

Partisan Pastor

The Politics of 130,000 American Religious Leaders

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Abstract

We investigate the political relationship between church pastors and congregants, and we reveal how this relationship varies across denominations. To do this, we compile an original database of 130,000 American clergy across forty denominations, which we link to public voter registration data. We then link these data to mass surveys, neighborhood-level statistics, and a survey of pastors' own churches. In the first part of our study, we demonstrate that denominational affiliation is highly informative of a pastor's party but not a congregant's party. However, the weak relationship for congregants masks a stronger underlying relationship between denominational affiliation and issue positions. In the second part of the study, we show that many congregants, particularly in conservative churches, are politically unaligned with their pastor. Even if they wanted to, congregants have only a limited capacity to switch to churches within their denomination that are politically aligned.

Word Count: 7,828

1 Introduction

Attitudes and behaviors of ordinary Americans are influenced by elites. Among these elites are not only politicians and media personalities, but also local leaders to whom citizens turn for moral and political guidance. Arguably, one industry in the U.S. incorporates moral leadership into its professional duties more than any other: congregational religious leaders. In spite of a decline in religious attendance and affiliation in recent years, it is still the case that millions of Americans (up to a quarter of the population) attend weekly church services.¹ At these services, and in pastoral duties throughout the week, congregational leaders probably have more opportunity than any other group of professionals in the U.S. to set political agendas, mobilize action, and influence opinion. Moreover, when religious communities make consequential political decisions - for example whether to provide sanctuary to undocumented immigrants - it is often up to the clergy to decide how to act.

Prior research has both demonstrated and qualified the influence of religious leaders. Clergy are understandably cognizant of competing demands of their jobs. The basic pressure to retain their jobs and keep their congregations afloat means that most clergy are limited in the extent to which they can, and desire to, influence the opinions of their congregation (Crawford and Olson 2001). Nevertheless, many religious leaders report a desire to engage in politics, with a substantial portion agreeing that it is an important part of their ministry (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Calfano, Michelson and Oldmixon 2017). Their decision to engage in politics depends on a number of factors, like ideological difference within their congregations, their congregation's social status in the local community, the local political environment, and their personal beliefs and ideology (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Djupe

¹The exact percentage of Americans who attend weekly services is difficult to estimate because of mis-reporting. Chaves (2011) suggests attendance might be 20-25% of Americans. See also: <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>

and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Olson 2000).

In this paper, we focus on the political relationship between pastors and their congregations. We assess this relationship in a new light using original data that allows us to compare the party registration of pastors to the partisan affiliation of their congregations and denominational adherents. Most denominations in the U.S. have find-a-church websites where anyone can look up information about churches in their area. We scraped forty denominations' websites to compose a list of 186,000 Christian and Jewish pastors.² We then utilized the name of the pastor and the location of their congregation to find 130,000 of these individuals in public voter registration records. To our knowledge, this is the largest compilation of religious leaders ever assembled, and the first to link individual pastors to their reported party registration. We then linked this data on pastors' partisanship to sureys of the mass public to compare party affiliation between clergy and their congregants. Our effort collecting data on clergy follows recent work in assembling publicly accessible data sources to study politically-impinged industries like medicine (Hersh and Goldenberg 2016) and law (Bonica, Chilton and Sen 2016).

These new data open up the investigation of several questions regarding pastors' political leadership and their relationship to their congregants. First, we examine how pastors' partisan affiliation varies across and within denomination, asking the extent to which a pastor's denomination is informative of their party affiliation and comparing this relationship to the mass public. We find that denomination is much more informative of a pastors' political affiliation than congregants'. Yet, congregants are still in denominations that align with their views on policy issues tied closely to personal morality. For clergy, partisanship tracks theological orientation and denomination much more closely than for congregants, yet

²Throughout this essay, we use the term 'pastor' or 'clergy' as catch-all for priests, rabbis, reverends, and all other professional religious congregational leaders.

denomination does inform us of individual congregants' moral issue positions.

