

Clergy Deliberation on Gay Rights and Homosexuality*

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In examining the increasingly popular concept of deliberative democracy, social scientists most often look to “cross-cutting” elements within discussion networks. Studies of deliberation in networks, however, preclude a number of other sources of deliberative discourse, and ignore the important role that some theorists claim for elites, like clergy, in fostering debate in group settings. To this effect we ask: Do clergy model the deliberative process on potentially divisive issues such as gay rights? We employ an original survey instrument administered to clergy in Columbus, Ohio, just after the 2004 election to understand the quantity and diversity of clergy discussion. We find that discussion diversity increases under conditions of congregational disunity, which, somewhat paradoxically, has no effect on the quantity of issue discussion.

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Introduction

In 2004, Ohio voters were presented with a proposed ban on same sex marriage (a ballot issue qualified as Issue 1), which may have played a role in handing the presidential election to George Bush.¹ Throughout the months leading up to the election, churches were deluged with information about the proposed amendment from the various groups active in the Issue 1 campaign and many churches also made their own attempts to mobilize their congregations.² What is not clear, however, is the extent to which clergy actively encouraged their congregations to deliberate on issues of gay rights and same-sex marriage during the Issue 1 campaign. To this effect we ask: Do clergy model a deliberative exchange about gay rights and same-sex marriage in their churches? By this we mean two things, (1) how much do clergy talk about relevant arguments and (2) what range of views is provided by clergy? If they talk about the issue at all, are clergy opening diverse channels of debate or are they preaching to the converted when they discuss gay rights and homosexuality?

In contrast to the vast amount of research that links the civic capacity of citizens to their organizational involvement, deliberation research largely ignores it.³ Exceptions to this general observation, though, come in the form of investigations of special deliberative forums that impose unique constraints on participants.⁴ The assumption is, perhaps, the old pluralist one that individuals join groups because they agree or that little political discussion occurs there.⁵ If true, organizations are not spaces in which individuals who disagree can engage each other.

Contrary to that view, we seek water from what most consider a stone.⁶ Groups without a clear political mission of course can, and often do, become a locus of

1. Walter Shapiro, "Presidential Election May Have Hinged on One Issue: Issue 1," *U.S.A. Today*, 5 November 2004.

2. Paul A. Djupe, Jacob R. Neihsel, and Anand E. Sokhey, "Clergy and Controversy: A Study of Clergy and Gay Rights in Columbus, Ohio," in *Religious Interests in Community Conflict: Beyond the Culture Wars*, ed. Paul A. Djupe and Laura R. Olson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 73–100.

3. See Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), and Sidney Verba, Key Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

4. James S. Fishkin and Robert C. Luskin, "Bringing Deliberation to the Democratic Dialogue," in *The Poll With A Human Face: The National Issues Convention Experiment*, ed. Maxwell McCombs and Amy Reynolds (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999), 3–38.

5. Clyde Wilcox, Mark J. Rozell, and John C. Green, "The Meaning of the March: A Direction for Future Research," in *The Christian Right in American Politics: Marching to the Millennium*, ed. John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 277–80.

6. See Diana C. Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative Versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Dietram A. Scheufele, Matthew C. Nisbit, Dominique Brossard, and Erik C. Nisbit, "Social Structure and Citizenship: Examining the Impacts of Social Setting,

political talk.⁷ Political discussion is ubiquitous in these non-political contexts, where disagreement is likely more widespread.⁸ Moreover, under the right conditions, non-politically purposive groups may even venture into the political arena, particularly when the issues at stake in a political contest hit close to home.⁹ Certainly the assumption that underlies much of the recent talk concerning the emergence of churches and other religiously motivated groups as a political juggernaut is one that works from just such a conception of nonpolitical organizations. Even so, it is certainly true that not everyone in churches agrees and most do not view their church as pursuing a political purpose (or want their church to).¹⁰ In addition, the leaders of such groups, especially clergy in churches, often feel a responsibility for their members and may attempt to nurture their democratic capacity themselves.¹¹ In essence, organizations such as churches are a potentially significant (and largely unexamined) milieu in which deliberation can occur.

What follows is a discussion of deliberation in theory and observation, in which we attempt to specify an organizational component and a role for organizational leadership. Then we look for evidence of practices by clergy that fulfill such a role in an important ballot measure campaign.

Deliberation in Theory and Practice

To say that calm, reasoned deliberation among the citizens of a given polity is a necessary condition for democratic practice seems to be stating the obvious. Normative philosophers such as the oft-cited John Stuart Mill and Jürgen Habermas

Network Heterogeneity, and Informational Variables on Political Participation," *Political Communication* 21 (July–September 2004): 315–38.

7. See Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit: Clergy, Churches, and Communities in American Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Bonnie H. Erickson and T.A. Nosanchuk, "How an Apolitical Organization Politicizes," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 27 (May 1990): 206–19; Andrew J. Perrin, "Political Microcultures: Linking Civic Life and Democratic Discourse," *Social Forces* 84 (December 2005): 1049–82; and Verba *et al.*, *Voice and Equality*.

8. See Diana C. Mutz, "Cross-Cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice," *The American Political Science Review* 96 (March 2002): 111–26; Diana C. Mutz, "The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political Participation," *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (October 2002): 838–55; and Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

9. David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process* (New York: Knopf, 1951).

10. See Brent Coffin, "Moral Deliberation in Congregations," in *Taking Faith Seriously*, ed. Mary Jo Bane, Brent Coffin, and Richard Higgins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 113–45; Kenneth D. Wald, Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "Churches as Political Communities," *The American Political Science Review* 82 (June 1988): 531–48; and Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*.

11. See John P. Burgess, "Framing the Homosexuality Debate Theologically: Lessons from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)," *Review of Religious Research* 41 (December 1999): 262–74; Coffin, *Moral Deliberation*; Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*; and Ted G. Jelen, "Notes for a Theory of Clergy as Political Leaders," in *Christian Clergy in American Politics*, ed. Sue E.S. Crawford and Laura R. Olson (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

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emphasize the salubrious effects of “cross-cutting” discussion in a democracy. They say a great deal “about what deliberation *ought* to look like,” in addition to providing the theoretical underpinnings for the view that deliberation is an essential component of democratic governance.¹² Social scientists and philosophers alike have grown increasingly attracted to the concept of deliberative democracy in recent years.¹³ As a result, “deliberation has become the concept *du jour* of political theorists and in some cases has taken on nearly religious overtones.”

