

The Effects of Descriptive Associational Leadership on Civic Engagement: The Case of Clergy and Gender in Protestant Denominations

PAUL A. DJUPE

*Department of Political Science
Denison University*

Given the attention that has been paid to the presence of women in leadership positions throughout the economy and society as well as the role that associations play in shaping citizen political participation, it is surprising that their confluence has not been systematically studied. What effect does men's versus women's associational leadership have on the political engagement of women and men members? Using a set of surveys drawn from Protestant denominations that ordain women as part of the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study, I investigate clergy gender effects on church leadership and political participation conditional on member gender using hierarchical models. Across four denominations, I find descriptive evidence but little systematic evidence supporting an effect due to clergy gender, though somewhat more evidence on church leadership than on political activity.

Keywords: *clergy, political participation, descriptive representation, gender, civic skills.*

INTRODUCTION

Women now constitute in the range of one-sixth of American clergy, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009). To date, there is no systematic evidence of whether their leadership produces distinctive behaviors in their congregations. There is good reason to think that women clergy might create distinctive congregational contexts given the wide variety of studies that have assessed the effect of descriptive representation (leadership by a fellow group member) on the political engagement of citizens. However, these studies have focused solely on representation by elected public officials. Much more could be learned about descriptive representation if the concept were extended to analysis of the presence of underrepresented groups in the tiny societies of nongovernmental institutions. There, descriptive representation is likely to boost the participation of the described group in associational affairs. But associational experiences also have robust links to participation in the political process since they teach members how to trust each other and work together to solve collective problems. Therefore, any force that serves systematically to inhibit or promote the development of civic engagement is important to consider.

In this article, I expand the reach of this research by examining the effects of descriptive representation on citizen civic engagements (church leadership) and political activism in the most common type of voluntary association in the United States: houses of worship. Do

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Correspondence should be addressed to Paul Djupe, Department of Political Science, Denison University, 100 W. College St., Granville, OH 43023, USA. E-mail: djupe@denison.edu

members exercise church leadership and political activity at greater rates when they have descriptive representation in the pulpit? Descriptive results show considerable variation in congregations, with a nontrivial number of congregations showing gender gaps in favor of women's church leadership and political participation. Hierarchical models using the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study gathered from clergy and members of their congregations show weak, sporadic evidence that descriptive associational leadership motivates same-gender members to engage in church leadership, and select, inconsistent evidence of a direct effect on political participation.

THE POWER OF DESCRIPTIVE LEADERSHIP

The concept of descriptive representation is simple. Citizens will be motivated to participate in politics when they see visual evidence that their interests and experiences are being represented (Mansbridge 1999). If citizens are overloaded and seek shortcuts to evaluate the political world (Popkin 1991), then visual reminders should be especially powerful. Typically explored in the cases of race and gender—the easiest visual cues—recent research clearly establishes that women are especially responsive to the leadership of other women (Atkeson and Carillo 2007; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Mansbridge 1999; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2003; Smith and Fox 2001). Women have also been shown to prefer women leaders as a matter of course (Rosenthal 1995; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2003), a preference that is strongest among high-status women with feminist identities (Carroll 1987; Rosenthal 1995; Smith and Fox 2001).

But these choices, in fact, are more than heuristic; representation is rooted in the actual practice of representatives and the politics of the gender gap. That is, there is some debate about whether these effects are due to political agreement and status rather than gender *per se* (Lawless 2004). Women candidates and elected officials are widely believed to have an “issue competency” regarding social issues, particularly those involving children (Burrell 1994; Dabelko and Herrnson 1997; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kahn 1993, 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Sapiro 1982). This issue competency lends women leaders additional legitimacy to speak and act around “gendered” social issues. Of course, studies support the substance of representational ties, documenting over and over a political gender gap, with women more liberal than men on a wide range of issues, ideology, party preference, and vote choice (e.g., Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef, and Lin 2004; Chaney, Alvarez, and Nagler 1998; Kaufmann 2002, 2006).

Since many religious leaders tend to emphasize a similar set of social issues in their public pronouncements, regardless of their personal ideology or theology (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997), it stands to reason that women clergy might be perceived as doubly expert on certain “gendered” social issues. Indeed, both female elected officials (Bratton 2002; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Burrell 1994; Swers 2002; Vega and Firestone 1995) and clergywomen (Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005) have been shown to take action around “care issues” on a regular basis.

Despite good reasons to think that descriptive representation would affect political participation rates, the evidence is actually mixed. Women may give higher evaluations to women representatives, but descriptive representation does not translate into greater motivation or participation on the part of female constituents (Lawless 2004). Similarly, Hansen (1997) finds limited evidence of the effect of female candidates on women's attempts to mobilize the vote through political discussion. Atkeson and Carillo (2007; see also Atkeson 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2003), however, find that the presence of women in state government positively affects women's external efficacy, which is an important determinant of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Thus, there is a good deal of disagreement in the literature about whether and how descriptive representation matters.

