

# Solidarity and Discord of Pluralism: How the Social Context Affects Interest Group Learning and Belonging

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## Abstract

Despite the theoretical centrality of associational life in interest group formation, there is little research to assess it. We seek such a contribution by analyzing how the social environment affects the individual group joining process. We promote a two-pronged explanation, drawing upon the nature of both associations and individual associational ties. Specifically, we examine the twin forces of solidarity and discord that constrain and expand, respectively, information acquisition within two associational types, using survey data clustered by congregations and neighborhoods. In congregations, we find meaningful variance across social contexts in the available group information, which affects group knowledge and membership. As unstructured social environments, neighborhoods lack the organizational structure to spread group learning and participation. While these results generally confirm the pluralist framework, they highlight the multilevel forces that fuel the chaotic connection of citizens with organized interests.

## Keywords

interest groups, religion, pluralism, neighborhoods, social networks

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There is perhaps no concept over which political scientists are more conflicted than pluralism. While it is the standard against which interest group politics, among other things, is judged, it remains more of a theoretical baseline than an empirical touchstone. This is especially true in the facet of pluralism that regards individuals' connections with interest groups. While Truman laid out a skeleton theory for how individuals join groups in tandem with how groups form, no individual-level study tested this theory before the advance of economic theory, following Olson (1965), obviated the apparent need for it. Now, organized interest research skips over individual decision making to focus on system-level structure and interaction. Yet, as the fundamental unit of representation, understanding how individuals come to acquire organized representation remains an important task. With data available that enable a test of pluralism, we ask, do organized interest connections flow out of communities? And what forces within communities structure access to organized interests?

In this article, we operationalize and test a pluralist perspective on learning about and joining organized interest groups. The model includes four facets: (a) the supply of information in the community available for acquisition, (b) the organizational structure of the associational space that facilitates information transfer, (c) social network structure that connects individuals to information supplies, and (d) individual orientations toward their contexts and networks that affect the motivation to learn.

Central to this task is defining community, which we take to mean associational opportunities—the networks and contexts in which individuals interact (e.g., Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). These associations host information asymmetries regarding group attachments that accord with pluralist assumptions. Information about certain groups is relatively plentiful in some social contexts and nearly empty in others, leaving individuals with arbitrary, if not capricious, opportunities to learn about organized interests. Whatever information there is will be transferred more efficaciously when the association has a more developed organizational structure. Within associations, the interpersonal dynamics of *solidarity*—being part of a particular social context where certain information is available, and *discord*—feeling different enough to inspire a search for a representative organization, will shape whether individuals acquire information about organized interests. On this basis, we join a growing line of work that pitches a multivalent role for associational ties in linking individuals to collective action (e.g., Kitts, 2000, 2006). The pattern of results we find serves to affirm the essential features of the pluralist paradigm, while highlighting its weaknesses in building and sustaining a fully representative interest group universe.

Notably, the social learning component to pluralist theory serves to differentiate it clearly from even the most evolved iterations of Olson's

approach (see, for example, Moe, 1980; Rothenberg, 1988). Olson posited an individual cost-benefit calculus built upon an assumption of perfect information about groups and the benefits they offered. Subsequent work walked back this assumption in several dimensions, with Moe (1980) arguing about popular misconceptions of efficacy (see also Koch, 1993) and Rothenberg (1988) easing new members' knowledge about a group's advocacy. While the final result from these efforts is a set of predictions that parallel pluralism's emphasis on the primacy of interests, it avoids a crucial question about how individuals come to know about group opportunities in the first place. Most pluralist theories identify the social context as the primary index of such opportunities, and this is where we focus our efforts.

### **Associations, Information Search, and Interest Group Activity**

From the beginnings of the republic, associational life has been theorized as a bulwark of democracy. While local associations would primarily take care of their own problems, they would also socialize members into the norms of compromise and cooperation (Tocqueville, 1840/1994). Associations would also constitute the font of interest group activity (Bentley, 1908), generated by tangent relations with others, social disruption, and technological change (Truman, 1951). To provide the most generalizable theory of association, Truman's (1951) theory of group formation has communal roots, so that neighbors with common problems are motivated to form, discover, and/or join groups that solve these problems and represent these interests. Pluralists generally assume (and have not tested) a process of interest discovery in which interests and organizational membership are functionally equivalent (see Bentley, 1908). As such, the pluralists envision clustered differences in information about groups because interests should be concentrated (or even coincident in the more extreme versions like Bentley's) within communities. There, the aggregate forces of common stakes, problems, and occupations and the microsocial forces of family, friendship, and group promote learning and participation (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Truman, 1951). The effects of these forces are conditioned on disagreement, which would motivate engagement with another organized interest. Therefore, the economic and social forces that alter the state of communal relations also affect the mission and membership of organized interests. This "wave theory" of interest mobilization and countermobilization is a common expression of the adaptation and evolution of the group to the environment (see McFarland, 1991; Truman, 1951).

Across the social sciences, various strands of pluralism exist, though this research often lacks connections to interest group politics. Nevertheless, we can glean insights for interest groups from the number of mechanisms that can connect individuals to interest groups through apolitical associational spaces. Most prominently, there are two content-less mechanisms, indicating that civil society involvement does not affect the distribution of political interests while promoting participation. First, it is possible that the resourceful emerge as activists (Verba & Nie, 1972), suggesting an endogenous role for associational memberships (e.g., Oliver, 1984). Second, associational activity may help equip members for political activity through skill-building exercises (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). In both cases, resources are fungible and civil society promotes activity without necessarily directing its course.

Then there are two content-full mechanisms that indicate the distribution of *interests* in otherwise apolitical associations drive political interest representation. First, associations allow people to learn about participatory opportunities, both informally among members and as directed from the leadership (Djupe & Gilbert, 2009; Kitts, 2000; Leighley, 1996; Snow, Zurcher, & Ekland-Olson, 1980). Second, associations can shape an identity that helps members connect with salient political opportunities (e.g., Heaney, 2004; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993). Given that the first set of content-less mechanisms has been well developed in the political participation literature, we focus our attention on this latter set.

Reflecting a long pedigree, it is well accepted that social networks provide information that may direct activism. The most established perspective on political learning starts with the assumption that citizens' information searches are costly endeavors (Downs, 1957). Therefore, individuals often rely on "cheap" sources of information available within their social environment, including gaining knowledge from agreeable, trustworthy, and knowledgeable cohorts that enables political activity (Downs, 1957; Huckfeldt, 2001; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; McClurg, 2006; Mondak, 1990; Mutz, 2002a). It is also possible to relax the assumption of rationality and posit proximity as the primary determinant of the sharing of information that enables participation (Klofstad, 2007; Nickerson, 2008; Snow et al., 1980). While there is near certainty in this literature linking network expertise and political participation broadly defined, the pluralist link to organized interest participation is so far lacking.

