

Am I the shepherd of this flock or its pet lamb?

—Campbell and Pettigrew (1959: 131)

During the height of the 2004 presidential campaign, Greg Boyd, a mega church pastor in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota was repeatedly confronted by members of his mostly conservative, middle class congregation who wanted their minister to be more politically engaged. Boyd was asked to publicize a rally against gay marriage from the pulpit, allow anti-abortion activists to set up an information table in the lobby, and hang an American flag in the sanctuary. To all of these requests, the pastor demurred. Finally, after a long period of silence, Boyd delivered a six part sermon series that was eventually turned into a book entitled *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, in which the pastor described his belief in the strong separation of church and state. One of Boyd's sermons included the line, "I am sorry to tell you that America is not the light of the world and the hope of the world. The light of the world and the hope of the world is Jesus Christ." The results were immediate and devastating, with average church attendance declining by nearly 1,000 congregants in the wake of Boyd's remarks. In addition, the church suffered a shortfall in both volunteers and budget leading to the termination of four staff members (Goodstein 2006).

The Greg Boyd story is one that can be explained through a variety of theoretical lenses, but the most important may be the disconnect between how Boyd's congregation viewed the pastor's role in political affairs and how Pastor Boyd wished to position himself in relation to politics. It is likely that this tension is apparent in many religious environments and only becomes visible when a member of the clergy decides to stake out a position on political matters in defiance of a congregation's wishes. But the story is about more than disagreement – it is also about the call from the congregation for the clergy to be their representative, to amplify their voices and interests in the public sphere.

The idea that clergy are *political representatives* of their congregation's interests and the conditions under which they adopt such a role are understudied and under-theorized. Mirroring the larger debate in regards to the proper role of religion in democratic society, representation is a tricky proposition for clergy as they debate whether to remain loyal to either their principals (their congregations) or their principles (their beliefs and values), though of course both are possible. The literature that has examined the role of clergy as political elites has largely focused on just the mechanisms, both internal and external, that drive political activity. While this research has provided a number of possible motivations for clergy becoming politically engaged, little previous scholarship has linked that activity to just what is being represented.

Clergy-Centric Research

A superficial glance at a member of the clergy would likely leave one to conclude that they are uniquely situated to engage in the political process in an effective way. Many clergy have high levels of education (Guth et al. 1997; McDaniel 2008), possess significant organizational resources (Djupe and Gilbert 2002), earn middle class incomes (Perl and Chang 2000), and have a great deal of flexibility in regards to how they spend their time (Brunette-Hill and Finke 1999). Taken together, these attributes would lead to an individual ideally situated to be highly politically engaged and to help mobilize those around them to become involved in the political process (Nie and Verba 1987; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). However, some of the earliest work in the field concluded just the opposite – clergy were both hesitant to speak about politically charged issues from the pulpit and were also averse to being seen engaging in any sort of political activity beyond voting in primaries and general elections (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Hadden 1969; Quinley 1974).

This initial finding was met by subsequent research with a significant amount of disagreement regarding the amount of political activity in which clergy engage (it was much higher by the turn of the century), but agreed that clergy were constrained by both the institutions and

communities in which they found themselves (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; McDaniel 2008) as well as their social theology (Guth et al. 1997). The external factors that exert an influence on the way that clergy behave politically start with a minister's audience – the local congregation. A clergy's primary audience and most important asset are the individuals who occupy the pews during each worship service. The importance of these regular attendees was described by Harold Quinley who wrote, "(Clergy) rely on their parishioners not only to pay the churches' bills, but also for the very rationale for their existence" (299; see also Djupe and Gilbert 2003). Clergy are acutely aware of the political inclinations of their local congregation and take a varied approach based on the distance between their personal ideology and their perception of the congregation. If clergy believe that they are ideologically similar they will engage in a wide variety of political activity (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Owens 2007; McDaniel 2008), while if they are ideologically distant they may attempt to provide countervailing arguments (Djupe and Neiheisel 2007) or remain largely silent (Stark et al. 1971), though Djupe and Gilbert (2003) found substantial evidence of a "prophetic pulpit."

In addition to pressures felt from the local congregation, many clergy have close ties to their denominational hierarchy and they can oftentimes feel the need to conform to the behavior patterns of colleagues (Ammerman 1980), which may mean finding support from them (Calfano 2009). For example, during the school desegregation crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas researchers described a denominational structure that encouraged pastors to speak out for the cause of integration, however many clergy understood that taking a public stand would alienate many church goers and drive down church attendance. Campbell and Pettigrew (1959: 130) wrote, "Defense of racial integration in Little Rock came to mean lost members, lost financial support, and a lost opportunity to build the north wing." Additional research has also reinforced this assertion, finding that clergy are not only sensitive to the ideology of their congregation, but also alter their sermon topics to reflect the political sensibilities of the laity (Calfano et al. 2013).

This is to say that the dominant approach in this literature is to view clergy as *fidei defensor*, acting in defense and in advocacy of their faith. There is good reason to think of clergy in this way, of course, but it is not the only way. In fact, this approach sets up a false dichotomy between the clergy and congregation or denomination, thinking only of the ways in which these external factors may limit clergy freedom to advocate for their own interests. This assumption ignores that the faith of some clergy encourages them to seek to represent the interests of their congregations, that faith traditions provide wide latitude in terms of what and how clergy advocate, that clergy develop connections and compassion for their congregants that compels action on their behalf, and that these factors are conditioned on the political and religious environments that incentivize action. That is, there is a lot that is missing from accounts that restrict the roles of clergy and the nature of the relationship between the clergy and congregations.

Agents of Principles or Principals?

One of the ways we can capture this richer sense of how clergy understand their role is in terms of representation. Representation is a complex relational concept that incorporates many of the ambiguities we seek to understand about clergy. From one perspective we can think about clergy as agents who are delegated tasks to carryout. Just who or what provides direction regarding those tasks is one of the primary ambiguities for political as well as religious representatives (McDaniel 2008, 79). In short, clergy may represent principles (a set of ideas about how the world should work) or principals (congregation members and others who have the responsibility to hire and fire them). In another literature, these are summarized differently – representatives may be delegates, following the interests of constituents literally, or are trustees, making decisions on behalf of constituents whether they agree with those decisions or not (Schneier and Gross 1993; Thomas and Pika 1997). These roles need not drive different decisions, but they might, and, more importantly, they entail very different motivations for action.

Resolving the extent to which these (potentially) competing motivations are drivers of clergy behavior is an essential task in understanding their political significance in a democracy. There is nothing anti-democratic about advocating from a theological or ideological position. However, American religion has long been marked by a significant degree of anti-clericalism (Finke and Stark 2005; Hatch 198), where any elevation in stature of the clergy over others was seen as at odds with the American tradition. Thus, the practical effects of a trustee/principled perspective on representation may entail less influence. The frequent criticism of American denominations as “generals without armies” encapsulates this notion neatly (Nazworth 2013). This, then, highlights the other side of the coin, which is that a delegate model would augment the trust in and credibility of the representative – a persistent finding regarding political representatives (Lupia and McCubbins 1998).

Lastly, finding evidence of the delegational pulpit may shift our view of religion in a democracy. If one view of religion is that its concerns are orthogonal to political norms and pressures, then finding delegates in the pulpit indicates the extent to which religion bends to the political distributions of their congregants. Religion, in this instance, might be seen as a force looking to mend representational deficits and seeking to make a more perfect union.

Explanations of Representational Behavior

The choice for a member of the clergy to take a representational role for their local congregation is one that is fraught with a number of potential risks and benefits. As befits an actor at the center of a complex social system, we organize clergy’s decision making calculus along the lines of three guiding questions. We make no claim that these three questions are descriptive of the entire process, however we believe that they touch upon the three primary areas that previous literature has considered in regards to the political activity of clergy (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003;

McDaniel 2008): their own motivations, their links with the congregation, and their thoughts of how the actions will be received in the community.

Do I support being a representative?

Perhaps the most significant factor that could shape clergy representational roles may be the same driving force that compelled many clergy to pursue the field of ministry – theology. Many ministers note that they were “called” to ministry through their understanding of God’s purpose for their lives (Christopherson 1994). Many clergy take this calling a step further and believe that their understanding of God’s call is not limited to a minister being the religious leader of a congregation but also the laity’s political representative to the community. Some research has provided support for this claim with Olson (2000) concluding that a significant minority of subjects were political leaders largely because they believed that taking on such a role was part of their divine calling.

