Intra-Organizational Constraints on Churches' Public Witness

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We examine the effects of some oft-overlooked influences on clergy public speech, an important component of a church's public witness. While there are many studies of denominational conflict, few studies connect denominational-level conflict with the ways in which clergy address salient public issues to their congregations. We also explore the impact that the presence of a congregant who has struggled with his or her sexuality, that is, the contact hypothesis, has on clergy speech. We test these ideas using 2004 survey data from clergy in Columbus, Ohio concerning their speech on the state's constitutional ban on gay marriage. We find that these intra-organizational constraints shape opinions that in turn affect speech, tempering indirectly the ability of clergy to present concerns about the proposed ban.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we examine the effects of some oft-overlooked influences on clergy public speech. There are many studies that examine intra-denominational conflict (e.g., Ammerman 1990; Farnsley 1994; Kniss and Chaves 1995; Seidler and Meyer 1989) and in particular the clashes that have erupted over the perennially divisive issue of homosexuality (Anderson 1997; Beuttler 1999; Burgess 1999; Wood 2000; Wood and Bloch 1995). Few scholarly investigations of such denominational cleavages, however, connect the debates that go on among denominational leaders with the ways in which clergy present arguments concerning issues like homosexuality to their congregations (though see Cadge 2002; Olson and Cadge 2002). Although stances on gay rights issues in national politics are quite different from those in denominational ones (e.g., Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert 2006), denominational conflict may prevent or alter the public witness of clergy on the status of gay rights in society. To address this void in the literature, we investigate the effects of denominational conflicts on the arguments that clergy in Columbus, Ohio presented to their congregations regarding that state's proposed constitutional ban on gay marriage, a ballot initiative known to voters in 2004 as Issue 1.

The majority of the literature detailing the factors that influence clergy public speech, while certainly not dismissive of the role that denominations can play, primarily contends with the congregational barriers clergy face in attempting to address a potentially divisive issue (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Glock, Ringer, and Babbie 1967; Glock and Stark 1965; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Hadden and Rymph 1973; Scherer 1980; Stedman 1964). We examine a different constraint than most studies of congregational limitations on clergy public speech that trumpet the role of ideological differences between clergy and laity (e.g., Glock and Stark 1965; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Hadden and Rymph 1973)—how the presence of a congregant who has struggled with his or her own sexuality affects if and how clergy present arguments

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concerning Issue 1 and gay rights. We expect to find conflict both at the denominational level and within the congregation to serve as significant sources of discussion about homosexuality and to affect the ability of clergy to present arguments about Issue 1 to their congregations.

As the most common form of association in the nation (Bellah et al. 1985), it is important for religious organizations to witness to society on salient issues under the view that democracy works best when all interests are fully represented (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954:14; Pateman 1970). At the same time, scholars have long been concerned with extreme opinions (Dahl 1956) and the possible detrimental effects of such viewpoints in a democracy (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954:314). Religious groups, in particular, have long been the subject of such concerns, as many observers have remarked upon the tendency for churches and other religious organizations to violate the norms of a pluralist democracy (see Shields (2007) for a discussion). We therefore examine the extremity of opinions (also known as opinion strength) clergy hold on gay rights as a dependent variable but also as an influence on how they present their views to their congregations. That is, we examine the extent to which extreme views promote their public representation.

CLERGY PUBLIC SPEECH

Following the "storms in the churches" that were spawned as a result of congregant dissatisfaction with clergy activism during the 1960s (e.g., Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Quinley 1974; Stark et al. 1971), scholars began to note that clergy generally eschewed politics in the interest of maintaining congregational unity and were especially leery of inviting congregants to take political action. Scholars thought that clergy would avoid political engagement in an effort to stave off the divisive splits that ripped apart many congregations over ministerial involvement in the civil rights movement and other major social issues of the era. As leaders of voluntary associations, clergy were largely beholden to the people in the pews in terms of the extent to which they could push a political agenda (e.g., Glock, Ringer, and Babbie 1967; Glock and Stark 1965; Hadden 1969; Hadden and Rymph 1973; Quinley 1974; Scherer 1980; Stedman 1964). These early observers believed the "clergy-laity gap" in both ideology and attitudes about church involvement in secular matters shaped clergy willingness to engage politics (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Glock and Stark 1965; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969).