But while “exhortations to deliberate” may indeed be everywhere, as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse suggest, political theorists have been unable to come to any kind of consensus as to what constitutes deliberation.¹⁴ By engaging in debates over what deliberation should entail, though, political theorists have largely forgotten about “what deliberation looks like on the ground, where real people discuss concrete issues.”¹⁵

Given the list of requirements for deliberation that political theorists have delineated, the dearth of empirical literature detailing deliberation in action is not entirely surprising.¹⁶ Mutz remarks: “If one limits the political communication phenomena worthy of study to those conversations that meet the necessary and sufficient conditions invoked by democratic theorists, then one is left with a near-empty set of social interactions to study.”¹⁷

Similarly, other scholars have argued that the kinds of political talk that occur in informal settings often fall outside of the bounds of what many consider to be deliberation.¹⁸ The bar has simply been set too high for most forms of discussion

12. David M. Ryfe, “Does Deliberative Democracy Work?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (2005): 45–71. Emphasis in the original.

13. See Harry C. Boyte, “Building the Commonwealth: Citizenship as Public Work,” in *Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions*, ed. Stephen L. Elkin and Karol Edward Soltan (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 259–78; Simone Chambers, “Deliberative Democratic Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (2003): 307–26; John S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Michael Rabinder James, *Deliberative Democracy and the Plural Polity* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004); Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996); and Cass R. Sunstein, “The Law of Group Polarization,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 10 (June 2002): 175–95.

14. John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans’ Beliefs About How Government Should Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 172.

15. Ryfe, “Does Deliberative Democracy Work?” 45, see also Michael X. Delli Carpini, Fay Lomax Cook, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, “Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004): 315–44; Tali Mendelberg, “The Deliberative Citizen: Theory and Evidence,” in *Political Decision Making, Deliberation and Participation*, Vol. 6, ed. Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddie, and Robert Y. Shapiro (New York: Elsevier Press, 2002), 151–94; and Cass R. Sunstein, “Deliberative Trouble? Why Groups Go to Extremes,” *The Yale Law Journal* 110 (October 2000): 71–119.

16. Tali Mendelberg and John Oleske, “Race and Public Deliberation,” *Political Communication* 17 (April–June 2000): 169–91.

17. Mutz, “Cross-Cutting,” 111.

18. See, for instance, Katherine Cramer Walsh, *Talking About Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

to meet all of the necessary conditions detailed by theorists.¹⁹ As Tali Mendelberg and John Oleske point out, many such conditions are simply unrealistic when held up to some of the more enduring findings of public opinion research. For instance, while deliberative theorists make the claim that a true deliberative exchange should collectively examine all alternatives to the particular policy item or issue under discussion, most citizens are ill-informed on even the most pressing of issues and rarely consider all manner of viewpoints.²⁰ Nevertheless, theorists have enumerated a long list of requirements for deliberation—a list that even political discussions in public forums such as the much-touted town hall meeting have displayed great difficulties in satisfying.²¹ As a result, a number of previous studies of political discussion have relaxed the requirements for deliberation, focusing only on exposure to dissonant viewpoints or otherwise acknowledging the existence of deliberative processes that are “incomplete” in some manner.²²

An Organizational Component to Deliberation

The studies of deliberation in networks take an excessively narrow view of citizens’ sources of discussion and information. Communication occurs with more than just the self-identified discussion partners asked about in network batteries.²³ Diana Mutz, for instance, comments on the diversity of views in churches by examining the perceived views of discussion partners who share a church affiliation. However, there are myriad other sources in church that may supply political information to and engage in dialogue with attenders, including clergy and small groups and activities that involve many church affiliates.²⁴

19. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

20. John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

21. See Mark Button and Kevin Mattson, “Deliberative Democracy in Practice: Challenges and Prospects for Civil Deliberation,” *Polity* 31 (Summer 1999): 609–37; Mendelberg and Oleske, “Race,” and Walsh, *Talking About Politics*.

22. Jan Leighley, “Social Interactions and Contextual Influences on Political Participation,” *American Politics Quarterly* 18 (April 1990): 459–75; Mutz, “Cross-Cutting.” For a different view see Jack M. McLeod, Dietram A. Scheufele, Patricia Moy, Edward M. Horowitz, R. Lance Holbert, Weiwu Zhang, Stephen Zubric, and Jessica Zubric, “Understanding Deliberation: The Effects of Discussion Networks on Participation in a Public Forum,” *Communication Research* 26 (December 1999): 743–74; and Scheufele *et al.*, “Social Structure and Citizenship.” See also James S. Fishkin, *The Voice of the People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

23. A “network battery” collects information on people (generally up to three or four) with whom the survey respondent reports having discussed politics or important matters.

24. See Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, “The Resourceful Believer: Generating Civic Skills in Church,” *The Journal of Politics* 68 (February 2006): 116–27; and David C. Leege, “Catholics and the Civic Order: Parish Participation, Politics, and Civic Participation,” *The Review of Politics* 50 (Autumn 1988): 704–37.

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A more realistic portrait of the diversity of views presented to citizens may emerge when the data collection scope is enlarged beyond the network to consider organizational leaders and small groups. In spite of this obvious void, social scientists have not expressly addressed the question of how, or even if, deliberation manifests in the day-to-day workings of organizations and other venues in which groups of individuals come together and then consider issues.²⁵

Organizations, especially non-political ones, may be particularly important venues in which deliberation may occur. Non-political organizations assemble a politically diverse range of citizens who have multiple opportunities to engage each other with a common set of information. That is, deliberation can be hosted in an array of settings in an organization, including in small groups, in informal discussion, and even individually as members work through the arguments to which they have been exposed. Organizations, such as churches, offer a multitude of opportunities to deliberate.

To illustrate, Mark E. Warren argues that churches are fundamentally different from the politicized interest groups that form, for instance, the associational landscape of the Christian Right. Although he acknowledges the possibility that churches “may serve as a means of representation of moral issues to the broader public,” Warren’s theoretical framework suggests that churches may indeed be potential fonts for the kinds of deliberative exchanges that build congregants’ democratic capacities.²⁶ Owing to the social linkages formed in church and the ways in which many congregants’ identities are molded through church membership, Warren argues that churches tend to internalize conflict and are therefore more likely to foster deliberation.

If deliberation is to happen, though, especially in organizations devoted primarily to a non-political purpose, it will most likely be sponsored by elites. When organizational elites set a political agenda and refuse to present a clear and consistent message, they are helping members to consider different sides of an issue. Conflicting messages supplied by elites can thus be seen as a first step in the deliberative process for many members, filling an essential role in political exchanges that Page terms the *professional communicator* and Barber calls a facilitative leader.²⁷ In this capacity, organizational elites can “assemble, explain, debate, and disseminate the best available information and ideas about public policy, in ways that are accessible to large audiences of ordinary citizens.”²⁸

25. See David Dutwin, “The Character of Deliberation: Equality, Argument, and the Formation of Public Opinion,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 15 (Autumn 2003): 239–64; Button and Mattson, “Deliberative Democracy in Practice,” and Ryfe, “Does Deliberative Democracy Work?”

26. Mark E. Warren, *Democracy and Associations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 37.

27. See Benjamin I. Page, *Who Deliberates? Mass Media in Modern Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5; and Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 271–72.

