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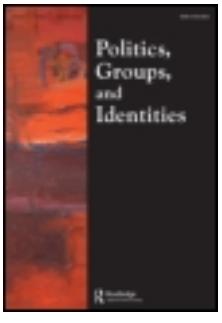

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Stained-glass politics and descriptive representation: does associational leadership by women engender political engagement among women?

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Stained-glass politics and descriptive representation: does associational leadership by women engender political engagement among women?

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The vast literature on the political effects of descriptive representation focuses solely on representatives *in government*. However, since non-governmental associations are essential to citizens' political engagement, we extend the reach of the descriptive representation literature to include associational leadership. We offer an initial glimpse at what this form of investigation may entail, asking what effect descriptive representation of women within religious associations (i.e. in the pulpit) might have on the political engagement of members of their congregations. Using a set of matched data gathered from clergy and members of their congregations, our findings suggest that women's associational leadership could be an important force boosting women's political engagement, although this is conditional on the content of elite political communication and, at times, comes at the expense of men's involvement in politics.

Keywords: political participation; women and gender; religion; representation; social groups; political engagement; clergy; descriptive representation

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A vast literature has assessed the effect of descriptive representation (leadership by a fellow group member) on citizens' political engagement, but these studies have focused solely on representation in the *governmental* context. This uniform focus is hardly unreasonable considering that political scientists have conducted the vast majority of this research. However, we could learn even more about descriptive representation by extending the concept to analysis of leadership by members of underrepresented groups in *non-governmental* contexts. Associational posts are normatively important. Political movements for inclusion historically have pushed for both political representation *and* increased presence in non-governmental institutions (Gamson 1990; Jasper 1997; Tarrow 1998). Moreover, associational elites give structure to experiences that teach group members how to trust each other and work together to solve collective problems, in addition to modeling and encouraging participation in the political process (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Leighley 1996; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

In this paper we argue for expanding the reach of research on the effects of descriptive representation on citizen political engagement. We do so specifically by asking whether a group leader's gender and political communication might affect the political engagement of group members in a non-governmental setting. The relationship between women leaders and members in a particular organizational context – religious congregations – lies at the heart of

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our study. While certainly not representative of all organizational commitments, congregational membership is the most common type of voluntary practice in the USA (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2010), and women increasingly are being accepted as clergy (Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang 1998) – a development that carries political implications (Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005). Do members of congregations headed by women differ in their political engagement in ways that reflect the substantive significance of descriptive representation? Using a set of matched data gathered from clergy and members of their congregations, our goal is to set forth the dimensions that this line of investigation might entail. Our analyses provide suggestive evidence that descriptive associational leadership is an important force in motivating same-gender members to engage with and participate in politics, perhaps contingent on the political engagements of the clergyperson.

Effects of descriptive representation

As Mansbridge notes, "disadvantaged groups may want to be represented by 'descriptive representatives,' that is, individuals who in their own backgrounds mirror some of the more frequent experiences and manifestations of belonging to the group" (1999, 628). The extant literature offers voluminous support for her assertion. One of the primary foci of studies examining the effects of descriptive representation has been analysis of political motivation as a dependent variable. The central thesis of this body of research has been that when a group enjoys visible representation, group members will be more motivated to be active in and engaged with politics (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Gay 2001; Hansen 1997; Lawless 2004; Philpot and Walton 2007; Pitkin 1967; Tate 1993, 2003).

Gender and gender roles are, of course, two different things, and women who occupy positions of authority often are perceived as less "feminine" than women who adopt more traditional gender roles. Earlier studies posited that women might be less likely than members of other social groups to exercise a unified political voice (Andersen 1975; Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980), but more recent research clearly establishes that women are in fact likely to respond to descriptive leadership by other women (Atkeson and Carillo 2007; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Dolan 2008; Mansbridge 1999; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2003; Smith and Fox 2001).[1] Some studies even show that women prefer female leaders as a matter of course (Rosenthal 1995; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2003). This preference is strongest among women of higher socioeconomic status and those with deep feminist sentiments (Carroll 1988; Rosenthal 1995; Smith and Fox 2001). It is worth noting that both high-SES women and those with feminist inclinations are overrepresented in the American religious traditions that allow the ordination of women clergy: mainline Protestants and Jews (Carroll 2006). Members of both religious traditions are comparatively wealthy (Park and Reimer 2002; Smith and Faris 2005) and socio-politically progressive (Greenberg and Wald 2000; Wuthnow and Evans 2002). Meanwhile, American women participate more actively in organized religious life than do men (Pew Forum 2009), and women-led congregations seem to have especially large proportions of female members (Ammerman 1997; Konieczny and Chaves 2000). Thus we might expect mainline Protestant and Jewish women to be especially responsive to political cues offered by clergywomen.

Meanwhile, women's apparent preference for descriptive female representation makes particular sense because American men and women have displayed consistent differences in political attitudes and behaviors since at least the 1980s (Dolan 2008). Although a larger percentage of women than usual supported George W. Bush's 2004 reelection (Kaufmann 2006), plenty of studies document the longer term attitudinal and partisan differences between women and men (Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef, and Lin 2004; Chaney, Alvarez, and Nagler 1998; Howell and Day 2000; Kaufmann 2002, 2006; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Norrander 1999; Trevor

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1999). Women are more liberal than men (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003), especially with regard to social welfare issues (Erie and Rein 1988; Howell and Day 2000; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Attitudinal differences between the genders are most substantial with regard to homosexuality: women are much more likely than men to support full equality for gay people (Herek 2002; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Kite and Whitley 1996). All of these patterns are just as pronounced between clergywomen and clergymen (Deckman et al. 2003; Djupe and Gilbert 2003).

Women also appear especially responsive to female leaders when they use their positions of power to prioritize issues about which women are perceived to have special knowledge or understanding, which adds a dimension of substantive representation to their descriptive representation. The congruence of the interests any leader promotes should form the basis of the leader's legitimacy with the group she leads. Women candidates and elected officials are widely believed to have special "issue competency" regarding social issues, particularly those involving children (Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kahn 1993; Paolino 1995; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Sapiro 1982). 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 "gendered" social issues (Ice 1987; Nesbitt 1997). Indeed, female elected officials (Bratton 2002; Burrell 1994; Swers 2002; Vega and Firestone 1995) and clergywomen (Olson, Crawford, and Deckman 2005; Stewart-Thomas 2010) alike have been shown to take action with regard to family-relevant social issues on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, evidence is mixed on the motivational effects of descriptive representation, including in the case of women (Hansen 1997; Lawless 2004; but see Atkeson 2003; Atkeson and Carillo 2007; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). As Lawless (2004) finds in an analysis of a pooled series of American National Election Study (ANES) data, women give higher evaluations to women representatives, but descriptive representation does not translate into greater motivation or participation on the part of female constituents. Similarly, Hansen (1997) discovers limited evidence that a candidate's gender affects women constituents' attempts to mobilize the vote. Atkeson and Carillo (2007; see also Atkeson 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2003), however, do 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).

