JOURNAL FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION

The Deliberative Pulpit? The Democratic Norms and Practices of the PCUSA

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In contrast to typical approaches that view religion as problematic or benign, thicker conceptions of religion's place in promoting and sustaining democratic politics are possible. This includes religious organizations modeling democratic practices and engaging in debate on common terms. We initiate this program of inquiry with data from a survey of Presbyterian Church, USA clergy gathered during the late summer and fall of 2009. We asked explicitly about clergy commitment to democratic norms and practices as reflected in their public speech and small group activities in their congregations. We use this article to explain variance in the results, looking especially to see if democratic commitments fall at the expense of religious competition, organizational maintenance, and personal preference and increased conservatism.

Keywords: *deliberation, democratic norms, clergy, congregations, religion and politics.*

INTRODUCTION

Though there are multiple approaches to understanding religion's role in society, most of them are left unstated in empirical research. Among the approaches is the notion that religion poses a problem for democracy. As Madison argues in his Memorial and Remonstrance, although religious belief is an inalienable right and society must reserve room for it, religious behavior is not and religious establishments have resulted in "pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution." More modern thinkers have echoed this concern, posing religion as a "conversation stopper" (Rorty 1994; but see Rorty 2003), as promoting allegiances alternate to the state (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989), as encouraging extreme opinions (Barker, Hurwitz, and Nelson 2008; Green et al. 1996), and as promoting intolerance (e.g., Jelen and Wilcox 1990; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Reimer and Park 2001; Smidt and Penning 1982). Other work studying the political engagement of clergy and churches tends to conceive of them as rational political actors working strategically to maximize their impact on the policy process (e.g., Calfano 2009, 2010; Guth et al. 1997). At the same time, still other perspectives on the role of religion in a democracy push religious actors to the background, with religion constraining social values and behaviors to enable political debate, limited government, and citizenship through basic training in associational life (Bellah et al. 1985; Tocqueville 1994; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Yet, in contrast to these approaches that see religion as problematic or benign, thicker conceptions of the place of religion in promoting and sustaining a democratic politics are possible. In these conceptions, religious organizations model democratic practices and engage in debate on common terms—what is known as democratic deliberation.[1] That is, it is possible to think of religious organizations as more than just structural

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[1] There is no one definition of deliberation, but it commonly includes the equality of participants, full participation, the use of universally accessible arguments, and agreement on goals. For instance, Button and Matson (1999:610) define deliberation as "understood broadly to mean reflective and reasonably open-ended discussion under conditions of general

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (2012) 51(1):90–109
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features of American society, but as integral players helping to generate or undermine strong versions of democracy (Barber 1984). In this article, we ask to what extent churches model ideal democratic practices and what affects their ability and willingness to do so.

Adapting some of the applicable developments of the political tolerance literature, we provide a more comprehensive approach to understanding how religion may affect democratic capacity in citizens. Rather than conceptualizing religion as a set of beliefs or abstracted behaviors, we urge a rededication of energies to study the direct democratic implications of congregational life—what they do to orient believers toward attitudes and behaviors that reflect basic principles in line with a democratic society (Warner 1997). In particular, we argue that it is essential to capture the actual practices of congregations, and the relevant communication patterns therein, because they bear on how citizens may come to understand and apply democratic principles (see also Coffin 2005; Moon 2004; Perrin 2005).

We begin this inquiry with a study of Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA) clergy conducted during the fall of 2009. In the study, we asked clergy explicitly about democratic practices in their congregations, as well as democratic principles held and communicated. After documenting their responses, which reveal a denomination devoted to promoting democratic practices to varying degrees, we attempt to explain observed patterns, drawing on three essential forces—environmental pressures, congregational dynamics, and the clergy's dispositions.

A Model of Popular Support for Democracy

If democracy must be sustained by popular commitment to its principles and practices, then, as observers have long argued, the United States is deeply troubled. Although commitment to democratic principles is widespread in the abstract (McClosky and Brill 1983; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Prothro and Grigg 1960), the American public has been less accepting of their application to unpopular groups, such as racists, communists, homosexuals, and atheists (the traditional list offered on the General Social Survey—Stouffer 1955). A considerable amount of nuance has been added to this "paradox" of democratic support since these early studies, most of which is not important to review here (see Marcus et al. 1995 for a review). But three crucial forces act to resolve the paradox and connect democratic principles to their application.

First, it is important to account for the intensity of commitment to democratic norms to understand one's dedication to the conduct of democracy as represented by, for instance, political tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995; Prothro and Grigg 1960; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). More generally stated, that values can structure attitudes and behaviors is an old idea with a great deal of empirical support (e.g., Feldman 1988; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Jacoby 2006; Rokeach 1973). However, though values are important, they may not function effectively without additional encouragement. Thus, and second, citizens who are not encouraged to think through the application of general principles to specific practices are unlikely to have consistent attitudes. In other words, repeated exposure to the application of a principle through modeling is most likely to spur adoption (Bandura 1977; McClosky and Zaller 1984). In the tolerance literature, the result of personal exposure to such modeling is the standing decision to tolerate noxious political expression (Marcus et al. 1995).

Third, the contemporary information available to people from their environments can affect whether they apply democratic principles to a situation (Marcus et al. 1995) or any values to a situation (Zaller 1992). For instance, McClosky and Zaller (1984) found that lawyers were considerably more willing to apply abstract principles in areas where the legal precedent was clear,

equality." Guttmann and Thompson pitch the concept initially with the freighted phrase "reason[ing] together to reach mutually acceptable decisions" (1996:1). But Mendelberg and Oleske (2000:170), for one, belie simple definitions by distilling from the literature eight high requirements for deliberation.

but did not differ from other elites when the precedent was unsettled. In a more general investigation, Marcus et al. (1995) manipulated information backing or undermining the application of democratic principles and found it a consistent determinant of political tolerance of least-liked groups.[2] In essence, the application of values to attitudes and behaviors is also a product of ongoing discussions in local contexts and the provision of cues in broader environments (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Perrin 2005; Pollock, Lilie, and Vittes 1993; Zaller 1992).