28. Page, *Who Deliberates?* 5.

An organizational orientation also suggests taking a more expansive view of what deliberation constitutes and the information sources that contribute to such a process. We adopt an encompassing definition of deliberation that follows from work by Lindeman and others, in which social consideration of issues is sufficient but not necessary.²⁹ Lindeman argues that for deliberation to occur individuals need only to engage in a cognitive process in which they “form, alter, or reinforce their opinions as they weigh evidence and arguments from various points of view.”³⁰ Similarly, Gunderson maintains that deliberation happens “anytime a citizen actively justifies her views (even to herself) or defends them against challenge (even from herself).”³¹ But, it should be noted that organizations make social consideration more likely given the coincidence of information exposure and forums for social exchange.

Clergy, Framing Effects, and Moral Deliberation

In many ways, deliberative exchanges might also be seen as contests where conflicting frames are pitted against each other.³² As Price and colleagues point out, “frames develop in a dialectic fashion, as contesting parties articulate counter-frames to meet their opponents’ preferred interpretations.” In debates over same-sex marriage, social conservatives commonly frame the issue by emphasizing “morals and family values,” while social liberals counter with their own frames that couch the debate in terms of social equality and equal rights.³³ Although such frames are typically associated with public discussions of homosexuality, similar framing effects are found at work in denominational debates over the ordination of homosexuals and in conversations in individual congregations over issues of gay rights and homosexuality.³⁴

29. See Mark Lindeman, “Opinion Quality and Policy Preferences in Deliberative Research,” in *Political Decision Making, Deliberation and Participation*, Vol. 6, ed. Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddie, and Robert Y. Shapiro (New York: Elsevier Press, 2002), 195–224; and Adolf G. Gunderson, *The Environmental Promise of Democratic Deliberation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

30. Lindeman, “Opinion Quality,” 199.

31. Gunderson, *Environmental Promise*, 199.

32. See James N. Druckman, “Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)Relevance of Framing Effects,” *American Political Science Review* 98 (November 2004): 671–86; James N. Druckman and Kjersten R. Nelson, “Framing and Deliberation: How Citizens’ Conversations Limit Elite Influence,” *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (October 2003): 729–45; Jack Knight and James Johnson, “Aggregation and Deliberation: On the Possibility of Democratic Legitimacy,” *Political Theory* 22 (May 1994): 277–96; Vincent Price, Lilach Nir, and Joseph N. Capella, “Framing Public Discussion of Gay Civil Unions,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (Summer 2005): 179–212; Burgess, “Framing,” and Walsh, *Talking About Politics*.

33. Price, Nir, and Capella, “Framing Public Discussion,” 182.

34. See Burgess, “Framing,” Wendy Cadge, “Vital Conflicts: The Mainline Denominations Debate Homosexuality,” in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002),

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What is not clear from accounts of framing effects in churches, though, is the role that clergy play in the promotion of specific frames. The success of framing effects often depends upon sponsorship from elites, as laypeople will often defer to issue experts or political elites in making their decisions.³⁵ Depending on their own personal motivations and the atmosphere within the congregation and the surrounding community, clergy would appear to be able to serve not only as authorities on the theological/denominational issues raised by homosexuality, but also as an elite with the limited ability to direct churchgoers on a particular matter confronting the congregation.³⁶ Clergy who wish to push a certain agenda may act as “polarization entrepreneurs,” working to reinforce and entrench a particular point of view.³⁷ Recent scholarship, however, suggests that gay rights may be an issue with which clergy are hesitant to contend.³⁸

Coffin puts forward another conception of the role that clergy play in fostering deliberation in his account of how three congregations in Lexington, Massachusetts, discussed the issue of homosexuality. By exercising various types of authority, Coffin argues, clergy are able to open channels of dialogue between congregants and moderate deliberative exchange. Clergy’s willingness to exercise moral authority may not be sufficient to generate congregational debate, though, as their ability to exercise such authority is often limited by lay committees or other elements within their congregations. To overcome such barriers, clergy use frames in order to prepare the congregation for sustained debate and minimize the chances of polarization on the issue within the congregation. Along such lines, the frames that clergy employ in discussions of homosexuality are often quite pragmatic in nature, as clergy are often occupied with concerns over splits in the congregation and membership losses that might result from their comments on the issue.³⁹

Overall, clergy play a number of important roles in structuring congregational debates about homosexuality, and much of the debate on the issue can be directly attributed to the efforts of clergy.⁴⁰ Aside from speaking from the pulpit

265–86; Coffin, “Moral Deliberation,” and Laura R. Olson and Wendy Cadge, “Talking About Homosexuality: The Views of Mainline Protestant Clergy,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (March 2002): 153–67.

35. Price, Nir, and Capella, “Framing Public Discussion”; Walsh, *Talking About Politics*, and Button and Mattson, “Deliberative Democracy in Practice.”

36. Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*, and Paul A. Djupe, Laura R. Olson, and Christopher P. Gilbert, “Whether to Adopt Statements on Homosexuality in Two Denominations,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45 (December 2006): 609–21.

37. Sunstein, “Group Polarization.”

38. Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, “Two Denominations,” and Olson and Cadge, “Talking About Homosexuality.”

39. Jeffrey K. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969); and Olson and Cadge, “Talking About Homosexuality.”

40. Olson and Cadge, “Talking About Homosexuality.”

and in other public forums about their stances on gay rights, some clergy join a variety of national and local interest groups that work on issues related to homosexuality and gay rights.⁴¹ Clergy may also engage matters relating to gay rights through community-centered gatherings of religious leaders, such as ministerial organizations.⁴² Perhaps most importantly, though, clergy minister to those in their congregations who express their concern over the concept of homosexuality, and in some instances, with gay or lesbian members of their congregations.⁴³

Essentially, clergy can play important roles in promoting deliberative processes.⁴⁴ They can initiate a deliberative process, supply information to be used in citizen deliberation, and model how deliberation might work. Clergy were instrumental in initiating the moral deliberation that took place in the congregations in Coffin's study, and clergy have been found to be important forces in setting the agendas of their congregants.⁴⁵ Individual citizens are often uninformed about politics, which is one of the most stable findings in public opinion research, and they often rely on elites for cues to supplement or supply their knowledge. Clergy engage in considerable public speech on political matters, providing an important supply of information for church members.⁴⁶ Lastly, an essential element in challenging routine habits of reasoning is crossing new intellectual terrain—engaging a diversity of arguments. In their leadership capacity, clergy “may act as sea walls against the tide of routine habits of reasoning” that go on in the quotidian workings of the church.⁴⁷ The depth and diversity of their engagement of an important political issue is precisely what we will consider after describing our data.

Moreover, a focus on clergy as deliberative role models may help resolve conflicting conclusions in previous research. One line indicates clergy play down politics in church to avoid the storms in the churches following civil rights

41. Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, “Two Denominations.”

42. Jacob R. Neiheisel, Paul A. Djupe, Anand E. Sokhey, and Franklyn C. Niles, “Quick Bar the Gates! Issue 1 and Religious Communities,” Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the APSA, Washington, DC (2005).