One way to reconcile these disparate findings is to explore the concept of political motivation in greater detail. Social groups like women or African Americans are not homogeneous, of course, so descriptive leadership may create cross-pressures among members of a particular group. For instance, moderate and liberal African Americans have long felt cross-pressured about whether to support Justice Clarence Thomas (Hutchings 2001). Similarly, Gay (2001; see also Griffin and Keane 2006) shows that African Americans are only selectively mobilized by black representation, depending on party (Griffin and Keane 2006) and candidate qualifications (Atkeson 2003; Philpot and Walton 2007). In short, substantive and descriptive markers combine to affect the relationship between a candidate or representative and her (potential) constituents. Assessing the political relevance of the presence of a woman in a non-governmental position of leadership like the pulpit may depend in part on the substance of what she conveys to members.

Clergy, gender, and representation

The presence of substantial numbers of women in the American ministry and rabbinate is a relatively recent phenomenon, but women now make up nearly 15% of all clergy (United States Department of Labor 2009) (Table 1).[2] Although their numbers have grown, women clergy still face "stained glass ceiling" professional challenges (Konieczny and Chaves 2000; Nesbitt

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Table 1. Current population survey estimates of women clergy.

Year	Total employed, both sexes*	Female employed*	Percent female
2008	441	65	14.8
2007	422	64	15.1
2006	416	53	12.8
2005	437	67	15.5
2003	410	57	13.9
2002	406	54	13.3
2000	369	51	13.8
Average	414	59	14.2

Source: United States Department of Labor (2009).
*Numbers in thousands (000).

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1997; Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang 1998). Moreover, previous research shows that female clergy approach politics from an ideological and participatory vantage point that diverges from that of many of their male counterparts; in short, clergywomen are more liberal and more active in politics than clergymen (Deckman et al. 2003; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Olson, Crawford, and Guth 2000). One study showed that clergywomen were significantly more likely than clergymen to engage in visible acts of political protest, including signing and circulating petitions, taking a public stand on a political issue, boycotting corporate policies, preaching a whole sermon on a controversial issue, and organizing an action group to accomplish a political goal (Deckman et al. 2003, 626). Other studies of clergy's leadership styles suggest that such activism is relatively rare; religious leaders are more likely to involve themselves in noncontroversial efforts to assist people in need or eschew anything that smacks of politics altogether (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Olson 2000). Despite the apparent politicization of women clergy on the whole, to date no studies have examined how representational diversity in the pulpit might affect the political orientations of people in the pews (but see Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert 2007).

One of our underlying assumptions is that clergy may be compared to elected representatives, a tack taken in previous studies (Djupe and Gilbert 2003). Our comparison is rooted in the status of both clergy and elected officials as elites; as such, they share several important features. In the first place, many clergy are chosen through some sort of public process. 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.[3] Furthermore, 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 speaking, if citizens evaluate elected officeholders like they evaluate ordinary individuals (Kinder 1986; Rahn 1993), we should be able to assume that for the most part citizens evaluate clergy in a similar way as well.

Moreover, *women* clergy are akin to female elected officials in that they seem to offer styles of leadership that are distinctive from those of men (on female elected officials' distinctive leadership styles, see Fox and Schuhmann 1999; Rosenthal 1998). This distinctiveness also has been noted in women's leadership styles in the nonprofit sector (Gittell, Ortega-Bustamante, and Steffy 2000), which makes our investigation especially relevant to a broadened understanding of gender's political significance.

The reasons why we observe gender-related political differences among clergy lie in the history of professional discrimination women have faced in the ministry (Chaves 1997; Nesbitt 1997; 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 in many religious settings, many clergywomen do still confront longstanding religious norms about gender roles that challenge their legitimacy (Chaves 1997; Nesbitt 1997). In short, gender – and more specifically, the gendered nature of women's experiences as religious leaders – appears to play a straightforward and significant role in shaping clergy's personal approaches to politics. This is precisely what we would expect in light of the broader differences relating to gender in American politics.

Clergy have the capacity to serve as opinion leaders for their congregations because each week they face a largely attentive audience who look specifically to them for spiritual and moral guidance. Clergy's 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 (Calfano and Djupe 2011). However, two facets of clergy's political communication are likely to shape members' political engagement. First, the degree of political cue giving by the clergy is likely to be important in stimulating political engagement among the congregants (Djupe and Gilbert 2009), working in the same way that exposure to news coverage of politics can boost interest (Graber 2009). Second, the political content of that communication should influence political engagement, though how it will matter is subject to several interpretations. Importantly, responses to clergy political communication may be conditioned by gender, which we discuss below.

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Hypotheses

Our paper has two purposes. First, we examine the effects of clergywomen's leadership on political interest among congregation members. Second, we consider whether having a woman in the pulpit affects the extent to which male and female congregation members participate in politics. In short, we are positing that the simple presence of a woman in the pulpit has differential effects on how male and female congregation members approach politics. Thus, in addition to broadening our understanding of descriptive representation and its consequences, this study furthers the developing literature on whether political leadership by clergy actually has meaningful consequences (Crawford and Olson 2001).

With regard to clergywomen's effect on the political engagement of their congregation members, we hypothesize that women congregation members' interest in politics will be heightened if their clergyperson is female. Women and men will respond differently to women clergy due to the fact of the clergy's gender, but also because of the specific kind of political cues women clergy tend to offer. Thus, we assess whether gender interacts with the presence of an opinion difference with one's clergyperson. Either an opinion difference may spark motivation as a precondition to learning (Huckfeldt and Mendez 2008; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995) or it may trigger conflict avoidance, which women are more likely than men to exhibit (Ulbig and Funk 1999). We suspect, however, that members will benefit from agreement with a same-gender clergyperson.