While personal theology describes the way that an individual member of the clergy relates to God, other scholars have noted that most ministers also rely on a well-developed social theology which is concerned with what role the Church plays in the world (Guth et al. 1997). The potential clash of this notion with the congregation has been noted, even attributing blame to social theology for “the gathering storm in the churches” – with clergy believing that the role of the congregation as to “move beyond the four walls of the church,” while the laymen, “seeks comfort and escape from the world in the sanctuary of God” (Hadden 1969: 99). This tension is precisely the one we describe: either act in a way that comports with their social theology (a trustee) or remain silent in effort to appease their congregations and maintain the post as a pastor (a delegate).

However, not all clergy react in similar ways when placed in a situation that would typically lead to clergy taking on a representative role. For example, research in this field has consistently arrived at the conclusion that younger, less experienced ministers were much less likely to engage in political activity. The relationship between political activity and length of tenure was found to be

curvilinear with the most politically active clergy being mid-career, followed by an overall drop off as the pastor reached retirement age (Djupe and Gilbert 2003: 32; McDaniel 2008; Olson 2000).

Also worth consideration is the impact that gender has on the theology and personal motivation of clergy. Studies on this subject has concluded that while women make up a small portion of the overall clergy population, they are slightly more likely to engage in political activity than their male counterparts (Deckman et al. 2003; Djupe and Gilbert 2003: 22). In addition, female clergy take a different approach to their political speech, as they are more likely to introduce social justice topics to their congregations, while male clergy are more inclined to bring up moral reform issues during their sermons (Djupe and Gilbert 2003: 35, but see Olson et al. 2000; Crawford et al 2001).

Finally, in recent years the emergent church movement (ECM) has espoused a radical rethinking of the role of the clergy in representing the congregation in both theological and political matters (Burge and Djupe 2014, 2015). Observers of the movement have noted that those who identify as emergent are focused on “a continual practice of deconstruction” (Marti and Ganiel 2014, 6), in all aspects of religious life but especially in areas of leadership. For example, a leading emergent author argues that the ideal structure for the movement is, “leaders who refuse to lead” (Rollins 2008: 1). Both recognized leaders of the movement as well as social scientists have noted that the ECM is intentionally focused on a religious community with little formalized leadership and instead emphasizes understanding and practicing spirituality as a shared experience (Jones 2011; Packard 2012). If a member of the clergy has a low view of religious authority and believes that the congregation should play an active role in the leadership and direction of the church community, that could have a suppressive effect on their desire to represent their congregation politically. In regards to delegate vs. trustee roles, a member of the clergy who places a great deal of emphasis on

authority would seem prone to adopting a trustee's approach to representation, as they believe that a congregation empowers church leadership to act independently of the laity.

Was I asked by congregation? Do I agree with them?

While the motivation may be in place from a supportive social theology, the match must be struck through perhaps the most important factor: Was I asked? While research into voter mobilization has concluded that merely asking a potential voter to cast a ballot is an effective way to increase turnout (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), many pastors may stay on the political sidelines because they feel that there is little desire from their congregation to act in a political way. However this has not been assessed by previous studies of clergy political behavior. In fact, from ongoing news reports, one would be lead to think that there is very little desire from congregants as national surveys often indicate that near majorities want less involvement of clergy in politics (e.g., Kuhn 2010; Lee 2014). The primary question then becomes: Are clergy being asked to represent their congregations politically?

Invitations are important, but the pastor must feel comfortable taking the congregation's interests into the public square as their own. One essential reason why they may not is that their politics are incongruent with the predominant views of the congregation. Previous research into mainline churches has indicated that clergy are consistently at odds politically with their congregations (Djupe and Gilbert 2003: 52), and this ideological distance makes clergy less likely to speak about political issues from the pulpit (2003: 60; though see Djupe and Gilbert 2008; Djupe and Neiheisel 2007). We have no data from evangelical, Catholic, or other churches (though see Calfano et al. 2013 and inferences in Guth et al. 1997: 157-159). We would expect that the same factor that suppresses clergy political speech – disagreement – also drive down their desire to politically represent their congregations. In addition, ideological distance between clergy and congregation returns us back to the delegate vs. trustee classification. From a definitional

perspective, clergy should be much more willing to take on a delegate role for their members if they are ideologically close to their congregations. In contrast, if there is a significant gap in political inclinations a member of the clergy acting politically would be doing so from a trustee posture.

Is it efficacious for me to be a representative?

While social and personal theology has a significant impact on the way that clergy see their roles as political representatives, an additional factor clergy surely weigh is how their activity may be received and how effectual it will be. The crucial considerations are how open the field is to elite representation, how consensual the field is to what is represented, and how the organizations' goals might be met through representation.

The overriding reason why black clergy are more likely to be involved in politics than among any other religious or racial group is the forces that prevented other, competing institutions from developing within the black community (e.g. Morris 1984; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). Since black churches were allowed, black clergy filled the void of community elites, made especially credible and forceful by their place at the center of community life. While especially visible in the black community, this dynamic has been found elsewhere. Olson (2000) finds clergy filling the void of elite representation in impoverished communities. Djupe and Gilbert (2003) find something related – mainline Protestant clergy were more politically active when their congregations were underrepresented in the community. In a related vein, Owens (2007) finds black churches advocating for services from city government. However, the ability of the clergy (regardless of tradition) to be successful in steering resources to their congregation hinges on a more practical matter: the pastor's relationships with government officials (Olson, 2000). Together, these findings suggest that open organizational fields invite representatives.

In addition, pastors who operate under a religious tradition that has a long history of political activism may have access to a trove of resources that will increase the ability to be politically

efficacious. For some Protestant denominations (such as Baptists) there is very little leadership structure and therefore each minister is granted significant latitude to represent the political viewpoints of their congregations as they see fit (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). For other traditions that have a more rigid hierarchy, the denominational structure can provide cues to clergy on how to represent congregations politically (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Calfano 2009).

The last two concerns involve the degree of competition of the religious organization in the environment and its orientation toward that competition. If clergy are entrepreneurs who are responsible for the health and maintenance of a local franchise, then they must be sensitive to not only how their members are treated, but how likely members would respond to their actions in public (Finke and Stark 2005). The response of religious firms to competition is varied in order to cover the spectrum of demands from the marketplace. Those approaches vary from more inclusive to more exclusive approaches (Stark and Finke 2000), recognizing that a viable congregational strategy must include reasons to come to church (inclusive) and reasons to stay (exclusive).

Most religious traditions have developed long-standing approaches to how the members of the congregation interact with those who are not part of their religious community. For example, the most significant shift in the Catholic Church's approach to inclusion came in the form of Vatican II which drastically changed how open the church was to laity and outsiders (Leege and Welch 1989), and many Protestant churches have turned toward inclusion as a way to increase church attendance (Stark and Glock 1968; Finke and Stark 2005). Churches with a more inclusive posture would be led by clergy who are willing to serve the needs of parishioners and therefore be more likely to become political representatives. One might make the same claim for exclusive churches – representation might be considered another service offered to members to stay. But exclusivity also involves an element of building barriers to the world by emphasizing the importance of ingroup solidarity and

increasing the costs of association with the outside world (Finke and Stark 2005), which may obviate the need for representation outside of the gates.

However, we believe that clergy's emphasis on inclusion and exclusion should interact in sensible ways with the degree of competition felt to shape a representational role. Inclusively oriented clergy in dissimilar communities should be likely to use representation to increase the diversity of views available in the community. In homogeneous communities, there would be less need for inclusive clergy to reach out and join the public debate. Exclusively oriented clergy should work oppositely – in dissimilar communities there is no competitive pressure for them to represent their views. But in communities with a great degree of similarity, exclusively oriented clergy may have to engage a more public strategy to gain and retain members.