CLERGY AS REPRESENTATIVES

The comparisons in the descriptive representation literature are hampered by inconsistencies in the level of office considered, the lack of control for the substance of representation and communication from officials, inconsistent controls in models, and variance in the dependent variables considered, not to mention the effects of the broader political environment. This is where a program of investigation outside of government may be helpful in clarifying the nature of the relationship between leaders and members. Congregations constitute tiny publics that, at least, are not involved with society-wide elections every few years and hence are not as subject to interference from the broader environment that might hamper inference. Clergy constitute an easily recognized source of representation and are not involved in a complex power-sharing arrangement with other institutional leaders as elected officials are in the federal government (though see Calfano, Oldmixon, and Gray 2014). While members may not be aware of all that clergy do, it is unlikely that many know nothing about them as is common among citizens with respect to their elected representatives. Moreover, researchers can relatively easily capture the representational substance of the clergy-member relationship and assess the dimensions of greatest concern for engagement with congregational life. It is my aim to initiate such a program of study here.

An underlying assumption of this analysis is that clergy may be compared to elected representatives, which is a tack taken in previous studies (see, e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003). The fit of the comparison is actually quite good. In the first place, many clergy, especially in the denominations that ordain women, are chosen with some sort of member input. Also, to protect their legitimacy, clergy must remain at least somewhat responsive to their constituencies; most clergy are forced to maintain the approval of their constituents for job retention, even in the most hierarchical of religious traditions (see Calfano, Oldmixon, and Gray 2014). Moreover, clergy regularly pursue activities that appear to represent the interests of their congregation in public (Crawford and Olson 2001; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Olson 2000). And, functionally, if citizens evaluate elected officeholders in the same ways in which they evaluate ordinary individuals (Kinder 1986; Rahn 1993), I should be able to assume that for the most part citizens evaluate clergy in much the same way.

The differences in men and women clergy's styles resemble the differences between men and women representatives in government (see Fox and Schumann 1999; Rosenthal 1998a, 1998b). Two important reasons why there are gender-related political differences among clergy lie in the history of professional discrimination women have faced in the ministry (Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang 1998), as well as a distinctive political calling experienced by many women who become clergy (Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005). Although the professional environment has improved over time for women in many religious settings, they still confront longstanding religious norms about gender roles that challenge the ordination and acceptance of women clergy (Chaves 1997). As in politics and many other professions, women clergy face a glass ceiling (in their case, it is referred to as a "stained glass ceiling") (Sullins 2000). In short, gender—and more specifically, the gendered nature of women's experiences in the ministry—appears to play a straightforward and significant role in shaping clergy's personal approaches to ministry and politics, which is just what would be expected given the broader differences relating to gender in American political representation.

CONGREGATIONAL INFLUENCES ON CIVIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY

To understand how clergy might affect the exercise of church leadership among members, the literature on how clergy and churches encourage political activity may be helpful. Many clergy promote the activism of members explicitly, but they also do so indirectly by creating

participatory structures within the church that facilitate learning about politics and develop the habits and skills of taking part. That is, clergy may play a role in encouraging the religious and political activism of members through direct recruitment and motivation to participate, as well as building the resources necessary to get involved, or what is otherwise known as the civic participation model (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). It would be a mistake to think of clergy solely as heuristics. But this means that a comprehensive model of participation is needed in order to adequately assess any descriptive representational effects on political participation.

The most straightforward view of the political importance of clergy is that they have the capacity to serve as opinion leaders for their congregations because each week they face a largely attentive audience that looks specifically to them for spiritual and moral guidance. Clergy's identities and political orientations undoubtedly come across to members of their congregations even if they do not *intend* to convey overtly political messages; the very fact that a woman is standing in the pulpit sends a meaningful political message (see Calfano and Djupe 2011). Seeing a pulpit filled with clergy of one's gender sends a message that the church will listen and take into account their interests. It is natural to assume that members who share gender with the clergy would feel more efficacious about involvement in the governance structure of the church, though this has not been tested explicitly.

Religious institutions are also thought to provide a number of different channels through which adherents can be recruited (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Warren 2001). Direct appeals from clergy can have an effect on members' levels of political engagement (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Djupe and Gilbert 2009), as can more indirect efforts at mobilization through clerical organizational networks (McAdam 1982). But as some observers of the impact of religion on political behavior have begun to note, calls to action from religious leaders are but one conduit through which churchgoers receive politically relevant information, and constitute only a small segment of the total universe of opportunities for political mobilization in church (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Lee, Pachon, and Barreto 2002; Leighley 1996; McKenzie 2004; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Schwadel 2005). According to Schwadel: "It is important to note that church activities other than religious service attendance are pivotal to this relationship between religious activity and civic activity" (2005:160). Informal social ties, membership in organized small groups, and adult education classes in church all have the potential to serve a mobilizing function for congregants (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; McKenzie 2004; Warren 2001:18). In essence, those who hang around are more likely to be asked to exercise leadership. I therefore hypothesize that church involvement in addition to simply attending religious services will be associated with the church leadership and political participation examined here. Further, the extent to which members have friends in church should promote the distribution of information and recruitment that are important in leading to political activity (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Gilbert 1993; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; but see Schwadel 2005).

Many have looked to the subunits of the church as serving a critical role in helping to generate the kinds of civic skills that are necessary for taking part in the political process (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Espinosa 2005; Lee, Pachon, and Barreto 2002; Leege 1988; McKenzie 2004; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Warren 2000; though see Calhoun-Brown 2010; Djupe and Grant 2001; Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert 2007). According to this view, practicing a civic skill in church or another such voluntary association can help to balance out inequities in socioeconomic status and is therefore one of the key ingredients of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Warren 2000). I therefore expect to see congregants who practice a leadership role in the congregation to participate in politics at higher rates than those who simply attend services.