Since the late 1960s, however, research has noted increased levels of political activism by clergy (Djupe and Gilbert 2003, 2008; Guth 1996; Wuthnow 1988). Now much of the research detailing the political involvement of clergy, in marked contrast to earlier investigations, focuses on the many political roles that clergy play (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Jelen 2001; Smidt 2004). Moreover, the "clergy-laity gap," while certainly still considered to be a limiting factor for some clergy (e.g., Djupe 2001; Djupe, Neiheisel, and Sokhey 2007; Guth et al. 1997; Jelen 2001; Olson 2000; Olson and Crawford 2001; Wood 1981), appears to be less of a barrier to clergy political engagement today than it was in the 1960s (Luidens and Nemeth 1989). Studies conducted since the mid 1970s (e.g., Becker 1999; Hoge 1976) have found little support for such a clergy-laity division. More recently, scholars have even found evidence that clergy engage in more political action when they are ideologically distant from their congregation. Rather than shy away from speaking to parishioners about political matters when they sense an ideological mismatch with their congregation, Djupe and Gilbert (2003) found clergy to take on a prophetic role to bridge such a divide.

And yet, other studies have shown that clergy avoid specific issues when their opinions do not match the congregation's (Djupe and Gilbert 2002). Gay rights, in particular, may be an issue with which clergy are hesitant to contend (Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert 2006; Olson and Cadge 2002). Denominational officials and other higher-ranking church professionals, however, have long been understood as being removed from the congregational pressures that may act as a

disincentive for many clergy to advance a perspective on a potentially divisive issue (Hadden 1969; Scherer 1980; Stedman 1964; Wuthnow 1988). In observing clergy involvement in the civil rights movement, scholars often noted that the most politically active religious leaders were those in positions in which they were somehow shielded from reprisals from laity (e.g., Hadden 1969). The same might also be said of many clergy today when it comes to the controversial issue of homosexuality, as much of the debate on the subject has seemingly taken place at the denominational level (e.g., Beuttler 1999; Burgess 1999; Olson and Cadge 2002; Wood 2000; Wood and Bloch 1995).

Denominational conflicts, however, can scare clergy away from speaking out on issues where they can provide a witness. Tensions at the denominational level have the potential to engender schism within congregations, as denominational conflicts are sometimes "fought by proxy" in the local church (Eiesland 1999:184). And as Chaves (1993:162) suggests, "intradenominational conflict has important top-down elements that should not be overlooked" (see also Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert 2006). Nevertheless, research on church splits tends to focus on congregational explanations for such division and largely ignores the possible influence that controversy at the denominational level can exert on the congregation (Eiesland 1999; but see Calfano 2009). We therefore suspect that in the interest of keeping their congregation together clergy are wary of bringing the debates over homosexuality that have raged at denominational gatherings into their churches (though see Coffin 2005; Djupe and Neiheisel 2008). Accordingly, clergy public witness on homosexuality is likely to be less common among those clergy who report that the issue first came up as the result of denominational conflict.

It would be unreasonable to believe that the way clergy think about homosexuality and gay rights would be unaffected by debates over such matters at the denominational level. We suspect, then, that denominational conflict, in addition to shaping clergy's ability to talk about Issue 1, also influences their thoughts about the proposed amendment and gay rights in general. Extended conflict should make clergy wary of the extension of this conflict to society. But we should also be able to detect notes of compromise positions as a result of the attempts in conflict-ridden denominations to affirm the rights of gays and lesbians in society while at the same time rejecting inclusive policies in the church.

Of course, most studies detailing the factors that affect clergy public speech primarily deal with congregational explanations. But while such investigations have greatly improved our understanding of the ways in which laity can have an impact on whether clergy talk about a salient issue, some potential congregational influences on clergy public speech remain unaddressed by scholars. No study to our knowledge has examined the effects on clergy when a member of the congregation is known to have struggled with his or her own sexuality. Social psychologists, however, have long held that personal experience with a member of a minority group can, under the right conditions, lead to more favorable attitudes toward such a group as a whole (the "contact hypothesis"—Allport 1954, 1968).

While investigations of the contact hypothesis have detailed the sometimes paradoxical relationship between religiosity and prejudice (see Allport 1954, 1968; Batson and Stocks 2005; Greeley 1972), none have examined how "contact" affects the proceedings of an organizational context. Allport does suggest that clergy are not immune to the use of "inept, overinclusive categories" that "are employed in place of differentiated thinking" when encountering a member of a minority group (Allport 1954:446), and thus may adopt a reactionary stance toward those in their congregation who have struggled with issues of sexuality. Clergy may also struggle with their personal views about homosexuality—they are like ordinary citizens in the sense that they might often have complicated views about what to think about homosexuality. When they actually come into contact with a gay person, it may help to develop a fresh perspective on the issue. Also, as Batson and Stocks (2005) point out, in many churches attitudes toward homosexuals may constitute a "nonproscribed prejudice." Negative attitudes toward homosexuals, then, may be "either endorsed or implicitly encouraged" by clergy (Batson and Stocks 2005:418). On the other

hand, several more recent studies of the contact hypothesis found that those who had interpersonal contact with gay or lesbian individuals were altogether more likely to express favorable attitudes toward homosexuals as a group (Herek and Glunt 1993; Liang and Alimo 2005; Mohipp and Morry 2004).