Separately, we ask whether male and female congregation members participate in politics at differing levels depending on the gender of their clergyperson. This potential difference would not be a simple function of augmented political motivation, since clergy regularly encourage their congregations to participate (often independent of a particular goal, too: Djupe and Gilbert 2003). We hypothesize that congregation members will report higher levels of political participation when they are of the same gender as their clergyperson. We test the same interaction as discussed above – gender should interact with an opinion difference with the clergy – and with the same expectation. We also test an interaction of gender with civic skills. We suspect that women members may receive a subsidy from a female clergyperson when they are not otherwise organizationally involved (exercising few civic skills).

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Data and methods

The data needed to assess this line of inquiry are scarce. Ideally, organizations and their members would be sampled with quotas on the descriptive characteristics of leaders sufficient to enable powerful statistical tests. Given the anemic presence of women in leadership positions, these design choices often conflict with other goals of researchers, which are to be representative of a population. This conflict affects the data we draw on for these initial explorations.

The data we use to test our hypotheses were gathered in two stages.[4] Starting in the fall of 1998, 2400 clergy in two mainline Protestant[5] denominations – the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church – were surveyed by mail, 19% of whom were women. From among the 2400 clergy respondents (Djupe and Gilbert 2003), 50 congregations from each denomination (for a total of 100 congregations) were sampled to participate in a follow-up mail survey of congregation members. Sixty congregations (38 ELCA and 22 Episcopal) agreed to participate, 12% of which were led by women clergy (due to missing data, we end up with 6 female-headed congregations and 45 male-headed congregations). From these congregations, about 1600 completed surveys (1050 ELCA and 550 Episcopal) were returned, yielding a response rate of 27% (13% of respondents were in clergywoman-led congregations).[6]

Because of the research design, clergy reports may be tied directly to congregation member responses. Not only do we know what the clergy themselves reported doing, but we also know how their congregation members perceived them. The survey asked detailed questions about respondents' political attitudes and information environments, including their perceptions of the frequency of their clergyperson's political speech (Appendix 1). Clergy were asked how often they addressed various issues publicly in the last year, whereas congregation members were asked how often they heard clergy speak on the same political issues. Thus, we are able to assess the difference between clergy's own accounts of the frequency with which they spoke publicly about political issues and their congregation members' recollections of such speech. Moreover, clergy and congregation members were asked identical opinion questions about a range of issues, permitting direct measurement of clergy-laity political agreement.

While it would be optimal to include a wider variety of religious traditions in this analysis, there simply are very few women clergy outside of mainline Protestant (and Jewish) denominations (Chaves 1997; Konieczny and Chaves 2000; Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang 1998). The only two broad religious traditions that are numerically larger than mainline Protestantism in the USA – evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism – do not ordain women (save for a small smattering of evangelical women clergy, most of whom do not lead their own congregations: Konieczny and Chaves 2000). Examining mainline Protestants also is analytically useful since looking for gender effects among members of this religious tradition heightens the difficulty of our task. Mainline Protestant church members are typically better educated than the average American (Park and Reimer 2002; Smith and Faris 2005; Wuthnow and Evans 2002), and mainline clergy by and large share a longstanding and deeply felt emphasis on fighting for social justice, including gender equality (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Quinley 1974; Tipton 2008). Given that all of the mainline Protestant denominations had begun ordaining women by the 1970s (Chaves 1997), we might expect to observe little systematic variance among mainline Protestant congregations with male and female clergy. Any effects we do find should be all the more convincing and should be expected to be even greater in other religious traditions were they to host women as clergy.

Throughout this line of inquiry, researchers confront the argument that selection effects are driving the results. This argument contends that people choose the people and groups with which they interact to emphasize agreement, so any correlations found are simply artifacts of personal preference. Scholars' early responses to the selection argument were to include sufficient

individual-level controls so that social influence could be demonstrated statistically in the presence of preference (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Later work assessed social influence in the context of field experiments in which the effect of preference is nullified by random assignment (Klofstad 2007; Nickerson 2005). These studies have served to verify the previous generation's results generated from cross-sectional data.

Important for our effort here, the average political participation and political interest rates in male-headed versus female-headed congregations are statistically equivalent (1.48 vs. 1.45 political acts for female-headed congregations [$p = .92$]; 49% vs. 44% very politically interested in female-headed congregations [$p = .45$]). Still, it is possible that one of two selection bias dynamics could be at work. First, activist female congregation members might push for the hiring of a clergywoman in cases where congregational leaders have a say in the call process. Second, people who choose to attend churches[7] headed by women clergy might well differ meaningfully from those who choose to attend churches headed by men. After all, some studies do suggest that women-led congregations have especially sizable proportions of female members (Ammerman 1997; Konieczny and Chaves 2000).

Respondents in the data set we use here do differ, but only slightly. As Figure 1 shows in Panel A that sample men are more conservative than sample women (by about .3 points on a five-point scale). This difference is maintained between men and women in male-headed congregations, and grows slightly in female-headed congregations (to just under .5 points, which is a result of the presence of more liberal women in such churches). In Panel B, we see that women think "women's issues" are more important than men think they are, by about half a point on a five-point scale. This difference (and the baseline levels) remains the same regardless of the gender of the clergyperson. Finally, in Panel C, we assess educational differences between men and women (on a five-point scale). Sample men are uniformly more educated than sample women (by just over .4 points on a five-point scale). While the gap between the sexes remains, both men and women attending congregations headed by women are more educated overall (by about .3).

Figure 1 compares all members of sample congregations. We also checked to see whether different kinds of people *joined* congregations headed by women clergy using the same variables as in Figure 1 (results not shown). We started by assessing whether the member joined the congregation during the tenure of the current clergyperson. Although we have no way of knowing the gender of the congregation's previous clergyperson (nor, for that matter, any of the dynamics surrounding the naming of its current clergyperson), statistically the previous clergyperson was more likely to have been a male than a female given the relatively recent growth in the number of women clergy and their continued minority status in the ministry (Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang 1998). Thus, we distinguish between newer members, who could self-select by current clergy gender, and pre-existing members. Overall, newer members overall are equally likely to be females as existing members (about 64% in each group are female), are more educated (by about .2 on a five-point scale; $p = .00$), are equally conservative, and are slightly less concerned about women's issues (by .09 on a five-point scale; $p = .01$). Among newer members of male-headed congregations, the results do not vary much from the overall sample, although new members are slightly more liberal than existing members (by .07; $p = .08$). The results are a bit different among newer members of female-headed congregations. Newer members are more likely to be *male* (by 11% [$p = .05$]; existing members are the same proportion female as in the overall sample: 64%). Newer members are also equally as educated as existing members, more *conservative* (by .24; $p = .02$), and equally as concerned about "women's issues."[8]