Design and Data

Our data from clergy result from a survey conducted via the Internet through the Qualtrics platform, after clergy were invited by email to participate.¹ We obtained responses from United Methodist, Southern Baptist Convention, Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), and Greek Orthodox clergy. This is clearly not a random sample of clergy, nor are the denominations/traditions present necessarily representative of the American religious population. What is useful about the sample, despite its limitations, is that appropriate questions were asked to gauge identification as a political representative of the congregation and the sample includes

¹ Clergy were contacted to participate via their listed office email address. For the smaller denominations in our study – the Greek Orthodox and RCA – addresses were culled from publicly-available parish and denominational websites that listed this individual-level contact information. PCUSA clergy contact information were provided to the authors from the denomination's in-house research office. For the largest denominations in our study – the UMC and SBC – we relied on a commercially-generated email list from the vendor Exact Data, which maintains current congregational lists for a variety of US denominations. Each of the culling methods has drawbacks from the standpoint of representativeness, although it is not possible to determine exact sampling biases a priori. In each denominational case, we endeavored to use the total population of clergy with listed email addresses, which is a subset of the total clergy population in each denomination. Given missing data, we received somewhere between 375-411 valid responses depending on the question.

considerable diversity of religious and political conservatism.² With appropriate controls, we can test with some confidence our hypotheses about the religious, political, and demographic correlates of adopting a representational identification. On the other hand, we have little confidence that the descriptive statistics regarding the levels of representation can be generalized to a relevant population.³ We will still display them (especially by denomination), but they should not be taken as necessarily representative of the larger population of clergy.

Representation Measures

The survey included a large battery of questions concerning the representational role of clergy. It captured identification as a representative, representative behavior, and structural placement as a representative. Figure 1 breaks out the results of this line of yes-no questioning by the denominations included in the sample. The most common experience from 70 percent of the sample was that congregants approached them with political concerns. Not all clergy took up the mantle of representative, though more did (31%) than perceived that the congregation considered them a representative (25%). There are very few (3%) that believed the congregation thought them a representative who did not take on that identification themselves; three times as many believed themselves a representative though perceived that belief was not shared by the congregation. Many more (22%) took on a representative role that was also perceived to be granted by the congregation.

² There are few benchmarks available for comparison. One high quality study, the Cooperative Clergy Study (Smidt 2009), was a cooperative venture between a number of scholars to survey clergy in 10 Protestant denominations: Assemblies of God, Christian Reformed Church, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, and Mennonite Church. A religious conservatism measure from the CCS with 7 likert (5 point) items has a mean of 4.1 (sd=1.0), while a comparable measure from our data has a mean of 3.6 (sd=1.1). That is, the distribution of religious conservatism in our data is more flat, including more moderates and liberals than the CCS. Our data are also symmetrically distributed in terms of partisanship (45 percent each Democrats and Republicans), whereas the CCS is somewhat more heavily Republican (55 percent). This is not to say that either is better, but is simply to say that there is considerable diversity in our sample and moreover that the two samples are not radically different from each other.

³ Outside of community studies (e.g., the Northern California clergy study of Stark et al. 1971), clergy studies have never been generalizable to the population of clergy because of the difficulties of defining the sampling frame of clergy relative to the population. Instead, researchers have sampled within denominations, given occasional access to their lists.

A significant majority are well placed in the social structure to easily access public officials as just under two-thirds (62%) knew public officials personally. Few took advantage of this access, at least on behalf of congregation members, as only 20 percent contacted “government officials on behalf of members of my congregation.” Of course, such contact was much greater (29 vs 11%, $p < .01$) among those who had social access to officials. Somewhat surprisingly, the variance among the included denominations was muted with the exception of the Greek Orthodox, who stood out on these measures in their prominent representational role. The remainder was closely aligned – there was only significant variation among denominations on contacting government officials and introducing government officials to the congregation.

[Figure 1 about here]

To focus our efforts in explaining whether clergy adopt a representational role, we collapsed responses from three of these variables to create a dichotomous measure if they (1) referred to themselves as representatives, (2) believed the congregation thought of them as representatives, or (3) contacted officials on behalf of the congregation. These are highly correlated – the former two at $r = .92$ (tetrachoric correlations), the latter two at $r = .71$, and the other two at $r = .52$. A scale would have an alpha of .76. The scale from 0-3 has a mean of .78 ($sd = 1.08$), while the dichotomous measure we employ indicates that 40 percent report playing a representational role in at least one of these ways.

Independent Variables

To explain why clergy take on a representative role at all, we include variables that addressed the set of three questions that motivated our theory discussion above (see the Appendix for full variable coding). To address personal support for being a representative, we include several variables capturing the motivation of the clergyperson to represent the congregation. Religious conservatism includes agreement (using a likert scale) with 6 statements including the existence of the devil and

whether Jesus was born of a virgin. Religious authority (citation blinded) is similarly coded using agreement with statements including “I believe there are many valid interpretations of the Bible,” and “The Gospel is what the congregation makes of it.” Inclusive values (following Djupe and Calfano 2013) includes more frequent presentation (1=never to 5=very often) that loving the stranger and inviting people to church even if the church changes as a result are essential to be good person of your faith. Exclusive values are coded the same way and include presentation of the values “It is important to shop as much as possible at stores owned by people of our faith,” and “It is important to keep company with other people of our faith.” Authoritarianism sums the child-rearing values that are linked to more authoritarian mindedness (following, e.g., Barker and Tinnick 2006): respect for elders, good manners, and being well behaved. And stronger partisans should be more highly motivated to represent the congregation depending on agreement with the congregation; we fold the traditional 7 point partisanship scale so that 4=strong Democrat/Republican and 1=pure independent.

The second question asks whether it is appropriate to be a representative of the congregation. This dimension primarily considers the relationship of the clergyperson to the congregation and includes the perceived agreement of the clergyperson and congregation (covering 5 dimensions including partisanship, immigration, and “social issues like abortion.”). Congregational homogeneity captures the difficulty of representing a heterogeneous group and is measured using 5 bipolar items (7 point scale), including whether the congregation is very politically united to very politically divided.

Our last question sets the potential representative in the political context to ask whether it is efficacious for the clergyperson to take on this role. This includes items that are generally related to efficacy like education – a three point scale from a college degree (1) to a doctorate (3). But is also includes the relationship of the church and clergy to the community. The similarity of the church to

the community, which should make it easier to represent the congregation, includes the number of dimensions (0-4) on which the church is “about the same” as the community in terms such as their political views, ethnicity/race, and church activity levels. And member outreach, following the USCLS, is measured (0-4) as the number of activities in the last year the church has: sponsored an outreach event, used different worship materials, had a special committee on membership, and used mailing to recruit members. The clergyperson may know public officials (=1 and 0 otherwise) and access to them should make representation more efficacious.⁴

We recoded all measures so that they run from 0-1, which permits easy display of the full effect of each independent variable.

Model Results – Representational Role

Model estimates of the probability of playing a representational role are available in Figure 2 (coefficients are available in Table A.1 in the appendix). Significant variables can be seen when the confidence intervals do not overlap with 0. The results confirm that taking on representation is a function of values and circumstance. The effects of values show up in multiple ways and perhaps most prominently through the interaction of religious conservatism and religious authority. Displayed in Figure 3, the results show that religious conservatives are consistently less likely to take on a representational role – their predicted probability varies across religious authority by an insignificant 12 points, from .31 to .19. Religious authority has a profound effect on religious liberals, however. Liberals who eschew authority for themselves and their theology (left side) are much less likely to take on a representative role than liberals who value authority. The histograms embedded in the figure show that it is rare for religious liberals (top of the panel) to value authority

⁴ Full variable coding is available in the appendix.

while conservatives have a wider spread.⁵ Thus, since liberal clergy are clearly more likely to value organizational and theological flatness, this serves to depress the difference between liberal and conservative clergy. It is important to note that this effect is not a function of a general authority mindedness – valuing authority in child rearing has no direct effect and does not interact with religious conservatism. Instead, taking on representation of the congregation reflects religious-specific notions of authority.