One area that has been missing from the study of religious effects on political participation is the community (Djupe and Neiheisel 2012; but see Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Nishikawa and Huckle 2013 for nascent attempts), though scholars have long acknowledged the importance

of the community for participation rates (e.g., Huckfeldt 1979; Leighley 1990). Churches may be islands in their community, providing a gathering place where a distinctive set of skills, experiences, and relationships may be gained. But churches may also be well integrated into the community and thus may be a place where existing relationships are continued and reinforced. In the latter case, church involvement in the community indicates being thoroughly networked into the community majority, which should boost political activity, even while the church environment itself should have less of an effect on participation than when it exists independent of the surrounding community.

At this point, it would be useful to restate the primary hypotheses going forward. The primary hypothesis is that members participate in church leadership and political activity at higher rates when they share the same gender as their clergyperson. This will be represented in the models as an interaction term between the clergy and member's gender. To flesh out the model, measures of attendance, the church's involvement in the community, congregation-based friends, and political recruitment in the church, among others, are included, with the expectation that each will have a positive effect on church leadership and political activity rates. Of course, the exercise of church leadership should boost political participation as well.

DATA AND METHODS

To test these hypotheses, I employ the U.S. Congregational Life Study (USCLS) conducted in 2001.¹ The USCLS had several components to it. First, all participants in the 2000 GSS who attended a house of worship at least once in the past year were asked by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) to identify the name and location of the congregation. NORC then invited identified congregations to participate in the study. Second, specific Protestant denominations were invited to participate, asking a random sample of congregations to participate. Of those denominations that participated, only some allow women clergy and I capitalize on those that do: the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) (495 congregations, 47,708 congregants), the United Methodist Church (UMC) (141 congregations, 15,084 congregants), the United Congregational Church (220 congregations, 20,811 congregants), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (420 congregations, 40,177 congregants).

In these denominations, the proportion of women clergy varies a bit, though three of the four hover around 20 percent. Only the ELCA has a lower proportion (14.9 percent). The UMC has the highest at 23.6 percent (see Table 1). The histories of ordaining women vary across the four as well. The UCC first ordained a woman in 1853, though it was not common practice to do so until more recently. The other three allowed the ordination of women much later, but the PCUSA's and UMC's changes (in 1956) predated the modern women's movement. The ELCA followed after the advent of the modern women's movement in 1970 (the same year for both constituent denominations of the ELCA: the LCA and ALC).

There are three data collection components to the USCLS that cover each congregation. First, the head clergyperson completed a lengthy survey. Second, a knowledgeable informant completed a lengthy "profile" of the congregation's facilities, staff, programs, and worship services. Third, adult "attenders" of worship services during the weekend of April 29, 2001, were surveyed *in situ*. Of course, each congregation's "profile" dataset can be tied to "leader" and "attender" survey results and I take advantage of these possibilities here. Moreover, because the samples are composed of clusters (congregations) in which individuals are surveyed, measures of the

¹The data, gathered by Cynthia Woolever, Keith Wulff, Deborah Bruce, and Ida Smith-Williams, are publicly available at the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.thearda.com).

Table 1: Percentage of congregational clergywomen in four mainline denominations

| | Percentage in USCLS | Year of First Woman's Ordination |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| United Church of Christ | 21.5 | 1853 ^a |
| Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) | 19.1 | 1956 ^b |
| United Methodist Church | 23.6 | 1956 ^c |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church in America | 14.9 | 1970 ^d |

^aZikmund (2003).

^bHilley (2006). Women were allowed as deacons in 1906 and as elders in 1931.

^cMcAnally (2011).

^dELCA (2011). Both denominations (the ALC and LCA) that went on to form the ELCA first ordained a woman in the same year.

Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study.

congregational context can be computed with survey results, recognizing that these measures are *de facto* weighted by attendance.

Data clustered in some way, such as by congregation, violate the OLS assumption that errors are uncorrelated across survey respondents. Standard errors tend to be depressed when clustering is not recognized, elevating the chances of a type I error (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Steenbergen and Jones 2002). Of course, such clustering is not a statistical nuisance since I also wish to test whether there are effects of the cluster (i.e., the congregation) on the individual. Therefore, I employ hierarchical modeling techniques where the nested features of the data are explicitly modeled. Specifically, I model individual church leadership and political participation nested within churches.

One particularly important feature of hierarchical modeling is the centering procedure used to assess group-level effects. Nondichotomous variables are centered around the group mean at level 1 and around the global sample mean for level 2. Thus, the model takes into account differences in the mean levels across congregations and assesses what moves individuals away from the church mean. This is precisely what I want to know: whether members respond to their clergy in a particular way because of their genders given their particular congregational choice. Without centering, the model would assess whether variables moved the individual away from the global sample mean and thus compare men and women across congregations, which would be an inappropriate comparison given the research question.