We therefore endeavor to understand how clergy present arguments concerning Ohio Issue 1, gay rights, and homosexuality when someone in their congregation has struggled with his or her own sexuality. We suspect that because of the prominent leadership role that they adopt in their churches, clergy are risk averse, and probably attempt to avoid the issue of homosexuality altogether. At the same time, clergy often have strongly held views, and the nature of their position encourages them to convey those views to their congregations. Their status as leaders, however, is not the only factor affecting clergy's decision calculus. Consistent with the contact hypothesis, we believe that clergy are likely to become more accepting of homosexuals as a group when ministering to a congregant who has struggled with his or her own sexuality and introduce more affirming arguments regarding same-sex marriage in their churches.

To this point, we have said very little of how these factors interact and how clergy's personal motivations fit into the overall picture. Clergy's level of interest in a particular social or political issue—what we call clergy agenda in this article—is arguably the most important factor affecting whether they choose to make a public pronouncement on a given matter. As Olson and Crawford note: "Clergy who participate heavily in politics are often motivated by their own intrinsic interest in politics" (2001: 4; see also Olson 2000; Stark et al. 1973:170–71). On this front, we also look to Djupe and Gilbert's (2003) synthesis of the determinants of clergy public speech. Similarly, Guth and colleagues (1997) devote a great deal of attention to the influence of clergy's personal motivations and level of political interest. And yet, their overall theoretical approach focuses far more on the effects of theology on clergy's public speech.

While theology may have an effect on clergy's propensity for political action, such a static view of religious influence overlooks many of the contextual pressures, both local and national, that influence religious leaders. An alternative perspective suggests that "clergy political behavior . . . should be considered a product of personal motivation situated in an environment conducive to action, including the pressures exerted by the congregation, the denomination, and the community" (Djupe and Gilbert 2003:122). These cross-pressures can go a long way in restricting the ability of clergy to act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience on a matter on which that they may wish to take a stand (Glock and Stark 1965).

Unlike most organizational elites, however, religious leaders often exercise a prophetic voice—meaning, in the broadest sense (see Djupe and Neiheisel 2007), that clergy may engage in public speech on a political issue in spite of pressures from the congregation (or another such source of resistance). Clergy often find particular meaning in their necessary engagement in "challenge activities"—modes of public speech or political action that are at odds with the prevailing sentiments of those around them (McNamara 1968). Thus, while we fully expect to find that conflicts at the denominational level and cross-pressures from within the congregation curtail clergy's ability to speak out on gay rights and homosexuality or at least shift its content, personal motivations are likely to emerge as the strongest influence on clergy's public statements.

In beginning to address these hypotheses, we asked clergy not simply whether someone in their congregation had come out as being homosexual, but rather if the presence of a person who has grappled with issues of his or her sexuality had motivated the discussion of homosexuality and gay rights in the congregation. This is clearly different than simply knowing someone who is gay. A public discussion about a congregant invites clergy to think through the implications of their opinions and actions for their ministry in a way that simply knowing someone who is gay does not. Thus, with such a question construction we hope to be able to determine whether clergy's attitudes toward homosexuals and public speech on these issues are shaped by a congregational experience with homosexuality.

<center>**DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN**</center>

Like many other studies of clergy activism and public witness on a matter of social or political import (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Stark et al. 1973), we use a mail survey of clergy as a surrogate for first-hand accounts of the messages that congregants were hearing prior to the 2004 election. As such, this study relies on clergy reports of the kinds of arguments that they presented to their Columbus, Ohio congregations regarding Issue 1, gay rights, and homosexuality.

We used the Columbus area yellow pages as our sampling frame, which lists addresses of 921 houses of worship from a wide range of faith traditions (as of 2006). The yellow pages seems a reasonable representation of the religious community, especially since there is no reasonably affordable alternative (e.g., Chaves et al. 1999). Moreover, Kalleberg et al. (1990) suggest the phone book provides broad coverage and the least bias of five methods of identifying organizations. Chaves et al. (1999) suggest this source is biased toward larger congregations, but also note that most people attend larger houses of worship.

