to be significant. Too often the relationship between these two, arguably, most important positions in a church breaks down in acrimony. The topic has been researched by Rees (1991, 1993) and Freke (2003) whose survey produced evidence to suggest that there is be a significant correlation, and so they are employed here as a compound variable.

Means of the variables used in the estimation are presented in Table 1, and these relate to the full sample of 106 organ players.

Table 1 about here

Nearly 90% of the organ players in this sample are *willing*, indicating that most of the organists do not need to be coerced into playing the organ. The 'average organ player' is in his 40s, male, started playing in their teens, has no formal qualifications, asked to play and was appointed, not attracted to pay, but are paid *in situ*. The average number of people in their choir is 16 and the quality of the instrument was neither important nor unimportant in attracting the organ player to the post.

Table 2 suggests a strong skew in the age that the male organ player started playing: 83% were in their teens. This is in contrast to women organ players where there is no, clear discernible pattern, although they tend to be young. Table 3 supports Table 1 in that there appears to be little gender bias in the probability of having a formal qualification in playing the organ.

Table 2 about here

Table 3 about here

There are, of course, possible interrelationships occurring between regressors. The correlation coefficients between variables are presented in Table 4. One interesting finding from the correlation coefficients is that the appointed organ player is likely to

be male and paid.¹³ This appears to reflect the strong gender bias towards males playing the organ from an earlier age: early learners tend to be better qualified and therefore are equipped with the necessary skills and experience to support applications for better paid posts. The obverse side of the situation is that some women start to learn the organ in later life, particularly in their 40s. This correlation endorses the original hypothesis that being an organ player has been a male dominated activity and by the available pathways to learning, i.e. treble chorister whose voice ‘changes’ at a time when the desired keyboard fluency (Associated Board Grade 5 Piano) tends to have been reached. This early start to playing the organ is itself reinforcing the explanation that early learners become better qualified in due course, and therefore more inclined both to be ‘*Appointed*’ and be better paid. The obverse of this situation is reflected in the negative and strong coefficient between ‘*Asked to Play*’ and ‘*Gender*’ suggesting that the female organ player cohort are reluctants and, as we know, often late learners, and therefore neither well-qualified nor inclined to apply for church positions.

Table 4 about here

V RESULTS

The results of the binary logistic regression estimations are provided in Table 5. The dependent variable in all regressions is whether the organ player is willing to play an organ in a church. This is a binary variable and has a value of 1 if the individual is a ‘*willing*’ player of the church organ, and a value of 0 if the individual is a ‘*reluctant*’ organ player. The values for the omnibus test of model coefficients are always statistically significant at the 5% level, indicating that the null hypothesis of no causal relationship between the regressors and the regressand can safely be rejected. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test for goodness-of-fit are always insignificant, indicating that there is nothing to suggest that the model is inappropriate.

Table 5 about here

We first examine the personal characteristics of the organ player. It appears that the willingness of the organ player to play does not depend on gender, age or whether or not the player has any formal qualifications in playing the organ. Instead it appears that one of the most important factors in influencing the willingness to play is the age that the individual started playing the organ: the younger the individual started playing then the greater the likelihood of the individual being willing. Among the data set were instances of players returning to the practice of being a church organ player after some prolonged spell away: these ‘returners’ found the process of ‘picking up where they left off’ much less onerous than a reluctant having to start from basics.

Given that there is a severe shortage of organ players, it might be worth offering money as an initial incentive mechanism for participation and we empirically test this in columns 2 – 4 of Table 5. In this sample, 78.3% of organ players are paid

¹³ ‘*Formal qualifications x attracted to pay*’ is, as one would expect, highly correlated to both ‘*formal qualifications*’ and ‘*attracted to pay*’; but these will not be included in the regression at the same time.

something for their efforts. In spite of the fact that church organ players have been traditionally well paid, and notwithstanding that being paid *per se* makes the organ player significantly more willing to play, it appears that the money itself does not attract the individual to play in the first instance and therefore influence the willingness to play. This distinction is important. It appears that money does not attract the individual in the first instance, but it does increase the willingness of the individual *in situ*. This can influence policy making: although offering money will not entice the individual, paying them once they are playing will increase their willingness to play and therefore reduce the likelihood that they will leave.