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

Also showing the effect of values, greater commitment to inclusive religious values promotes adopting a representational role. Inclusion accepts people where they are, overlooking differences to reach the goal of promoting involvement in the congregation. Viewed this way, inclusion promotes a delegate model of representation in which clergy would feel able to represent a more diverse array of people than trustees. Exclusive value commitment has an insignificant effect itself, but it interacts with the similarity of the congregation to the community (see Figure 4).⁶ Among those who reject exclusivity (left side of the graph), those who feel dissimilar are more likely to adopt a representational role. Notably, this is the effect that Djupe and Gilbert (2003) found among Mainline Protestant clergy; this is also where we are more likely to find Mainline clergy in these data. But this relationship reverses as the embrace of exclusivity grows. On the high end of the exclusivity scale, community similarity drives up a representational role. This is also where we are more likely to find evangelicals, suggesting that religious liberals and conservatives enter the public sphere not only with different goals but under different circumstances. Though both inclusion and exclusion are tools in the kits of congregations in the religious economy (Stark and Finke 2000), in the context of

⁵ The histogram for religious liberals includes those with a religious conservatism score of less than .5, while the histogram for religious conservatives includes those with a score above .5

⁶ Notably, inclusive and exclusive value commitments are not correlated with the congregation's similarity to the community ($p > .6$), which underscores that there are variable responses to religious competition (e.g., Stark and Finke 2000).

similarity, exclusion looks like niching in response to competition (Gray and Lowery 1996). Taking on a representative role could therefore be seen as a way to offer a fuller range of services. In a related vein, the more outreach for new members the congregation conducts – another sign of competition – the more likely the clergyperson is to occupy a representational role. To complete the circle and bolster the competition explanation, higher exclusivity in the context of community similarity is also related to a higher number of outreach activities to new potential members (result not shown).

[Figure 4 about here]

The relationships of the clergy to public officials and to the congregation affect their likelihood of being a representative. Knowing public officials personally drives up being a representative by 14 percent. Knowing officials is not randomly distributed in the population, of course, so this surely reflects a longitudinal and reciprocal relationship.

While social relations facilitate access, representation is still built on political fundamentals. In this vein, and consistent with a delegate role, greater perceived opinion differences with the congregation undermine representation – those experiencing the most extensive differences (compared to the least) are 20 percent less likely to adopt a representational role. This structural feature of the congregation interacts sensibly with the political motivation of the clergyperson. As shown in Figure 5, the probability of a partisan independent adopting a representative role is low and consistent (about 32%); strong partisans, on the other hand are much more responsive to represent the congregation, but only when their politics align. When no differences are perceived, strong partisans have a 59 percent chance of adopting a representative role, which then declines to the same level as independents as opinion differences with the congregation grow. Of course, this means that there is a good deal of slippage in between, where a number of those with significant

political differences with the congregation still claim a representative role in perhaps the classic form of a trustee.

[Figure 5 about here]

It is noteworthy that all levels of opinion differences between the clergy and congregation are represented in this dataset – note the histogram at the bottom of the figure. This puts a dent into frequent claims that clergy are selected into their congregations based on political agreement. And though those differences are less extensive among religious conservatives ($r = -.32, p < .01$) that pattern does not aggregate cleanly by denomination – there are insignificant differences across the included denominations (see Figure A.1 in the appendix).

The results also suggest that white clergy are less likely to adopt a representative role. There were not enough racial minority clergy to break out the results any further than white-nonwhite. This ratifies at least one of the arguments in the literature, such as the historic role that (especially) Black clergy have played as representatives (e.g., Owens 2007) or perhaps that racial minority clergy tend to minister in communities with fewer community leaders and clergy often then fill the void (Olson 2000). This is not an effect of the social class of the congregation, which reinforces that the racial differences are either located in the church-community relationship or in the norms of different racial groups.

Relative to the Southern Baptists, the mainline Protestant clergy are less likely to adopt a representational role. This is not surprising since mainline clergy are less likely to say that they have “great capacity” to influence the views of members (Djupe and Gilbert 2009). On the other hand, the Greek Orthodox priests are more likely to adopt a representational role, ratifying the descriptive statistics in Figure 1. Though clearly offering additional leverage on the question of representation, the denominational results mirror the larger distinctions about authority and social exclusivity.

Sorting Delegates and Trustees

Among those who identify as a representative, most (72%) do so in concert with the perception that their congregations also believe them to be their representative. That means that 28 percent do so without the congregation's (perceived) blessing. Though there are other ways of making this determination, we believe it is fair to label the first set delegates and the latter as trustees. Moreover, this determination allows us to model this variable, though with a reduced set of variables given that the N has shrunk to just over 100 cases (since we are just examining variation among self-appointed representatives).

[Figure 6 about here]

Those model estimates, which appear in Figure 6, show that some key variables from the prior analysis are important in differentiating the kind of representative clergy appear to be. Those who value religious authority are much more likely to be trustees (75 percent more likely) which makes eminent sense. At the same time, religious conservatives are more likely to be delegate style representatives – the full effect is a 68 percent increase. Though this may be due to only perceived support from the congregation, it is consistent with a number of previous findings. Religious liberal clergy are more likely to adopt a prophetic role with regard to their congregations (Djupe and Gilbert 2003) and religious conservative clergy are more likely to be given deference by their congregations (Djupe and Gilbert 2009). The one wrinkle is that this measure does not include the political content conveyed and conservatives tend to prefer a trustee (Barker and Carman 2012) – thus does the clergy's perception of support result from a perceived preference for a trustee?

While our data cannot quite answer that question, it does suggest that opinion difference between the clergy and congregation is related to a slight lean to a trustee role, which in part reflects the slippage mentioned earlier. That is, the politically motivated reduced their representative role under conditions of disagreement, but gradually and not immediately at the first sign of disagreement. Of course, this measure is blunt and does not gauge the extent of the interests

represented. Notably, those with a stronger partisan identity are not more or less likely to be delegates. And lastly, those who have been in the ministry longer are more likely to be delegates (40% more likely through the full range) indicating a growing consonance of views with the congregation over time or perhaps a willingness to subordinate their views.

Model Results – Clergy Political Activity

A representational role is less important if it is not connected to a greater rate of political activity. That link is tested in Figure 7 using a participation scale involving up to 10 activities; the average is 3.5 activities. We used almost the same model as before, though we added the former dependent variable as well as whether the clergyperson was approached by congregation members as a measure of recruitment. Most important, adopting a representational role boosts political activism by almost one full activity (.9). This holds in the context of a host of controls, including several items that push and pull at a representational role. For instance, clergy participate at higher levels when congregants bring their political concerns (push), and so do clergy who know public officials (pull). Of course it is entirely possible that highly participatory clergy make themselves accessible to public officials and invite the expression of concerns from congregants, but these relationships do highlight the degree to which clergy political activity is mobilized.

Like a representational role, clergy political activity is also driven by values, which work in the same way as in the representation model results. Figure 8 shows the interaction between religious conservatism and religious authority, which makes the same point as Figure 4. Religious conservatives participate at lower rates – about a half point below the sample mean – and their activity does not adjust given their valuation of religious authority. Again, only liberal clergy's political activity varies by their commitment to religious authority and the more they embrace authority in the congregation, the more political activity they engage in. The difference is sizable at

the extreme, though most liberal clergy are not there. Instead, they are closer to .4 on the religious authority scale which pegs the average difference between liberal and conservative clergy at 1.5 political activities.

[Figure 8 about here]

The other interaction is between inclusive values and community similarity. While most of the range of the interaction (see Figure 9) does not support a significant difference, the high end of the inclusive value range does. It is important to note that this is where most of the observations (60%) are clustered. Clergy who are more inclusive with congregations dissimilar to the community are more participatory. This effect supports Djupe and Gilbert's (2003) finding that mainline Protestant clergy are more likely to participate when the congregation is a minority in the community. An inclusive orientation is served by reaching out through multiple channels, politics included. This interpretation gains steam with the consistent effect of member outreach – more outreach is associated with greater clergy participation in politics.

Homogeneity of the congregation undermines both adopting a representative role and the participation rate of the clergy. In part, this reflects the push that disagreement with the clergy directs their energies elsewhere. But it also shows what a lack of stimulus to action homogeneity represents. This is also the effect consistent with “the prophetic pulpit” (Djupe and Gilbert 2003), as clergy are more engaged when faced with a diverse (and therefore disagreeable) congregation. This interpretation squares with other work, as well – Calfano (2009) finds that clergy who disagree with their congregation are prompted to find supportive references groups that serves to build a wider political network.

Consistent with political participation research, strong partisans are more likely to participate. In a shift from prior research, every denomination's clergy is less politically active than the Southern Baptists. Thirty years ago, they were less active, but have made steady gains so that by

the 1990s they had achieved parity with more liberal clergy (Guth 1996; Guth et al. 1997). Apparently twenty years on they have surpassed clergy in more liberal denominations.