43. Coffin, “Moral Deliberation”; and Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, “Two Denominations.”

44. Ryfe, “Does Deliberative Democracy Work?”

45. Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, “What’s Important? The Determinants of Church Member Issue Agendas,” Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the WPSA, Portland, OR (2004); and Paul A. Djupe and Laura R. Olson, “Sermons in a Difference Voice? Gendered Clergy Effects on Public Opinion,” Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the SSSR, Portland, OR (2006).

46. See Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, “The Political Voice of Clergy,” *The Journal of Politics* 64 (May 2002): 596–609; Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*; and James L. Guth, John C. Green, Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and Margaret M. Poloma, *The Bully Pulpit: The Politics of Protestant Clergy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997).

47. Ryfe, “Does Deliberative Democracy Work?” 63; see also Mendelberg, “The Deliberative Citizen.”

activism in the 1960s and maintain the congregation.⁴⁸ Others have found that clergy are actually more likely to engage in political discourse when they disagree with their congregations—exercising a prophetic voice.⁴⁹ Whether clergy alter the amount of political engagement in church, a concern for deliberation directs us to examine the content of that speech. In particular, facing a divided audience may encourage a divided presentation, fostering reasoned argument, specifying ground rules for engagement, and establishing a way, even venues, to confront and embrace conflicting views.⁵⁰

Data and Research Design

To address our motivating questions, in the late fall of 2004 we asked clergy in Columbus, Ohio, about the arguments that they introduced in their congregations concerning homosexuality and Ohio Issue 1. Unlike most previous studies that have used participant observations, interviews, news reports, or experimental focus groups in examining deliberation in religious groups, our study relies on clergy reports about the goings-on in their churches, which we culled from a mail survey.⁵¹

We used the Columbus Area Yellow Pages as our sampling frame, which listed addresses of 921 churches from a wide range of faith traditions. The Yellow Pages seems a reasonable representation of the religious community, especially since there is no reasonably affordable alternative.⁵² The Yellow Pages frame likely underrepresents small churches, though Chaves *et al.* show that most people who attend churches attend larger churches.

We sent two waves of surveys to all churches in the sampling frame. The first was sent in late November, the follow-up to non-respondents in mid-January. Because our survey was administered during the busy holiday season, but also because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, our response rate was low. In all, 148 clergy responded (for a response rate of 16.1 percent), though several were not usable.

Two concerns dominate the use of these data: whether typical clergy of their respective traditions responded and to what degree they are representative of

48. Ernest Q. Campbell and Thomas F. Pettigrew, *Christians in Racial Crisis: A Study of the Little Rock Ministry* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1959); Hadden, *The Gathering Storm*; Harold E. Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy: Social Activism Among Protestant Ministers* (New York: Wiley, 1974); and Guth *et al.*, *The Bully Pulpit*.

49. Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*.

50. Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*; and Guth *et al.*, *The Bully Pulpit*.

51. See Coffin, "Moral Deliberation" and Perrin, "Political Microcultures." Coffin, too, used an "empirical survey" administered to the congregations in his study.

52. Mark Chaves, Mary Ellen Konieczny, Kraig Beyerlein, and Emily Barman, "The National Congregations Study: Background, Methods, and Selected Results," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (December 1999): 458–76.

their geographic area. One point of reference is that sample clergy were asked to what degree they felt they had the capacity to influence the views of their church members, which was also asked in a number of other studies grouped under the Cooperative Clergy Study (CCS) in 2000.⁵³ The response from Mainline Protestants was dead-on—56.3 percent of the Columbus sample agreed that they had such influence, versus 54.7 percent of CCS Mainliners. Black Protestants (92.9 percent Columbus/ 87.7 percent CCS) and Catholics (70/60.7 percent) also gave similar responses. Evangelicals in the Columbus study were perhaps a bit more strident—84.3 percent agreed versus only 68.3 percent of CSS clergy. Therefore, by and large, the Columbus sample appears to be representative of their respective religious traditions.

To gauge geographic representativeness, we compared our results to the county-level church census conducted by the Glenmary Research Center. That census has its own problems: for example, traditionally black Protestants did not participate.⁵⁴ Moreover, the definitions used to cover the Columbus metropolitan area differ: the 2000 church census figures include Franklin and neighboring counties, while the Yellow Pages includes portions of neighboring counties. The church census lists 623 congregations in Franklin county versus a figure 50 percent higher in our sampling frame. Still, our sample differs only marginally from the church census picture of Franklin county. According to the church census, 39 percent of congregations can be classified as Mainline Protestant, 44 percent as Evangelical Protestant, and 12 percent as Catholic. Our sample slightly over-represents Mainliners—44 percent are in the Mainline, 36 percent are Evangelicals, and 7 percent Catholic. There is no census comparison available for black Protestants, who constitute 10 percent of our sample.

According to the church census, the typical median church size in Franklin county is 645, while it is 693 for the sample. The figures for each religious tradition from the two sources are quite close (Mainline congregations are 526 from the survey and 535 from the church census) with the exception of evangelicals, whose typical sample church size is larger (484 in the sample versus 344 from the church census). The sample median for evangelical church size is 200, however, suggesting that a few very large churches have skewed that statistic.

In sum, the sample represents Columbus area churches adequately and, moreover, the sample appears roughly representative of clergy from their respective religious traditions nationally. The sample captures considerable

53. Corwin E. Smidt, ed., *Pulpit and Politics: Clergy in American Politics at the Advent of the Millennium* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004).

54. Dale E. Jones, Sherri Doty, Clifford Grammich, James E. Horsch, Richard Houseal, Mac Lynn, John P. Marcum, Kenneth M. Sanchagrin, Richard H. Taylor, eds. *Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States 2000: An Enumeration by Region, State, and County Based on Data Reported for 149 Religious Bodies* (Nashville, TN: Glenmary Research Center, 2002).

variance and there is a wide selection of traditions and views represented. With appropriate controls, these data can provide a good view of clergy's discussion dynamics surrounding a salient issue campaign.

Empirical Results

Having presented some of the theoretical and empirical concerns outlined in the literature regarding the role that clergy and other elites play in providing deliberation, we now turn our focus to the arguments that clergy in Columbus, Ohio, were providing concerning the proposed ban on same-sex marriage. Table 1 offers a look at the substance of clergy-driven discussions. We asked clergy how they spoke about gay rights, homosexuality, and Ohio's Issue 1 in public discourse in the year prior to the 2004 election—a question set unique in the systematic study of clergy political behavior. We presented clergy with a set of twelve statements written to encapsulate the range of arguments concerning homosexuality that were circulating in public exchanges at the time in Ohio (see Table 1). Clergy were asked to indicate which ones they had entered into public debate and whether they agreed with each argument. We also include a correlation between mentioning an argument and political ideology.