A different facet of social network research has debated how overlapping ties affects further organizational involvement. Early social movement work identified social ties beyond individual resources or concerns as promoting movement activism (Snow et al., 1980). Individual participation in social

movements has been linked to sources within “multi-organizational fields” (Fernandez & McAdam, 1988), as one social movement organization would seem to provide fertile ground to learn about another. However, there is good reason to believe that organizations with mutual interests compete (Gray & Lowery, 1996), which would qualify the nature of membership overlap. And group participation may reduce the structural availability for recruitment or time for additional activism (Granovetter, 1973). It would make sense, then, that only memberships in other groups with orthogonal interests would promote group activity, whereas membership in groups with overlapping interests undermines activism (Kitts, 1999). Associational involvement may therefore boost additional involvement in political organizations when there is no sense of competition that would inhibit information sharing but also because associations host social networks through which information is shared. This carves out significant space for the political influence of associational life in civil society outside of politics.

While the supply of information from the context and network is important, of course individuals are not powerless in the face of social pressure (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). The nature of ties within networks facilitates information acquisition and adoption. While many measures have been pitched to operationalize the nature of social ties, they coalesce into the valuation of information from the tie and the likely consonance of that information. In other words, people evaluate the expertise of the information source and whether they tend to share the same interests with the source, which is either characterized by a shared identity or simple agreement. In terms of learning about interest groups, there is probably little role to play by expertise except in the amount of information experts tend to provide. Instead, the crux of the matter is whether the information supplied is core to one’s interests.

The level of agreement between individuals and their peers in their social context alters their motivation to learn and adopt the group’s norms. Since disagreement entails lower rates of discussion (Huckfeldt & Mendez, 2008; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Mutz, 2006), we would expect that disagreement undermines political learning (though see Mutz, 2002b; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). Others have examined the extent of friendship ties within an organization, finding that such ties promote the participation of members in group activity (Fireman & Gamson, 1979; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993). As such, solidarity is important to the learning process, because it establishes the social pipeline for information to be transferred.

There are at least two missing elements in these scenarios. The first is the converse—what happens when people are exposed to information from a disagreeable source? Does this simply impede their motivation to learn altogether or just learn from that source? It is possible that such out-group exposure

motivates a search for their own in-group variant, a supposition with wide support in social psychology (e.g., Turner, Hogg, Oakes, & Reicher, 1987). In contrast to the findings about the depressive effects of network disagreement on political activity (e.g., Mutz, 2006), we expect that feeling different from others in a social context will motivate a search for information that may ensnare a politically consonant organized interest. That is, rather than assume that the norms conveyed by a group promote its interests, we should follow Kitts (2000) and model the amount of disagreement and its effects.

Second, the effects of disagreement depend on the end goal for the individual. From one perspective, individuals may desire to conform in the expectation of psychological or social reward (McPhee, 1963; Sprague, 1982). If so, then individuals should simply adopt the organized interests supported by social intimates. But, from a Downsian learning perspective, the supply of trusted information may affect motivation to learn and therefore lead to a different outcome. In this case, a trusted information supply may actually lead to inaction as long as the desired end is to enable a rational decision. For example, a rich social supply of information undermines the need to engage the campaign or join an organization to make an informed vote. Further action to acquire information is only necessary when trusted information is in short supply. Thus, a greater sense of in-group status, at least in civil society associations, should demobilize the search for a politically congruent organized interest.

In summary, associational ties provide exposure to information and norms that bear on broader connections with political advocacy. While simple exposure is important, the presence of discord can push members to search for information external to the group, which may include organized interests. Furthermore, feelings of solidarity may entail adoption of preferences in apolitical associations but also may reduce the incentive to search for representation.

These social dynamics help to distance pluralism from an economic theory about joining groups. While the Olsonian approach highlights an individual calculus about group benefits, our elaboration of pluralist theory emphasizes the importance of social relations in putting group opportunities in front of potential members and motivating their search for representation. We are not claiming that individuals do not engage in a cost-benefit calculus, only that there are important social dynamics that must be taken into account first.

## **Associational Type: Congregations and Neighborhoods**

From the earliest studies, the interest was coincident with the group, which was largely conflated with geography (Bentley, 1908; Truman, 1951). However, there is good reason to distinguish organizations from categorical

groups and communities given the importance of organizational structures that institutionalize groups (Truman, 1951, pp. 26-27). More structured, less communal social environments—such as churches and workplaces—are likely to force a diverse set of individuals to interact and share information (Mutz & Mondak, 2006; Neiheisel, Djupe, & Sokhey, 2009). Less structured, more communal social environments—such as neighborhoods—may fail to promote the transmission of group information, identities, and skills (see Djupe & Sokhey, 2014).

As the most numerous and widespread social organizations in America (Putnam & Campbell, 2010; Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2011), congregations are an excellent example of a structured environment that can promote broader associational participation. Houses of worship host multiple mechanisms that can diffuse political information to members. Clergy provide varying, but often significant, amounts of political information through their many points of contact with members (Djupe & Gilbert, 2003; Guth, Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, & Poloma, 1997). Members also have multiple opportunities to interact with other members informally after worship services and through formal, organizational channels, including small support, educational, and governing groups that keep the church running (Schwadel, 2005). The formal groups are particularly significant in bringing people face to face across lines of difference (Djupe & Gilbert, 2009; Neiheisel et al., 2009). Parishioners' interactions within church contexts have been shown to affect political attitudes (Gilbert, 1993; Jelen, 1993; Wald, Owen, & Hill, 1988), political participation (Gilbert, 1993; Peterson, 1992; Schwadel, 2005), group knowledge (Djupe, 2011), and group participation (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008). Importantly, the same basic structure of influence has been found across associational life in the United States (Leighley, 1996; Walker, 2008).

These expectations about congregations, however, are not likely to be mirrored in unstructured settings, such as neighborhoods. While geographic contexts have been shown to be linked to political preferences (Baybeck & McClurg, 2005; Brooks & Prysby, 1991; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995), neighborhoods typically lack the organizational structure necessary to channel social interaction. This is one reason the presence of neighbors in Americans' social networks is so low (e.g., Mutz, 2006). They also provide fewer opportunities for individuals to engage in political discussion or seek out political experts (Djupe & Sokhey, 2014). This is not to say that some neighborhoods do not have these features since some are well organized and highly social (see Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002, for a review). The point is that structured organizations (congregations) can be compared with generally less-structured social environments (neighborhoods) to assess their relative efficacy in providing information.

By focusing on the political effects of interest networks, we seek to reorient the field of interest group politics to understanding the complicated communal roots of interest group pluralism. We hypothesize that individual information about organized interests will correspond to the local information supply. It will be more effectively realized in structured associational contexts (e.g., congregations) rather than in neighborhoods. Social similarity will undermine learning about organized interests, while socially experienced discord will drive up learning. Now we can turn to our two data sources before getting a first look at the variation in information about organized interests across social environments.