Some individuals have formal qualifications in playing the organ. Freke (2003) identified that the key elements that attract the best players to the best posts were a combination of salary, quality of the organ, quality of the choir and musical opportunities. These individuals might have become trained so that they can earn money while playing the organ in a church. To examine the compound effect of '*Formal Qualifications x Attracted by Pay*' on the willingness to play, we include it in regressions 5 – 7 of Table 5. This variable is never statistically significant and indeed has the wrong sign. This lack of significance probably is illustrative of the organ players that we would expect to see across the Church of England today. Although church organ players have traditionally been well paid, very few individuals possibly only at the top end of the accomplishment league actually intend to make the post full-time and professional. In the data set this would apply to less than 2% of cases.

Both '*Appointed*' and '*Asked to Play*' appear to have a negative influence on the willingness to play, but neither variable is statically significant at traditional levels of significance.

Other factors, linked to the degree of satisfaction of performing, could make the organ player a more willing performer. We were able to test a hypothesis linked to satisfaction in two ways. First, it would be extremely rare for an organ player to have an large grand organ in their home; this means that the best opportunity for an organ player would be to play such an instrument in the church. If the organ player obtains satisfaction from playing the organ then improving the quality of the organ would increase the probability of the organ player being willing. Second, if the organ player obtains utility from being part of a musical group, be it training or accompanying a choir, then the organ player would be more willing to play the greater the size of the choir. Both of these are associated with the opportunities for presenting music at concert standard either in a liturgical setting or secular concert. The results of the tests for these hypotheses are provided in columns 6 and 7 of Table 5. There is evidence that the quality of the organ and the size of the choir are both important. A willing player is attracted to better instrument quality and larger church choirs. This suggests that some organ players 'use' their position for purposes of self-aggrandisement: the quality of the instrument, and possibly that of the choir, would be enough of an inducement to play.

As mentioned above, the '*Churchmanship*' and the '*Incumbent*' might also influence the willingness of the organ player to play; '*Churchmanship*' relates to a continuum which places Evangelical churches as 'low' church and Anglo-Catholic ones as 'high' church, whereas whether the individual likes the '*Incumbent*' (vicar) might

also influence the player's willingness to play. These factors are strongly inter-related since 'high art' music, choirs and greater musical opportunities are traditionally associated with 'high' churchmanship, whilst there is evidence (Martin, 1984; Metcalf, 1980) to suggest that 'Evangelical' churches, and therefore their incumbents, favour less formalised musical styles. Given the assumed connection between these two we employed a compound variable to capture the effect. However, the results suggest that the '*Churchmanship x Incumbent*' variable has a very low statistical significance, suggesting that it has a relatively low influence on the willingness of an individual to play an organ in a church.

The results described above lead to the following conclusions:

- ? ? Willingness to play an organ in a church does not depend on gender, age, (formal organ) qualifications, whether they were appointed or asked to play.
- ? ? Willingness to play an organ in a church is negatively related to the age that the organ player started playing: the younger the organ player started playing then the greater the willingness of the organ player to play.
- ? ? Initially organ players are not attracted by pay. However, once *in situ*, being paid will increase the willingness of the organ player to play.
- ? ? The greater the size of the choir then the greater the willingness to play.
- ? ? Better instrument quality attracts more willing organ players.
- ? ? Churchmanship and the incumbent do not significantly influence the willingness of the organ player to play.

The implications of our results for the Church of England might appear clear enough, but the reality of an institution struggling to maintain its *status quo* in an increasingly pluralistic society would suggest that idealised objectives need to be tempered by a pragmatic assessment of what is achievable. Ideally the Church should:

1. Get individuals to learn to play the organ at a younger age.¹⁴
2. Pay organ players *in situ*.¹⁵
3. Increase the size of the choir.¹⁶
4. Improve the quality of the instrument.¹⁷

If churches requiring the services of an organist find that resources are limited, it may be more prudent to utilise funds for the proper training of a 'reluctant' organist rather than offer a meagre honorarium in the hope of attracting a trained organist.