The causal process that may lead denomination to bear a weak relationship to partisanship among ordinary citizens is unlikely to apply to pastors. Past literature suggests that pastors' denominational affiliation is closely tied with their theological, and in turn their political, orientations (Guth et al. 1997). However, when it comes to the mass public, Putnam and Campbell (2012) show that "religious devotion has largely replaced religious denomination as a salient political dividing line (35)." In general, religiously engaged individuals are Republican and unaffiliated individuals are Democratic, but among the engaged mass public, denominational differences are less apparent than they once were. Religiously-affiliated Americans are intermarrying across denominations and choosing churches based not just on faith and theology but on social relationships and geography. As Margolis (2018) has recently shown, religious participation is also increasingly influenced by political considerations.

Our results suggest that denominations are politically homogenous for the clergy but heterogenous for congregants, implying that congregants are often led by opposite-party leaders. Reinforcing past work, we demonstrate that clergy often lead congregations that hold different views from their own (Hadden 1970; Quinley 1974). This leads to the second major question of our analysis: to what extent are congregants able to select church leaders whose politics are consistent with their own if they wanted to?

Whether congregants are sorting into politically similar churches is a difficult empirical question to answer. Beginning with our dataset of pastors, we dig down to the regional level, metropolitan level, and finally congregation-level to examine homophily. Our evidence suggests congregants within denominations often have little choice about the partisanship of their leaders. We discover that in many denominations, congregants, even if they wanted to, could not stay within their denomination and find a church where the pastor's partisanship matches their own. Structural features of specific denominations (e.g. how pastors are hired or placed into congregations) can inhibit or encourage political matches between clergy and

congregations. Further, the extent of partisan mismatch is not uniform across denominations and faith traditions. Congregants regularly encounter leadership with a different political orientation from their own, particularly in ideologically and theologically conservative Mainline Protestant congregations.

In their leadership from the pulpit and in other pastoral activities, pastors translate theological teachings to real-world social and political issues of importance to their congregants' daily lives. In fulfilling their ministerial duties, pastors must balance their prophetic role – reminding congregants of their commitment to a set of shared values – with their role as leaders of voluntary organizations, the health of which depend on congregants' financial and material contributions. The decision to engage politically in a public manner becomes more complicated in the face of competing reference groups and occupational demands. Our dataset and findings open new doors in understanding the political relationships between clergy and their congregants and clergy's calculus in political engagement.

2 Understanding Pastors' Political Engagement

Scholarly and public interest in the politics of pastors rests on the assumption that pastors can influence a substantial share of the American public. Prior work supports this assumption, demonstrating that pastors are aware of their power as moral, spiritual, and political leaders and that this power has real consequences both for congregants' political attitudes as well as their connections with local government officials (Beatty and Walter 1989; Djupe and Gilbert 2001; Guth et al. 1997; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Olson 2000). Further, pastors have played an instrumental role, historically and contemporaneously, in mobilizing black churches and liberal Protestant churches on issues of civil rights as well as in evangelical churches on issues like abortion and gay marriage.

While pastors are cognizant of their potential influence, the decision to engage politically

is not an obvious choice, due to a number of social, institutional, and cultural constraints and the need to tread lightly on issues that may divide their communities (Calfano, Michelson and Oldmixon 2017; Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Crawford and Olson 2001; Hadden 1969; Jelen 2003). While theological differences were previously thought to structure political engagement of Protestant clergy, contemporary studies focus more on contextual factors like the socioeconomic status of the local community, the extent to which the congregation's theological worldview accords with the values of the wider community, and the opinions of important reference groups like congregants and bishops and/or denominational authorities (Calfano, Michelson and Oldmixon 2017; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Hadden 1969; Olson 2000; Smidt 2016). Pastors' political leadership cannot be understood in a vacuum. Their decision to lead is shaped by personal convictions as well as the characteristics of their congregations and community.

We focus on the interaction between clergy's own political views and the views of their congregations across denominations and local communities. While other work has examined the political views of pastors for a subset of denominations, our research allows us to measure a set of personal and contextual factors for most major U.S. Christian and Jewish denominations.

An individual's decision to affiliate with a denomination today is less tied to ideological differences than in previous decades (Putnam and Campbell 2012). In fact, Kellstedt et al. (1996) demonstrate that many individuals cannot even identify the denomination to which their church belongs. Putnam and Campbell (2012) demonstrate that most individuals rank both the pastor and the political and social views of a congregation low on their priority list when shopping for a new congregation.