ANALYSIS

Congregational Differences by Clergy Gender

It is important to ascertain first whether congregations headed by women are different from those headed by men. This question has been explored in previous literature (Chaves 1997; Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005; Sullins 2000; Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang 1998) and it has been found that women clergy hold less prestigious posts, which generally mean smaller, more rural congregations. Here, the focus is on measures of the content and process of organizations that might affect political activity levels. In Table 2, congregations headed by men and women clergy are compared based on their size, whether they held a voter registration drive, community service, political activity, church leadership opportunities, and their theological and political conservatism. Except in the UMC, I find results that confirm previous findings—men's congregations are nearly twice the size of women's. Other than that, the practice and content of those congregations are statistically equivalent, though in the PCUSA, women clergy are a bit more liberal. It is

Table 2: Differences in the congregations of male and female clergy within denominations

| | ELCA | | PCUSA | | UMC | | UCC | |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Men | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Church size | (330) 230 | (60) 137* | (395) 182 | (91) 92* | (127) 184 | (37) 81* | (163) 172 | (47) 90* |
| Political conservatism | 1.63 | 1.57 | 1.55 | 1.70* | 1.47 | 1.55 | 1.88 | 2.02 |
| Theological conservatism | 1.76 | 1.74 | 1.65 | 1.85* | 1.46 | 1.55 | 2.14 | 2.21 |
| Voter registration | .05 | .08 | .08 | .06 | .11 | .12 | .08 | .08 |
| Community service | .08 | .13 | .10 | .13 | .04 | .09 | .15 | .13 |
| Political activity | .09 | .11 | .08 | .12 | .17 | .18 | .23 | .23 |
| Church leadership | .17 | .17 | .18 | .18 | .18 | .19 | .14 | .15 |

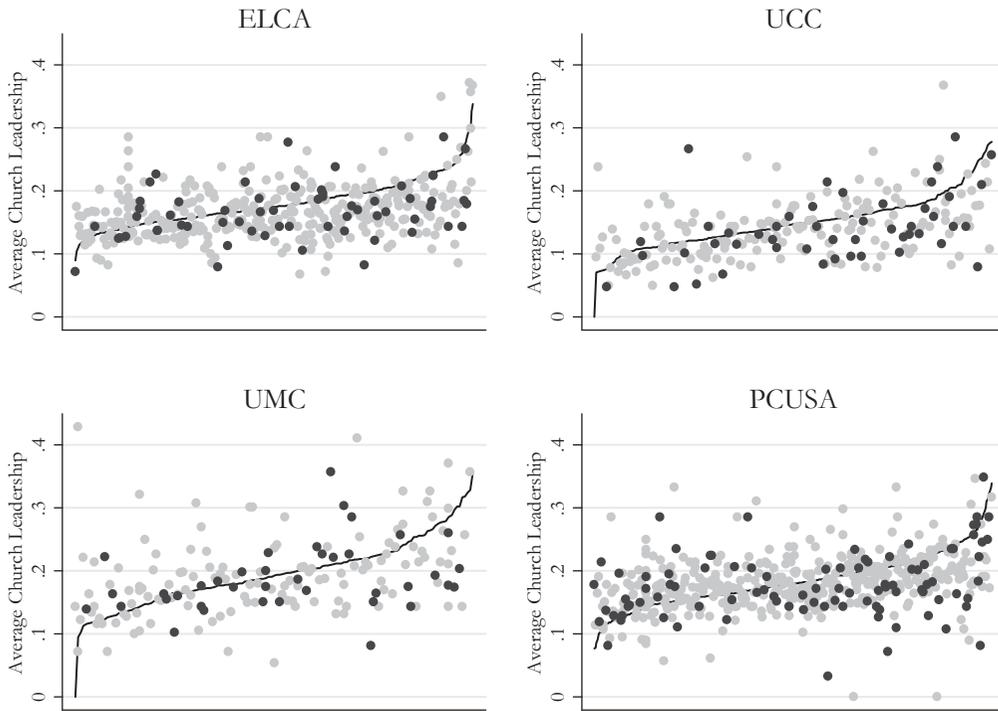
**p* < .05 difference between male and female clergy.

Note: Number of cases in parentheses.

Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study.

Figure 1

Mean church leadership of men and women in congregations headed by male and female clergy



Note: The black line represents the average church leadership of women (sorted from low to high across congregations); the gray markers are the average leadership of men in male-headed congregations; the black markers are the average leadership of men in women-headed congregations. The difference from the marker to the line represents the average difference between men and women in each congregation.

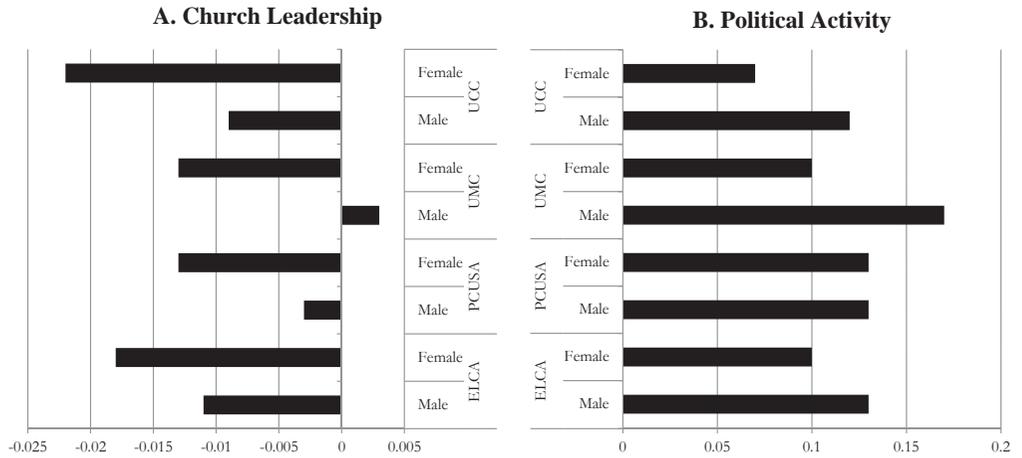
Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study, denominational files.

especially important to note that political activity and church leadership levels are statistically equivalent in the congregations headed by men and women. So, aside from church size, men and women clergy's congregations in these denominations are equivalent on measures related to the production of political activity.