Conclusion

Some previous work has discussed clergy as representatives, but those are often general observations and, at best, inferences from patterns of clergy activity. This paper provides a more concrete next step using responses about the adoption of the role of representative of the congregation specifically, congregant perceptions of clergy in that role, and clergy behavior that fits the role. This is a useful avenue on which to travel given the tension in the literature over just what clergy are representing when they are active. That tension concerns whether clergy are strategic actors maximizing their policy agenda (trustees, at best) or whether they are actors on behalf of others (delegates). There are opportunities for both in the myriad ways in which clergy can be active, but this gives us an estimate of the extent to which clergy consider themselves explicitly to represent the interests of congregants.

The evidence from this sample of clergy suggests considerable agreement across included denominations (save the Greek Orthodox) about the roles they adopt. It is common for congregants to approach clergy with political concerns, and less common for clergy to indicate that they take on a representational role. All told, 40 percent were considered a representative using our definition.

This does not resolve the debate because the adoption of a representative role is in some ways dependent on political agreement and strong partisan identities. Thus, to an extent, representation is consonant with policy maximization, but is heavily conditioned by agreement with the congregation. We learned several things about the social and value conditions under which clergy adopt a representational role. Some of how clergy think about their place in public life is shaped by what has been called their “social theology” (Guth et al. 1997). Theological liberals are more likely to think of themselves as representatives and are more active in political affairs.

There is another axis of values that is important to consider – religious authority. Religious authority reflects thoughts about the place of the clergyperson in the congregation and the importance of theological uniformity. This has no effect among religious conservatives since the population of anti-authority conservatives is effectively an empty set, but it does among more liberal clergy. And the rejection of authority serves to drive down their work as representatives and their participation in political life.

Clergy value orientations toward those outside the congregation, as captured through their inclusive and exclusive value commitments, help structure their representative roles. More inclusive orientations drive up a representational role and exclusive values drive them down, but this is contingent on whether the congregation is similar to the community in ways that suggest representation is driven by competition. For instance, exclusive orientations under congregational-community similarity drive up a representational role, suggesting that representation is another service that clergy can offer their congregants to retain them as members in a competitive environment.

The delegate vs. trustee style of representation is one that we can only begin to shed some light on using currently available data. Most clergy are not representatives, but a strong minority are, and their pattern of entrance into a representative role is consistent with being a delegate. This does not deny that they seek to fulfill their own agenda, but that their roles are complex and perhaps competing. Whether they take on this representational role is conditioned by their worldviews about authority and social boundaries as well as their placement in the social structure. That their place in the social structure plays such a prominent role begs for elaboration about its connection to political distributions in the community and religious competition. While this provides some early insight into how clergy see the concept of representation, further research could bring more nuance to these findings exploring this dyadic interaction in more detail: by asking clergy what specific issues their

congregants brought to their attention, as well as what issues politically activated clergy. It seems possible that liberal clergy are more likely to speak in a prophetic (trustee) role on issues such as social justice or that religious conservatives are more likely to want to represent their congregants' views of moral issues in the political arena as a delegate.

Appendix – Variable Coding

Representational orientation Described in text.

Congregants bring political concerns “Have any of the following happened in the past two years regarding any issue? Congregation members contacted me with their political concerns.” 0=No, 1=Yes.

Religious conservatism Averages responses (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) regarding these 6 statements: “The devil exists.”; “The Bible is literally true.”; “Jesus will return to earth in bodily form.”; “Jesus was born of a virgin.”; “There is an objective standard of right and wrong established by God's Word.”; “Men are given authority over women.”

Religious authority values scale Averages responses (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree) regarding these 5 statements: “The more clergy can step out of the way of the congregation the better.”; “It is important for the congregation to construct their own salvation.”; “The Gospel is what the congregation makes of it.”; “The church must adapt to a postmodern culture in order to spread the Gospel.”; “I believe there are many valid interpretations of the Bible.”

Inclusive values A set of questions was introduced by, “How often do you present the following values about how to be a *good person of your faith* in your sermons and public speech?” Responses included 1=never, 2=rarely 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=very often. Responses were averaged for two statements: “It is important to ‘love the stranger as yourself.’” And “It is important to invite others to our house of worship even if it begins to change as a result.”

Exclusive values Using the same introduction and procedure as inclusive values, this averages responses to two statements: “It is important to shop as much as possible at stores owned by people of our faith.” And “It is important to keep company with other people of our faith.”

Similarity to community Sums responses from 4 questions, gaining a point for each time the congregations is gauged to be “about the same”. “We would now like your perceptions of how your congregation differs from your local community. How would you say that the congregation compares to the community in terms of ethnicity/race?” We have more minorities, About the same, We have fewer minorities.” “How do the political views of congregation members compare to other people in the community? Members are more conservative, Members are about the same, Members are more liberal.” “How about in terms of members’ activity level in church compared to people in the community? Ours is higher, About the same, Ours is lower.” “How does members’ activity level in the community compare to other people in the community? Ours is higher, About the same, Ours is lower.”

Knows public officials “Have any of the following happened in the past two years regarding any issue? I knew government officials personally.” 0=No, 1=Yes.

Authoritarianism “Although there are a number of qualities that people feel children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. Below are pairs of desirable qualities. Please tell me which one you think is more important for children to have.” The pairs include Independence : Respect for elders, Curiosity : Good manners, and Being considerate : Well-behaved. Each is coded 0-1 and the final index is averaged so that 0 means choosing the first term in the three pairs and 1 means choosing the second term in each pair.

Education level “What is the highest level of education you have received?” 1=graduated college/seminary, 2=Master’s degree or working toward a Master’s, 3=Received a doctorate.

Member outreach Sums affirmative responses to 4 items introduced with: “In the past 12 months, has your church done any of the following?” Sponsored an outreach event intended to bring people into your congregation; Used different worship materials (e.g., music) to appeal to non-members; Had a special committee to work on recruiting new members; Mailed or distributed newsletters, letters, or flyers to recruit new members.

Clergy-church opinion difference Averages responses across five items, each coded 3=mine much more liberal/conservative, 2=mine somewhat more liberal/conservative, 1=mine about the same. “How would you compare your own views with congregation members’ views on the following items? On social issues like abortion, In terms of partisanship, On theological issues, On issues regarding immigration, On government aid to the poor.”

Congregant homogeneity Averages responses ranging from 1 to 7 on 5 bipolar items introduced with: “Would you say that members of your congregation are largely the same or different from each other in the following areas?” “Very politically united (=1), Very politically divided (=7).” “Very similar class/social status (=1), Very diverse class/social status (=7).” “Very much the same race (=1), Very diverse in terms of race (=7).” “From the same neighborhood (=1), From many different neighborhoods (=7).” “Very much agree with each other on the direction of the denomination (=1), Very much disagree with each other about the direction of the denomination (=7).”

Partisan strength Starts with the question, “Generally speaking, of the following political labels, which do you consider yourself?” Recoded so that 4=Strong Democrat/Republican, 3=Democrat/Republican, 2=Independent who leans Democratic/Republican, 1=Independent /Other party.

Female =1, 0=male.

Years in the ministry “For how long have you been a clergyperson and how long serving this congregation? Please enter a number (rounding to the nearest year). In the ministry.”