Clergy, on the other hand, self-select into denominations in a different way (Djupe and Gilbert 2009). While congregants may have the ability to select churches within a given denomination that comport with their ideological outlook, clergy generally do not have the

same choice; clergy must decide among denominations, rather than among churches of various denominations. Thus, clergy's decision to affiliate with a particular denomination, and to enter seminary when applicable, will be more closely tied to their preexisting theological and ideological beliefs.

The different processes by which congregants choose a church and by which pastors choose a denomination will lead to more within-denomination political homogeneity among pastors than congregants. These predictions echo previous work demonstrating political mismatches in Mainline denominations, where clergy have historically leaned more liberal than their congregants (Campbell and Pettigrew 1959; Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Hadden 1969; Jelen 1993; Quinley 1974).

While we expect political mismatches between clergy and congregants, congregants rank the theological views of the congregation at the top of their list for choosing their church (Putnam and Campbell 2012). Because a denomination's theological worldview bears on political values, we expect that denomination will predict the issue positions of congregants, particularly on moral issues often linked to religion, like abortion, even when denomination is less informative of congregants' party affiliations. While each denomination will have more diversity of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents than the clergy of that denomination will have within its ranks, we anticipate that denomination will predict the issue positions of congregants, above and beyond the variation in issue views that is explained by congregants' partisanship.

While we predict general alignment between clergy and adherents on hot-button issues at the denomination level, clergy face congregations with a diversity of views and political affiliations (Calfano, Michelson and Oldmixon 2017). Political mismatches have been shown to impact clergy's political engagement, especially with issues that are less theologically salient, and not always in a way that depresses clergy's engagement. Jelen (2003) finds that Catholic priests are more likely to engage with political issues when they feel psychologically

close to their congregations on social issues and psychologically distant from their congregants on economic issues. Djupe and Gilbert (2003) find that ELCA and Episcopal pastors are more likely to speak publicly about issues when there is an ideological gap between them and their congregants, but when they nevertheless feel supported by their congregations. Wald, Owen and Hill (1988) find that homogenous congregations tend to facilitate clergy political engagement, and that this pattern advantages evangelical Protestant congregations which tend to be more homogenous than Mainline denominations.

Existing work has demonstrated that political mismatches between leaders and congregants are common. While we expect mismatches to exist across most denominations, the extent of mismatches will vary by denomination due to structural characteristics that make mismatches more or less common. For example, clergy in the Catholic Church are placed in parishes by bishops, and often serve churches within the same diocese where they attend seminary. This hierarchical and regional focus of clergy placement may make it more likely that clergy share their congregants political views in the Catholic Church, compared to denominations where clergy are called from other states or regions. The centralization of clergy placement may also impact congregants' expectations regarding mismatches, and provide clergy more freedom to address political and social issues without as much concern for their job security, compared to denominations where individual congregations hire and dismiss clergy directly.

Political mismatches will also vary by location. For example, in areas that only support one church within a given denomination, there is no opportunity for congregants to remain in that denomination but sort into a church with a more or politically-aligned pastor. We would expect, therefore, that in smaller communities, mismatches between clergy and congregants will be more common than in larger communities where congregants have greater opportunity to select a congregation with a politically-aligned pastor.

3 Data

In the spring and summer of 2016, we assembled a list of denominational websites through which we could scrape directories of churches.³ Most of these websites are owned by the umbrella denomination. In a few cases, third party curators (e.g. theblackchurches.org) were used to supplement the denominational resources.

Given the highly decentralized nature of religion in the U.S., our list of denominations (see Table A1) does not cover all religious congregations, but it does cover the largest umbrella groups among Christian and Jewish affiliates. Some missing denominations, like the Church of Latter Day Saints, are missing because online directories are not made available to the general public and because the church has only lay leaders. Other denominations, like Muslim communities, are not listed in reliable centralized directories. Based on the religious landscape assessed by the Pew Research Center, we estimate that our data collection covers at least two-thirds of all religious congregations in the US, and probably a larger share of religiously affiliated individuals (assuming the denominations included in the analysis have larger congregations on average than the smaller, less centralized denominations not included⁴).