Church Group Leadership

The next order of business is to establish if there is sufficient variance in men's and women's congregational leadership to explain across churches. Church leadership is an index ranging from 0 to 1, where a point is given for checking each of the following activities: member of the governing board; member of a congregational committee or task force; leading or assisting in worship; officer or leader of men's, women's, youth, or other small group; choir member, musician, or choir director; religious education teacher; and "other role not listed here." Figure 1 shows that there is considerable variation across churches in these denominations. The black line in the figure represents the average church leadership level of women by congregation, sorted from low to high. The dots represent the average leadership level of men in each congregation, with the dot color denoting the gender of the clergy (black for women clergy, gray for men clergy). The distance from the dot to the line shows the gap in leadership. For all denominations but the UCC, women's church leadership averages just below .2, while men's lags behind by a few one-hundredths of a point. Two-thirds of the variation lies within about .05 of those mean

Figure 2
Average difference between male and female members' church leadership and political activity in congregations headed by male and female clergy, by denomination



Note: In both panels, the bars represent male minus female activity (positive numbers signify more activity by males, negative numbers mean more activity by females). None of the differences are significant in panel A (church leadership). In panel B (political activity), the differences are marginally significant ($p < .10$) between male and female clergy in the UCC and PCUSA.

Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study, denominational files.

values. The dots appear to be somewhat below the line, on average, and that is an appropriate lesson to take away. That is, just under two-thirds of congregations in the ELCA and UCC and just over a majority (~54 percent) of PCUSA and UMC congregations host men's leadership at lower levels than women's. The gap is higher in women-headed congregations, though only significantly so in the UCC. The average difference between women's and men's leadership levels in each congregation is summarized in panel A of Figure 2 for each denomination. In each denomination, more women participate in church leadership in women-headed congregations, while that gap is reduced (or reversed as in the UMC) in male-headed congregations.

The models of church leadership are built in the same way as Figure 1, comparing men and women in the same congregation. Thus, this set of models predicts the exercise of church leadership, focusing on whether that exercise depends on the interplay between the gender of the clergy and member. Specifically, the descriptive representation literature would lead us to expect that women in congregations headed by women would be more likely to exercise various forms of leadership in church. Women may be explicitly encouraged to do so, but may simply *feel* encouraged by the example of the leader of their congregation. Either way, whether intentional or not, I expect descriptive representational effects on the exercise of leadership in the church.

The results are presented in Table 3 and do not admit of many gendered effects. There are no significant main effects due to the member's gender, and only two of the four models show a significant effect due to the clergy's gender. They are both negative, which suggests that all members exercise more leadership roles in churches headed by women. It is no surprise that women clergy run more participatory organizational structures (Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005). Then, only one interaction between the clergy and member's gender is significant—in the PCUSA—though the effect sizes are largely consistent in the UMC and ELCA models (and not in the UCC). The interaction suggests that the gap between men and women is essentially nil, but that there are slightly more women in leadership in a church with a female clergy person. Then there is a larger gap between men and women in male-headed churches with men participating in more leadership roles. Thus, there is some evidence to suggest that descriptive representation

Table 3: Hierarchical linear model estimates of the interactive effects of clergy and member gender on member exercise of church leadership (robust standard errors)

| | PCUSA | UCC | UMC | ELCA |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <i>Level 1</i> | <i>B[*] p</i> | <i>B[*] p</i> | <i>B[*] p</i> | <i>B[*] p</i> |
| Gender * Clergy gender | .011** | -.004 | .011 | .004 |
| Gender | .003 | .006 | .003 | -.000 |
| Resources | | | | |
| Income | .009*** | .011*** | | .006*** |
| Education | .008*** | .011*** | .009*** | .009*** |
| Black | .005 | .017* | .053** | .023* |
| White | .002 | .013** | .010 | .007 |
| Skills and recruitment | | | | |
| Attendance | .019*** | .025*** | .027*** | .020*** |
| Involvement | .210*** | .264*** | .202*** | .192*** |
| Membership length | .005*** | .008*** | .005*** | .002*** |
| Social network | | | | |
| Friends | .010*** | .014*** | .008*** | .012*** |
| Motivation | | | | |
| Literalist | -.004*** | -.003*** | -.003*** | -.004*** |
| <i>Level 2</i> | | | | |
| Leader | | | | |
| Clergy gender | -.010** | -.008 | -.001 | -.007* |
| Congregation | | | | |
| Church education level | -.002 | .003 | -.013*** | .001 |
| Church lack of involvement | -.035* | -.043 | -.122*** | -.033* |
| % No community involvement | -.001** | .001 | -.002 | .000 |
| % No church roles | -.176*** | -.223*** | -.202*** | -.144*** |
| Church size | .000* | -.000*** | -.000 | -.000*** |
| Intercept | .201*** | .155*** | .193*** | .184*** |
| Model statistics | I2n=483 I1n=34203 I2σ ² =,0004 ^ψ I1σ ² =,02 | I2n=188 I1n=13951 I2σ ² =,0003 ^ψ I1σ ² =,02 | I2n=129 I1n=10192 I2σ ² =,0006 ^ψ I1σ ² =,02 | I2n=326 I1n=26528 I2σ ² =,0002 ^ψ I1σ ² =,02 |

***p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10 (two-tailed), ^ψp < .001 (one-tailed χ^2).

Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study, denominational files.

affects the pattern of the exercise of leadership in churches. However, the evidence provides an interesting twist to the classic thesis. Here, women clergy remediate gaps in engagement and boost everyone's activity level, while the expected gaps appear when a clergyman heads the congregation.