As might be expected, arguments against same-sex marriage were mentioned much more often than arguments for it or ones that attempt to stake out a middle ground. Roughly three-fifths of our sample mentioned "Allowing same-sex partners to marry violates Scripture," although not all those who brought up the argument agreed with it—a fifth disagreed. Two-fifths mentioned the argument that Issue 1 would unjustly deprive gays and lesbians of legal rights, and three-fifths of them agreed with it.

Politically conservative clergy mentioned arguments couched in terms of the affront to traditional values or holy scripture represented by same-sex marriage more often than ideologically liberal clergy. There is, for example, a strong correlation between conservative ideology and clergy mention of the argument: "Allowing same-sex partners to marry violates Scripture." Conversely, ideologically liberal clergy more often mentioned arguments that tended to emphasize the social justice aspects of the same-sex marriage debate.

What is altogether surprising about the results shown in Table 1, though, is that clergy in some instances did mention arguments that they found disagreeable. At times, the percentage of clergy who disagreed with an argument that they nevertheless mentioned was much higher than one might expect. For instance, the majority of clergy (57.1 percent) who mentioned the argument "Allowing same-sex partners to marry grants God's blessing on a sinful practice" were in disagreement with it. But the emergent pattern displayed in Table 1 is that, in most cases, about a third of clergy disagreed with the viewpoints that they

Table 1
Clergy mention of and agreement with arguments in their public deliberation over Issue 1

Arguments about Issue 1		Mentioned argument? (%)	Agree with argument? (%)			Correlation of ideology+mention
			Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
Allowing same-sex partners to marry threatens the social fabric and traditional institutions.	Yes	59.3	62.5	1.3	36.3	0.314***
	No	40.7	33.3	5.9	60.8	
We should recognize genuine love expressed between consenting adults of the same sex by allowing them to marry.	Yes	30.8	61.0	0.0	39.1	-0.258***
	No	69.2	20.7	14.9	64.4	
Allowing same-sex partners to marry violates Scripture.	Yes	61.8	77.8	1.2	20.9	0.476***
	No	38.2	28.3	17.4	54.3	
Allowing same-sex partners to marry helps to bring a once marginal group into traditional institutions and stabilizes society.	Yes	25.2	60.6	3.0	36.3	-0.156*
	No	74.8	27.5	15.4	57.2	
Not to allow same-sex partners to marry unjustly deprives these couples of many legal benefits.	Yes	40.2	62.3	9.4	28.3	-0.240***
	No	59.8	29.2	8.3	62.5	
Allowing same-sex partners to marry paves the way for other nontraditional forms of marriage such as polygamy.	Yes	33.3	64.4	9.3	16.3	0.367***
	No	66.7	25.0	11.1	63.0	
Allowing same-sex partners to marry grants God's blessing on a sinful practice.	Yes	26.9	42.8	0.0	57.1	0.023
	No	73.1	26.1	10.2	63.6	

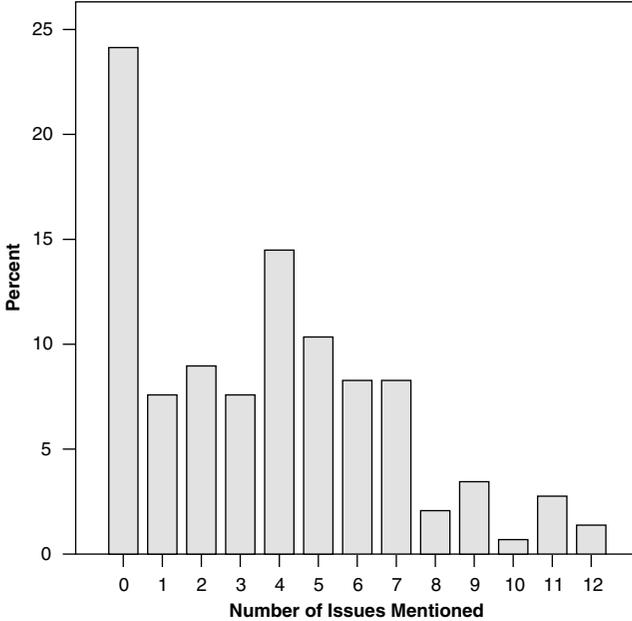
Table 1 (continued)

Arguments about Issue 1		Mentioned argument? (%)	Agree with argument? (%)			Correlation of ideology+mention
			Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
Though I oppose allowing same-sex partners to marry, I support anti-discrimination laws for gays and lesbians.	Yes	32.8	82.5	7.5	10.0	-0.167*
	No	67.2	42.0	24.6	33.3	
Though I oppose allowing same-sex partners to marry, I support granting gays and lesbians obtaining civil unions—granting secular benefits of marriage without God’s blessing.	Yes	28.8	52.8	8.3	38.9	-0.052
	No	71.2	27.3	19.5	53.3	
Issue 1 should be opposed because only God and the churches can sanctify a marriage—no constitutional amendment can do that.	Yes	23.3	62.1	6.9	31.0	-0.079
	No	76.7	22.3	16.0	61.7	
Issue 1 should be opposed because, historically, constitutional amendments in our nation extend rights rather than restrict them.	Yes	24.0	89.7	0.0	10.3	-0.371***
	No	76.0	23.9	23.9	52.2	
Issue 1 should be opposed because of potential detrimental economic effects in the state.	Yes	23.4	57.2	7.1	35.7	-0.188**
	No	76.6	18.9	25.6	54.4	

Source: 2004 Columbus clergy Issue 1 study

Note: Agreement categories collapse strongly (dis)agree and (dis)agree. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$. A positive correlation means conservatives mention it more often.

Figure 1
Number of arguments clergy mentioned concerning Issue 1
 Source: 2004 Columbus clergy Issue 1 study



discussed. Likewise, about a third of clergy *agreed* with the viewpoints that they did *not* discuss.

In order to evaluate the quantity and diversity of clergy discussion in churches, we need to shift our unit of analysis to individual clergy. This we do in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows the number of arguments presented by sample clergy. Although almost a quarter of clergy failed to introduce any argument concerning same-sex marriage into public debate, the vast majority presented at least one argument for public deliberation, with nearly two-fifths of clergy entering up to a total of four different arguments into the debate over same-sex marriage. Just about a third of the sample presented more than four arguments. Although relatively few clergy mentioned more than seven arguments, the quantity of discussion of these arguments was certainly not trivial.