Nearly all directories list the name, address, and other contact information for the churches. Several denominations list other useful information, such as the size of the church congregation. In most cases, the name of the pastor and other church staff members are listed in the directory. In about 4% of the cases, a pastor’s home address is listed. In 0.05%

³This research was approved by Yale University Institutional Review Board, Protocol Number 1606017891.

⁴Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” 2015 report, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

of cases, a pastor's spouse is listed. In three denominations, lay leaders (e.g. congregational presidents) are also listed.

In five denominations, pastors' names were not listed in the online denominational directories in more than 90% of cases (American Baptist, Disciples of Christ, EFCA, Orthodox Jewish, and Nazarene). Several other denominations had missing pastor names for a sizeable share of the churches (AME: 31%; Black Churches: 58%; Church of Christ: 30%; Unitarian: 25%, and others with 1-15% of churches missing pastor information). For churches with missing pastor names, we hired Mechanical Turk workers to find the pastors' names. In many cases, they simply needed to click on the church's website URL (which we obtained from the directories), search for the pastor name, and enter it. In other cases, the Mechanical Turk workers conducted a web search for the church and the pastor. In total, we identified 25,000 additional pastors from listings that did not have pastor name by using Mechanical Turk.

The first two columns of data in Table 1 lists the number of churches per denomination and the number of pastors' names we identified by denomination. In addition to the data listed in Table 1, we also collected names of 2,967 faculty associated with 144 seminaries in addition to lay leaders listed in a few directories. We do not analyze those records here.

After creating this dataset, we performed a customized match of the name of the pastor and associated address to the voter file supplied by Catalist. The match is customized to leverage the benefits of working with a national data vendor while also maintaining maximum control to the researchers to perform the matching procedure ourselves. We asked Catalist to send us plausible matches on name of residents in a commuting distance to the church address. (For the small number of records that listed pastors' with their home address, we utilized home address). In 44% of cases, there was exactly one plausible match between a pastor and a voter registration address. These are individuals with unique names within their geographic area. We took a series of steps to identify matches among pastors who

Table 1: Denominations in Study

Denomination	Churches	Pastors Named	Catalist Linked	Pct. IDed
AME	3,878	873	398	46
Adventist	5,425	5,330	2,700	51
American Baptist	4,959	3,407	1,737	51
Assemblies of God	12,703	12,042	9,904	82
Baptist General	1,423	1,371	1,015	74
Black Churches	2,533	1,954	1,130	58
Brethren	113	101	86	85
COG General Conf	462	462	419	91
COG Anderson	2,063	1,769	1,380	78
Catholic	18,435	16,439	10,783	66
Church of Christ	12,853	2,859	1,570	55
Church of God	5,957	5,347	4,127	77
Disciples of Christ	3,262	2,156	1,334	62
EFCA	1,561	1,339	990	74
ELCA	10,886	9,310	7,530	81
Episcopal	6,826	6,105	3,660	60
The Evang. Church	124	124	94	76
Foursquare	3,842	3,813	2,896	76
Fundamentalist Baptist	4,875	4,803	2,714	57
Greek Orthodox	664	618	311	50
Independent Baptist	7,846	7,249	5,016	69
Jewish, Conservative	530	527	436	83
Jewish, Orthodox	718	601	326	54
Jewish, Reform	1,446	1,445	972	67
Missouri Synod	7,182	6,238	5,218	84
Methodist	32,507	31,395	21,937	70
Nazarene	4,995	3,414	2,345	69
OCA	576	576	249	43
PCA	1,837	1,752	1,466	84
Pentecostal (PCG)	783	33	26	79
Pentecostal (UPCI)	4,416	4,285	3,134	73
Presbyterian	13,454	9,918	7,782	78
CRCNA	953	871	681	78
Reformed Presbyterian	265	238	150	63
Southern Baptist	51,944	24,113	16,392	68
UCC	5,138	4,535	3,240	71
Unitarian	1,412	1,272	724	57
Wisconsin Lutheran	1,207	1,143	996	87
Totals	240,053	179,827	125,868	71 (Med)

Note: In addition to denominations listed here, we also attempted to link COGIC churches and churches endorsed by Joel Olsteen. Both sets of records fail to match to the Catalist file. In addition, we exclude a database of Baptist World Alliance Churches, which only had 12 pastors' names available.

matched to multiple voter file records. If a pastor linked to two potential voter file records but only one of these records matches the pastor exactly on first and last name, we counted that as a match. If the pastor's name contained a middle name or a suffix (e.g. Jr.) and only one of the potential voter file records contained that value, we counted that as a match. If a pastor linked to a record of a current registered voter and a record of someone who used to be a registered voter or is unlisted, we counted the registrant as a match, since this is likely to be the more up-to-date record.