Religious Underpinnings of Democracy

From these three points, we wish to draw several lessons for houses of worship. To understand the depth of democratic capacity in the citizenry, we need to be attentive to at least three roles that houses of worship may engage. First, religious organizations can help to instill support for democracy and its fundamental values directly. This is their most obvious function—to encourage a particular worldview—and there are numerous ways that they seek this end. Just within a worship service, Wald, Owen, and Hill (1988) provide a perceptive list:

> [T]he sanctuary was festooned with posters promoting solidarity with Central American victims of rightist oppression, the minister's sermon lauded the resistance of women to tyranny throughout history, the explanation of harvest symbols stressed the need to combat poverty and hunger and the choice of hymns included folk songs from the civil rights era. (1988: 533)

But there are other avenues of influence as well—including the often myriad small group meetings and activities that churches sponsor (Wuthnow 1994), as well as informal interaction with other church members and the clergy that is less visible to the naked eye (Djupe and Gilbert 2009).

Some empiricists and theorists alike might argue that encouraging the adoption of values alone is insufficient because citizens often hold competing values, and it is their resolution that counts most (e.g., Alvarez and Brehm 1995; Tetlock 1986). In this case, democratic principles must trump dictates from alternate sources, such as theology or organizational expediency (Guttmann and Thompson 1996; Macedo 2000; Rorty 1994). With regard to religion, this tension is often represented as one between fundamentalists and liberal democracy (e.g., *Mozert v. Hawkins* 1987), but that tension has not been measured systematically (though see Pew Forum 2006; Wilcox 2010). To accurately gauge commitment to democratic norms, the measurement strategy should require respondents to choose between religious dictates and democratic principles and practices.

Second, the consistent elucidation and application of democratic principles may help to thicken the link between abstract values and consistent attitudes. Thus, churches may help to deepen individuals' democratic capacity by modeling how democracy works within their walls. Although some high-profile studies have suggested that religious organizations lack the most basic element necessary for democratic function—disagreement (Mutz 2006; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Scheufele, Nisbet, and Brossard 2003; Sunstein 2002)—others working with more comprehensive measurements have found considerable and consequential political diversity in churches (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Gilbert 1993; Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey 2009; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). Importantly, many religious organizations may model the democratic process more overtly than simply supplying its ingredients. Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey (2009) found that adult education sessions in congregations quite often adopt deliberative norms (see also Coffin 2005). Shields (2007) uncovered deliberative patterns in some of the presumed least likely

[2] However, they found that the "contemporary information" provided in their manipulations was not applied when the group was not one of the individual's least-liked groups (Marcus et al. 1995:146–48).

places—within Christian conservative movement organizations (but see Wilcox 2010). Several studies have found that, contrary to conventional wisdom, clergy often model the deliberative process, presenting some balance of arguments to their congregations (Djupe and Neiheisel 2008; Olson, Djupe, and Cadge 2011) and/or speaking prophetically (Calfano 2009; Djupe, and Gilbert 2003, 2009; Hofrenning 1995; Quinley 1974). Denominational assemblies, wracked with difficult issues can, at times, resemble deliberative forums (Wood and Bloch 1995). Moreover, it is hard to argue with the compelling demonstration of the democratization of American religion, which included overt arguments in support of the fledgling democracy after the American Revolution (Hatch 1989). In short, religious organizations are constantly modeling more or less deliberative processes for their members in a wide variety of milieus.

Finally, houses of worship are constantly providing information that would assist members in applying their values in specific, contemporary situations. This understanding stands in contrast to both Madison's pessimistic view of religious institutions as narrow and self-interested, as well as Tocqueville's (1994) view that religion stayed out of politics, but provided for social stability by imposing value homogeneity. Religious organizations have not been content to remain in the background, refraining from politics (Hatch 1989; Noll 1990). Instead, religious organizations are often vibrant participants in public debate on consequential issues. Almost all national religious organizations have lobbyists (or participate in lobbying coalitions) and produce official statements of positions on political issues (Fowler et al. 2004; Hertzke 1988; Hofrenning 1995; Yamane 2005). What is more, clergy engage in frequent political communication on salient political issues (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997), perhaps now more than ever (Djupe and Gilbert 2008; Guth 1996). Therefore, to remain relevant and ensure that their values are applied in a consistent way, religious organizations engage current events (Wood 1991, 1999). But when they do engage political issues, they seem to cast their arguments within a set of more or less prosocial norms like tolerance (Djupe et al. 2009).

Thus, we have three clear directions to explore regarding the support congregations provide to democratic capacity. First, they can instill democratic principles; second, they model the democratic (deliberative) process; and third, they apply those principles to current situations. This portrait does not differ significantly from how churches shape the political choices of their members (Djupe and Gilbert 2009).

Forces Shaping the Pursuit of Democratic Practice

Given our three-fold framework for asking how religious organizations shape democratic capacity, we now turn to a discussion of its determinants. In what follows, we develop general expectations and do not distinguish effects among the three components of congregational democratic practices. A wide swath of literature, whether couched in terms of markets, organizational ecologies, or reference systems, agrees that what congregations, firms, and groups do is driven by a mix of internal demands and external pressures (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Finke and Stark 2005; Gray and Lowery 1996; Hannan and Freeman 1989; Heinz et al. 1993; Olson 1965). Concerning the choice to implement deliberative procedures, we think about the process as governed by a complex system of preference and necessity, including whether such procedures would help negotiate differences within the congregation, reify the importance of a participatory membership, give members a process to negotiate disagreements with the community, signal to new members their inclusivity, and otherwise conform to the predilections of the clergyperson.