¹⁴ Most trained organists were choristers as children. With the demise of many church choirs, links with younger children need to be achieved by different means.

¹⁵ Payments to organists might be an unrealistic goal for the majority of churches faced with shrinking income.

¹⁶ Choirs are only ever likely to attract new members if there is a commitment on the part of clergy for them to have a role in the liturgy, and a sufficiently qualified person is attracted to the organist's post.

¹⁷ Improving the quality of the instrument would appear to be an unattainable objective. However, Finnegan (1984) found that some congregations faced with no instrument at all made supreme efforts to finance one.

VI CONCLUSION

The economics of religion has augmented our understanding of human behaviour and the origins of religious preferences. In this study, we have identified that the willingness of a church organ player to play is driven by the size of the choir and that willing players are attracted by better instrument quality. Interestingly, remuneration increases the willingness of the organ player to play *in situ* but does not attract the organ player to play in the first instance (on hindsight). It appears that the younger the organ player started playing then the greater the willingness of the organ player to play. By increasing our understanding of the choice mechanism behind the willingness to play organs in churches, economists can help churches decide on policies to attract the player, thereby also increasing the utility obtained by the congregation from musical accompaniment and potentially reverse the trend of falling church attendance.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Definition	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	Direction
Reluctant (Would you say that you are a willing or a reluctant organ player?)	1 = Willing; 0 = Reluctant	0.896	0.306	0	1	-2.636	5.043	
Age (How old are you?)	1 = 10-20; 2 = 21-30; 3 = 31-40; 4 = 41-50; 5 = 51-60; 6 = 61-70; 7 = 71+	4.859	1.410	1	7	-0.388	-0.421	+
Gender (What is your gender?)	1 = Male; 2 = Female	1.189	0.393	1	2	1.614	0.617	?
Age start playing (At what age did you start playing the organ?)	1 = 0-9; 2 = 10-15; 3 = 16-20; 4 = 21-30; 5 = 31-40; 6 = 41-50; 7 = 51-60; 8 = 60+	2.830	1.424	1	8	1.859	3.480	-
Formal qualifications (Do you have any formal qualifications in organ playing?)	1 = Yes; 0 = No	0.387	0.489	0	1	0.472	-1.812	+
Appointed (Were you appointed to the post?)	1 = Yes; 0 = No	0.849	0.360	0	1	-1.978	1.950	-
Head-hunted/ Applied (Were you headhunted or did you ask to play?)	1 = Headhunted; 0 = Asked to Play	0.425	0.497	0	1	0.310	-1.941	-
Attracted by Pay (How influential was pay in attracting you to the post?)	1 = unimportant; 2, 3, 4, 5 = important	1.906	1.091	1	5	0.952	0.065	+
Paid (Does the church pay you for your services?)	1 = Paid; 0 = Not paid	0.783	0.414	0	1	-1.393	-0.061	+
Choir Size (How many people are there in the church choir)	Continuous variable	15.557	10.734	3	84	3.026	15.466	+
Quality of Instrument (How influential was the quality of the instrument in attracting you to the post?)	1 = unimportant; 2, 3, 4; 5 = important	3.528	1.274	1	5	-0.374	-0.918	+
Churchmanship x Incumbent (How influential was a) the Churchmanship and b) the Incumbent in attracting you to the post?)	For both variables: 1 = unimportant; 2, 3, 4; 5 = important	9.453	7.756	0	25	0.435	-0.958	?

Table 2: Age Started Playing by Gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age Started Playing	0-9	5		5
	10-14	47	6	53
	15-19	24	5	29
	20-29	6	2	8
	30-39	1	1	2
	40-49		5	5
	50-59	2		2
	60+	1	1	2
Total		86	20	106

Table 3: Formal Qualifications by Gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Formal Qualifications	No	51 (48%)	14 (13%)	65 (61%)
	Yes	35 (33%)	6 (6%)	41 (39%)
Total		86 (81%)	20 (19%)	106 (100%)