Finally, we consider spatial distance from the church location. In some denominations, pastors live on the church property or very close by. For instance, because of the prohibition of driving on the Sabbath, all Orthodox Jewish congregational rabbis live in walking-distance of the synagogue location. For each denomination, we calculated the median distance between the registration address of unique matches to the church location. For the multiple matches, if only one match is closer than the median distance for that denomination, we counted it as a unique match.

This procedure resulted in a match rate of 70% to a unique Catalist record and a 63% match rate to a current registered voter. This is very similar to the match rate found using a similar methodology in Hersh (2013) and Hersh and Goldenberg (2016). The match rate is quite close to the national registration rate of 71%.⁵ Some individuals do not match here because they are unregistered. Others would not match because, perhaps on account of a common name, they match to multiple records. The method generates very low rates of false positive matches, according to prior research.

The final column in Table 1 shows the percent of all pastors for whom we sought voter file records who matched to a unique record. The median denomination had a match rate

⁵US Census Bureau (2012) Reported voting and registration, by sex and single years of age, November 2012. Voting and Registration. Available at www.census.gov/hhes/

of 70%, but there is variation by denomination. This variation is likely attributable to the quality of the data in the original denominational directories. Some directories may be more up-to-date than others or contain more information (like middle names) than others.

Most pastors in our matched dataset (91.4%) are the sole pastors at their church. Six percent of pastors have a single co-pastor in the dataset at the same church location, 1.7% have two co-pastors, 0.8% have three co-pastors and 0.07% have between 4-9 co-pastors. We include all matched pastors in our study, even those who are part of a team of leaders at their church.

In a small number of cases (less than 2%), a single pastor at a single church location is listed under multiple denominations. Of the 2,151 records that have such a duplicate, 70% are duplicates of Fundamentalist Baptists and Independent Baptists. Another 5% represent overlaps between Southern Baptists and one of these first two groups of Baptists. Particularly for Independent and Fundamentalist Baptists, such duplicates are expected; while we identified separate directories for these two denominations, they are typically considered as one in the same. Apart from these Baptist denominations, there seem to be a small number of church communities that have merged into single institutions, but fall under two different umbrella denominations. For all of these instances, we retain the duplicative records to maintain a comprehensive list by denomination. That is, if a pastor is listed in our database twice, once as a Southern Baptist pastor and once as a Fundamentalist Baptist pastor, we include his record for both denominations. In some analysis below, however, we combine these three Baptist denominations and note our decision to do so.

The key variables utilized in our study come from the Catalist voter file and typically originate in public voter registration records. We utilize party affiliation in the 29 states where registrants are asked to register with a party. We also utilize age and gender, available in voter files and consumer data. Finally, we utilize Catalist's geocoding of precinct, which situates each voter in their precinct and supplies the precinct two-party vote share from the

2012 presidential election.

To study the mass public, we utilize pooled 2014 and 2016 CCES surveys, which ask detailed questions about denominational affiliation. We utilize self-reported party registration. We also use a variety of self-reported demographic characteristics available on the CCES surveys.

Party affiliation is a simple proxy for a pastor and congregant's political attitudes, but it is a powerful one. In recent years, about 90% of partisans vote for their party's candidates for nearly all offices. Partisanship is also a strong predictor of issue positions. For example, in the CCES, 74% of Democrats support abortion rights whereas 29% of Republicans do. Similarly, 82% of Democrats believe action should be taken to halt climate change, compared to only 25% percent of Republicans. In this research we assume that a pastor's party affiliation is broadly indicative of the issues and candidates they support. This is, of course, an assumption, and it is possible that pastors differ from the rest of the public in that their party is less informative of their general political worldview. However, given existing evidence of a tight link between theology and political ideology among pastors, as discussed above, and the fact that highly educated elites are more likely to hold ideologically consistent attitudes, we believe it is an appropriate assumption that pastors' partisanship is informative of their political attitudes.