## Data and Method

Our question requires gathering data on the information available in social contexts and networks relevant to learning about interest groups. That is to say that the data to assess the effects of social structure on learning about and joining organized interests are rare. One study with a suitable design and questions is Djupe and Gilbert's 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study (see Djupe & Gilbert, 2009).<sup>1</sup> In 1998, they sent surveys to half of the clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the largest Lutheran body, and the Episcopal Church, both of which are classified as mainline Protestant denominations. From the list of respondent clergy, they acquired the participation of 60 congregations (38 from the ELCA) and mailed random samples of adult members a survey in 1999 with a follow-up wave to boost response in early 2000. The congregations did not differ from the large sample of congregations represented in the clergy survey. In small congregations (less than 200 members—Djupe & Gilbert, 2009), all adult members received a survey, while they sampled in larger ones. All told, 1,551 members responded (the response rates were 30% in the ELCA and 25% in the Episcopal Church). While we operationalize our variables below, full coding information for both data sets can be found in the online appendix.

Their data include measures suitable to capture "information" about interest groups. One measure of information about groups is membership. Following Rothenberg (1988), people join groups as a way of acquiring information, thus membership may be considered a metric of information seeking. But membership is also a social fact that, when witnessed, may send a powerful cue and spur talk about the organization, its activities, and its commitments. Thus, when aggregated, the membership rate becomes a measure of the information supply. The congregation surveys included questions about congregants' membership in interest groups (coded 0-1) that are broadly relevant to religious interests. These are categorical, group types akin

to how they are asked in the General Social Survey: abortion groups, environmental groups, gun-related groups, and political groups.

A second measure of information is having an opinion about the group, otherwise known as opinionation (e.g., Krosnick & Milburn, 1990). The survey asked about affect toward particular organizations; importantly, the non-response for these questions was quite high because respondents were told that if they were not familiar with the group they should leave the response blank. We take advantage of this circumstance, using it as a measure of information possession that allows us to test the learning mechanism we specify. The binary membership and nonresponse variables constitute our two primary dependent variables capturing learning—the possession of information.

Then, since the survey was collected from congregational “clusters,” we can gain aggregate measures of the information environment—the rates of group membership and opinionation regarding specific organizations. These critical measures allow us to test whether the social context affects the connection individuals have with interest groups through exposure to higher opinionation and membership rates. We expect a positive relationship with both DVs.

We capture individual perceptions of solidarity and discord in several ways. The survey asked whether respondents felt similar to fellow congregants on seven social and political dimensions (race, age, political beliefs, party affiliation, religious beliefs, social status, and distance from home to church). These summed responses indicate a higher level of similarity and should drive down membership and opinionation; feeling different from congregants should drive up membership and opinionation when levels of interest are high (the interest is a point of contention in the congregation).

The survey also included a social network battery with a wide range of items, though it did not include interest group memberships of the political discussants specifically. It did include a measure of disagreement, which allows us to assess how people seek out information when they face disagreement socially. We expect that experiencing more disagreement will drive up membership and opinionation, as respondents seek out social support and supportive argumentation.

We also have access to a wide range of controls, including several that are important to understanding the motivation of people to join, such as issue importance, interest in politics, education, and income. Moreover, we include the respondent’s other political and nonpolitical memberships. Thus, any effects of solidarity and discord are not due to generic joiner norms, which would be captured by those controls, but would be due to the transfer of specific information.

In addition to the congregation data, we utilize the Presidential Election Campaign Study, a political survey cluster-sampled by neighborhoods, conducted in South Bend, Indiana in 1984 (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995).<sup>2</sup> This study has many similar characteristics to Djupe and Gilbert's ELCA/Episcopal Church study. The South Bend data do not have as extensive or specific questions about group participation or learning as the congregation data set does, but the data do gauge respondents' membership (coded 0-1) in political party organizations, which we can aggregate to the neighborhood level. The neighborhood-based South Bend data provide an important structural contrast to the church data. Unfortunately, we cannot test the efficacy of the congregation relative to the neighborhood directly since those data do not exist. Instead, we can see whether the patterns of joining and learning conform to neighborhood boundaries or are simply a function of individual forces as our hypothesis suggests. That is, we expect meaningful variation in learning across congregations but do not expect significant variation across neighborhoods.

A key feature of both sets of data is that they are clustered, so we are able to pool the responses within congregations and neighborhoods. This allows us to understand the information environment in which members are embedded, resulting in actual measures of solidarity and discord that should function independently of their self-reported solidarity. Such clustering also means that individual observations are not independent, violating regression assumptions and inflating type 1 errors (false positive). There are numerous ways to deal with this. We choose perhaps the optimal way, employing multilevel models in which relationships at Level 1 (individuals) and Level 2 (churches and neighborhoods) are modeled separately and joined with a link function (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). Importantly, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) allows us to assess whether any significant variation at Level 2 (congregations/neighborhoods) remains after controlling for variation among individuals at Level 1. We expect significant variation in congregations, but not in neighborhoods, to remain which would indicate the importance of organization.

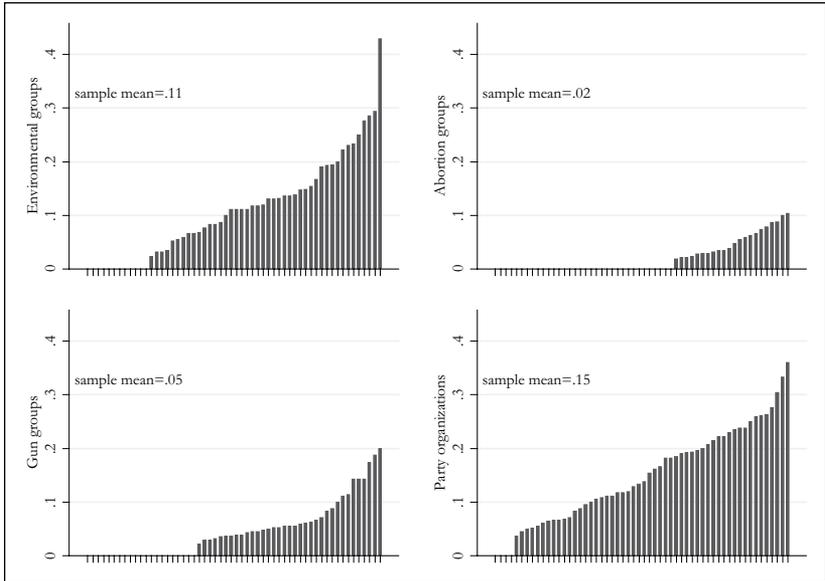
One issue that all investigations using social contexts confront is the possibility of self-selection (Hauser, 1974)—that people choose to participate in particular social environments precisely because of the variable of interest. This might particularly be a concern for the congregation data. Not all self-selection arguments have equal merit, though; the nature and strength of the selection claim depends on the proximity of the dependent variable to the core definition of the context. For instance, a strong selection claim would be that people choose religious congregations because they agree with the theology. It is thus surprising to find a loose connection between individual and

congregational theology (Djupe & Hunt, 2009; Wald et al., 1988). A more common claim in political science is that people choose their churches based on political agreement, but there are often quite wide distributions of partisanship *within* congregations (Djupe & Gilbert, 2009; Neiheisel et al., 2009), which makes sense given that few members make an attachment decision regarding the church on the basis of politics (Djupe & Grant, 2001; Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Furthermore, not all cues are equally evident to potential members.<sup>3</sup> Even within discussion networks, self-selection is not overwhelming, as individuals are only modestly motivated and able to control with whom they discuss politics (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995).