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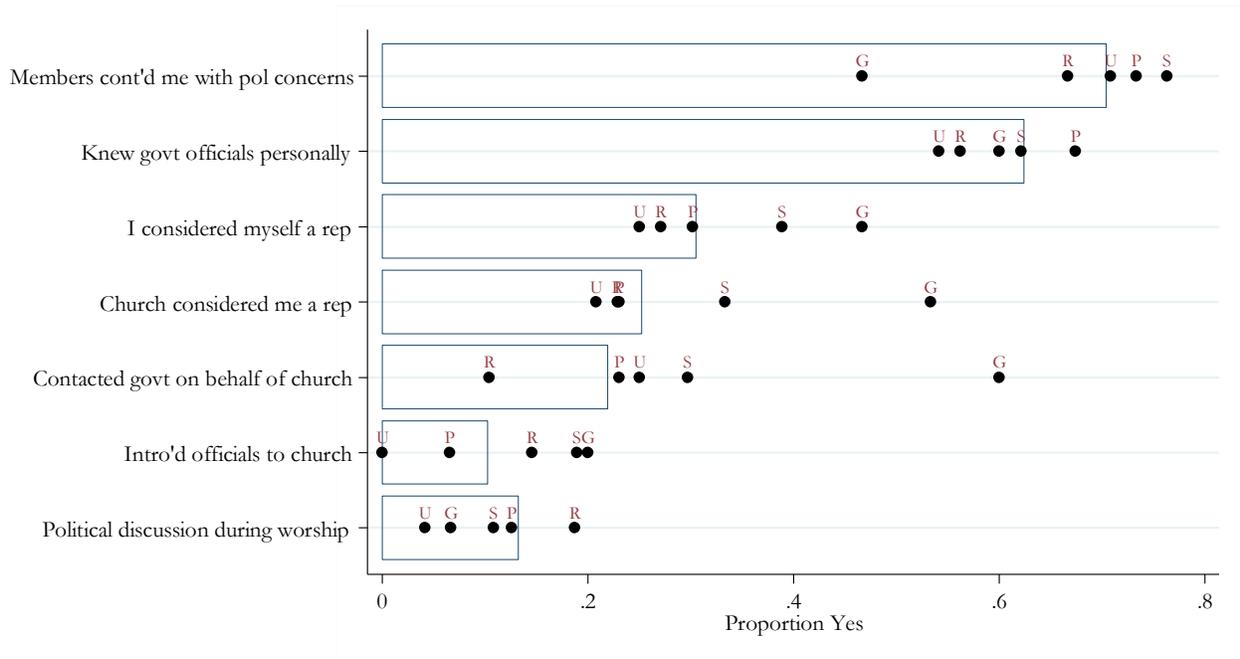
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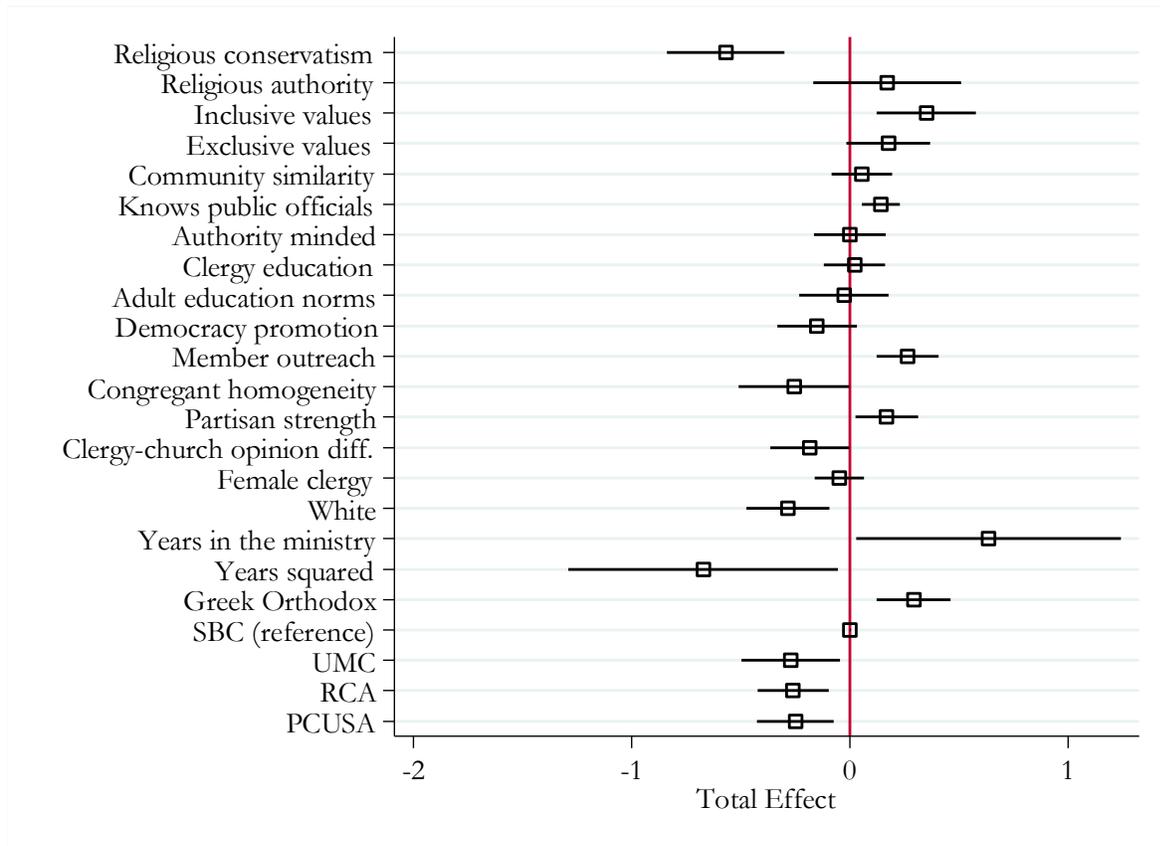
Figure 1 – Representational Roles by Clergy, by Denomination



Source: 2014 Clergy Survey.

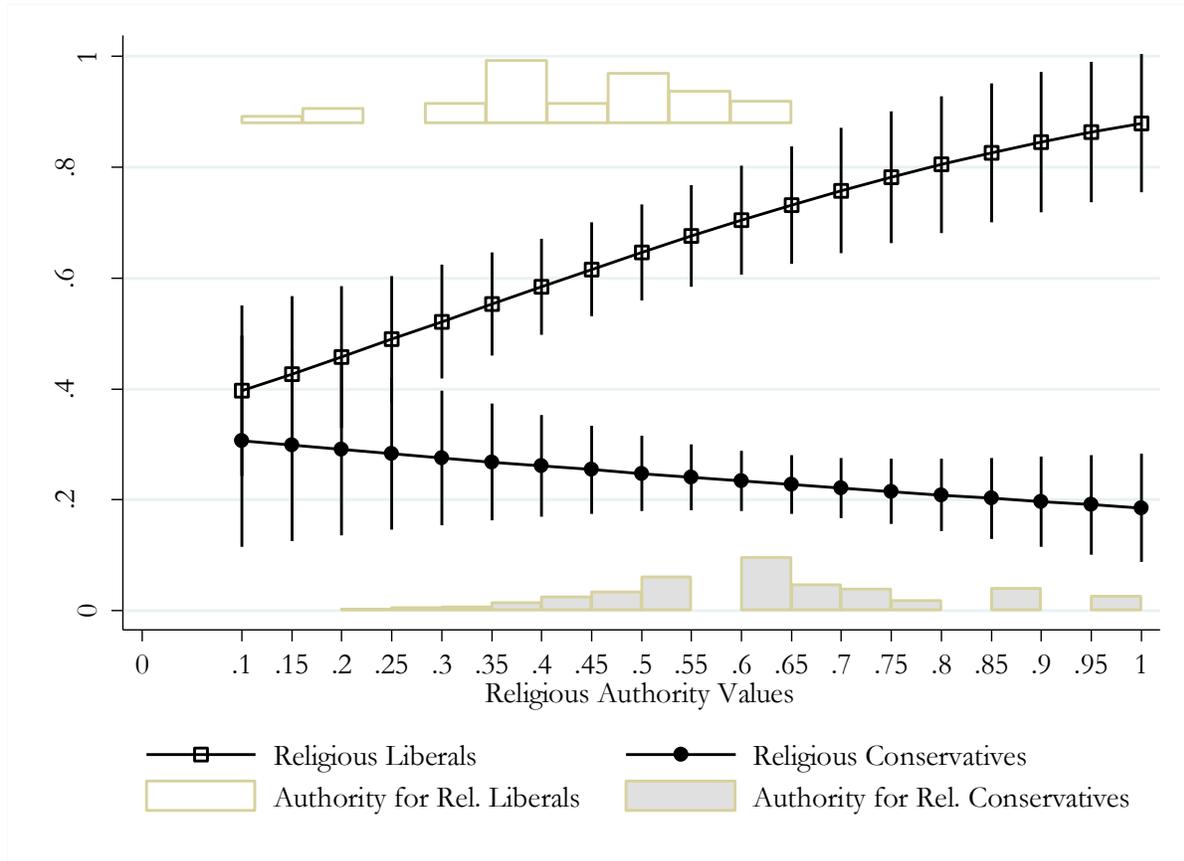
Note: G=Greek Orthodox, P=Presbyterian Church (USA), R=Reformed Church in America, S=Southern Baptist Convention, and U=United Methodist. Bars represent the sample mean.