3.1 Link to the National Congregations Study

To connect a subset of our pastors' dataset to information about their actual congregations, we linked our dataset to the nationally representative 2012 National Congregations Study (NCS). For sampling, the NCS utilizes self-reported congregation information provided by respondents to the General Social Survey (GSS) to produce a nationally representative sample of congregations. The GSS asks respondents who attend church to report the name and address of their religious congregation. Because the GSS provides a random sample of

Americans, this procedure provides a random sample of the congregations to which Americans belong. The 2012 NCS surveyed 1,422 religious congregations across 98 denominations (and many congregations with no denominational affiliation). The surveys were conducted in-person or by phone with one key informant, such as a pastor, rabbi, minister, or other staff member, for each congregation.

We matched our data to the NCS data by linking the church address provided by the NCS respondent to a matching church address and associated pastor in our dataset. There are several denominations included in the NCS for which we did not find or seek online directories; therefore, some NCS congregations did not match because their denominations were not included in our dataset. For example, we were unable to find a centralized directory for the National Baptist Convention, so this denomination was necessarily excluded from our dataset. As mentioned, we did not collect data on the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints.⁶ In other cases, the congregations provided by NCS respondents were associated with small, decentralized denominations which we did not include in our dataset, or they were part of denominations we did include, but did not match likely due to out-of-date directories (either the address did not match or the individual church was not listed in the directory). Finally, many NCS congregations fell under the “other” or “nondenominational” label, making it unlikely these churches would match to any churches in our dataset. In total, we matched 614 out of 1,422 NCS congregations to their pastors in our dataset.

Appendix tables A2 and A3 compare the representativeness of our NCS matched churches to the full NCS sample across faith traditions and ideological and theological orientations. Table A2 compares the percent of congregations that fall under each faith tradition across our matched sample, the unmatched sample, and the entire NCS sample. As expected given

⁶Similarly, Jehovah’s Witness and COGIC (Church of God in Christ) do not provide or maintain online directories.

the gaps in our original data, Black Protestants and non-Christian congregations are underrepresented in our matched sample, while Catholic and Mainline Protestant congregations are overrepresented. Despite these skews, our matched dataset is representative in terms of theology and ideology. Table A3 displays the percent of congregations that fall under each ideological and theological category. The matched sample looks very similar to the full NCS in terms of ideological and theological distributions. The largest difference appears for ideologically moderate churches; our matched dataset is 5% less ideologically moderate than the nationally representative NCS sample.