It is important to remember that this analysis is not attempting to link individual political participation and church participation, which might be subject to a counterhypothesis that “joiners” do both. Instead, we are examining whether a specific information/membership distribution within a social context is linked to individual knowledge and membership. Moreover, given the clustered sampling design, our tests compare members with members, all of whom are by design joiners. Moreover, the selection of a church on the basis of the interest group memberships of congregation members seems especially weak given the few cues that would plausibly be immediately available and salient to potential members. Still, aside from designs that account for selection by the inclusion of time, or randomly distribute a treatment (e.g., Klofstad, 2007; Nickerson, 2008), the strategy for dealing with selection is to incorporate the individual-level forces that structure selection. As discussed above, we include a large number of individual and group level independent variables to account for any selection effects (however, unlikely in our view).

## Results—Descriptive Statistics

To get a sense of the disparity of available information across these social contexts, we begin with a descriptive exploration of interest group memberships in sample congregations. From a broad listing, we focus on the explicitly political group categories: environmental groups, abortion groups, gun groups, and party organizations. Figure 1 displays the congregational average memberships in these four group categories—each panel is sorted from low to high. Membership is clustered in congregations, not dispersed. Between one sixth and one third of sample congregations have more than double the sample mean of group memberships and a few have considerably more than the mean. For instance, three congregations have more than triple the sample mean of 5% membership in gun groups and 20% have at least double the mean percentage. Membership in groups involved with abortion-related



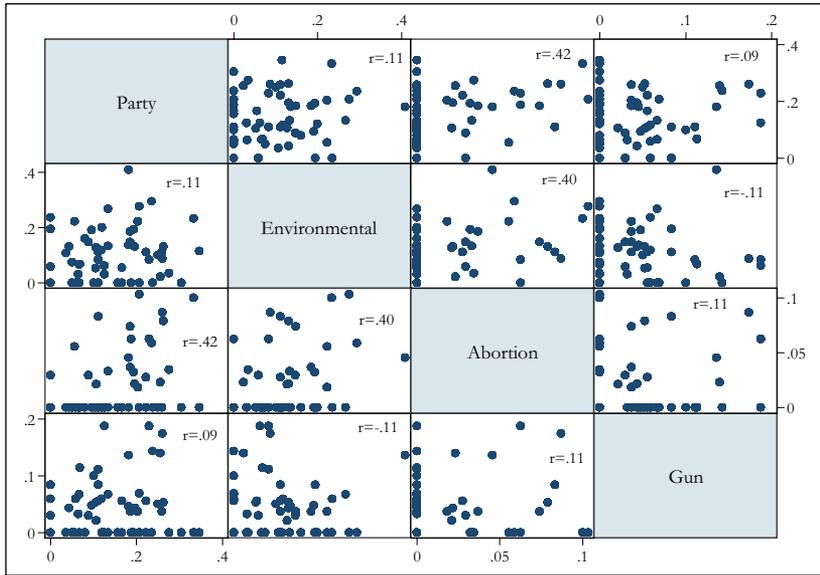
**Figure 1.** Distributions of congregational membership proportions in four group types, sorted.

Source. 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study.

Note. Congregations without reported memberships in those groups are represented with a tick mark and blank space.

advocacy is rare in this sample (2%), but some congregations are clearly more engaged than others. In two congregations, 10% are members of abortion groups, 20% of congregations have double the same mean, and only 40% of congregations have any members involved in abortion-related groups. Membership in party organizations is much more widespread, with most (but not all) congregations hosting members reporting involvement. Still, the variation is considerable with the lowest observable involvement 4% and the highest 35%.

In addition to membership being clustered, it is also largely specialized. Figure 2 shows that there is some, but generally minimal, overlap in membership rates within congregations. Specifically, Figure 2 presents scatterplots of membership rates in the four group types by congregation. The correlation coefficient is present in each panel. It is not possible to say that membership rates are orthogonal to one another, but it is clear that some congregations have overlap, while many have no members of one and only some members of the other (see the dots along an axis). The highest overlap lies, tellingly,



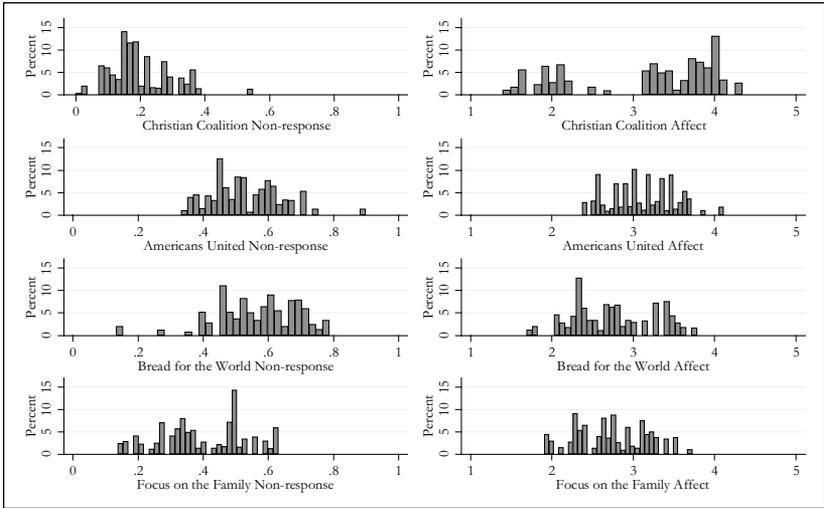
**Figure 2.** Scatters of congregational membership rates in four political group types; correlation coefficients noted.

Source. 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study.

between party organization and abortion group memberships ( $r = .42$ ), while environmental and abortion group memberships come in a close second ( $r = .40$ ). Only one relationship is negative—that between environmental and gun memberships ( $r = -.11$ )—and the rest of the relationships are weak and positive (around  $r = .10$ ).

Thus, it seems clear that there are not just congregations of joiners and other congregations filled with nonjoiners. Instead, there are many congregations that specialize in one or two group types, which suggests that the information environment regarding political groups is rather specialized there. Though we have no data to assess this, we suspect that group memberships are a proxy for a variety of related communication streams. In congregations with high concentrations of group type memberships, bumper stickers likely have a more specialized issue focus, the issues that come up in discussion are surely more salient to dominant group memberships, and the offhanded mention of particular interest groups is likely not a random, inclusive set (see, especially, Wald et al., 1988).