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

Though these issues confront the use of any sample, they are of particular concern here: Are sample clergy typical of their respective traditions and to what degree are they representative of their geographic area? We can gain one point of reference through sample clergy responses on whether they felt clergy have the capacity to influence the views of their church members. We can compare responses on this question since it was asked in a number of other denominational and religious traditional clergy studies grouped under the Cooperative Clergy Study (CCS) in 2000 (Smidt 2004). The response from mainline Protestants was dead on—56.3 of the Columbus sample agreed that they had such influence, versus 54.7 of CCS mainliners. Black Protestants (92.9 Columbus/ 87.7 CCS) and Catholics (70/60.7) also gave similar responses. Perhaps given the campaign and Columbus environments, evangelical Protestants in the Columbus study were more likely to agree (84.3 percent) compared to CSS clergy (68.3 percent). Therefore, by and large, Columbus sample clergy appear to be representative of their respective religious traditions.

To gauge geographic representativeness, we compared our results to the county-level church census conducted by the Glenmary Research Center, which has its own problems, as traditionally black Protestants did not participate, for instance (Jones et al. 2002). Moreover, the definitions used to cover the Columbus metropolitan area differ: the 2000 church census figures include Franklin and neighboring counties, while the yellow page include portions of neighboring counties. The church census lists 623 congregations in Franklin County versus a figure 50 percent higher in our sampling frame. Still, our sample differs only marginally from the church census picture of Franklin County. According to the church census, 39 percent of congregations can be classified as mainline Protestant, 44 percent as evangelical Protestant, and 12 percent as Catholic. Our sample slightly overrepresents mainliners—44 percent are in the mainline, 36 percent are evangelicals, and 7 percent Catholic. There is no census comparison available for black Protestants, who constitute 10 percent of our sample.

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

In sum, the sample represents Columbus area churches adequately and, moreover, the sample appears roughly representative of clergy from their respective religious traditions nationally. The sample captures considerable variance and there is a wide selection of traditions and views represented. With appropriate controls, these data can provide a revealing glimpse of the intra-organizational constraints clergy face in confronting an issue campaign that calls out for their witness.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Having drawn out some potential influences on clergy public speech that remain unexamined in the literature, we first turn our focus to the congregational setting in which clergy in Columbus, Ohio provided arguments concerning the proposed ban on same-sex marriage. We began by asking clergy how, if at all, issues related to homosexuality first arose in their church (respondents could only choose one) and what factors provided the impetus for continued discussion (respondents could select as many as applied). The results of their selection among 12 listed motivating forces are presented in Table 1, sorted by the factor that first generated the discussion.

As Table 1 reveals, a great deal of the discussion that took place in sample churches was generated by outside forces, with nearly a quarter of clergy naming denominational conflict as the source of the initial discussion about homosexuality. Similarly, 6.5 percent of clergy reported that the denomination actively encouraged the study of such issues. Such findings comport well with prior examinations of how conflicts at the denominational level motivate concerns in the congregation (e.g., Ammerman 2005). Under a tenth of clergy indicated that "political events in

TABLE 1
THE INITIAL AND ONGOING SOURCES OF DISCUSSIONS OF GAY RIGHTS AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN COLUMBUS CHURCHES

	How Did Gay Rights and Homosexuality First Come Up in Your Congregation?	What Has Motivated the Discussion of Gay Rights and Homosexuality Since?
Denominational conflict	22.3	32.8
I preached about it	16.5	41.0
Has not come up before	14.4	–
Political events in the nation	8.6	41.0
Issue 1 in Ohio	7.9	53.3
A church study group	6.5	13.9
Denomination encouraged study	6.5	21.3
A member came out as gay	5.0	10.7
Member struggling with own sexuality	3.6	13.1
Homosexuality in the mass media	3.6	36.9
I encouraged study of the issue	2.9	19.7
Sexuality and the schools	1.4	10.7
Public displays of gay pride	0.7	20.5

Note: Answers in the first column sum to 100, while responses in the second column do not since clergy were allowed to circle more than one category. The percentages in Column 2 exclude the 14.4 percent that report homosexuality has not been discussed in their church.
Source: 2004 Columbus Clergy Issue 1 Study.

the nation" initially spurred talk of homosexuality in their church, and nearly a fifth of clergy noted that they were the source of their congregation's first discussion of homosexuality, either by preaching (16.5 percent) or encouraging lay study of the issue (2.9 percent). Just under a tenth suggested that members' sexuality spurred discussion through a member coming out or struggling with questions of sexuality (5 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively). Interestingly, these instances are spread evenly across religious traditions. As Table 1 also illustrates, some congregations have long avoided discussions of homosexuality, with 14.4 percent of clergy reporting that the issue had never come up in their congregation and 7.4 percent indicating that Issue 1 motivated the first discussion of issues related to homosexuality.