Figure 2 – Marginal Effects on Adopting a Representative Role (logit)



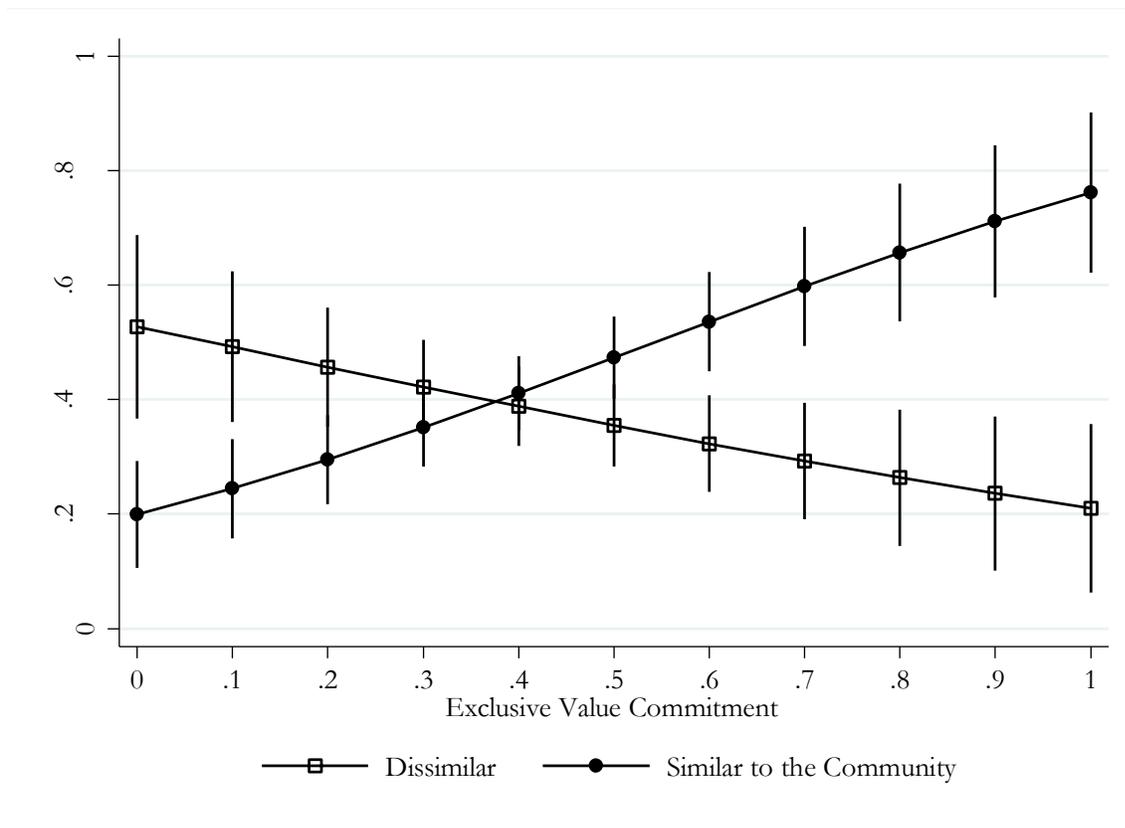
Note: For coefficient values, see Table A.1 in the appendix. Interactions are in Figures 3-5. Model statistics: N=316, pseudo R²=.21, % correctly predicted=73.1, % reduction in error=33.6

Figure 3 – The Interactive Effects of Religious Conservatism and Religious Authority Values on the Likelihood of Adopting a Representative Orientation



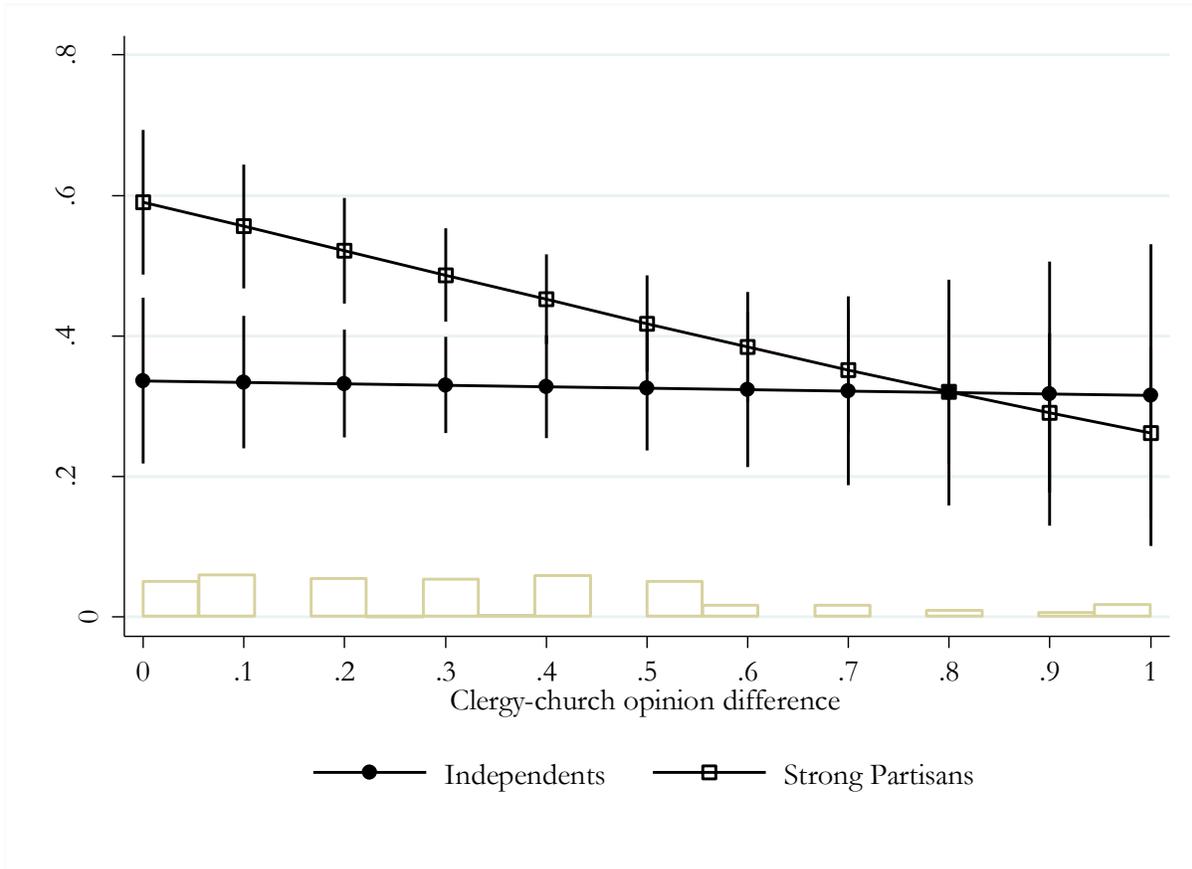
Note: 90% confidence intervals.

Figure 4 – Interactive Effects of Exclusive Value Commitment and Community Similarity on the Likelihood of Adopting a Representative Orientation



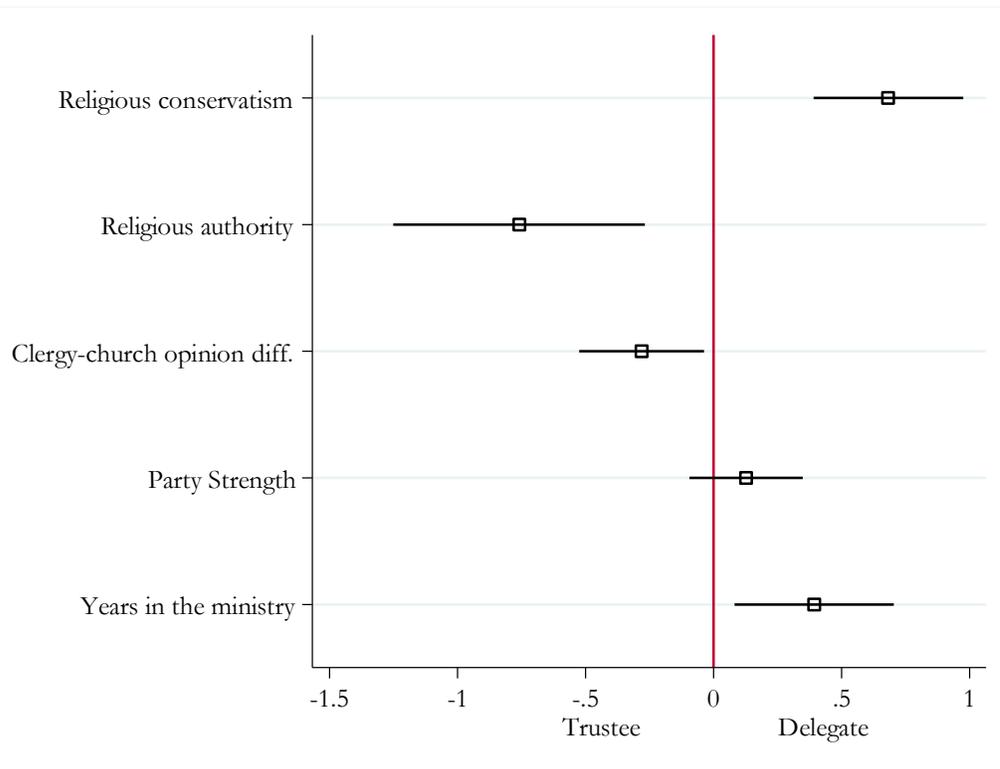
Note 90% confidence intervals.