Taken together, these comparisons suggest that people who attend female-headed congregations are *slightly* different than those who attend congregations headed by male clergy, even though the gaps in important variables between men and women inside these congregations

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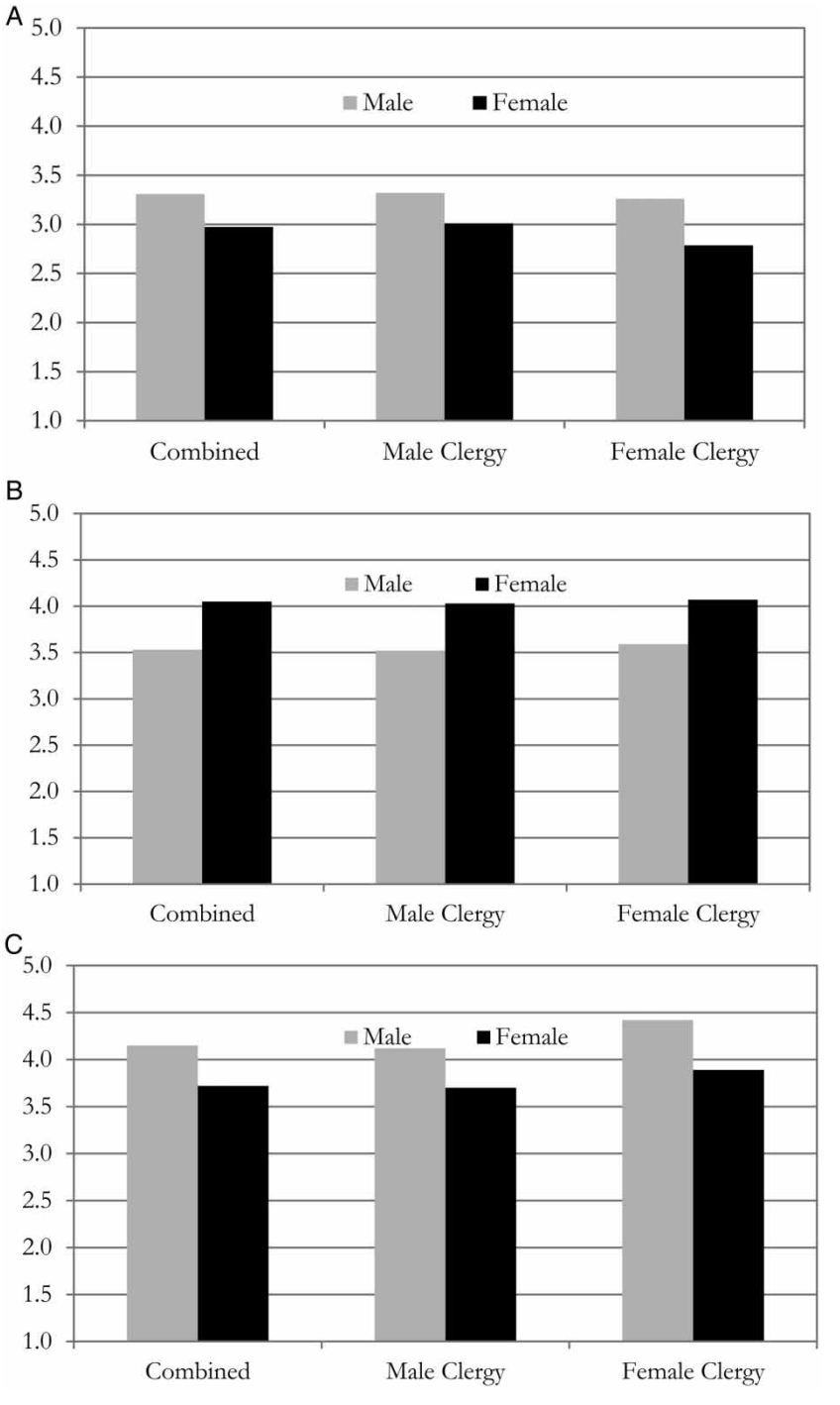

Figure 1. Comparisons of men and women members by the leadership of their congregation. Panel A – ideology of men and women members by clergy gender. Panel B – importance of women's issues for men and women by clergy gender. Panel C – education levels of men and women by clergy gender. Source: 1998–2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Studies.

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remain essentially the same. Moreover, the characteristics of people who joined female-headed congregations during their tenures do not suggest rampant self-selection. In fact, when women clergy preside, a few more conservatives, men, and those who are not as deeply concerned with women's issues as are pre-existing members tend to join. This is precisely the *opposite* profile one would expect if self-selection dynamics were at work. Nevertheless, because of the slight differences between members attending male- versus female-headed congregations, we will conduct our analyses by comparing the differences between male and female members holding the gender of the clergyperson constant (thus comparing men and women members of congregations separately by clergy gender).

These data are also nested, as individuals are sampled within sampled congregations. This desirable feature of the data enables investigation of descriptive representation in the first place, but places additional demands on the researcher. A particular concern is the potential presence of correlated errors among congregants, translating into the possibility of smaller standard errors and a consequent increase in probability of committing a type 1 error (failure to reject a true null hypothesis: a false positive). This is especially a problem treating "level 2" (aggregate, in this case clergy and congregations) variables as if they were at the individual level; their values are the same for potentially large numbers of cases and thus have deflated standard errors. There are several accepted ways to treat such data, including correcting the standard errors for clustering (though see Harden 2011) and, ideally, explicit modeling of the multiple levels at which data are gathered (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Steenbergen and Jones 2002).

The limitations of these data are very quickly reached in a hierarchical model with a level 2 n of only 51, especially with only 6 female-headed congregations that display little variation among them. There are numerous variables capturing the congregational context and describing the clergyperson that should be included, but the fragility of the model prevents a kitchen sink approach. For instance, because of the diversity of the sample, a state dummy is collinear with a set of church dummies. Moreover, the interactions necessary to test our hypotheses begin to become unmanageable in a single model context (e.g. clergy gender × clergy speech × member gender) when one of those variables is not taken out of the equation. In the end, we present model results with unclustered standard errors that employ a pseudo fixed effect: dummies establishing what quartile the congregation is in with regard to its mean political interest/participation rate. These estimates should be considered suggestive of what might hold when more appropriate modeling strategies are not foreclosed by data limitations.