Continuing discussions of homosexuality (Column 2) also seem to be motivated in large part by external factors, as denominations continued to either force by conflict (32.8 percent) or encourage (21.3 percent) discussions of homosexuality. Just over a tenth mentioned either a member coming out or struggling with his or her sexuality. "Political events in the nation" also helped promote further discussion of homosexuality, with 41 percent of clergy indicating just such a catalyst. Issue 1 is the most commonly cited source of continued discussions of homosexuality, with 53.3 percent of clergy pointing to the proposed amendment as having an impact on the congregation's engagement with the issue. But clergy also remained significant motivators of the church's discussions, with 41 percent having preached about homosexuality and another 19.7 percent encouraging lay study of the matter. There is little doubt that Columbus churches engaged in a debate about gay rights in this election season.

The central variables in the analysis to follow are constructed from the measures in Table 1. The contact hypothesis is operationalized as whether the church has had discussions motivated initially and/or ongoing by a member coming out or struggling with his or her sexuality. In total, about 20 percent of the sample, spread evenly across religious traditions, reported someone in the congregation struggling with his or her sexuality as motivating discussion. The effect of the denomination is represented as the sum of conversations in the congregation motivated by the initial and ongoing presence of "denominational conflict."

Multivariate Analysis

We asked clergy how they spoke about gay rights, homosexuality, and Ohio's Issue 1 in public discourse in the year prior to the 2004 election. We presented clergy with a set of 12 statements garnered from media accounts, interest group publications, and several activists that encapsulate the range of arguments concerning homosexuality that were circulating in public exchanges at the time in Ohio. Clergy were asked to indicate which arguments they mentioned to their congregation and, separately, if they agreed with the arguments. Thus, we have quite detailed data about the contours of clergy public speech.

We begin by testing the effects of several possible constraints on the direction and extremity of clergy agreement with such arguments. In particular, the contact hypothesis would predict that church discussions of homosexuality motivated by a congregant's struggle with his or her own sexuality would elevate the degree to which clergy agree with more affirming arguments and disagree with pro-Issue 1 arguments.

We suspect that denominational conflict, however, produces a slightly different effect—the divisiveness of related issues in the denomination should make clergy more ambivalent about applying Issue 1's provisions to the state. The presence of denominational conflict should therefore drive down the extremity of clergy's opinions.

We also included multiple controls, especially two factor variables capturing the degree of political unity in the congregation and the degree of interest clergy expressed in Issue 1, which we labeled "clergy agenda" (see Appendix for variable coding). Congregational unity should consistently drive up support for Issue 1 and lead to more extreme opinions, while a strong

interest may not have systematic directional effects but should be related to a more extreme position.

Table 2 displays OLS regression estimates of the effects of such possible constraints on clergy agreement with different arguments regarding the gay marriage ban; the last row of the table shows the effect of the same determinants on a summary opinion extremity measure. Consistent with the contact hypothesis, church discussions of homosexuality motivated by the presence of a congregant struggle with sexuality exert a positive effect on clergy agreement with more affirming, anti-Issue 1 arguments. And contrary to the suggestions implicit in the literature (e.g., Batson and Stocks 2005), congregational experience with an individual who has struggled with issues of sexuality drives down clergy agreement with arguments that might be considered to represent prejudiced perspectives regarding homosexuals.

The results displayed in Table 2 are quite clear as to the effect that giving the issue of homosexuality a human face has on clergy opinions regarding Ohio's marriage amendment. Clergy who must contend with congregants struggling with questions of sexual identity are far less inclined to see homosexuals and same-sex marriage as threats to the "social fabric or traditional institutions," and are more likely to view the issue as a matter of rights and protections for a once marginalized group. More than just a phenomenon occurring in churches affiliated with mainline Protestant denominations, it bears repeating that clergy reports of church discussions motivated by the presence of member struggle are spread evenly across religious traditions. The overall positive effect that congregant struggle has on clergy agreement with arguments against the marriage amendment, then, appears representative of all sample clergy with that experience regardless of denominational affiliation.

In sharp contrast to the impact that the presence of congregant struggle has on clergy agreement with anti-Issue 1 arguments, church discussions of gay rights and homosexuality motivated by denominational conflict appear to have the opposite effect. Almost without exception, denominational conflict drives up clergy agreement with arguments against same-sex marriage, and boosts disagreement with anti-Issue 1 arguments. The extremity of clergy's agreement with arguments on either side of the marriage amendment, however (see the last row in Table 2), is driven down by church discussions motivated by the presence of denominational conflict. Perhaps clergy's opinions are moderated by conflicts at the denominational level, especially as a result of the premium placed on process in mainline Protestant denominations. From this finding it appears that, as hypothesized, sample mainline clergy are ambivalent about applying Issue 1's provisions to the state given the considerable conflicts that the subject has engendered within their denominations.