The purpose of deliberative practices is to negotiate fundamental moral disagreements without having to resort to institutional exit or violence. Thus, norms such as equality, reciprocity, and fairness are quite well suited to communities divided in some way (Gutmann and Thompson 1996), though we should not discount avoidance as a viable strategy (Hirschman 1970; Moon 2004). The literature on clergy speech, one of the only literatures to think about the politics of

a congregation as a whole (though see Becker 2007; Beyerlein and Chaves 2003; Owens 2007), has focused on political differences between the clergy and congregation as a hurdle to introducing political content (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Quinley 1974). However, their concern is with the amount of clergy speech and not the form, nor even really its content except in the most general, topical way. Political communication in divided communities should take on a different form than in united communities. Reinforcing the importance of this distinction, Djupe and Neiheisel (2008) show that different motivations affect the amount of speech versus the content, with clergy's own interest driving the amount and political division within the congregation driving the content. Moreover, the motivation for adopting deliberative practices in adult education is more likely when there are significant political divisions within the congregation. Thus, we expect organizations that are not taxed by diverse views may see little need for the emphasis on deliberative norms because the purpose of democratic deliberation is to help bridge divides by finding shared values guided by a sense of reciprocity (Gutmann and Thompson 1996). We include a measure asking the extent to which the clergy believe the congregation to be politically divided, with high values indicating the congregation is "very divided."[3]

Very few clergy studies after Campbell and Pettigrew's pioneering work on clergy in Little Rock during the late 1950s made theoretical room for the community (but see Olson 2000), though work from the religious economy perspective (e.g., Finke and Stark 2005; Warner 1993) and more recent work on clergy political behavior demand it. Clergy become more politically active to fill leadership gaps in the community (Olson 2000) and become representatives of their congregations when the congregation's beliefs are underrepresented locally (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; more generally, see also Knight and Johnson 1993). It is not yet clear from this work whether there are congregational implications in terms of how political arguments are conveyed or how groups exploring political content are organized in congregations. But, we expect that these two activities are more likely to be structured around deliberative norms when the congregation is different from the local community. In a very general sense, political minorities should embrace deliberative processes because of their emphasis on equality and fairness—majorities will still prevail, but are first encouraged to listen to minority viewpoints and adopt fair procedures. Second, because they take multiple perspectives into account, deliberative procedures will allow participants to engage members of the broader community in discussion. Third, adopting an inclusive set of procedures for handling political matters may prove useful when competing for adherents, a notion that we explore in more detail later. In summary, we hypothesize that the more similar a congregation is to the local community, the less likely it is to adopt deliberative procedures and articulate deliberative norms. Following Djupe and Gilbert (2003, 2009), our measure of this asks clergy to compare their congregations with their local community on a number of political and demographic items that are summed into an index of similarity.

A great deal of research in the "new paradigm" of the sociology of religion has explored how market forces act on religious firms (congregations), dictating a set of predictable reactions to compete for adherents (Iannacone 1988; Finke and Stark 2005; Stark and Finke 2000; Warner 1993). Though competitive sects may maintain a higher tension with the world, they are also more inclusive and expend considerable resources reaching out to new members, which might result in a commitment to deliberative practice to accommodate new members. However, studies of religious change since the 1960s have often suggested a tension between outreach efforts and

[3] Djupe and Gilbert (2009) investigated the nature of this measure and found it does not work quite the way most have assumed it does. That is, the more partisan-leaning the congregation (the less divided in percentage terms), the more likely that the clergyperson indicated the church is politically divided. Evenly divided congregations in percentage terms (e.g., 50 percent Democrats, 50 percent Republicans) were less likely to be labeled as "divided." Therefore, they suggested that the measure is picking up the extent to which political conflict is evident rather than the distribution of partisan affiliations. This interpretation of the measure does not change our hypothesis, however.

political activism on the part of clergy. More than one commentator has argued that the reason mainline Protestant denominations have declined is because of "storms in the churches" caused by ecumenism and high levels of politicking on controversial issues (Hadden 1969; Kelley 1972; Quinley 1974; Reichley 1985; Roof and McKinney 1987; Wald 1997; Wuthnow 1988; for a review see Djupe and Gilbert 2008). At least implicitly, this inquiry suggests that either religious organizations focus on growing the church or politics, but not both.

We agree with the market paradigm and argue that a more nuanced perspective is called for. Although one view is that pursuing church growth and politics are compatible goals as long as the religious "benefits" members desire are delivered (Djupe 2001; Djupe and Gilbert 2008), it is also important to think about the particular style of politics engaged when reaching out to new members. That is, a deliberative framework, which is explicitly tolerant of diverse interests, is especially appropriate when newcomers are being welcomed to a church. Thus, we expect that a push for new members is compatible with, and even facilitative of, adopting an emphasis on democratic practices. Of course, this hypothesis is dependent on the distribution of opinions flowing into the congregation from new members. If that distribution is highly peaked, then there may be less need to emphasize deliberative norms.

Some famous investigations have found that more active associational citizenries are more demanding of their governments (Putnam 2000). The norms and networks of civic engagement encourage awareness and instill the participatory potential to hold government accountable. Especially in the United States, church involvement is a central force in sustaining political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). As an extension, churches can be considered microcultures that showcase the promise and perils of democracy (Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert 2007; Fine and Harrington 2004; Perrin 2005). The parallel force acting within the church to make demands on the organization and its hierarchy is involvement in small groups (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey 2009). Thus, we expect that greater small group involvement may drive a demand for participatory procedures in governing congregations.

At the same time, involvement in small groups may also be a way to instill the norms of the congregation and build support for the organization. Small groups are a central tool of megachurches to make the big church small, and they often carefully control the leadership and content of small groups (Thumma and Travis 2007; Towns 1990; Trueheart 1996). The same is arguably true in smaller churches. Ratifying this story, Djupe and Gilbert (2008) find that involvement in a small group promotes more satisfaction with "the time clergy spend on politics" independent of their political leanings and political engagement, thus indicating a measure of social control (Olson 1965). Thus, because of the tension in these predictions, the simple measures of the degree of church involvement by the congregation and whether the church held adult education sessions on social and political matters may not display systematic effects on democratic practice.