Before we proceed to those models, it is useful to note one benefit of hierarchical modeling: its ability to justify modeling the aggregate level. Is there a significant amount of variance at the congregational level? A simple model of the constant only, known as the "ANOVA model" (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), offers an estimate of the level 1 residuals along with whether the level 2 clusters contain significant variation from the sample mean. In this case, the variance in political participation at the individual level in these data is 4.01 (standard error = .11), while the level 2 variance is .32 (SE = .08). Both variances are distinguishable from zero, though clearly most (92%) of the variance is located at the individual level. The apportionment of the variance is similar for political interest.

Results: political interest

We first investigate a standard measure of motivation to engage in politics: political interest. Because of the distribution of our dependent variable with only 7% claiming to be "not very interested," we collapse the "somewhat interested" and "not interested" categories and thus use a logistic regression model comparing congregation members who report being very politically interested with those who do not.

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Table 2 provides estimates of political interest separately for people who attend churches headed by female and male clergy. There, many of our expectations about the effects of having a female clergyperson on congregation members' political interest are borne out. The strong positive coefficient for women in churches headed by a female clergyperson (results column 1) indicates the boost provided by descriptive representation. However, this variable is implicated in a significant interaction with clergy-member opinion difference and must therefore be interpreted in that context. The interaction is graphed in the top panel of Figure 2, which shows the marginal effect of being a female member given the extent of the opinion difference. A more negative opinion difference signals that the member is more conservative than the clergyperson; a zero signals agreement. The probability of being very politically interested is depressed among the most conservative women, dropping by about 20%. There is no gender difference throughout the rest of the range until agreement is reached (a zero on the scale), where women receive a boost of about 20% in their likelihood to express a high level of interest in politics. If it were possible to be much more liberal than these women clergy, which it is not, then the pattern would likely mirror the left side of the graph.

In congregations headed by a male clergyperson, women members have a lower propensity to express high levels of political interest. The overall interaction between gender and clergy-member opinion difference is insignificant. However, this is merely a summary statistic; global significance tests for interaction terms do not indicate the interaction is significant across all portions of the range (Kam and Franzese 2007). Thus, "significant" interaction terms must be explored further to assess the active range. The converse also is not true: finding an "insignificant"

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Table 2. The effects of church leadership on member political interest (logistic regression estimates).

	Congregations headed by women clergy Coeff. (SE)	Congregations headed by male clergy Coeff. (SE)
R is female	1.17 (.56)**	−.31 (.15)***
Clergy-member opinion difference	1.47 (2.16)	.47 (.33)
Female × opinion difference	2.98 (1.12)***	−.47 (.39)
Clergy public speech	−.09 (.23)	.01 (.03)
Education	.79 (.18)***	−.01 (.05)
Income	−.06 (.12)	.02 (.03)
Partisan strength	.63 (.19)***	.69 (.06)***
Church skills	.07 (.13)	.15 (.05)***
Job skills	−.38 (.12)***	−.09 (.04)**
Group skills	.36 (.11)***	.23 (.04)***
Church attendance	.00 (.17)	−.11 (.05)**
First church interest mean quartile	.26 (.83)	−1.26 (.16)***
Second quartile	−.94 (.49)*	−.64 (.15)***
Third quartile	−.20 (.77)	−.38 (.15)***
Constant	−3.90 (1.48)***	−1.31 (.37)***
	$N = 302$	1947
	LR $\chi^2 = 71.11^{\dagger}$	$317.56^{\dagger}$
	% correctly predicted = 74.50	66.51
	Expected % correctly predicted = 61.77	57.71

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 = very interested (47%) and 0 = somewhat or not interested (53%).
Source: 1998–2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Studies.
*$p < .10$ (two-tailed).
**$p < .05$.
***$p < .01$.
$^{\dagger}p < .001$, one-tailed χ^2 test.

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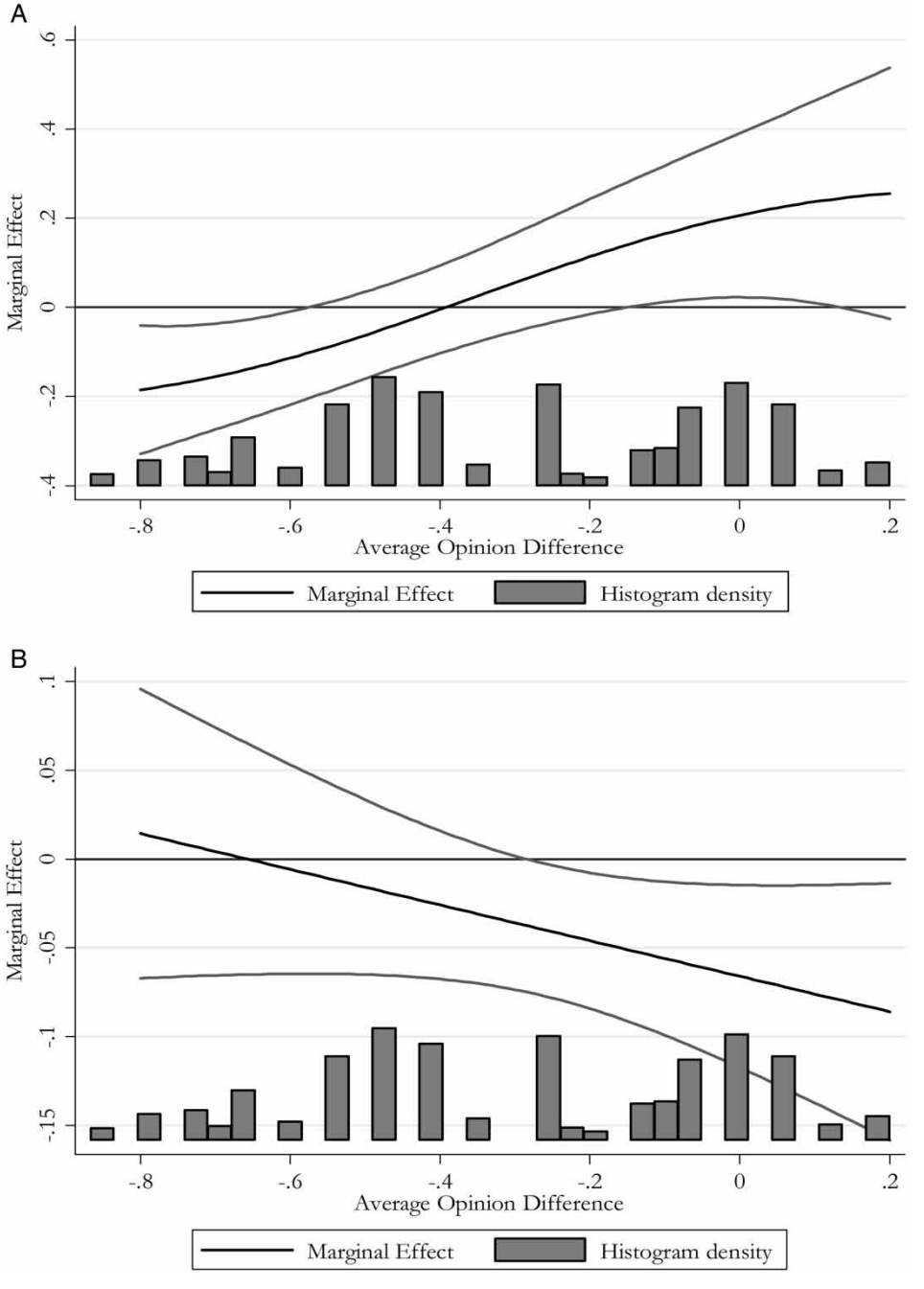