This speculation is reinforced in Figure 3, which shows two variables at the congregational level, each taken from one survey question about interest



**Figure 3.** Histograms of congregational mean nonresponse and affect toward selected interest groups.

Source. 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study.

group affect. The survey asked, “How positive or negative do you feel about the groups listed below?” The groups listed included Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, Bread for the World, and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, as well as three others that we do not consider here. These are all groups that we would expect religious Americans to know and have an opinion about—these groups are relevant to their interests. What is particularly useful about these questions is the level of nonresponse to each one. Respondents were encouraged to, “Please leave an item blank if you are not familiar with the group.” And many did. Twenty percent left Christian Coalition blank, 40% left Focus on the Family blank, 57% left blank Bread for the World, and 53% left blank Americans United.<sup>4</sup> Following previous studies (see, for example, Djupe, 2011), we consider this a measure of opinionation—the ability of citizens to make a judgment about an interest group.

The rates of nonresponse are high but vary by congregation as Figure 3 shows in the first column. Average congregational nonresponse rates range from 0 to .55 for the Christian Coalition with a standard deviation of .09. In fact, the other groups also have a standard deviation of just about .1, meaning that the typical range is a 20% average difference in congregational opinionation for these four group types. If a substantial number of congregants do not know enough about a group to have an opinion about it, they would not know

enough to share its name, discuss its activities, or in any way help others (or themselves) connect their interests with a group that can advocate for them.

The second column of Figure 3 displays the congregational mean affect score for each of the four group types—this is the substantive question on which the nonresponse data are sourced. Here again, there is considerable variance across congregations. The scale runs from 1 to 5 (*very negative* to *very positive*). The standard deviation for each group type is just more than 1 point, which indicates that the typical difference in affect across congregations covers 50% of the scale—a bit more for the Christian Coalition and a bit less for Bread for the World (which also has the smallest denominator because of high nonresponse). In sum, the descriptive statistics for both opinionation and membership suggest that opportunities for learning about groups are not equal across these social contexts.

## Model Results—Group Membership (Congregations)

We now turn to multilevel logit models of membership in four group types—environmental, abortion, gun, and party organizations (see Table 1); we also provide marginal effects of significant variables in each model to follow. We focus on two key tests. The first is how solidarity and discord within organizations shape membership rates, while the second looks for meaningful variation across congregations after controlling for individual-level forces. Regarding the first test, feeling similar to other congregation members on seven social and political items drops the probability of membership in organizations that advocate on the environment and abortion. Similarity has no effect on gun and party organizations. Put another way, feeling different from the congregation mobilizes membership in environmental and abortion organizations. These effects are not a function of simply being liberal since ideology is a control. Moreover, membership in these two organizations is ideologically symmetrical in the sense that those with strong feelings on either side of these issues (e.g., strongly opposed and strongly in favor of allowing abortions) are organization members at the same rates (results not shown).

It is no surprise that gun groups and party organizations are not driven by congregational discord given that partisan politics and gun issues are generally avoided in these denominations. At the same time, because abortion and especially the environment were more commonly discussed in these congregations (see Djupe & Gilbert, 2003, 2009), we expected that those in the minority would feel the need to seek reinforcement from interest groups who could supply solidarity and argumentation. The diffusion mechanism we suspect gains some plausibility from this pattern. If some issues are not salient to

**Table 1.** Multilevel Logistic Regression Estimates of Belonging to One of Four Kinds of Political Interest Groups.

Level 1 variables	Environmental group		Abortion group		Gun group		Party organization	
	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$
Similarity to congregation	-0.50**	-.03	-1.32**	-.003	0.30		0.06	
Difference from neighbors	-0.03		0.60***	.004	0.09		-0.11 <sup>-12</sup>	-.03
Network disagreement	0.02		-0.27		-0.07		0.02	
Political group memberships	0.48***	.03	1.50***	.005	0.77***	.01	0.86***	.09
Nonpolitical group memberships	0.14*	.02	0.34**	.002	0.00		0.26***	.08
Political network size	0.23*	.03	-0.49*	-.003	0.22		-0.02	
Church group activities	0.04		0.11		-0.28**	-.01	-0.08	
Issue attitude	0.01		0.21		-0.20 <sup>11</sup>	-.01	0.05	
Issue attitude folded	1.13***	.08	1.18**	.004	1.41***	.03	0.09	
Issue importance	-0.10		0.23		-0.11		0.15	
Political interest	0.13		-0.10		-0.30**	-.01	0.11	
Partisanship folded	-0.27**	-.03	0.15		--0.20		0.87***	.17
Transform social order	0.10		0.03		-0.37**	-.01	-0.01	
Income	0.19**	.03	0.08		-0.07		0.00	
Education	0.44***	.05	-0.48*	-.002	-0.27		0.09	
Female	0.20		2.91***	.008	-1.81***	-.02	-0.57***	-.05
Married	-0.60*	-.03	2.42**	.005	-0.33		-0.02	
Age	0.00		0.01		-0.02*	-.01	0.01	
Constant (grand mean)	-2.56***		-9.76***		-3.17***		--2.23***	
Level 2 variables	SD	(SE)	SD	(SE)	SD	(SE)	SD	(SE)
Total political group rate	3.54	(2.59)	0.00	(6.12)	4.26	(2.27)	0.00	1.78

(continued)

**Table 1. (continued)**

Total nonpolitical group rate	0.00	(1.06)	1.19	(2.29)	0.00	(1.66)	0.22	3.64
Constant (group mean)	0.77	(0.29)	0.00	(1.29)	0.56	(0.52)	0.58	0.17
Model statistics	$n = 1,065$		$n = 1,064$		$n = 1,057$		$n = 1,074$	
	(56 L2 groups), LR test $\chi^2 = 24.32^{***}$ , ICC = .15		(56 L2 groups), LR test $\chi^2 = .08$ , ICC = .00		(56 L2 groups), LR test $\chi^2 = 10.87^{***}$ , ICC = .09		(56 L2 groups), LR test $\chi^2 = 10.08^{**}$ , ICC = .09	

Source. 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study.

Note.  $\Delta$  refers to the change in effect produced by a two standard deviation move (the  $M - 1$  SD to the  $M + 1$  SD) or the full range for dummies.

LR = likelihood ratio; ICC = intra-class correlation

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

an organization, then there should be little meaningful transmission of information concerning them. This accords with more general treatments of religious influence, for which salience has been a key factor (Guth & Green, 1993; Wald et al., 1988).

But solidarity plays out in another important way—by simply being a member of an organization that contains a distinct information distribution. Thus, the second key test is whether there is meaningful variation across congregations after individual-level characteristics are controlled. For instance, the variation in environmental membership across congregations we displayed in Figure 1 could simply be a function of more members finding environmental issues important. Variation greater than zero in congregational means would suggest that congregations host a diffusion or some other process that contributes to individual membership rates.