Finally, we investigate the effects of a series of variables capturing what the clergy might want and the freedom of clergy to pursue their own vision for the congregation; they also serve as needed controls. It is a longstanding finding that conservatives tend to be less tolerant of minority groups and of ideas and lifestyles that challenge the status quo (e.g., Guth et al. 1997; Sniderman et al. 1991; Stouffer 1955). Though tolerance is not the only component of deliberative democracy, it is a critical one and the logic should extend easily to deliberative norms and practices—we expect liberals to be more supportive of deliberative norms and practices. Ideally, religious as well as political ideology measures would be represented here, but the survey suffered a dearth of theology measures. However, existing research suggests a very strong correlation ($r = .70$) between the two, suggesting the omission is not critical (Guth et al. 1997: 104).

Beyond ideology, other personal preferences may interfere with the desire or ability to fulfill a prodemocratic role. For one, clergy have strong opinions and wish to see them applied in society and government (Quinley 1974; Guth et al. 1997). They may not be willing to submerge

their views in the interest of promoting an open debate among congregants. However, Djupe and Neiheisel (2008: 20–21) found that the clergy's own agenda drove whether clergy addressed gay rights, but it did not have any effect on how the issue was addressed. Instead, the distribution of opinion in the congregation drove that. Clergy facing heterogeneous congregations were more likely to present a range of arguments in contrast to those who preached to the choir. We include a measure of the political interest of the clergyperson on the expectation that those more invested in the political process might be less willing to subvert their own views and process issues in a deliberative manner.

The tenure length of clergy is typically thought to indicate the credit that clergy have built, enabling some freedom of action (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997). That does not indicate the kind of values they hold and there is a slight tendency for longer-serving clergy to be conservative in a few mainline denominations (Djupe and Gilbert 2003), but the relationship has not been tested elsewhere. It has been found across the social sciences that women are typically more conflict avoidant, collaborative, and therefore susceptible to social pressures (e.g., Belenky et al. 1986; Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae 2001; Ulbig and Funk 1999). Those patterns lead us to expect an affinity among women for the norms of equality and reciprocity, but it is not clear that there is motivation to engage in a deliberative process because of a desire to avoid conflict.

A higher education is often a transformative experience, promoting individualism and a concomitant liberalism and tolerance (Golebiowska 1995; Mill 1991; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996). On that basis, we would expect that more highly educated clergy would express greater commitment to deliberative norms and practices. However, the primary distinction within the PCUSA, as in other mainline denominations, concerns whether the clergyperson holds a masters of divinity or a doctorate from outside the seminary (41 percent). We might expect that those holding a doctorate may be more self-assured in their opinions and less supportive of deliberative norms.

Data and Design

To begin the investigation of this framework of thinking about religion in a democracy, we polled PCUSA clergy in the fall of 2009 after gathering a simple random sample of churches from the PCUSA masterlist. Contact with 1,000 randomly sampled churches was initiated through email requesting their participation in an Internet-based survey. The general email for the church was used, though the request was addressed to the head pastor. Not all email addresses proved valid and the final valid sample was 712. With two reminders, we received 321 completed interviews for a 32.1 response rate for the initial sample of 1,000 and 45 percent for the final valid sample of 712.[4]

Although the PCUSA is thought of as a liberal, mainline Protestant denomination, its sample of clergy has at least one useful property. For one, the denomination's clergy are nearly evenly distributed in terms of political partisanship, with a slightly higher proportion of Democrats (especially weak) than Republicans. So, although we will use political partisanship as a control later in this analysis, it is useful to note that the sample covers almost evenly a full range of American partisan commitments.[5] Religious ideology has a similar distribution according to the

[4] A few comparisons with PCUSA research on pastors (2008) suggest our sample is reflective of the population. The PCUSA finds 24 percent of pastors are women, whereas our sample puts the number at 25 percent. The PCUSA finds 85 percent of pastors are married, while our sample finds 86 percent.

[5] Although we do not have data from the congregations of sample clergy, it is likely that they are quite a bit more Republican than the clergy. The Presbyterian Panel from 2008 indicates that 46 percent of members were Republicans, 31 percent Democrats, and 25 percent independents; similarly, the Pew Religious Landscape Survey (PCUSA weighted $n = 1{,}011$) finds 43 percent Republican, 26 percent Democrat, and 27 percent independent. Thus, there is likely to

Presbyterian Panel (2008), 31 percent call themselves religious conservatives, 37 percent religious moderates, and 31 percent religious liberals. The PCUSA cannot stand in for the rest of American religion, but it does contain broad representation of theological and political positions.

We also use select results from the most recent Cooperative Clergy Survey (CCS). A small subset of questions from our PCUSA survey was included on nine denominational surveys administered variously in the fall of 2009.[6] This small subset of questions does not allow for a full portrait of support for democratic practice in American religion, but it is illustrative of what that broader portrait may look like. In what follows, we will begin with an analysis of our PCUSA results and turn at an appropriate point to the full CCS results to set ours in some context.

Results

Clergy Beliefs

We begin our exploration with the degree to which clergy espouse deliberative norms. Because, we suspected that there would be some incentive among clergy respondents to agree with statements supportive of democracy, we made the statements border on hyperbolic and pit the interests of the church against democratic aims to raise the stakes of compliance. We first asked about the connection of the church and democracy. Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed with the notion that the health of the church and democracy are fundamentally tied, and that promoting democracy is "essential to God's plan for us." However, only 29 percent agreed that the church must be engaged in public affairs. Thus, the lack of belief in the necessity of political involvement by the church should not be interpreted to mean that the church should be separate from politics. Instead, PCUSA clergy see the fate of democracy and the church as bound, even if that does not demand explicit political engagement from the church.