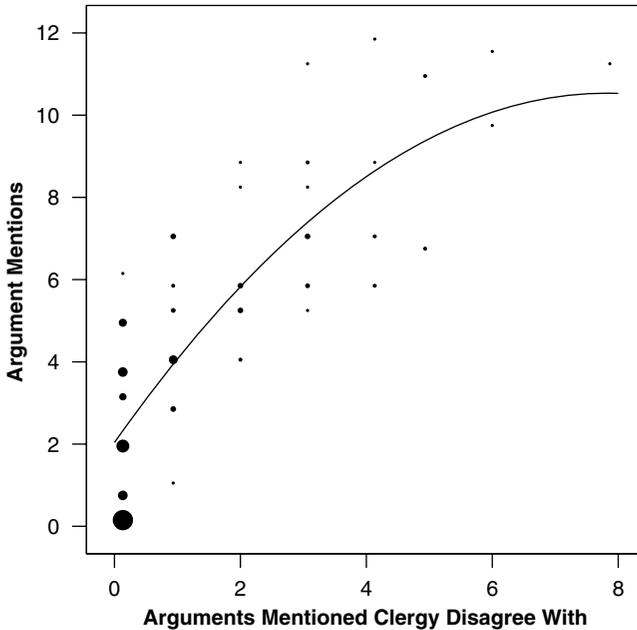
Figure 2 compares the number of arguments clergy presented that they disagreed with by the total number they addressed. This is a most important measure of modeling deliberation. With respect to the diversity of the arguments that clergy mentioned, *45.2 percent of clergy mentioned at least one argument with*

Figure 2

Number of arguments mentioned by clergy by the number mentioned they disagree with

Source: 2004 Columbus clergy Issue 1 study

Note: $R^2 = 0.673$ for the quadratic fit line



which they disagreed. From Figure 2, it appears that clergy presented about one argument they disagreed with to every four they agreed with (the average proportion is 0.22). Just under half (45 percent) mentioned no argument they disagreed with, 40 percent mentioned more than one argument they disagreed with out of every four presented (a proportion of 0.25 or greater), and only 10 percent had an evenly balanced presentation (a proportion of 0.5 or greater).

The available measures raise the question about how they comport with a deliberative framework. First, capturing the presentation of a range of content is a notable advance over capturing the mere presence of different political stances and imputing discussion of different views. Moreover, it is important to explore a full consideration of the various frames an issue can support. Addressing arguments with which they disagree models a crucial component of the deliberative process, that diverse arguments must at least be considered. Generally, the greater the number of arguments engaged covering various frames, the higher the quality of discussion and the better the deliberative

process modeled for the congregation. Of course, there is no guarantee in these measures that clergy have not given some arguments short shrift. Still, in addressing an argument they disagree with, they have to provide some reason, however simplistic, why an argument does not comport with their values. This is not the most complete measure of deliberation, but it takes a significant step above the ground floor.

For simplicity's sake, we will refer to the number of arguments as the "quantity" of discussion and the proportion of arguments advanced that clergy disagree with as discussion "diversity," acknowledging that deliberation incorporates both notions (as well as other conditions).

Multivariate Analysis

To explain the patterns of discussion we have seen, we embrace an interdisciplinary small groups perspective, which has settled (in the aggregate) on three general components for understanding participation within them: group composition, group structure, and environmental constraints.⁵⁵ Applied to the Issue 1 campaign, this perspective raises the following specific questions and related hypotheses that we attempt to test in the analysis to follow:

- [Compositional] Is clergy-modeled deliberation driven by personal interest? We suspect that greater interest in Issue 1 should augment discussion extent and diversity.
- [Compositional] How does deliberation on gay rights change when clergy face a congregation in which a member struggled with his or her sexuality? While the relationship is likely complex, generally the presence of such a member should increase and diversify clergy's discussion.
- [Structural] How does congregational political disunity affect clergy deliberation? And how does congregational-clergy political disunity affect clergy deliberation? Greater disunity should drive down clergy's discussions, but augment the diversity of any discussion there is.
- [Environmental] Is clergy deliberation mobilized from interested parties? Contacts from interest groups active in the Issue 1 campaign as well as exposure to Issue 1 political action within a ministerial organization should boost discussion, though they may not have the clout to affect discussion diversity (how the issue is addressed).

55. See Robert F. Bales, *Social Interaction Systems: Theory and Measurement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002); Lawrence R. Frey, ed. *Group Communication in Context: Studies of Bona Fide Groups*, 2nd edn. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003); Donald W. Klopf, "The Components of Small Group Interaction," *Communication* 3 (July 1974): 32–52; and John M. Levine and Richard L. Moreland, "Progress in Small Group Research," *Annual Review of Psychology* 41 (January 1990): 585–634.

- [Environmental] How does the denominational context affect clergy deliberation? Denominational conflict should augment discussion by force and encouragement, while diversifying its content to appease and teach members.

Typically, we would include a wide variety of independent variables that capture the range of possible hypotheses to explain quantity and diversity of discussion. The nature of our data constrains this usual modeling strategy, however. First, we have a small number of cases with even smaller numbers of crucial subgroups, such as black clergy and those who mentioned a large number of arguments. Second, there is collinearity between variables, though not at rates that would raise suspicions in large samples, such as $r > 0.8$; correlations of 0.4 to 0.5 across half of the predictors in a small sample may cause problems.⁵⁶

To help allay these concerns, we submitted some of the crucial predictor variables to a factor analysis. This exercise is more than naked empiricism on the run—there are good theoretical reasons for the combinations that result. In particular, we see what a religious tradition effect means in this context. As Kellstedt and Green note, “It has never been clear whether [denominational or traditional] measures refer to ethnic histories, doctrinal beliefs, social status, or social group attachments.”⁵⁷ Here we get a glimpse that they are a combination of things relevant to deliberation over gay rights: who attends and how they interact.

In Table 2 are the results of a factor analysis of the key, collinear variables—the four major religious traditions in the sample and five measures of how the clergy, congregation, and denomination interrelate. Specifically, we include measures about political disunity within the congregation (as perceived by clergy), political disunity between the clergy and congregation, and whether conflict over gay rights in the denomination has sparked discussion of gay rights in the congregation.

We expect these three measures to be positively related to Mainline Protestant identification and they are (see Table 2). We label this factor “political disunity.” As Djupe and Gilbert show, the aggregate division within Mainline Protestantism in presidential voting is also present at the congregational level—there is significant partisan disunity throughout the Mainline.⁵⁸ Mainline clergy have been compared to generals without armies, owing to the frequently noted disagree-

56. Damodar N. Gujarati, *Basic Econometrics*, 4th edn. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003).

57. Lyman A. Kellstedt and John C. Green, “Knowing God’s Many People: Denominational Preference and Political Behavior,” in *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, ed. David C. Legee and Lyman A. Kellstedt (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

58. Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, “The Local Roots of Aggregate Opinion Structures,” Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the APSA, Chicago, IL (2004).

Table 2
Factor analysis of key collinear explanatory variables

Variables	Factor 1—political disunity	Factor 2—clergy agenda	Factor 3—roman catholic	Factor 4—black protestant
Mainline protestant	0.862	−0.024	−0.361	−0.072
Evangelical protestant	− 0.818	0.121	−0.129	−0.264
Clergy and church voted similarly	− 0.726	−0.009	−0.146	0.157
Denominational conflict sparked discussion	0.723	−0.189	−0.388	−0.041
Church is politically divided	0.678	0.141	0.295	−0.121
Adult education on gay rights issues	0.077	0.808	−0.169	0.310
Clergy interest in issue 1	−0.302	0.756	0.089	−0.296
Catholic	0.041	−0.094	0.907	0.002
Black protestant	−0.158	0.041	0.009	0.912

Source: 2004 Columbus clergy Issue 1 study.