These effects appear even when controlling for a host of measures that should predict church leadership. Secular resources drive the amount of leadership a member engages, indicating that preexisting resource differentials are important in structuring who exercises leadership (Djupe and Gilbert 2009). Intriguingly, blacks exercise more leadership than average, while whites do not (except in the UCC). Blacks constitute very small portions of these denominations: 1 percent of the UMC, .06 percent of the ELCA, .07 percent of the PCUSA, and 2 percent of the UCC (from the samples). The quest for inclusion in these denominations, a strong theme of their identity, shows in the higher than average leadership activity of their black membership.

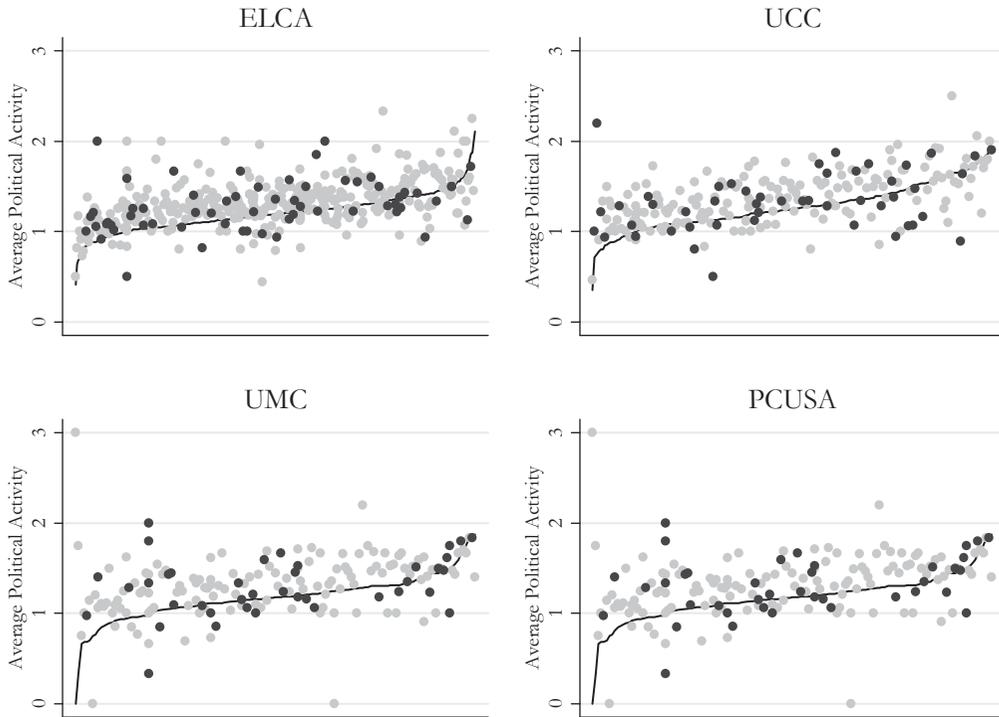
The descriptors of the involvement of members in their church help structure whether they exercise leadership. It is related to higher attendance, higher church involvement, and the length of membership in that church. The dominant explanation, of course, is the extent of involvement in church activities since it would be hard to be selected for an organizational leadership post without participating in the group. Having more friends in church likewise boosts leadership exercise, whether as a function of having a supportive constituency or reverse causation (and I suspect some of both). And, biblical literalists are less likely to participate in organizational leadership. This may be due to the fact that this belief is marginal in most, but not nearly all, congregations in the sample (discussed in more detail later).

At level 2, the average education level of the congregation does not play a role (except in the UMC where it drives down the exercise of church leadership), but involvement levels and church size do. The lack of participation in organizational leadership (percent no roles), predicts less involvement from the individual. The opposite was expected, that is, that a lack of leadership participation would create opportunities for others. Church size exerts a mild negative effect in two cases and a mild positive effect in one case. And that one is interesting since it is hosted by the most hierarchical denomination in the sample: the PCUSA. In the other denominations, there appears to be an economy of scale, but the Presbyterians create more governing structure as their churches grow in size.

Political Participation

As mentioned above, before turning to multivariate model estimation of the effects of descriptive representation on political participation of members, I begin by examining descriptive statistics of the political participation of men and women given the gender of their clergy. Political participation includes just three activities in this dataset (and so ranges from 0 to 3), though they cover a wide range: voted in the last presidential election; working with others to try to solve a community problem; and contacting an elected official about a public issue. Just like Figure 1, Figure 3 shows women's average political activity as a black line and men's average political activity as dots, with the dot color indicating the clergy's gender (black = female clergy). While a majority of congregations had church leadership rates in favor of women (Figure 1), Figure 3 shows that the vast majority of these congregations (a consistent 70 percent across denominations) have a gender gap in political activity in favor of men. Men are still expected to participate at higher rates than women overall because of resource differences, among other things. But, if the descriptive representation thesis holds, then there should be smaller differences between men and women in congregations headed by women than in those headed by men. And there are fewer congregations headed by women clergy that host a gender gap in favor of men, by an insignificant difference of .07 in the PCUSA, but by significant declines of .12 in the UCC, .13 in the ELCA, and .18 in the UMC. However, these congregations show men's activity rates just barely below women's (i.e., the dots are just below the line in Figure 3). The average gap in activity rates

Figure 3
Mean political participation of men and women in congregations headed by male and female clergy



Note: The black line represents the average political activity of women (sorted from low to high across congregations); the gray markers are the average activity of men in male-headed congregations; the black markers are the average activity of men in women-headed congregations. The difference from the marker to the line represents the difference between average men and women in each congregation.

Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study, denominational files.

between the genders by clergy gender and denomination are summarized in panel B of Figure 2. They confirm that the differences are not alarming, which asks for a significance test as well as controls for the effects of other salient variables.

Thus, the next step is to inquire if these slight effects hold in the presence of controls. Again, the descriptive representation thesis is assessed with an interaction between the member's gender and clergy's gender. The model takes into account measures of the dominant explanations of political participation in the literature, especially the civic participation model (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), even if all of them are not ideal. The model combines measures of resources, skills and recruitment, motivation, and social networks at level 1 (the individual level). At the congregation level (level 2) are added measures of the resource base of the congregation, church size, and the degree of involvement of members in the congregation and community to help explain variation in mean political participation across churches. Thus, any effects found from descriptive representation should confidently be due to the contingent effects of gender and not omitted variables that may be correlated with our key independent variables. The results in Table 4 are separated by independent variable type and the level at which they are measured.

In three of the four models, male members have a higher participation rate than women members of the same church. In two of the four models, the gender of the clergy has a significant effect as well, though in different directions. In the UCC, male clergy preside over churches with lower than average participation rates, while in the ELCA male clergy are pastors in churches with

Table 4: Hierarchical linear model estimates of the interactive effects of clergy and member gender on member political participation (robust standard errors)

| | PCUSA | UCC | UMC | ELCA |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <i>Level 1</i> | <i>B* p</i> | <i>B* p</i> | <i>B* p</i> | <i>B* p</i> |
| Gender * Clergy gender | -.034# | .064* | .014 | .039 |
| Gender | .120*** | .017 | .118*** | .070** |
| Resources | | | — | |
| Income | .062*** | .046*** | | .130*** |
| Education | .124*** | .130*** | .137*** | -.042 |
| Black | -.044 | .060 | .072 | .094*** |
| White | .162*** | .142*** | .139*** | |
| Skills and recruitment | | | | |
| Attendance | .009 | .017* | .001 | .030*** |
| Involvement | .099*** | .086*** | .186*** | .166*** |
| Membership length | .034*** | .026*** | .034*** | .031*** |
| Leadership | .444*** | .481*** | .350*** | .176*** |
| Social network | | | | |
| Friends | .031*** | .048*** | .020** | .041*** |
| Motivation | | | | |
| Literalist | -.032*** | -.022*** | -.025*** | -.023*** |
| <i>Level 2</i> | | | | |
| Leader | | | | |
| Clergy gender | -.004 | -.063** | -.019 | .034# |
| Congregation | | | | |
| Church education level | .156*** | .130*** | .176*** | .116*** |
| Church involvement level | .187* | | .072 | .025 |
| % No community involvement | .005# | -.026 | .000 | .000 |
| % No church roles | -.231** | -.304*** | -.558*** | -.468*** |
| Church size | -.000 | .000 | .000 | -.000 |
| Intercept | 1.189*** | 1.234*** | 1.100*** | 1.142 |
| Model statistics | 12n=483 11n=34203 12σ ² =.015 ^ψ 11σ ² =.59 | 12n=188 11n=13951 12σ ² =.013 ^ψ 11σ ² =.56 | 12n=129 11n=10192 12σ ² =.011 ^ψ 11σ ² =.56 | 12n=326 11n=26528 12σ ² =.013 ^ψ 11σ ² =.57 |

***p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10 (two-tailed), #p < .10 (one-tailed), ^ψp < .001 (one-tailed χ²).

Source: 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Study denominational files.

marginally higher participation rates. The key test—the interaction between clergy and member gender—is significant in two models, though they suggest slightly different relationships. In the PCUSA model, the interaction suggests that men participate at rates higher than the congregation average than women do, and participate at slightly higher rates in churches with female clergy than in churches headed by male clergy. The UCC results suggest the opposite. Though men still participate at slightly higher rates than women on average, women participate at increased rates when they have a women clergyperson. This is the effect expected; it is very small (about 5/100 of an act). Neither of the two other models have a significant interaction term. If they were significant, the UMC pattern coincides with the expected result in the UCC model. The insignificant ELCA results, on the other hand, would suggest that women participate at higher rates with male clergy than with female clergy.

There is very little consistent evidence here to confidently claim a descriptive representation effect. It appears in one denomination, ironically the one with the longest history of ordaining women, but perhaps more importantly the most decentralized denomination. In more hierarchical denominations with more recent histories of ordaining women, there is either no effect or a significant (if small) deviation from what was expected.

The rest of the results are consistent in their patterns of significance and size and thus suggest that the results in each denomination are not aberrant. As would be expected, the resources of congregation members are deeply connected with their propensity to participate in politics. A member who lacks the time, money, or capacity to participate in politics will obviously be less likely to do so. This is why education, for example, is significantly related to a member's propensity to participate in politics; persons of higher socioeconomic status have been consistently found to be more politically active.