We also asked more pointedly about the clergy's commitment to deliberative ideals by asking what is "most important" to their role. Is it most important to enshrine the church's values in public debate, or is their most important role to sponsor and enliven debate in the first place? It is clear from responses to these five questions that PCUSA clergy favor preserving the church and the church's perspective. Majorities believe it is most important to their role to persuade members to adopt the church's viewpoint, ensure debate represents the church's values, and help members choose candidates that reflect the church's values. It is clear from these measures that they also feel called to avoid debate and controversy to sustain the church.[7]

At the same time, these majorities are not large. On average, two-fifths of respondent clergy were neutral or took what we posed as the opposite stance—that it was their most important role to help members reach their own opinions, ensure debate reflects many views, ensure political participation rather than a particular political choice, and promote debate and the involvement

be considerable disagreement between the clergy and congregation, which seems to be typical of mainline Protestant churches.

[6] The surveys were conducted by a consortium of scholars coordinated by Corwin Smidt (director) through the Calvin College Paul B. Henry Institute. The denominations surveyed (the primary sponsor for each denomination is in parentheses followed by the final n and the response rate) included the Assemblies of God (John C. Green, $n = 208$, response rate (rr) = 21.1), Christian Reformed Church (Corwin Smidt, $n = 370$, rr = 53.3), Disciples of Christ (Christopher Devine, $n = 335$, rr = 34.9), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Laura Olson, $n = 272$, rr = 34.1), Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (Jeff Walz and Steve Montreal, $n = 359$, rr = 41.7), Reformed Church of America (Corwin Smidt, 312, rr = 50.9), Southern Baptist Church (James Guth, $n = 248$, rr = 25.4), United Methodist Church (John C. Green, $n = 282$, rr = 28.7), and the Mennonites (Kyle Kopko, $n = 520$, rr = 53.6).

[7] Figures showing the distribution of these items are available in Appendix S1 in the online version of this article at wileyonlinelibrary. Full coding information for all measures included in this article is available in Appendix S2, also available online from Wiley-Blackwell.

of the church in politics. Moreover, it is certainly not anti-democratic to promote expression of a particular viewpoint, though on its face such role orientations are not in accord with fostering deliberation inside the church.

Thus, most PCUSA clergy see an intimate tie between the church and society that serves to invest the church in sustaining a healthy democracy. Although most clergy within the PCUSA see their roles as most would expect of them, in which they maintain the church organization and attempt to instill the values of the denomination in their congregants, large minorities envision a different role for themselves. In this alternate role, clergy help foster egalitarian debate and nurture congregants as they seek their own views. That so many take these positions claiming it is their "most important" role while pitted against instilling the traditional teachings of their denominations in which most were raised indicates that we cannot easily assume clergy are rational actors meaning to persuade congregants to adopt the one, true faith. That is, there is considerable variance to explain. For later analyses, we average responses to these five measures and call it "clergy deliberative roles."

Clergy Practice

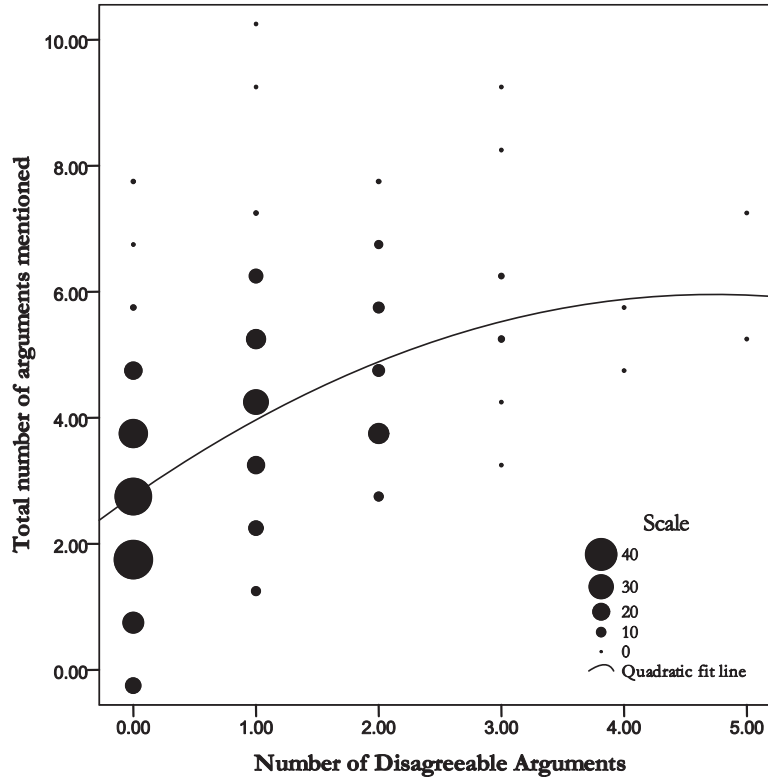
Though some clergy express commitments to democratic norms, it is what they do that matters most. We examine two arenas where norms may influence their actions—first in their public speech and then in how they structure adult education sessions in their congregations. Following Djupe and Neiheisel (2008), we radically changed the way that clergy speech has traditionally been measured in surveys (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997). Traditionally, respondents were presented with a list of issues (e.g., defense, abortion) and were asked how frequently they address them. Instead, we focused on one issue, immigration, and presented clergy with 15 arguments culled from all sides of the debate. For each argument, we asked if the respondent clergyperson (1) mentioned the argument, and (2) if they agreed with it. Such a scheme allows us to assess the degree to which they talked about an issue, but more importantly, how they talked about an issue. Primarily, we assess if they dealt with arguments they disagreed with and thereby modeled a minimalist form of deliberation.

The average number of arguments on immigration mentioned is 3.6—including 2.1 arguments they agreed with and .8 arguments they disagreed with (the balance are arguments they were neutral toward). The average proportion of disagreeable arguments mentioned is .21, which matches the one in five result that Djupe and Neiheisel (2008) found in a community sample of clergy on the issue of gay rights (see also the same proportion appearing in Djupe and Olson 2010).