On this score, variation in the group mean (the Level 2 constant—at the bottom of the table) is distinguishable from zero for three of the four group types. For environmental and party organization memberships, variation in the congregation mean is just below three times larger than its standard error. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals for gun groups suggest that congregational variation does not overlap with zero, though barely. And there is no meaningful variation in congregational-level abortion membership rates (primarily because membership rates are so low in these congregations).

Given the specter of self-selection, no matter how remote, we include a wide variety of controls to indicate that the real variation in group membership rates at the congregational level is not (or not just) due to general norms to be a joiner or individual-level resources and motivations that would bear on this decision. To capture the norms of belonging to groups conveyed in

congregations, we use several variables operating at two levels.<sup>5</sup> First, we include the number of memberships the respondent has in the other political group types. As we expect, these memberships exert strong, positive effects on being a member of another group. Similarly, their *non*political group memberships promote the probability of being a member of each political group examined here except gun groups (Kitts, 1999). These group memberships are additional organizational environments through which people learn about the political world, uncover their interests, and explore how their interests might be represented (see also Fernandez & McAdam, 1988). Of course, that is the central argument of the article. There is also significant remaining variation in the congregational (Level 2) norm of joining other political groups as they relate to environmental and gun group memberships, though nonpolitical group norms have little remaining variation across congregations after controlling for individual attributes.

The individual-level controls are especially strong on motivation and resources. The effects of personal motivation to belong are generally consistent. Though issue importance plays no role here, the extremity of the respondent's opinion is important for being a member of all but party organizations (for which our opinion measure is perhaps weak). Instead, it is no surprise that partisan strength has the strongest effect on being involved with party organizations, though it is worth noting that strong partisans are a bit less likely to be involved with environmental organizations. Our measures of resources do not play a strong role in these models. Income has no effect and education is split, boosting the probability of being in an environmental group and weakening membership in an abortion group, in which women are more likely to be involved. Women, not surprisingly, are less likely to be in gun groups and party organizations, though are no more or less likely to be in environmental groups. It is perhaps no surprise that general resources have inconsistent relationships with specific group memberships.

## **Model Results—Group Membership (Neighborhoods)**

To provide a comparison between structured and nonstructured environments, in Table 2, we present multilevel logistic regression estimates of political group membership from the 1984 South Bend study. Unlike the congregation data from which we gained estimates of membership in four group types, we could only estimate political party memberships with the neighborhood data (the other measures are not available). Even though the surveys are different, we take care to mirror, as best we can, the independent variables used in Table 1.

**Table 2.** Multilevel Logistic Regression Estimates of Belonging to a Political Group, Neighborhoods.

Level 1 variables	Political group		
	$\beta^*$	<i>p</i>	$\Delta$
Group memberships	0.24	***	.06
Political interest	0.72	***	.05
Neighborhood similarity	-3.24	***	-.09
Neighborhood partisan majoritarian	0.01		
Network size	-0.09		
Network disagreement	0.04		
Political discussion	0.18	***	.04
Political mobilization	0.32	**	.03
Time in community	0.00		
Primary turnout	0.71	***	.05
Partisanship folded	0.27	***	.04
Church attendance	-0.04		
Age	0.00		
Education	0.08	*	.03
Married	-0.35		
White	0.10		
Constant (global mean)	-5.65	***	
Level 2 variables	SD	(SE)	
Neighborhood mean group memberships	.00	.05	
Constant (neighborhood mean)	.00	.15	
Model statistics	$n = 1,128$ (17 L2 groups), LR $\chi^2 = 0.00$ , ICC = .00		

Source. Presidential Election Campaign Study, 1984 (South Bend, Indiana).

Note.  $\Delta$  refers to the change in effect produced by a two standard deviation move (the  $M - 1$  SD to the  $M + 1$  SD) or the full range for dummies.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

We pursue the results of the same two key tests—how solidarity and discord within contexts affects group attachments as well as whether there is any significant variation at Level 2 (the neighborhood) after accounting for Level 1 (individual) variance. Four measures help us sort out solidarity and discord in these contexts. The perceived similarities with neighbors variable is negatively related to party organization membership while the objective position of the respondent in the neighborhood (in the majority or not) is unrelated to being a member. Perceived similarity is also the strongest effect in the model,

on average differentiating respondents by 9%. Two measures are taken from a social network battery capturing how much disagreement is present in the network and how many discussants are in the network. Neither measure is related to political party membership. But another measure of solidarity—political discussion in the neighborhood—does affect membership. Higher levels of discussion are one route to disseminating information among neighbors.

As with the congregation data, the neighborhood's mean political group membership rate (the Level 2 constant) is of analytical importance. In contrast to the congregational results, these neighborhoods host no significant variation once individual attributes are accounted for. Neither the neighborhood mean party membership nor the average number of other memberships meaningfully vary after capturing the individual-level variation. This is not to say that there is not variation in membership rates in these neighborhoods—12% of the sample reported being a member of a party organization, but the rate varies considerably across neighborhoods from 5% to 19% ( $M = 0.12$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ). Instead, this variation is a function of individual characteristics alone and is not due to a higher-order force (such as an organizational layer).

The individual factors operate similarly to those in the congregational model. Individuals who are joiners are more likely to be members of political groups. Those who are more active politically—participating in elections, paying attention to campaigns, engaging in political discussions, and seeing themselves as partisans—are more likely to belong to a political group. Individuals who have higher levels of education are also more likely to belong to a political group.

We still would claim that people can learn from their neighbors, but the unstructured nature of the neighborhood environment relies on high levels of individual motivation, engagement (such as through discussion), and resources to generate activism. From this perspective, it is possible to say that neighborhoods without organizational properties are unlikely to help rectify civic imbalances in the way that congregations might by encouraging interaction across lines of difference and sharing available information. At the same time, the information shared is not general but particular, with learning dependent on the particular information supply in the social context.

## Model Results—Group Opinionation

The mechanism we promote underlying the effect of the social environment on interest group membership involves learning through interpersonal interaction, and this deserves a specific test. Fortunately, we have access to a more direct measure of learning, which was displayed in Figure 3—opinionation in

questions about affect toward four groups in the congregation data. With these measures, we shift away from considering general group types to the consideration of specific interest groups, three of which were involved in culture wars politics of the late 1990s.<sup>6</sup> The models in Table 3 predict whether the respondent abstained from providing their affect toward the group (coded 1).<sup>7</sup> We consider a substantive response (coded 0) an outcome of learning about the group (and having the confidence to express an opinion). Positive coefficients, therefore, suggest an increased probability of nonresponse and, therefore, decreased opinionation. Plentiful stimuli regarding a group should promote its opinionation—being surrounded by opinions should generate new opinions (a negative effect on nonresponse). Moreover, individuals must have the confidence to express their opinions, which resources and motivation help supply and would have a negative effect on nonresponse.