Note: Factors are quartimax rotated. $N = 116$.

Bold values are the highest factor loadings for each variable.

ment between clergy and their congregations.⁵⁹ Finally, the Mainline has been wracked by issues related to homosexuality since the 1970s and particularly in the last decade.⁶⁰ On the flip side, most Evangelical Protestant denominations seem to have avoided these organizational problems—Evangelical Protestant loads negatively on this factor.

Two other measures, the clergy's interest in the Issue 1 campaign and whether the church held an adult education session on gay rights, homosexuality, or Issue 1, consist of their own factor (called "clergy agenda"). Djupe and Gilbert conclude that the primary pathway of clergy influence is through setting the agenda, primarily by creating small groups and activities directed toward some end.⁶¹ That is strongly supported here, where clergy interest expressed through adult education pushes the congregation to confront an issue of concern. We must be quick to point out how limited clergy influence may be if it is limited to agenda setting, although that is a good thing if independent deliberation in the congregation is the desired end. That is, once the agenda is set, dynamics within the congregation likely hold sway over discussion that ensues. Still, the discussion could and has threatened organizational robustness, especially due to the divisive issues related to homosexuality, which is why some clergy are reticent to engage the issue.

Catholic and black Protestants each inhabit their own factors, as no other variables load significantly on their factors. In part what this pattern suggests is that Catholics and black Protestants do not enjoy the organizational strengths of white Evangelicals, with their high political unity, but are not in as much organizational trouble as Mainline Protestants.

We transformed the first two factors into variables for use in two regression models, one model estimating the quantity and another the diversity of clergy discussion of Issue 1 frames. The OLS estimation results are presented in Table 3.

The quantity of clergy discussion is explained by two variables. The clergy agenda factor (2), capturing clergy's interest in Issue 1 along with adult education addressing the issue, suggests that interest drives up the number of arguments advanced. Evidently, clergy will not be goaded into bringing up issues they do not

59. See Campbell and Pettigrew, *Racial Crisis*; Robert Booth Fowler, Allen D. Hertzke, Laura R. Olson, and Kevin R. Den Dulk, *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, 3rd edn. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004); Guth *et al.*, *The Bully Pulpit*; Hadden, *The Gathering Storm*; Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy*; and Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 4th edn. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

60. See James Anderson, "The Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1974–1996," *Journal of Homosexuality* 34 (Spring 1997): 37–65; Cadge, "Vital Conflicts"; Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert, "Two Denominations"; Olson and Cadge, "Talking About Homosexuality"; and James R. Wood and Jon P. Bloch, "The Role of Church Assemblies in Building a Civil Society: The Case of the United Methodist General Conference on Homosexuality," *Sociology of Religion* 56 (Summer 1995): 121–36.

61. Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*.

Table 3
Predictors of the extent and diversity of clergy discussion concerning Issue 1

Variables	Discussion quantity: number of issues mentioned		Discussion diversity: percent issues mentioned clergy disagreed with, logged	
	Coeff.	(s.e.)	Coeff.	(s.e.)
Factor 1—political disunity	-0.080	(0.269)	0.049	(0.015)***
Factor 2—clergy agenda	0.963	(0.265)***	0.002	(0.016)
Interest group contact	0.232	(0.200)	0.003	(0.011)
Ministerial organization took action on issue 1	1.301	(0.560)**	0.013	(0.031)
A member came out	-0.438	(0.640)	0.002	(0.036)
Black protestant	1.224	(0.940)	0.021	(0.049)
Number of issues mentioned			0.036	(0.006)***
Constant	3.263	(0.419)	-0.007	(0.033)
Number of cases	115		98	
Adjusted R^2	0.157		0.375	
S.E.E.	2.792		0.143	

Source: 2004 Columbus clergy Issue 1 study. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

want to discuss. But, also, clergy can lay the groundwork in small group activity for addressing the issue in a larger venue, such as from the pulpit to the congregation. This effect comports with the suggestion by Djupe and Gilbert that clergy influence runs through church small groups and activities.⁶² The other variable that makes a significant contribution is the extent of political action on Issue 1 to which the clergyperson was exposed in a ministerial organization (MO).⁶³ Participation in an MO, a small local gathering of clergy in a community, is one of the more frequent civic activities of clergy and serves to link them to other clergy forming important social and political relationships.⁶⁴ Each activity (of four) in the MO adds over one new frame to the clergy's discussion, suggesting the potency of a supportive social context for clergy to take action. Strikingly, the

62. Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*.

63. Neiheisel *et al.*, "Quick Bar the Gates!"

64. Paul A. Djupe and Franklyn C. Niles, "Prophets in the Wilderness: An Ecology of Ministerial Organization Representation in Public Affairs," Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the WPSA, Las Vegas (2007).

political disunity factor does not affect the number of arguments mentioned and neither does the presence of a member struggling with his or her sexuality.

The second model estimates the proportion of issues mentioned that clergy disagreed with—the diversity of clergy discussion. In this model, interpersonal dynamics take over. While clergy's interest may drive the number of arguments mentioned, *how clergy talk about the issue is driven by the audience*. The clergy's agenda (factor 2) has no effect on diversity, but greater political disunity (factor 1) drives up discussion diversity. That is, the greater the political disunity between congregation members, clergy, and the denomination, the greater the diversity in the clergy's deliberation on gay rights. The contents of the factor also give us a glimpse of the divisions among white Protestants. Evangelicals are simply more unified—in the congregation, between the congregation and clergy, and within the denomination (such as there are meaningful denominational structures). Partly as a result, there is less impetus to give full consideration, as we have defined it, to issues such as gay rights. Mainline Protestants, beset by controversy and deep-seated differences, approach these difficult issues with a broader perspective. Perhaps because the Mainline mirrors societal differences, they showcase near model deliberative practices to the extent Mainline clergy feel safe enough to do so.

The number of arguments mentioned (the dependent variable in the first model) is a needed control in the second model, since a larger denominator (quantity) frees up room for a numerator (diversity) as Figure 2 shows. Because discussion quantity is so tightly linked to clergy interest and ministerial organization political action, however, it has a substantive meaning in this model. The first model's results intimated elite control—information is only provided when clergy are interested enough or mobilized to do it. The results of this second model suggest that elites are constrained. When they present more arguments, at some point they have to address sides other than their own. Moreover, elites are encouraged to play to their audience. The more disagreement within the audience, the less elites can present a purely one-sided message. This should be especially likely considering that this set of elites, clergy, has an interest in maintaining its organizations, which is a goal that can compete with and overwhelm the drive to advance an opinion.⁶⁵

The fact that clergy play to their audience, of course, limits the possibility of influence if, as Huckfeldt and Sprague explain, difference drives the social influence process. It encourages audience members to hear selectively, filtering the reception of arguments according to their own opinions.⁶⁶ But these two

65. See Campbell and Pettigrew, *Racial Crisis*; Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy*; and Hadden, *The Gathering Storm*.

66. Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague, *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communications: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); see also Djupe and Gilbert, "The Political Voice of Clergy."

likelihoods do not mean that clergy deliberation is a wash. In this instance, clergy can initiate a deliberative process, providing a range of frames to consider and modeling what the debate might sound like. Although individuals may hear selectively, there are others in the church who heard something else, and churches host many forums for the expression of those views. Moreover, a presentation that pits one side's arguments against another's can build more informed, considered opinions within their audiences, which is no small victory, even if the opinions themselves do not shift.⁶⁷

Discussion and Conclusion

Churches are not armies that march to the steady drum beat of a commander, even though religion and politics research often tantalizes with militaristic titles. Churches are complex, diverse organizations, meaning that leaders are often confronted with the worst of Olsonian and pluralist organizational dilemmas. Starting with this nuanced view of churches, we are able to imagine them as the potential settings for deliberation to occur over significant policy issues.

If churches are different from interest groups, then so is their potential for hosting deliberation. Thus our conclusion is that clergy model the deliberative process to varying degrees depending on personal drive and social conditions. Clergy meet face to face with a large group of people to explore the policy (and other, to be sure) implications of their faith teachings on a regular and potentially sustained basis. Because of whom they minister to and why they minister to them, clergy often explore many framings of an issue that can lay the groundwork to build considered opinions of congregation members.

These data offer but a preliminary look at the possibility of exploring the extent of deliberation in churches (and in social organizations generally). Our view of churches as complex organizations intimates that deliberation is occurring in other venues within the church beyond that from clergy in worship and other settings. Members may, and surely do, engage significant public policy issues in organized small groups and in informal interactions with other members on a sustained basis. To what extent and where congregation members deliberate and how it relates to clergy cues remains to be investigated thoroughly. Our analysis suggests at least one direct connection, though—adult education sessions, which resemble true deliberative forums in some churches, are linked closely to an expanded clergy presentation. But significant questions, especially involving church members, remain: Do members deliberate in response to clergy initiation? Are members' discussions constrained by the range and depth of clergy's presentations?

67. Mutz, "Cross-Cutting."

Moreover, other conditions held necessary for deliberation should be explored. For instance, it is important to understand the approach clergy take to the initiation of policy debates. To what extent are they referees specifying the ground rules and questions for debate or active participants weighing in with their moral authority on one side? Moreover, information about the context in which frames are issued is crucial to making a determination about the deliberative potential of a church. In this case, the context refers to the distribution of views of church members involved in deliberative exchanges, the specific forums hosting those exchanges (whether formal or informal settings), and the environment beyond the church that might bear witness to the results. Insofar as we want to privilege the deliberative capacity of individual citizens over the diversity of views engaged in public deliberation, examining the context in which clergy frames are issued is critical.

We are also left with a tantalizing set of conflicting claims in the political behavior of clergy literature that cannot stand together. For a generation, scholars noted that clergy, taught a lesson by the “storms in the churches” in the 1960s, downplayed political engagement, especially that directed toward church members. This would save the congregation from conflict and preserve the organization’s sustainability.⁶⁸ Others found evidence to support a prophetic role for clergy, as their political action increases as ideological differences with their congregation widen, although Djupe and Gilbert also found clergy avoiding specific issues when their opinions did not match the congregation’s.⁶⁹ Here, we found that deliberation diversity increases under conditions of disunity, although unity appears to have no effect on the quantity of issue discussion. These results seem to support both sides. Are clergy prophetic if they temper their discussion to their divided audience? But are not clergy prophetic when they dare to engage a divisive issue at all? Further investigation is clearly needed and should, in our view, (1) include a diverse sample of religious organizations, (2) focus in depth on one or more issues, and (3) collect data on church structure, environmental forces, and the clergy’s professional socialization and obligations.

Appendix: Variable Coding

Note: This appendix includes coding for all variables not fully described in the text or tables.

Mainline Protestant Those who self-identified with the following denominations: ABUSA, DOC, ELCA, ECUSA, PCUSA, RCA, UCC, UMC, or UUA.

68. See Campbell and Pettigrew, *Racial Crisis*; Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy*; Hadden, *The Gathering Storm*; and Guth *et al.*, *The Bully Pulpit*.

69. See Djupe and Gilbert, *The Prophetic Pulpit*; and Djupe and Gilbert, “The Political Voice of Clergy.”

Evangelical Protestant Those who self-identified with the following denominations: AOG, Baptists, Brethren, CMA, Church of God, Community of Christ, CRC, GARBC, LCMS, Nazarene, non-denominational, SBC, SDA, UFMCC, UPC, Vineyard, or Wesleyan.

Black Protestant Congregations for which the clergy identified the majority race as Black.

Clergy and church voted similarly Is assessed by comparing the clergy's reports of their own 2000 vote with their perception of how a majority of their congregation voted. The measure equals 1 if that vote is the same (e.g., both voted for Bush) and 0 if not.

Denominational conflict sparked discussion if clergy reported that "denominational conflict" motivated discussion in the congregation about gay rights and homosexuality (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Church is politically divided "Would you say that your congregation is politically united (members agree on political issues)?" 1 = politically united, 2 = mostly united, 3 = politically divided.

Adult education on gay rights issues "Has your church held adult education sessions about any of the following? (Circle all that apply)" Coded 1 (0 if not) if clergy circled: (1) Gay rights, (2) Homosexuality as a lifestyle, or (3) Ohio's Issue 1.

Clergy interest in Issue 1 "How interested were you in Ohio's Issue 1, placing a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage?" 5 = a great deal, 4 = quite a bit, 3 = some, 2 = very little, 1 = none.

Interest group contact An index gaining a point (and ranging from 0 to 7 in reality) if clergy reported being contacted by the following groups: The Ohio Campaign to Protect Marriage, Ohioans Protecting the Constitution, Citizens for Community Values, The Christian Coalition of Ohio, The Catholic Conference of Ohio, The Human Rights Campaign of Washington, Ohioans For Growth and Equality, The Columbus Partnership, and The Alliance Defense Fund.

Ministerial organization took action on Issue 1 Clergy were asked "Since September 2004, did your ministerial alliance deal with Ohio's Issue 1 in these ways?" The index gains one point, ranging from 0 to 4, for reporting each activity: discussing Issue 1 at a meeting, discussing Issue 1 informally with group members, taking a stand on Issue 1, and communicating their position to others.

A member struggled with his/her sexuality If the congregation had discussions of gay rights and homosexuality (1 = yes, 0 = no) as a result of (1) a member struggling with his or her sexuality or (2) a member coming out as gay.