Moreover, it seems that addressing the other side is part of a fuller engagement of the immigration issue. Those who mentioned at least one disagreeable argument addressed a mean of 4.4 arguments compared to the 2.8 arguments of those respondents who did not address at least one disagreeable argument. Moreover, disagreeable arguments composed nearly 40 percent of the argument set of those addressing at least one disagreeable argument, meaning their presentations, on average, are incredibly diverse. Figure 1 shows the distribution of that relationship with the total number of arguments mentioned on the Y-axis and the number of disagreeable arguments mentioned on the X-axis. As the number of arguments increase, the number of arguments they disagreed with and mentioned increases at a rapid rate as demonstrated by the low trajectory of the curve. This pattern closely resembles that found by Djupe and Neiheisel for arguments advanced about an anti-gay-rights ballot measure.

A slim majority of clergy mentioned a disagreeable argument, highlighting that clergy model the deliberative process to their congregations on a regular basis on even highly controversial issues. Thus, clergy are active participants in public debate, suggesting Tocqueville's assessment of American churches is time bound, but that clergy are sensitive to how to present their arguments in public. We cannot tell from these data whether they offered the disagreeable arguments as straw men or as viable alternatives. But what matters most is that a significant proportion of sample

Figure 1
Scatter of disagreeable arguments mentioned by the total number of arguments mentioned



Source: 2009 PCUSA Clergy Survey.

clergy addressed them in a way for their members to observe, modeling that all should engage alternate perspectives in some way.

Group Implementation

Next, we turn our attention to the actual and prospective implementation of deliberative norms. The most promising place to look for deliberation in church is adult education because many churches, especially in the mainline, host adult education sessions, such sessions often cover social and political issues, and church adult education sessions often play host to a considerable diversity of opinion (Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey 2009). What we are concerned with here is whether political adult education sessions are governed by deliberative norms or whether they are meant to instill particular opinions.

In Table 1, we show the distribution of responses on five measures that tap commitment to deliberative norms in adult education used by Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey (2009). With one exception, there is at least plurality support for deliberative norms of ensuring participation, asking participants to have an open mind, and learning how to work through differences of opinion. Support for the need to learn how the church's values apply to political issues is split for and against. Roughly one-sixth of respondents are undecided about whether they are supportive of each deliberative norm.

Responses were not limited to those clergy whose churches host adult education, so the responses of those without adult education may be systematically different. We tested whether mean support for deliberative norms was different between clergy who host (53 percent) and do not host (47 percent) adult education, but found no significant differences. Clearly, support

Table 1: Support for deliberative values in adult education

Deliberative Values	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
We would explicitly encourage participants to think seriously about the opinions of others.	55.4	16.3	28.3
It would be essential that all those present participate.	53.6	21.2	25.2
It would be essential that a range of views are presented.	40.4	16.0	43.6
It would be essential for participants to learn how our values apply to social/political issues.	45.1	16.4	38.6
It would be essential for participants to learn how to talk through their differences in opinion.	44.2	17.9	38.0

Source: 2009 PCUSA Clergy Survey. $N = 300$.

for deliberative norms is not driven by practical experience managing small groups that take on political topics.

We can evaluate the generalizability of these results by offering comparison statistics from nine denominations surveyed as part of the 2009 Cooperative Clergy Study described above. We examined mean scores from an index of four items asked in these denominations that match four of the items in Table 1 and found remarkable uniformity in support for deliberative norms from one end of the theological spectrum to the other. There is some variation, of course, and it does vary marginally along theological lines—there is slightly less support among Assemblies of God clergy (mean = 3.7) and slightly more among the Disciples of Christ (mean = 4.3). But, although there is real statistical variation, the substantive differences among these denominations is remarkably slight, especially given the conventional wisdom. All of the denominational means round to "agreement" with the importance of administering deliberative principles in adult education.[8]

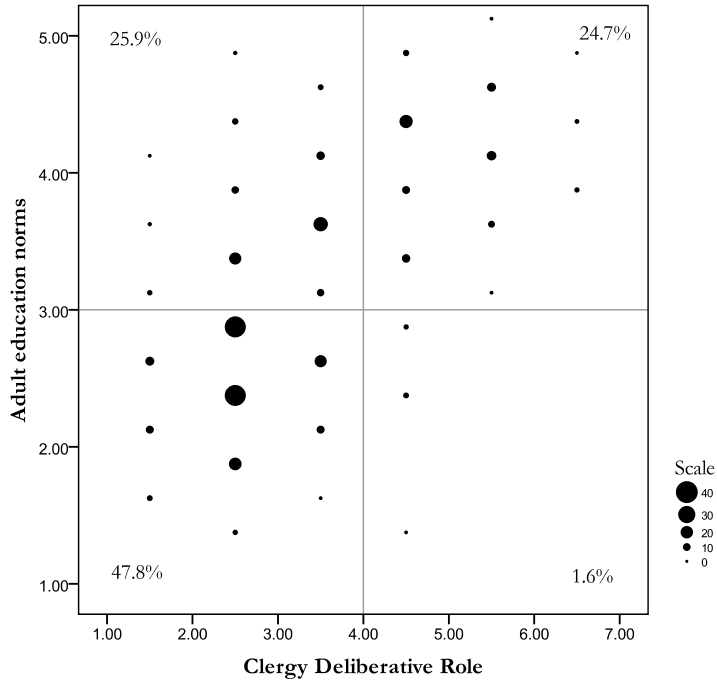
Turning the responses regarding clergy democratic roles discussed above and regarding adult education democratic practices into separate indices allows us to get an initial sense of their relationship, which we display as a scatterplot in Figure 2. The relationship is curvilinear such that there are almost no clergy who hold democratic values but do not implement them in adult education, but there are many of the reverse—a quarter hold low regard for democratic values but implement democratic practices in adult education sessions. Although many believe in a democratic role for themselves and implement democratic practices, the bulk of respondents (~50 percent) are low in both, though most of the "low" support for adult education deliberative norms is clustered close to the scale midpoint. Still, there is a strong, positive relationship ($r = .64$, $p = .00$, $n = 320$) that suggests adult education is the most likely place to find democratic practices in church.