Figure 2. The marginal effect of being female in churches headed by female (Panel A) and male (Panel B) clergy given the amount of opinion difference the member has with the clergyperson (with 90% confidence intervals). Panel A – female-headed congregations. Panel B – male-headed congregations.
Source: 1998–2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Studies. Estimates from Table 2.

interaction term does not indicate that there are no distinguishable effects whatsoever. Panel B of Figure 2 shows that relationship, which reverses the pattern in Panel A. That is, the most conservative men and women are indistinguishable (left side), but as agreement with the clergyperson is approached, we see a discernible negative effect for women. Put differently, when men share political dispositions with a male clergyperson, their propensity to be politically interested increases in comparison with women's. If clergy place special emphasis on issues that traditionally are of greater concern to one gender, we would expect, for instance, women to respond with increased attention to women clergy while men remain unresponsive. The results are consistent with this story.

Other elements in this model perform as we might expect. Strength of partisanship is related to greater political interest, as are skills practiced in an organization (reflecting associational involvement), while skills practiced in a job environment exert negative effects in both models. Education is significant in women-headed churches only, while skills practiced in church affects interest in male-headed churches only.

Thus, even in the presence of strong controls, we find clear evidence of different kinds of politically relevant responses by men and women to male and female clergy. Motivation to engage in the political process clearly is affected by organizational leadership, and descriptive representation is influential. Exactly *how* it is influential depends on the nature of the political cues provided within the organization. Women respond positively to agreement with female clergy, while men benefit from agreement with male clergy.

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Results: political participation

We now move to examine how the political *participation* of men and women is affected by descriptive representation in the pulpit. We hypothesize that members whose gender matches that of their clergyperson will participate in politics more than opposite-gender counterparts. Without controls, there is rather remarkable evidence of the potency of descriptive representation's effect on participation: men engage in significantly more political activities when they attend a male-headed church (1.65 activities vs. 1.19 among women), but women engage in more political activity than men when attending female-headed churches (1.56 activities vs. 1.35 among men). That suggests that women actually open up a positive (and significant) gender gap when they attend churches headed by women clergy.

It is necessary to impose controls, though, and the estimates for these effects in the presence of controls appear in Table 3. We add a variety of individual-level explanations, including education and income, as well as elements of a now-standard explanation for political activity: practicing civic skills in various contexts (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). In fact, one additional explanation we wish to test is whether the application of civic skills to political activity varies by respondent and clergy gender. We suspect that a boost in participation may accrue to the least organizationally involved individuals only, because civic skill practice is such a powerful force in leveling political participation rates.

In the presence of controls, women receive a boost in political participation when they attend churches headed by women clergy,[9] but again gender cannot be understood here outside of the interaction terms in our model. Church-based civic skills have a positive and significant effect on political participation in the model for churches headed by women, although the positive effect is moderated by the respondent's gender. The top panel of Figure 3 shows clearly that the boost in participation rates that women receive from attending a church with a woman clergyperson is limited to those who are not organizationally active (practicing zero civic skills in church). Women's participatory advantage over men dissipates rapidly as their exercise of

Table 3. The effects of church leadership on member political participation (OLS regression estimates).

	Congregations headed by women clergy Coeff. (SE)	Congregations headed by male clergy Coeff. (SE)
R is female	.77 (.43)*	.06 (.14)
Church skills	.29 (.13)**	.05 (.06)
Female × church skills	−.24 (.17)[14]	.09 (.08)
Clergy public speech	.57 (.81)	.02 (.03)
Clergy-member opinion difference	−.34 (.67)	−.80 (.28)***
Female × opinion difference	.84 (.79)	.57 (.32)*
Education	.12 (.12)	.13 (.04)***
Income	.19 (.08)**	.04 (.03)
Partisan strength	.30 (.12)***	.17 (.05)***
Political interest	1.12 (.21)***	.94 (.09)***
Job skills	−.09 (.08)	.05 (.03)
Group skills	.46 (.08)***	.36 (.04)***
Church attendance	−.53 (.12)***	.03 (.04)
First church political activity mean quartile	.19 (1.97)	−1.14 (.12)***
Second quartile	−1.76 (.53)***	−.95 (.13)***
Third quartile	−1.61 (.90)*	−.61 (.13)***
Constant	−.36 (1.87)	−.28 (.31)
	N = 302	1947
	Adj R^2 = .33	.23

Note: See Appendix 1 for variable coding.
Source: 1998–2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Studies.
*p < .10 (two-tailed).
**p < .05.
***p < .01.

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church leadership grows, which suggests the civic skill subsidy applies equally to men and women in women-headed churches. In male-headed churches, civic skill practice has no effect on political activity; neither is there a differential effect between men and women at any point in the range of the interaction (results not shown).[10]

Instead, in male-headed churches, there is a significant interaction between member gender and clergy-member opinion differences. As shown in the bottom panel of Figure 3, the estimates show that women are particularly affected by disagreement; the political activity of more conservative women is depressed more than men's. In contrast to the political interest effects (Figure 2), there is no advantage for either gender when they agree with the male clergyperson, and more liberal women are marginally more active than are more liberal men. There is no gendered effect of clergy-member disagreement in women-headed churches at any point in the range (results not shown).