The model results are also consistent with the literature's findings in terms of skills and recruitment: congregation members with more experience within the congregation in various capacities and leadership roles are provided opportunities to develop the civic skills and invitations that are necessary to be politically active citizens (e.g., Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Exercising leadership in the church is the most strongly related to political participation, followed by involvement levels, membership length, and finally attendance. As several studies have argued, attendance is a weak proxy for skill-building activities and, with proper controls, should not exercise an independent effect (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Schwadel 2005). Here it exerts a weak, significant effect only in the UCC and ELCA. It seems clear that conditions ripe to foster political activity are produced by the more exposure one has to other members, most prominently promoted by serving in organizational leadership.

All denominations demonstrated that members with more friends in the congregation are more likely to be politically active (see also Djupe and Gilbert 2009; though see Schwadel 2005). This effect is reasonable and to be expected: congregation members with more friends are more invested in their congregation, feel more accountable to their community, and also have developed social connections that will allow them to be more politically engaged (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

Consistently among all denominations modeled, members who had a literalist interpretation of the Bible were significantly less likely to be politically involved (see also Schwadel 2005). Though these are mainline Protestant denominations, a considerable number still held literal views of the Bible. Sixteen percent of Congregationalists held a literal view of the Bible, which bucks against the view of members of the UCC as theological liberals. Among the PCUSA, it is 22.5 percent, 24.5 percent in the ELCA, and 30 percent in the UMC. And they are not randomly distributed in the population of congregations; the mean congregational statistic is .36 in the UMC, with a standard deviation of .18. These are not marginal figures, though it is important to note that the depressive effect of literalism on political activity is small.

Finally, there are effects on political activity at level 2 from the clergy and congregation. The average education level of the congregation has a significant positive effect on members,

while the percent of the congregation not involved in church leadership (no roles) strongly depresses participation (I used “no roles” so the variable was not highly correlated with the individual leadership measure). Neither church size, nor the amount of congregational or clergy involvement with the community, affected member political participation levels.

Thus, in a sensible model of political participation, I found very small, if any, effects due to descriptive representation in the pulpit. A number of other features of the congregational environment and engagement with it affected political activity, but not these particular measures of the clergy. However, clergy can have an indirect effect on political activity through their encouragement of members to participate in small groups and hold leadership roles in the congregation. In fact, one of the goals clergy have is to generate and sustain their own civil societies within their congregations to provide for member needs, field concerns, and help manage the church operation itself. Djupe and Gilbert (2009) suggest that the most important role clergy have in shaping political activity is to put people in conversation through small groups; a degree of that is in operation here as church leadership is one of the more powerful determinants of political activism.

CONCLUSION

One of the principal aims of civil rights movements is not just recognition, but advancement. If so, then the advancement of women in society has proceeded apace, though not without setbacks, plateauing, and geographically variable change. That can be seen in one area under consideration here: women’s occupation of American pulpits. Though concentrated in highly select denominations, women have come to constitute just under a sixth of all clergy positions according to the Census Bureau. This fact is significant in its own right, of course, but it is important to ascertain if their presence has feedback effects on congregations. Since clergy also serve as political elites, does the presence of a man or woman in the pulpit affect the church leadership and political activity rates of congregants differently by member gender?

The answer is “a little bit,” and even that conclusion is highly qualified. The effects are not large and they are limited to some denominations. Furthermore, without the huge samples of the USCLS the effects would be far too small to distinguish. There was a bit of evidence that women clergy, by example or call, encourage women to participate in congregational leadership at higher rates than under male clergy. These were small effects and were not consistently significant across denominations. Moreover, there is a small effect on political participation, such that women participate relatively more when they have a women clergyperson, though there was counterevidence that men respond more to women clergy in one denomination.

Finding few effects here may be a public good. It is reassuring that congregation members appear to take roughly equal inspiration from their clergyperson and church environment to engage in public life. On the other hand, the results show that the gaps between men and women are not fully closed through descriptive leadership, which is much cheaper to supply than equalizing resource bases of men and women. So, why not?

While there is considerable evidence to suggest that women clergy pastor differently than men, shaped by their organizational experience and identity (e.g., Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005), it is sensible that women and men clergy would be quite careful about elevating the interests of one group over another. Overt campaigns to recruit one gender over another to congregational positions or into political activity would surely be met with some degree of disdain. However, the evidence regarding church leadership suggests that women clergy encourage a slightly more inclusive and participatory culture that engages men and women about equally. Moreover, clergy appear to be representative of their congregations, not simply one gender within their congregations. And, churches draw on the talents of members at hand, which may advantage men generally as resource differences still remain (Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert 2007).

Still, there are possible pathways that I was not able to test with these data. One avenue of exploration involves the substance and amount of political engagement by the clergy. This line of attack squares with developments in the political descriptive representation literature, which has found effects conditional on agreement between the voter and officeholder (e.g., Democratic blacks would not respond positively to a black Republican) (Gay 2001; see also Lawless 2004). Since women clergy tend to engage different issues than male clergy (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005), women in the pews may respond more positively to agendas that match their own. Issue mobilization is one avenue, but the content of clergy communication may bear on the political motivations of members so that the positive advantage in church leadership among women converts to political action at the same rate as it does among men. At this time, however, there are no datasets that contain a nested structure such as the USCLS but that also include political content from clergy across a wide variety of denominations. The importance of this question obliges scholars to undertake further studies along these lines to tease out the ramifications of the diversification of organizational leadership. Do the advancements of women in the pulpit have individual and collective social and political ramifications?

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Appendix 1. Variable Coding

Level 1 Variables

Level 2 Variables