Interestingly, there is no relationship between deliberative norms and the extent to which clergy speech includes disagreeable arguments, nor between deliberative practices in adult education and disagreement in clergy speech.[9] In fact, the relationships, though insignificant, actually point in a negative direction. That said, those who support deliberative norms mentioned more

[8] The distribution of these values is available in Appendix S1.

[9] The correlation between adult education practices and the percent of arguments clergy presented that they disagree with is $r = -.064$, $p = .265$, $n = 308$; the correlation between clergy deliberative norms and the clergy speech measure is $r = -.050$, $p = .382$, $n = 307$.

Figure 2
The relationship between democratic practice in adult education and Clergy's deliberative role



Source: 2009 PCUSA Clergy Survey.
Note: Pearson's correlation = .630 ($p < .000$, $n = 320$)

arguments ($r = .140$, $p = .01$, $n = 320$). If clergy act in unconstrained ways, then we would expect their values to dictate their speech regardless of the situation, and thus would expect consistently high, positive correlations. Instead, the results suggest that the field in which clergy act with less constraint is in the organizational structure of the church, which is where Djupe and Gilbert (2009) locate most clergy influence. The curious thing, then, is that most of the research on clergy has focused on their public speech (e.g., Beatty and Walter 1989; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Quinley 1974), when several studies with much improved measures have found that clergy speech is almost always ineffective in persuasion (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Smith 2008; but see Bjarnason and Welch 2004), primarily because it is so heavily constrained by environmental forces (Djupe and Neiheisel 2008).

Explanations of Deliberative Norms and Practices

In the following analysis, we pursue tests of the forces affecting commitment to deliberative norms and practices outlined above, operationalizing most of the primary tensions facing churches in an open religious market while allowing for the clergy's own predilections to contribute to the explanation. We follow the order of the descriptive results above, discussing results for clergy deliberative norms, adult education practice, and then the diversity of clergy speech.

Deliberative Norms

The results of our estimation of the three dependent variables introduced above are presented in Table 2. It is not surprising to see that the explanation of holding deliberative norms (column 1) is heavily reliant on the personal attributes of clergy. Political liberals are much more

likely than conservatives to support a deliberative role for themselves, differing by 2.5 points across the full ideological spectrum (of a 4-point range in the dependent variable). Those with a doctorate are less likely to hold deliberative roles for themselves, though only by a quarter point. Those with a doctorate are not more politically conservative (and it is controlled anyway); in fact, they lean more liberal and almost significantly so ($p = .11$; not shown). Instead, the doctorate must confer a sense of authority that runs counter to deliberative norms. The only other variable that contributes to the explanation is the membership trend—a declining trend is associated with less support for deliberative norms. This might be explained, in part, by the inclusion of measures about the engagement of difference and debate, which might be deemphasized in churches losing members. Primarily, though, almost no environmental variables are significant, highlighting that the values clergy hold are nearly exogenous to the applied setting.

Deliberative Practices in Adult Education

The second column of Table 2 shows the estimation results of our index of deliberative practices in adult education sessions. The study by Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey (2009), in which the items that compose our dependent variable were introduced, was limited in its number of cases. Hence, they did not get far beyond the finding that mainline Protestants were more likely to implement them than evangelicals (Olson, Djupe, and Cadge 2011) and that congregations with larger small group involvement were more likely to demand deliberative practices. Within the PCUSA, we find different variables at work. As above, political liberals are more likely to implement deliberative practices, and at roughly the same rate of difference as for deliberative norms (the effect from the full range of ideology covers about half of the dependent variable range). Neither clergy education nor the membership trend has an effect; instead, there is an effect because of the church's relationship with the community. The more similarity is perceived between the church and the community, the less committed is the church to deliberative practices in adult education. The most similar church is more than half a point less supportive of deliberative practice than the most dissimilar. Finally, those churches more engaged with outreach to new members are more supportive of deliberative practice, surely as a way to integrate diverse perspectives without alienating new members.

In contrast to the results above regarding deliberative norms, deliberative practice in adult education is more reliant on environmental pressures. Deliberation is meant to solve practical problems, so from this perspective it is no surprise that congregations turn to them when they might be useful. What is novel here, aside from actually finding commitment to deliberation in churches, is that PCUSA congregations are more likely to adopt deliberative practice when the congregation differs from the community. This is suggestive that deliberation is not only useful for processing internal diversity, but in coping with between-group diversity as well. Deliberative practices are convenient for both reaching out to new members, as well as equipping minorities with tools for confronting political opposition.

At the same time, not all congregations offer adult education (Chaves 2007; Djupe and Gilbert 2006) and, when offered, not all members are involved in adult education, though participants do not seem to differ significantly from nonparticipants (Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey 2009). We suspect that because such sessions are open to all comers, it is important for organizers to anticipate disagreement. Still, whether democratic practice in adult education is applied outside the sessions and whether such norms diffuse to the congregation remain at issue.

Deliberative Practices in Clergy Speech

Because clergy speech is a product of their values and the environment (Djupe and Gilbert 2003), it makes sense that the results would be a blend of the previous two models (see the third column of Table 2). The same variables from the deliberative norms model are significant

Table 2: OLS models of three deliberative indicators: Clergy deliberative norms, adult education, and the diversity of clergy speech on immigration