We observe these effects of descriptive representation even when controlling for the standard explanations imposed in most models of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). We included individual resource explanations, such as education and income, in addition to the motivational variables of political interest and intensity of partisanship. These variables all show relationships to political participation that are consistent with the literature. Some are not significant in both models, but the signs and magnitudes are quite closely aligned. The effects of the civic skills variables depend on their generating context. Skills practiced on the job are insignificant predictors, whereas group-based skills boost activity.

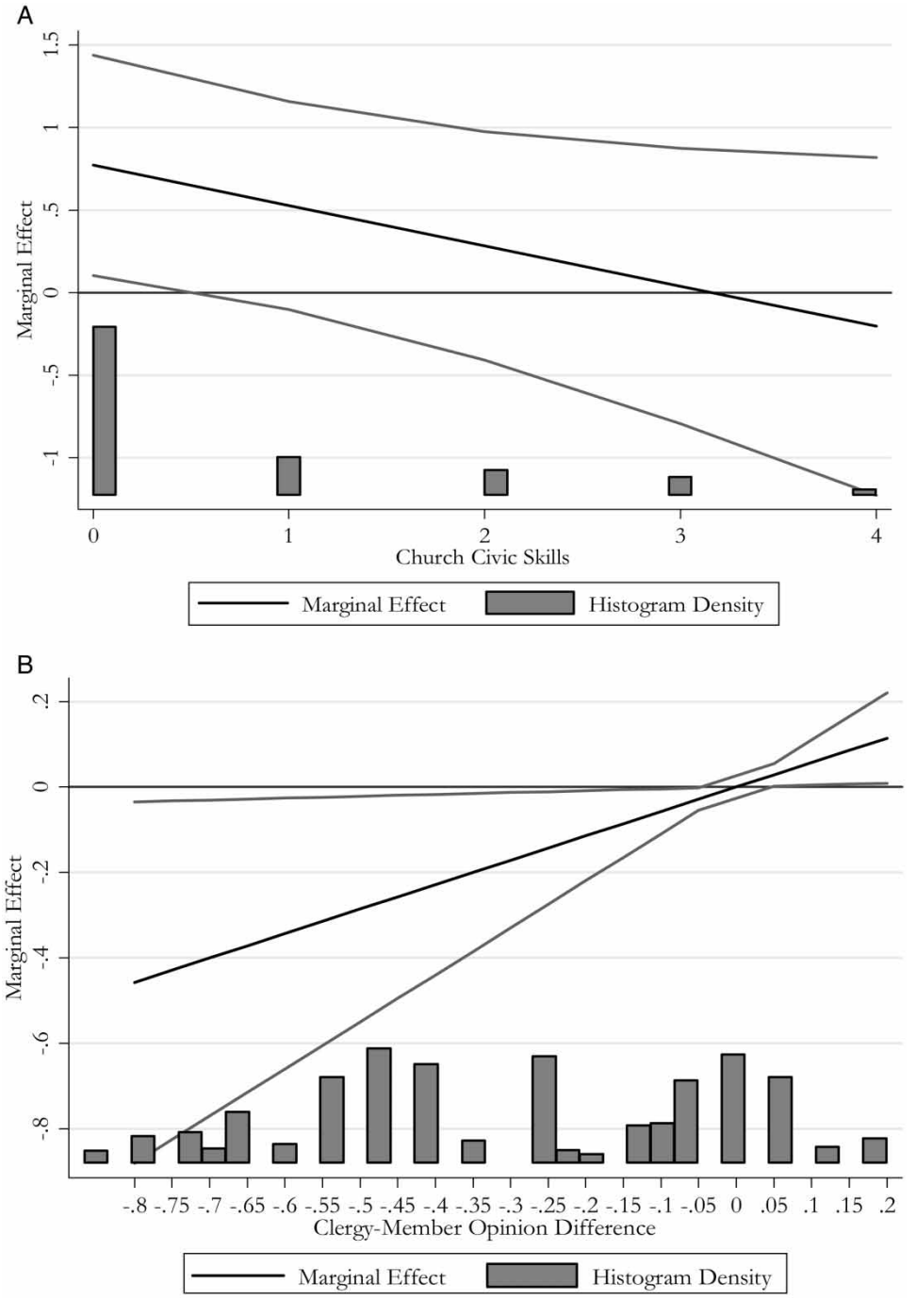

Figure 3. Marginal effects of being female on their political participation given the number of civic skills practiced in church in female-headed congregations (Panel A) and given the opinion difference with the male clergy (Panel B) (90% confidence intervals). Panel A – female × civic skills, female-headed congregations. Panel B – female × opinion difference, male-headed congregations.
Source: 1998–2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Studies. Estimates from Table 3.

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Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to expand the reach of research about the effects of descriptive representation on citizens. Primarily, we note that previous studies have focused solely on representation in government, which leaves a rather large lacuna in the literature. Associations for long have been noted as essential forces in promoting the political activism of their members, and organizational leaders often attempt to represent their members before society and government. Thus, the person who occupies the leadership post in a voluntary association (of which a church is a prominent type) will shape the kind of representational benefits offered by the association. This benefit package should affect members' motivation to get involved in politics, shape their civic skills, and influence whether they attract political recruitment overtures (Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert 2007).

Our findings legitimate the concerns of people (like social movement leaders) who wish to diversify the institutions of American life beyond government. Descriptive representation and the substantive political content that attaches to it appear to affect both political motivation and participation in political life. In short, attending a church with a female clergyperson enhances women's political interest and participation. These effects are not universal, but interactive. Women who engage in more civic skill-building activities in churches with female clergy do not gain any additional benefit, but instead participate at the same rates as men. Women are sensitive to disagreement in female-headed congregations, expressing interest at a reduced rate, and do not respond positively to the same degree as men do to agreement with their male clergyperson. In this way, our conclusions align with previous findings that descriptive representation matters. We add the caveat that descriptive representation is contingent on the substance of the interests expressed by the representative.

This study is notable for the very fact that we find direct effects of clergy on citizen political behavior. Most of the extant studies find little to no effect (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Smith 2008). It is useful to conceive of congregations as tiny publics that are susceptible to social identity differentiation. While we find clergy effects, they are contingent in several ways that belie simple assumptions.