Such conclusions may be premature, however, because the denominational conflict variable reflects a division among mainline Protestants. In further analysis (results not shown), clergy who report church discussions motivated by denominational conflict tend to share the same opinions as congregation members (typically against same-sex marriage), more frequently self-identify themselves as conservatives, and often express support for arguments in favor of Issue 1. Church leaders who register that denominational conflict has been a significant source of church discussions about homosexuality are therefore likely to be those most bothered by divisions over the matter at the denominational level. Opposition to gay rights, then, is likely to lead them to report that they had discussions with denominational conflict as their source. If this is indeed the case, denominational conflict probably does not lead clergy to have a particular view. Then again, mainline Protestants are significantly more moderate than clergy in other denominations and only they experience denominational conflict. While it may not change the principles held, experience with damaging conflict may induce hesitation in addressing these issues.

These competing effects are summarized in the last two lines of Table 2, where we see that denominational conflict boosts support for Issue 1 arguments (in the penultimate model), but also drives down extreme position taking (in the final model). Member struggle drives down agreement with pro-Issue 1 arguments, but does not affect the extremity of those positions.

TABLE 2
OLS REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF THE EFFECTS OF KEY CONSTRAINTS ON AGREEMENT WITH 12 ARGUMENTS ON GAY MARRIAGE AND ISSUE 1

Arguments	Member Struggle	Denom. Conflict	Church Unity	Clergy Agenda	Adj R^2	N
Allowing same-sex partners to marry paves the way for other nontraditional forms of marriage such as polygamy.	−0.423†	0.555*	1.152***	−0.171†	0.379	115
Allowing same-sex partners to marry threatens the social fabric and traditional institutions.	−0.628**	0.442†	1.292***	−0.194*	0.498	116
Allowing same-sex partners to marry grants God's blessing on a sinful practice.	−0.511†	0.728**	0.893***	−0.237†	0.218	113
Allowing same-sex partners to marry violates scripture.	−0.524*	0.748**	1.166***	−0.242*	0.406	116
Though I oppose allowing same-sex marriage, I support antidiscrimination laws for gays and lesbians.	0.316	0.532†	−0.261†	−0.401**	0.097	102
Issue 1 should be opposed because of potential detrimental economic effects in the state.	0.534*	−0.004	−0.655***	−0.093	0.219	111
Issue 1 should be opposed because, historically, constitutional amendments in our nation extend rights rather than restrict them.	0.727***	−0.583*	−0.935***	0.159	0.298	110
Though I oppose allowing same-sex partners to marry, I support granting gays and lesbians obtaining civil unions—granting secular benefits of marriage without God's blessing.	0.223	0.285	−0.678***	−0.357**	0.286	104
Issue 1 should be opposed because only God and the churches can sanctify a marriage—no constitutional amendment can do that.	0.990***	0.263	−0.389**	0.096	0.152	112
Not to allow same-sex partners to marry unjustly deprives these couples of many legal benefits.	0.335	−0.706*	−1.082***	0.233†	0.312	114
Allowing same-sex partners to marry helps to bring a once marginal group into traditional institutions and stabilizes society.	0.563*	−0.507†	−0.923***	0.318**	0.308	114
We should recognize genuine love expressed between consenting, same-sex adults by allowing them to marry.	0.443†	−0.531†	−0.996***	0.491***	0.354	116
Average Issue 1/gay marriage support.	−0.546**	0.548**	1.009***	−0.271***	0.469	116
Average opinion extremity.	−0.018	−0.254***	0.089**	0.179***	0.308	116

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$ (two-tailed tests); † $p < 0.10$ (one-tailed test).

Note: The OLS regression models also control for the mobilization from interest groups, Issue 1 activism in the respondent's ministerial organization, and black Protestants.

See the Appendix for variable coding.

Source: 2004 Columbus Clergy Issue 1 Study.

We also examine the effects of conflict within the clergy's own congregation on their agreement with arguments concerning same-sex marriage and Ohio Issue 1. Table 2 shows that church unity—a lack of division within the congregation and between the clergy and congregation—has a positive effect on clergy agreement with arguments against same-sex marriage and drives down agreement with more affirming, anti-Issue 1 arguments. And, as suspected, congregational unity has a positive effect on the extremity of clergy's opinions. Although previous studies have shown clergy to engage in more public speech when they find themselves to be ideologically distant from the people in the pews (Djupe and Gilbert 2003), this suggests not just a behavioral constraint, but also an attitudinal one. That is, opinion ambivalence is induced when clergy are faced with ideological difference. This presents a far different conception of clergy than is typical, where clergy are the elite opinion leaders whose views are not shaped by their congregations or peers.