The model specified in Table 3 is close to that used in Table 1. Again, our focus is on the same two key tests. First, our Level 1 measures of solidarity and discord find statistical purchase in several models. Perceived similarity to the congregation is positively related to nonresponse with respect to the Christian Coalition (marginally) and Americans United—both groups clearly involved in the culture wars. It is not related to opinionation about Bread for the World and Focus on the Family.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, feeling different from the congregation drives up opinionation on groups on which people were most likely to disagree—culture wars issues rather than hunger and parenting, respectively. None of the other measures of discord are significant with the exception of disagreement in the network. Those experiencing higher levels of network disagreement are more likely to have an opinion toward the Christian Coalition, which accords with previous findings (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008), though network disagreement does not affect nonresponse for the other groups.

We might expect sporadic effects of network disagreement because we examine opinionation toward *specific* groups. Instead, social discord surely promotes a more individualized search for information depending on the nature of disagreement experienced, which our blunt measures cannot capture. Thus, discord should promote more opinionation generally. That is what we find in a count model of an opinionation index (not shown)—perceived congregational similarity drives up nonresponse about all groups listed in the survey.

Our other key test regards the amount of variance remaining in congregational means at Level 2. For this evidence, the bottom of Table 3 lists the standard deviation in these means with a standard error. In all cases, the 95% confidence intervals around the standard deviation do not include zero. There is real variation across congregations in the available supply of information about these groups in the form of opinionation. The effect of the congregation

**Table 3.** Multilevel Logistic Regression Estimates of Nonresponse Regarding Interest Group Affect.

Level 1 variables	Christian coalition		Americans united		Bread for the world		Focus on the family	
	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$	$\beta^*$	$\Delta$
Rate of NR of all other groups	1.14***	.27	1.19***	.77	1.23***	.77	0.94***	.59
Political group memberships	0.00		-0.11		-0.14		0.23**	.06
Nonpolitical group memberships	0.08		-0.08		-0.11*	-.08	-0.06	
Similarity to congregation	0.35 <sup>.12</sup>	.01	0.30*	.07	-0.05		-0.07	
Difference from neighbors	-0.05		0.08		0.03		-0.07	
Political network size	-0.15		-0.11		-0.06		0.01	
Network disagreement	-0.30*	-.02	-0.07		0.07		0.21	
Church small groups	0.02		0.16***	.12	-0.01		-0.12**	-.07
Issue importance average	-0.76***	-.03	0.13		-0.33		0.24	
Political interest	-0.20**	-.02	-0.17***	-.11	0.05		0.18***	.09
Partisanship folded	0.02		-0.04		0.13		-0.15*	-.06
Transform social order	0.21*	.02	-0.06		-0.05		-0.02	
Income	-0.15*	-.02	0.03		0.02		0.07	
Education	-0.16		0.33***	.16	0.06		-0.07	
Female	1.41***	.06	0.47***	.11	-0.30		-0.20	
Married	0.31		0.05		0.02		-0.10	
Age	-0.02***	-.03	-0.02***	-.11	-0.03***	-.19	0.01*	.06
Constant (grand mean)	-4.18***		0.03		1.07***		-0.47	
Level 2 variables (SDs)	SD	(SE)	SD	(SE)	SD	(SE)	SD	(SE)
Total political group rate	0.00	(2.98)	0.82	(2.78)	3.41	(0.99)	0.00	(1.36)

(continued)

**Table 3. (continued)**

Total nonpolitical group rate	0.00	(1.39)	0.84	(1.21)	0.00	(0.87)	0.00	(1.52)
Constant (group mean)	1.23	(0.26)	0.52	(0.19)	0.39	(0.21)	0.74	(0.13)
Model statistics	$n = 1,097$ (56 L2 groups), LR test $\chi^2 = 6.26^*$ , ICC = .11		$n = 1,097$ (56 L2 groups), LR $\chi^2 = 11.61^{***}$ , ICC = .08		$n = 1,097$ (56 L2 groups), LR $\chi^2 = 43.84^{***}$ , ICC = .04		$n = 1,097$ (56 L2 groups), LR test $\chi^2 = 32.05^{***}$ , ICC = .14	

Source. 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study.

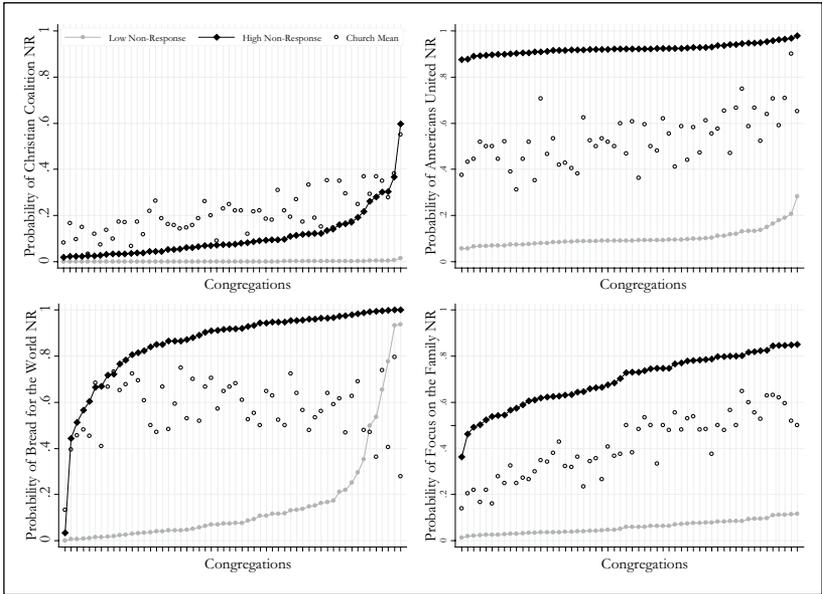
Note.  $\Delta$  refers to the change in effect produced by a two standard deviation move (the  $M - 1$  SD to the  $M + 1$  SD) or the full range for dummies. NR = nonresponse.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

on individuals is easier to visualize graphically, which we do in Figure 4. Here, we use the dominant effect in the model—the rate of nonresponse toward all other listed groups, splitting the measure into respondents with high (+1 *SD* – black lines) and low (–1 *SD* – gray lines) nonresponse. The predicted nonresponse rate is shown incorporating the Level 2 “random effect” of the congregation. In essence, Figure 4 shows the predicted rate of nonresponse for low and high opinionation respondents within each congregation. For ease of visualization, these predictions are sorted to run from low to high; for reference, the actual congregational nonresponse rate is plotted (hollow circles).