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients

	<i>Reluctant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Age start playing</i>	<i>Formal qualifications</i>	<i>Paid</i>	<i>Attracted by Pay</i>	<i>Formal Qualifications x Attracted by Pay</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Asked to Play</i>	<i>Choir Size</i>	<i>Quality of instrument</i>	<i>Churchmanship x Incumbent</i>
<i>Reluctant</i>	-	-0.095	0.231	-0.363	0.016	0.271	0.170	0.072	0.116	-0.146	0.165	0.142	0.056
<i>Age</i>	-	-	-0.139	0.224	-0.076	-0.099	-0.054	-0.090	-0.046	0.104	-0.173	0.131	0.017
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-0.342	0.086	0.331	0.291	0.171	0.403	-0.415	0.147	0.106	-0.028
<i>Age start playing</i>	-	-	-	-	-0.125	-0.321	-0.230	-0.166	-0.270	0.240	-0.153	-0.008	-0.176
<i>Formal qualifications</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0.277	0.336	0.879	0.118	-0.329	0.136	0.143	0.009
<i>Paid</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.334	0.315	0.481	-0.381	0.173	0.183	-0.073
<i>Attracted by Pay</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.571	0.157	-0.277	0.059	0.344	0.056
<i>Formal Qualifications x Attracted by Pay</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.133	-0.381	0.132	0.316	0.022
<i>Appointed</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.384	0.212	0.155	-0.006
<i>Asked to Play</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.213	-0.057	-0.008
<i>Choir Size</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.055	-0.054
<i>Quality of instrument</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.158
<i>Churchmanship x Incumbent</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5: Estimation Results

Dependent variable = the organ player is willing/reluctant

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Age</i>	-0.020 (0.026)	-0.001 (0.000)	0.010 (0.006)	0.004 (0.001)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.015 (0.015)	-0.012 (0.010)
<i>Gender</i>	0.990 (1.822)	0.943 (1.136)	0.768 (0.835)	0.809 (0.821)	0.964 (1.331)	1.059 (1.469)	1.063 (1.471)
<i>Age start playing</i>	-0.055** (6.086)	-0.052** (4.698)	-0.053** (5.370)	-0.050** (4.379)	-0.055** (5.932)	-0.060** (6.114)	-0.063** (5.779)
<i>Formal qualifications</i>	-0.247 (0.166)	-0.826 (0.950)	-0.598 (0.569)	-0.916 (1.160)	–	–	–
<i>Paid</i>	–	1.725** (3.399)	–	1.588* (2.748)	–	–	–
<i>Attracted by Pay</i>	–	–	0.489 (0.875)	0.294 (0.348)	–	–	–
<i>Formal Qualifications x Attracted by Pay</i>	–	–	–	–	-0.028 (0.008)	-0.141 (0.149)	-0.160 (0.187)
<i>Appointed</i>	–	-1.415 (1.398)	-0.433 (0.182)	-1.367 (1.305)	-0.406 (0.165)	-1.140 (1.117)	-1.207 (1.204)
<i>Asked to Play</i>	–	-0.419 (0.228)	-0.454 (0.301)	-0.401 (0.212)	-0.439 (0.279)	-0.641 (0.545)	-0.693 (0.606)
<i>Choir Size</i>	–	–	–	–	–	0.129* (2.690)	0.129* (2.690)
<i>Quality of instrument</i>	–	–	–	–	–	0.571* (3.285)	0.614* (3.272)
<i>Churchmanship x Incumbent</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	-0.019 (0.144)
Constant	2.925** (3.949)	3.186* (3.038)	2.655 (1.822)	2.778 (2.072)	3.352* (3.650)	0.817 (0.158)	0.987 (0.217)
<i>-2 Log likelihood</i>	59.605	55.846	58.137	55.453	59.367	52.718	52.574
<i>Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients (8 df)</i>	11.054**	14.813**	12.522**	15.206*	11.292**	17.941**	18.085**
<i>Hosmer-Lemeshow Test</i>	7.437	11.838	5.600	4.094	7.646	8.147	7.998

Notes: 'Z²score' is the ratio of the coefficient to the standard error, all squared; this is a pseudo *t*-statistic. ** and * indicate significance at the 5% and 10% levels respectively. In each regression and in all statistics presented in this paper, *n* = 106.