Clergy agenda exerts a positive influence on clergy agreement with anti-Issue 1 arguments, but with several conspicuous exceptions. As would be expected, clergy agenda has a negative influence on all pro-Issue 1 arguments, but also on some of the more moderate positions we provided to clergy. For example, more issue engagement drives down their agreement with the argument: "Though I oppose allowing same-sex partners to marry, I support antidiscrimination laws for gays and lesbians." Not surprising, then, is that a stronger clergy agenda has a positive effect on the extremity of clergy's opinions about gay rights and same-sex marriage. One would certainly expect to find that clergy who take it upon themselves to promote or oppose the constitutional amendment would hold strong opinions.

Although the results in Table 2 offer a rather unique glimpse at what clergy thought about different arguments related to issues of gay rights and homosexuality around the 2004 election, the question still remains whether clergy were constrained in their ability to present such arguments to their congregations. Table 3 displays logistic regression estimates of the effects of several possible constraints on clergy mentioning the same set of 12 arguments concerning Issue 1. These results afford a look at how, if it all, clergy public speech on the sensitive issue of homosexuality in society is shaped by the content of their own opinions as well as conflicts at the denominational and congregational levels.

Prior studies of clergy public speech have found clergy to be particularly hesitant to broach the subject of gay rights (e.g., Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert 2006; Olson and Cadge 2002). We therefore hypothesized that clergy, in the interest of keeping their congregation together, were likely to avoid the issue of homosexuality altogether when faced with church discussions of the matter motivated by member struggle or denominational conflict. The results, however, suggest that denominational conflict has essentially no direct effect on clergy speech and we were somewhat surprised by the effect that member struggle has on clergy public witness.

Discussions of homosexuality motivated by a church member's struggle with questions of his or her own sexuality drive down clergy mentioning several of the more extreme pro-Issue 1 arguments, such as that allowing same-sex marriage would pave the way for polygamy. Member struggle augments mentioning at least one argument against Issue 1—that we should recognize genuine love between consenting adults—but at the same time tamps down making a broader rights-based attack on Issue 1. The pattern of results seems to suggest that clergy faced with a parishioner struggling with issues of sexuality take a public stance that affirms the individual, avoids extreme arguments, and does not turn clergy into generals in the campaign. They appear hesitant to make the personal into the political.

The rest of the church context seems to affect them less than one might think. Church conflict and denominational conflict have almost no direct effects on clergy public speech (see Table 3). We predicted that denominational conflict would constrain clergy in their ability to provide public witness, but it fails to achieve significance in all but one model. The same is true for church unity, which has little effect as well.

Perhaps not surprisingly, though, the most consistent findings presented in Table 3 are the effects that clergy agenda and the extremity of clergy opinions have. Opinion extremity achieves

TABLE 3
LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF THE EFFECTS OF KEY CONSTRAINTS ON CLERGY MENTIONING 12 ARGUMENTS

Arguments	Member Struggle	Denom. Conflict	Church Unity	Clergy Agenda	Opinion Extremity	Cox R^2	N
Allowing same-sex partners to marry paves the way for other nontraditional forms of marriage such as polygamy.	−1.006 ˠ	−0.930	−0.274	0.513 ˠ	−0.003	.291	111
Allowing same-sex partners to marry helps to bring a once marginal group into traditional institutions and stabilizes society.	−0.585	0.407	−0.101	0.445 ˠ	0.151	.184	110
Allowing same-sex partners to marry grants God's blessing on a sinful practice.	−1.175*	−0.102	−0.009	0.557*	1.273**	.206	109
Allowing same-sex partners to marry violates scripture.	−0.512	0.279	0.395	0.746**	1.281**	.455	112
Though I oppose allowing same-sex partners to marry, I support antidiscrimination laws for gays and lesbians.	−0.564	0.497	0.306	0.441	0.549 ˠ	.333	97
Issue 1 should be opposed because of potential detrimental economic effects in the state.	−0.215	0.153	0.340	0.170	0.820**	.134	103
Issue 1 should be opposed because, historically, constitutional amendments in our nation extend rights rather than restrict them.	−2.512***	0.229	0.660 ˠ	−0.295	1.287**	.340	103
Though I oppose allowing same-sex partners to marry, I support granting gays and lesbians obtaining civil unions—granting secular benefits of marriage without God's blessing.	−0.315	−0.434	0.156	0.473 ˠ	0.587 ˠ	.219	100
Issue 1 should be opposed because only God and the churches can sanctify a marriage—no constitutional amendment can do that.	0.035	−0.518	0.256	0.304	0.782*	.232	107
Not to allow same-sex partners to marry unjustly deprives these couples of many legal benefits.	0.537	0.458	0.415	0.710**	−0.424	.271	110
Allowing same-sex partners to marry helps to bring a once marginal group into traditional institutions and stabilizes society.	−0.585	0.407	−0.101	0.445 ˠ	0.151	.184	110
We should recognize genuine love expressed between consenting adults of the same sex by allowing them to marry.	1.055*	1.256*	−0.127	0.076	1.245**	.290	112