	Clergy Deliberative Norms (More Deliberative)		Adult Education Practices (More Deliberative)		Clergy Speech Diversity (More Diverse)	
Variable (Higher Variable Coding)	Coefficient	(*SE*)	Coefficient	(*SE*)	Coefficient	(*SE*)
Constant	2.78***	(.56)	1.748***	(.43)	.69***	(.16)
Church political unity (more unified)	−.01	(.05)	−.010	(.04)	−.01	(.01)
Community similarity (more similar)	−.39	(.35)	−.653**	(.27)	−.20**	(.10)
Church outreach index (more outreach)	.14	(.22)	.348**	(.17)	.03	(.06)
Declining membership (losing members)	−.11*	(.06)	−.004	(.05)	−.03*	(.02)
Church size (larger)	.00	(.00)	.000	(.00)	.00	(.00)
Church involvement (higher % involved)	−.01	(.01)	−.002	(.00)	.00	(.00)
Adult education (held sessions)	−.14	(.12)	−.007	(.09)	−.02	(.03)
Years served church	−.01	(.01)	−.002	(.01)	.00	(.00)
Female clergy	−.14	(.14)	−.039	(.11)	.03	(.04)
Clergy has doctorate	−.23**	(.10)	.006	(.07)	−.06**	(.03)
Political interest (more interest)	.01	(.03)	−.005	(.02)	−.00	(.01)
Political ideology (more liberal)	.53***	(.04)	.384***	(.03)	−.03***	(.01)
N	208		208		201	
F	19.75 ***		20.22 ***		2.03**	
Adjusted R^2	.52		.53		.06	
Standard error of the estimate (SEE)	.62		.82		.23	

Source: 2009 PCUSA Clergy Survey.
$^{*}p < .10$, $^{**}p < .05$, $^{***}p < .01$.

predictors, though not quite in the same way. This time, the speech of political liberals is less likely to contain arguments they disagree with, hence liberal clergy do not model the deliberative process in their speech to the same extent as more conservative clergy. Those with a doctorate are less likely to address disagreeable arguments, though we expect this negative effect of education may reverse given a broader distribution in clergy educational attainment.

The outreach index is not significant as it was in the adult education model, though a declining membership trend predicts a lower percentage of disagreeable arguments. Community similarity also has a significant effect—the more similar, the more homogenous is the clergy's presentation of arguments on immigration. It is perhaps surprising that the church's place in the community should play such an important role in structuring the process of treating politics in church. But clergy clearly feel some incentive to address issues in different ways given the match of the church and community. Several possible mechanisms might generate this relationship. To reach out to new members in a dissimilar community would be advanced by acknowledging a diversity of views from the pulpit. From another perspective, clergy treating a diversity of views would train members to have more considered opinions (Price, Capella, and Nir 2002), which would help their opinions survive in a dissonant environment. Because the effect of member outreach is insignificant here, we are tempted to lean more on the latter interpretation.[10]

Discussion and Conclusion

Our primary goal for this article was to initiate a dialogue that brings the investigation of the role of religion in American politics into alignment with the concerns of democratic theory. Traditional investigations have explored religion's role in a participatory democracy, asking about the extent to which the church promotes the participation of citizens. Though citizen participation is not unimportant by any means, pursuing that line of inquiry has led to a number of unfortunate assumptions about how religion functions in politics. Previous work has asked whether clergy and churches provide political information and assumed that information is intended to persuade. But that work has avoided the crucial question of how they address and process political issues. That is, we should ask about the extent to which clergy and congregations support deliberative norms and implement deliberative practices (see also Coffin 2005).

When we ask about these matters, we find a considerable variance in emphasis placed on democratic process in PCUSA congregations. For a significant minority in this sample, democratic process trumps installing the dictates of the faith. But it is perilous to make blanket assumptions for houses of worship since there is a diversity of venues in which deliberative practice may be modeled, such as clergy public engagement of political issues and adult education sessions. The results assert the importance of clergy, to be sure, but add considerable nuance about their role in the church and where we might devote our attention in future analyses. It is probably inappropriate to think of all or even most clergy as policy maximizers given the range of concerns that may govern their political thoughts and actions. That is, instead of seeing themselves as *fidei defensor*, many clergy see democracy as inextricable from the faith and worth promoting at times at the expense of the traditional viewpoint of the faith. Thus, we cannot assume that when clergy say they address a particular political issue like "immigration" frequently that they all do it in the same way. The extent of public address may be comparable, but some will address a diversity of views in their public presentation about the issue and some will not. Moreover, we find that clergy are relatively constrained in their speech, but are freer to innovate in the organizational structure

[10] We also tested an interaction between outreach and community similarity and it is insignificant ($p = .218$). It points toward high amounts of outreach erasing the decline in clergy speech diversity that otherwise occurs when the church better matches the community.

of the church. Enough evidence has accumulated to indicate more energy should be expended to understand how clergy organize the congregation and hence affect how political information is transmitted, civic skills developed, and network connections made.

But should we expect to see these patterns in other congregations outside of the PCUSA? We, of course, cannot know without gathering data, but we presume the answer is that we will see much the same relationships across American religion, though surely with different intercepts. The question to be answered for each congregation is the extent of its exposure to the religious economy, the congregation's relationship with the community, the commitment of the clergyperson to democratic norms, and the degree of difference amongst congregants. Generally, we expect more conservative congregations to evince lower levels of support for democratic practices, but widespread adoption where such procedures would help cope with growth, internal division, and minority status in the community. But, it is more important that questions like these are asked.

This pattern of constrained speech and unconstrained organization is consistent with the religious economy perspective, which has articulated the remarkable flexibility and adaptability of American religious organization under competition (Finke and Stark 2005; Stark and Finke 2000). We find it hard to follow Warner (1997: 217) to focus almost exclusively on what congregations do versus what they say they should do, but the religious economies approach directs our attention to the degree of tension between the church and the community, which is essential to the story here. If competition is the engine that drives religious organizations to innovate to secure and maintain adherents, it is no surprise that felt competition would affect how congregations process political matters in ways that would not alienate potential members, as well as better equip current members to withstand community social pressures. That adoption of deliberative norms in adult education is so widespread and without substantial variance across the Protestant theological spectrum adds to our confidence that strong market forces are in play. Thus, the evidence is suggestive that the free market in religion may be said to be an important part of not just the social structure, not just in the background of American political life, but an important force leading congregations to train citizens how to be democrats.

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Supporting Information

The following supporting information is available for this article:

Appendix S1. Supplementary Tables and Figures.
Appendix S2. Variable Coding.

Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at wileyonlinelibrary.com.

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