Generally speaking, our study challenges the dominant treatment of associations in the production of politically engaged citizens. When Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001; see also Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) discuss variation in "institutional treatment," they are referring to the norms that govern institutions – not the people who populate them. What we show, echoing previous research (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert 2007), is that the population distribution of associations plays an essential role in their democratic capacity-instilling powers. Civil society can be the great equalizer of civic resources, but only with the right leadership and membership.

We think the call of this research is clear: investigation into the effects of descriptive representation outside the context of government can be fruitful. Managers, chief executive officers, team leaders, chapter chairs, and association presidents all may play leadership roles similar to those of clergy. Clergy may be distinctive because of the frequency with which they address politics as a matter of course, but it is not their primary mission (Crawford and Olson 2001). Still, any organizational leader has the capability to set a tone and emphasize particular issues that may influence whether and how people think about and participate in the politics of the nation.

Notes

1. But see Lawless (2004) and Poggione (2004), both of whom argue that women voters' positive response to female elected officials may be rooted primarily in partisan agreement. See Dolan (2008) for a review of the literature in this vein.
2. The trend across the decade shows some fluctuation, hovering around 14%, as given in Table 1.

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3. Unpublished research by Brian Calfano and Elizabeth Oldmixon show that even Catholic priests are responsive to their congregations on the most important of issues: abortion.
4. These data are publicly available from the American Religion Data Archive. The clergy data are here: <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/ELCACLRG.asp>. The congregation member data are here: <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/ELCA2000.asp>.
5. Mainline Protestants are more theologically – and increasingly politically – liberal than their evangelical counterparts. Mainline denominations, such as the Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church, are old, large, and hierarchical. See Wuthnow and Evans (2002) for an overview of mainline Protestantism in contemporary American society and politics.
6. Although the data were collected in 1998, we have no strong theoretical reason to suspect that our results would vary dramatically were we to replicate the study today. Men remain the dominant gender in the ministry, and the religious traditions that allow women to serve as clergy remain more theologically and politically liberal.
7. Our use of the terms "church" and "churches" reflects the fact that our study included congregations in the Christian tradition only.
8. The gap between newer and older members of .07 points on a five-point scale is essentially the same as in male-headed congregations (.08) and in the total sample (.09). The sample size for those in women-headed congregations, however, is less than one-sixth of the entire sample, which is why the difference is insignificant.
9. In a combined, full-sample model, the interaction between respondent gender and clergy gender is significant, confirming that women have significantly higher political participation rates in churches headed by women clergy.
10. Djupe and Gilbert (2009) show that in order to connect civic skill practiced in church to political activity, the church needs to be politically charged. Women-headed churches in this sample are almost uniformly so, whereas there is variance among male-headed churches. This distribution surely explains why church-based skills have varying effects across models.

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Appendix 1. Variable coding

Note: "R" refers to the main survey respondent.

R is very politically interested (Table 2 dependent variable) "Would you say that you were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in the 1998 political campaigns? 1 = Very much interested, 0 = Somewhat interested or Not much interested.

Political Activity (Table 3 dependent variable) Average frequency (1 = never to 5 = very often) of ten political activities: Call, write, email a politician; participate in local politics, such as planning boards or councils; contribute to political campaigns; work for a political campaign; put out a political yard sign; march or protest for a cause; wear a political button; help register others to vote; join a national political group; write a letter to the editor about a political issue.

R is female 1 = female, 0 = male respondent.

Clergy Public Speech "How often have you addressed the following issues publicly in any way in the last year?" 0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = seldom, 3 = often, 4 = very often. This index is an average of clergy

responses to 16 issues they may have addressed in the past year: hunger and poverty, environment, education, civil rights, women's issues, unemployment/economy, gay rights, government spending/deficits, family problems, gambling laws, homosexuality, current political scandals, capital punishment, abortion, prayer in public schools, national defense.

Clergy Member Opinion Difference Clergy and church members were asked identical opinion questions on hunger and poverty, government services, environmental protection, defense spending, school prayer, abortion, gun control, gay rights, welfare reform, minority treatment, national health insurance, and capital punishment. Respondents were presented with a statement they could agree or disagree with, each coded strongly agree to strongly disagree (the direction depends on the statement and was determined by the high value being the conservative one). We take the difference, so this variable sums the difference between the clergy's and church member's opinion, which we then averaged across all included issue questions. It ranges from −4 to 4.

Education "What is the highest level of education that you have received?" 1 = less than high school, 2 = finished high school or GED, 3 = some college or associate's, 4 = four year college degree, 5 = more than 4 years of college.

Income "In what category does your total family income fall before taxes?" 1 = under $25,000, 2 = 25–35,000, 3 = 35–45,000, 4 = 45–65,000, 5 = 65–85,000, 6 = over 85,000.

Partisan strength Using the traditional three-question construction of partisanship, we folded the scale, such that 1 = independent, 2 = independent leaner, 3 = weak partisan, 4 = strong partisan.

Church/Group/Job-based skills "In the past year, have you done any of the following activities in Church, on your Job, in a Group/Organization setting, or in some Other setting? Circle all that apply." The index ranges from 0 to 4, with one point if the respondent had written a letter, given a speech/presentation, planned a meeting, studied/discussed a political issue with a group in their church, group, or as a part of their jobs, respectively.

Table A1. Descriptive statistics for the overall sample and for churches headed by men and women clergy.

	Overall Sample		Women Clergy		Men Clergy		*t*-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*p*
Political participation	1.47	2.09	1.41	1.97	1.46	2.09	.65
Political interest	.47	.50	.45	.50	.49	.50	.13
Clergy public speech	2.27	1.64	2.80	.86	2.18	1.73	.00
Clergy-member opinion difference	−.29	.27	−.42	.24	−.28	.27	.00
Education	3.87	1.10	4.10	1.02	3.84	1.10	.00
Income	4.23	1.66	4.62	1.54	4.16	1.67	.00
Partisan strength	3.09	.92	3.11	.87	3.09	.92	.66
Female	.64	.48	.60	.49	.65	.48	.08
Church skills	.65	1.06	.77	1.10	.64	1.06	.04
Job skills	1.15	1.44	1.61	1.55	1.10	1.41	.00
Group skills	.94	1.24	1.05	1.28	.91	1.23	.06
Church attendance	4.01	1.07	4.08	.92	4.00	1.08	.15
South	.09	.29	.00	.00	.11	.31	.00
Midwest	.51	.50	.51	.50	.52	.50	.61
Northeast	.25	.43	.10	.30	.26	.44	.00
West	.15	.36	.40	.49	.12	.32	.00

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