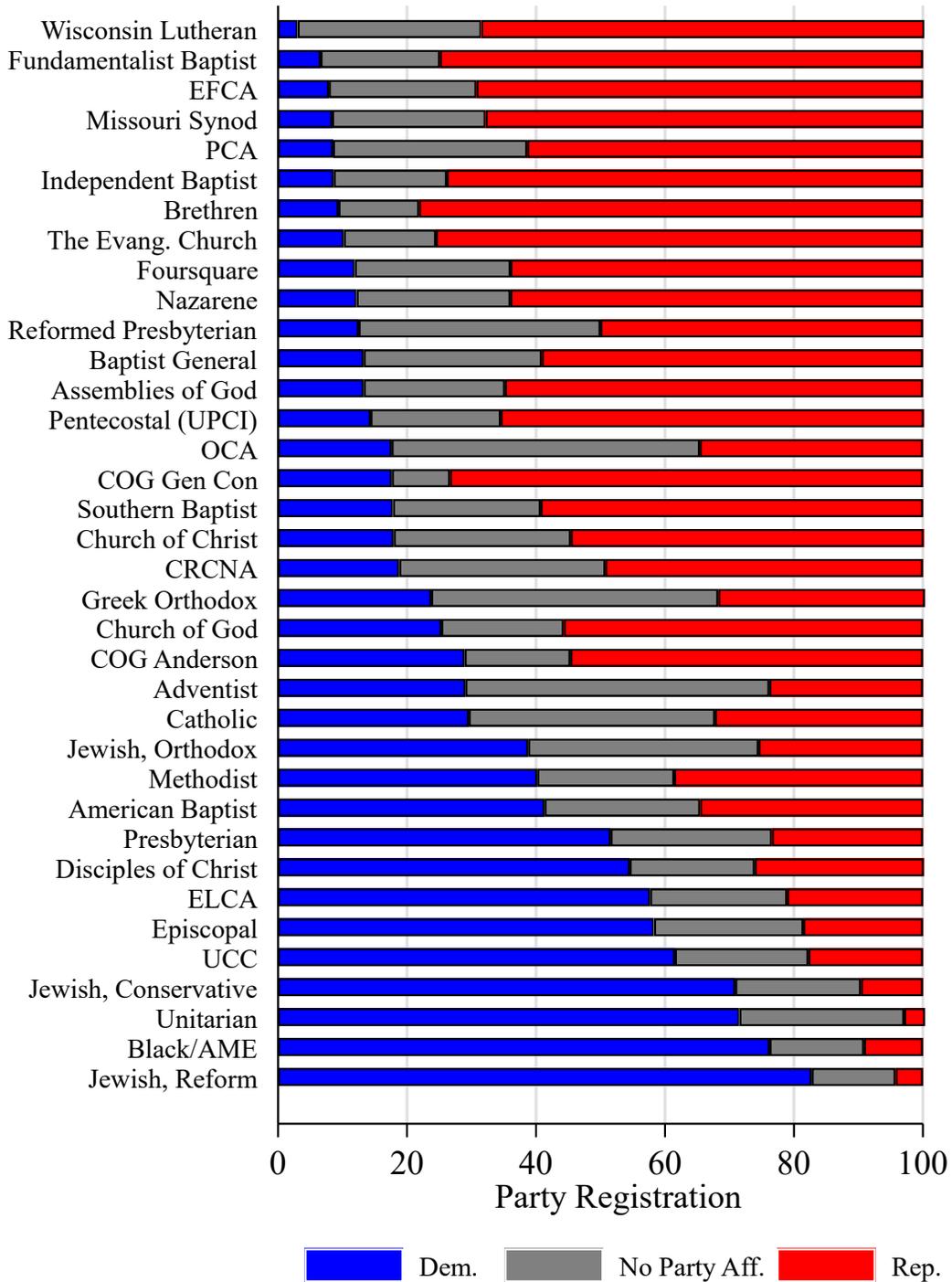
4 The Partisanship of Pastors

In Figure 1, we focus just on pastors who live in 29 party registration states.⁷ In these states, voters can choose to register as Democratic, Republican, or independent. This designation becomes a public record. In the figure, we calculate the percentage of pastors who are Democratic, Republican, and no party affiliation. This third category includes a very small set of pastors (1.4%) who are listed with a third-party registration.

The diversity in partisanship among religious pastors is not unexpected, but it is dramatic. Denominations like Reform and Conservative Jews, Black churches, and Unitarian-Universalists have almost no Republican clergy. Pastors associated with Fundamentalist Baptist churches, Independent Baptist Churches, the Evangelical Church network, Brethren churches and others have almost no Democrats. Seventh Day Adventists, the Orthodox Church of America (OCA) and Greek Orthodox churches stand out in that close to half of

⁷Party registration states are quite representative of the country as a whole (Hersh 2015). Further, while denominations are not evenly distributed across regions, the potential bias introduced by looking at only party registration states is unlikely to significantly skew our core results.

Figure 1: Party affiliation by Religious Denomination in Party Registration States



the pastors in these denominations are registered without a party.