Congregations are not equally stocked with information about these groups and the supply of information exerts a conditionally potent influence on individual opinionation. Those who give their opinions on many groups (gray lines) are largely unaffected by the congregational supply. Exceptions include high nonresponse in congregations regarding Bread for the World and Focus on the Family. Instead, most of the movement in response to the congregational supply can be seen among the respondents providing their opinions about few groups (black lines). Their likelihood of nonresponse increases as the information stocks around them dwindle. In most cases, that effect is monotonic, with probabilities growing steadily along with the congregational nonresponse rate. But Bread for the World very quickly falls off their radar screen.

Congregational solidarity and individual discord effects hold in the presence of a strong set of controls, including the rate of the respondent’s nonresponse for the other included groups, which predictably has a very strong effect. The other variables capturing the joiner hypothesis, as discussed above, have inconsistent and sporadic effects. Political group memberships have no effect on any particular group nonresponse except for Focus on the



**Figure 4.** Estimated probabilities of NR on affect toward four groups for generally high and low NR respondents, by congregation (estimates from Table 3, congregational mean NR scattered).

Source. 1998-2000 ELCA/Episcopal Church and Clergy Study.

Note. Each vertical line represents estimates for one congregation. NR = nonresponse.

Family. Nonpolitical group memberships drive down nonresponse only for Bread for the World.

The set of controls we include for individual resources and motivations largely behave as expected, especially once we consider the nature of the particular group. For instance, higher political interest levels drive down nonresponse for the first two (more political) groups, but drive it up for the latter two, which are less commonly perceived as political (Bread and Focus). Partisan strength has no effect on three of the four groups but drives down nonresponse for Focus. Education only drives up nonresponse about Americans United, while women are more likely to evade response for Christian Coalition and Americans United. Older respondents are more likely to respond regarding all groups except for Focus.

Thus, social contexts like churches can inhibit or promote learning about particular groups given the supply of opinions they are able to share. To some degree, the ability to learn about a particular group is idiosyncratic to the

congregation, because some congregations have high rates of information about one group, but lower rates regarding other groups. But the orientation of the individual to the information supply, captured by discord measures, helps motivate an information search about groups of concern to the individual. Thus, because of solidarity, individuals most likely will come to have opinions about and join groups that are of concern to the local majority. And discord in the local context promotes their own broader information search.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Perhaps the classic pluralist statement on interest group joining suggests that people acquire their interests in communities through socialization and common experience (Truman, 1951). While an article of faith in the interest group literature, the empirical patterns and the forces that drive them have not been objects of scrutiny in political science. Understanding the conditions under which citizens learn about groups and belong to them is paramount to understanding the representation of interests. Without information about a variety of groups, individuals cannot effectively evaluate the quality of their representation and the efficacy of the group. Without a smörgåsbord of options for organized interest representation, individuals may even have a skewed sense of what they want from government.

We promote a perspective that considers the multilevel forces of the immediate social context and social network of the individual. However, there is no question that, in an ideal world, future studies would step beyond a Level 2 consisting of social precincts to integrate Level 3 where ecological pressures between interest groups play out (see, for example, Gray & Lowery, 1996). Only then may we begin to understand how information disparities in communities compound the problems of acquiring reliable reputational information about interest groups (e.g., Heaney, 2014), or how social insulation promotes interest group members becoming politically distinct from broader issue publics (Claassen & Nicholson, 2013).

The preceding analyses leverage nested data about citizens and their social contexts to provide insights into how environmental factors affect interest group learning and joining. Though the data appropriated here are mostly taken from the religious contexts of two large, mainline Protestant denominations and South Bend neighborhoods, some generalizations may still be made to the broader political context. While there are surely distinct qualities about congregational life and these congregations in particular, we largely assume that congregations are similar to many social precincts with an organizational structure (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Wald et al., 1988). Though the concentrations of group information will vary, as they do in this sample, the same

essential dynamics should shape how people acquire information about interest groups in civil society associations.

The way in which congregations do differ systematically from other social contexts, especially neighborhoods, is in their degree of organization. We find that social structure has important effects on group participation and learning, primarily by hosting group information and memberships asymmetrically across congregations and imposing these distributions through their manifold avenues of information diffusion. The implications are that congregations have persistent, variable effects on individual learning independent of individual control. The scope of groups that parishioners can learn about, therefore, is dependent on the cues available in the social environment. These matching norms may be an underlying cause of civic organizations being clustered and interdependent (Baldassarri & Diani, 2007).

While solidarity affects the relationship between individuals and interest groups, discord within one's social context is important for procuring information about groups. Those who report being different from their congregations are more likely to belong to and possess knowledge of groups in the dimensions marked by disagreement. Dissimilarity with one's social context promotes an information search, as the information provided within the existing context does not satisfy the individual's information needs. This dynamic provides a crucial, if modest, counterbalance to the dominant effect of the social context that defines the information environment. Individuals are not clones of their environments but do need to be motivated to seek out new information and add to the local supply. It also suggests dissatisfaction with an organization may not simply prompt exit or voicing concerns but instead can stimulate additional group involvement to mediate these concerns (see also Welch & Leege, 1991).

The empirical patterns found in this article largely comport with a general pluralist account. But the extent of the disparities in information seen here was probably not countenanced by even the most ardent proponents of interest fractionalization. Even within an organizational unit that transcends geography and presumably shares a common view of the world (a religious denomination), the asymmetries in information about groups that advocate on a range of religious interests were profound. It is no surprise, then, that persistent questions are asked about whether interest groups are in fact representative of the broader interest community they claim to represent.

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## Notes

1. These data are publicly available at the American Religion Data Archive ([www.thearda.com](http://www.thearda.com)), using the following links: <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/ELCA2000.asp> (for the congregational component) and <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/ELCACLRG.asp> (for the clergy component).
2. These data are available by subscription to the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>.
3. Even when it is quite evident, such as the presence of a woman clergyperson in the pulpit, newer members of such churches were, in fact, more conservative than existing members (Djupe & Olson 2013), when we would expect liberals to join women-headed churches.
4. Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family are perhaps well-known religious right organizations; Bread for the World is a “collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad” (<http://www.bread.org/about-us/>); Americans United for Separation of Church and State advocates for its title issue and against the religious right’s agenda more broadly.
5. The correlations between the variables that we are describing in this section regarding a belonging norm (the totals of political and nonpolitical organization memberships at the individual level and means at the congregational levels) are positive, but low—in no cases exceeding  $r = .28$ .
6. Bread for the World advocates for hunger and poverty reductions from a faith-based perspective and is commonly associated with mainline Protestant denominations and affiliated organizations, especially colleges.
7. The results are not driven by respondents skipping the question set entirely (though 5% did). Instead, respondents provided opinions selectively with 27% providing responses to all groups and otherwise most of the remaining respondents providing responses to about half of the listed groups—19% responded on five to six groups, 31% on three to four groups, and 18% on one to two groups.
8. While academics think of Focus as a culture wars organization, headed at the time by Dr. James Dobson, most Americans know it as the widely broadcast radio show dispensing (conservative to be sure) parenting advice.

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