Figure 5 – Interactive Effects of Partisan Strength and Clergy-Church Opinion Differences on the Likelihood of Adopting a Representative Orientation



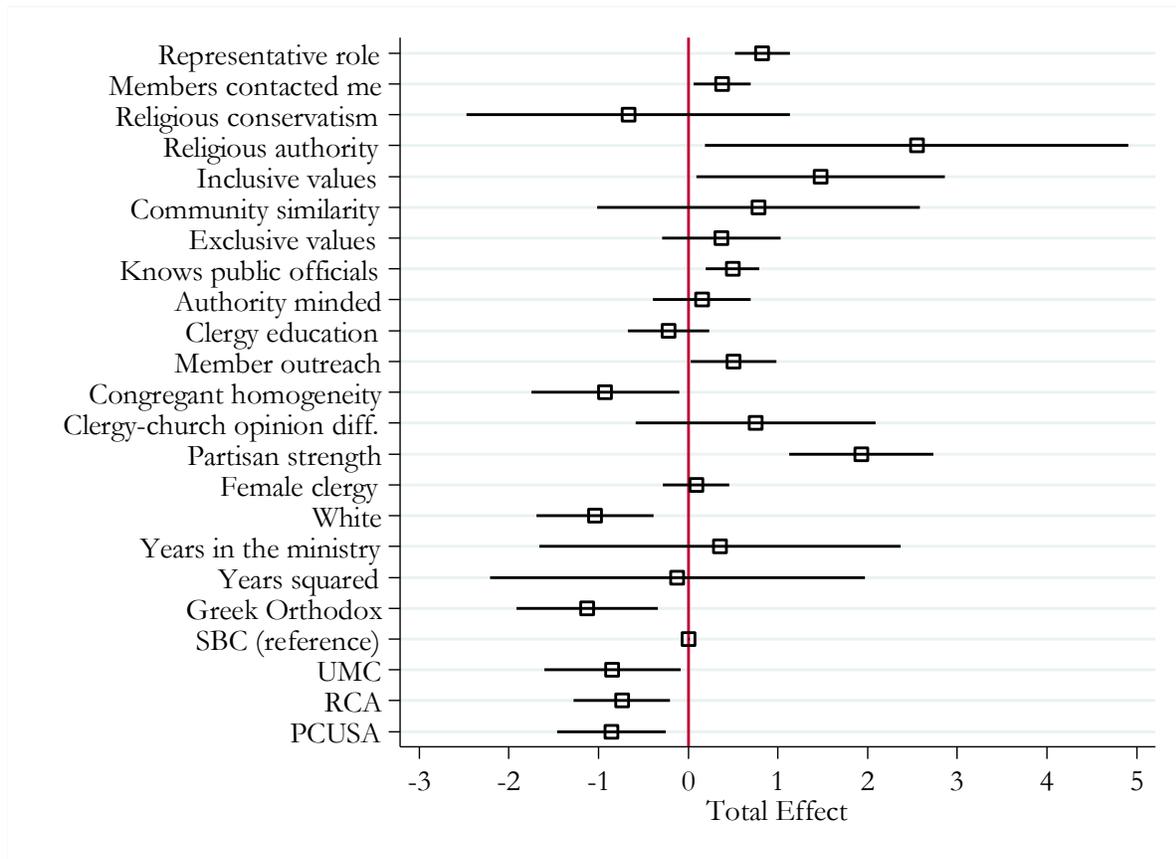
Note: 90% confidence intervals. The histogram shows the distribution of clergy-church opinion differences.

Figure 6 – Marginal Effects on Delineating Trustee vs. Delegate Style Representatives



Note: 90% confidence intervals. Model statistics: N=101, pseudo R2=.15, % correctly predicted=74.3, % reduction in error=7.1

Figure 7 – Marginal Effects on Political Activity Levels (OLS)



Note: 90% confidence intervals. For coefficient values, see Table A.2 in the appendix. Interactions are in Figures 8 and 9. Model statistics: N=320, adjusted R²=.33, RMSE=1.42

Figure 8 – The Interactive Effects of Religious Conservatism and Religious Authority Values on Clergy Political Activity Levels

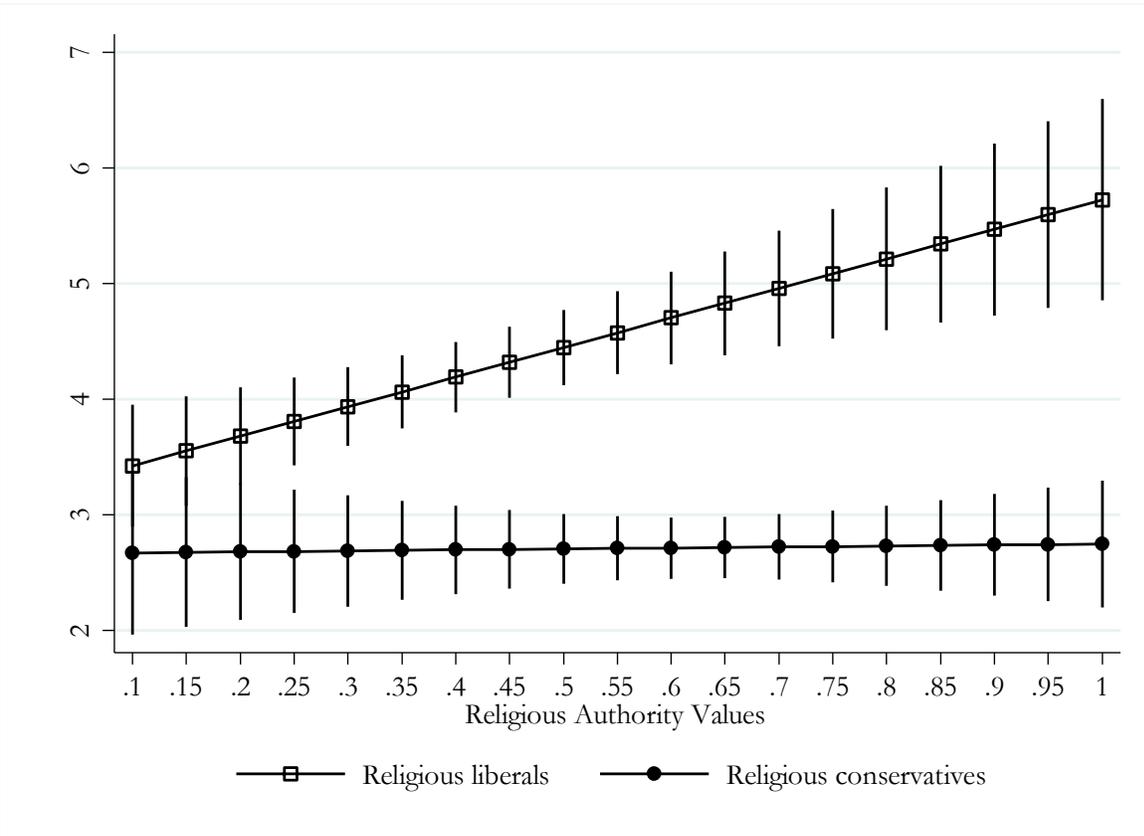


Figure 9 – The Interactive Effects of Inclusive Value Commitment and Community Similarity on Clergy Political Activity Levels