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$ (two-tailed tests); ˠ $p < 0.10$ (one-tailed test).

Note: The logistic regression models also control for mobilization from interest groups, Issue 1 activism in the respondent's ministerial organization, black Protestants, and agreement with the argument. See the Appendix for coding.

Source: 2004 Columbus Clergy Issue 1 Study.

statistical significance in most models, driving up clergy mentions (after controlling for the direction of opinion, which is always significant, positive, and not shown). Clergy agenda, too, has a consistently positive effect on clergy mentions of arguments on both sides of the Issue 1 debate. Personal motivations, then, have a far greater direct effect on clergy public speech than either denominational or congregational influences.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This last finding only serves to further highlight the importance of our findings in Table 2, especially related to clergy opinion extremity. On this basis, denominational discussions of homosexuality and cross-cutting congregational elements might be recast as deliberative processes (Djupe and Neiheisel 2008; Olson, Djupe, and Cadge 2008) that have important moderating effects on the extremity of clergy's opinions on gay rights and homosexuality. One possible interpretation of that finding is that, as a result, clergy exhibit what might be termed issue ambivalence (although many might contend that we are too hasty to use this term given the nature of our measures—see, for instance, Albertson, Brehm and Alvarez (2004)). Like other citizens, clergy can hold multiple perspectives on a single issue and, hence, can both favor and oppose the same issue (Zaller 1992). While ambivalence is often portrayed as a democratic good (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954), ambivalent clergy provide less argumentation to their congregations, perhaps inhibiting further deliberation, especially if clergy are crucial in initiating conversations in congregations (Djupe and Gilbert 2009).

The implications are fairly clear about how denominations are represented in public debates. When denominations begin debates about how gays and lesbians are to be recognized, congregations are naturally entangled. The process, however, can serve as an important influence on participants, moderating their own views, especially when confronted with a diversity of viewpoints. At the same time, denominational conflict can detract from public debate on similar public issues, as clergy are wary of exacerbating potentially high tensions, may not be able to avoid discussion of denominational issues at the same time, and are not motivated to the same extent by more nuanced opinions on the matter. That is, conflict at the denominational level has multiple, deleterious effects on the representation of that organization's views in public debate.

What is quite surprising about this interpretation is that clergy are often thought immune to social pressures to think (though not to act) a certain way. The notion of a prophetic voice for religious leaders hinges on their ability to think and act in tension with society (Hofrenning 1995; Weber 1922). Here, we see that clergy are attuned to their congregational and denominational contexts and take experiences had and messages heard there to heart. It is perhaps no surprise that clergy called to minister to a particular community can be changed as a result of the experience. On this basis, these contexts might be considered less as mere constraints on behavior, though they surely play that role as well, but as agents of socialization in outlook. If results like these hold, what emerges is a picture of American religion that is diverse and local, but also less conflict ridden than we might think. There are powerful pressures to minister to the needs of a particular congregation, which may have long-term reciprocal effects.

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Appendix: Variable Coding

Member struggle if clergy reported congregational discussion resulted from a "member struggling with own sexuality" or a "member came out as gay" (collapsed to 1 = yes, 0 = no).

Denominational conflict if clergy reported congregational discussion resulted from "denominational conflict" (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Church conflict is a factor variable with high loadings from evangelical Protestant and clergy and church voted similarly in 2000 and high negative loadings from mainline Protestant and the church is politically divided.

Clergy agenda is a factor variable with high loadings from clergy interest in Issue 1 and reporting the church held an adult education session on gay rights issues.

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

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

Black Protestant = 1 if the church is primarily black, 0 = otherwise.

Opinion extremity for each issue, the five-point agreement scale is folded so that 1 = neutral, 2 = (dis)agree, and 3 = strongly (dis)agree. The measure is averaged across all 12 issues for the model at the bottom of Table 2.