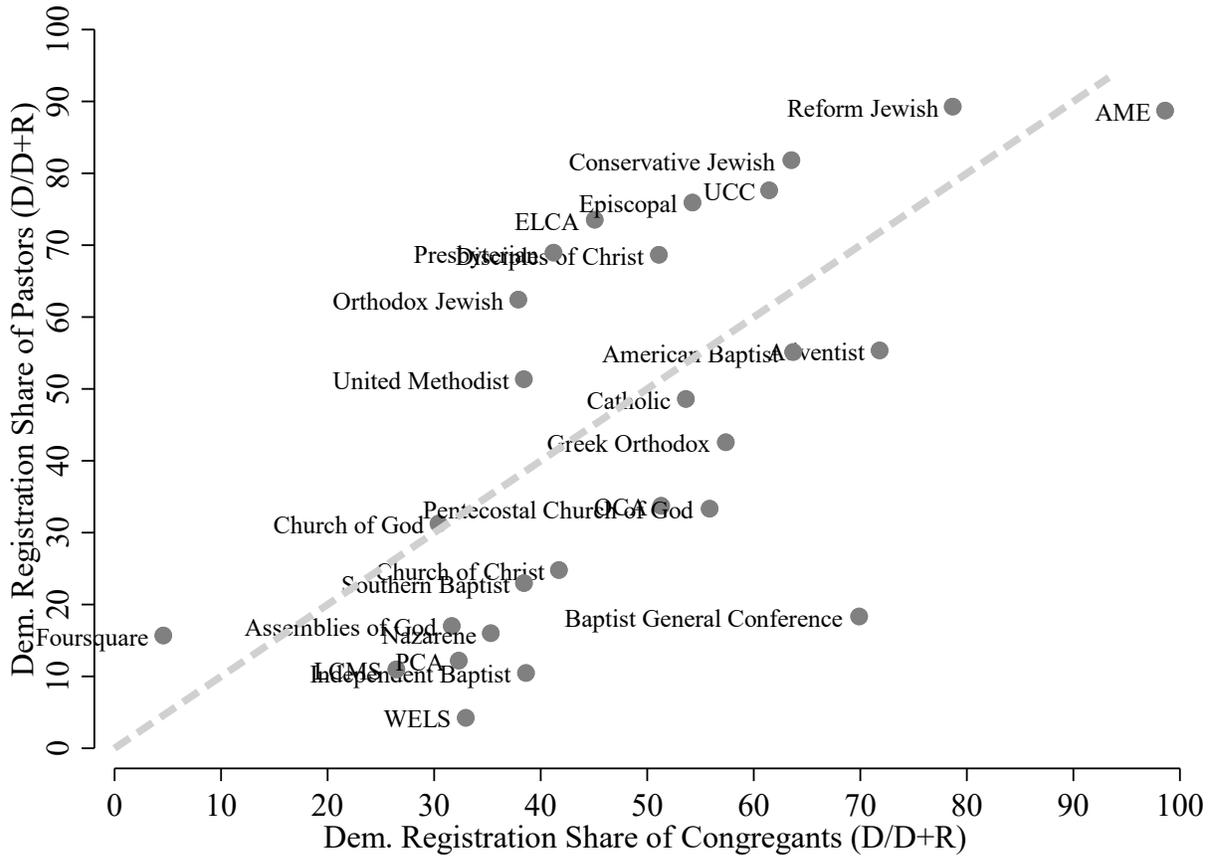
The Democratic denominations also show other signs of liberalism, which aren't particularly surprising. For instance, whereas Republican denominations tend to be entirely staffed by male pastors, the most Democratic of the denominations are 20-60% female. In fact, two of the denominations at the bottom of Figure 1 have the greatest share of female pastors, with 45% of Reform Jewish rabbis and 57% of unitarian ministers listed as female. Overall in the population of pastors, only 16% are female.

Our assumption is that partisanship is a useful proxy for understanding a pastor's - and even a church's - views on political issues. Our data on United Church of Christ provides a confirmatory metric of churches' political views. Some UCC churches (31%, N= 1,932) are listed in their directory as Open and Affirming, which means they are welcoming to LGBT congregants. Democratic pastors are four times more likely to be working at an Open and Affirming Church compared to Republicans (38% vs. 9%). Of course, this may be because the church community is liberal and hired a liberal pastor to reflect its views or because of a pastor imposing Democratic-aligned views on the congregation. Either way, partisanship is highly correlated with this religiously sensitive and politically sensitive policy issue, which is indicative of the political climate of these churches.

In the next figure, we compare pastors' partisanship with the partisanship of the mass public. Figure 2 plots the Democratic share of pastors registered either Democratic or Republican against the Democratic share of CCES respondents (2014, 2016, pooled and weighted) by denomination. We focus only on CCES respondents in the same set of party registration states. We include all denominations for which we have at least twenty party-identifying respondents in the CCES.

Figure 2 illustrates a clear relationship between partisanship of pastors and partisanship of congregants for denominations. In denominations that lean Republican, the pastors are

Figure 2: Party affiliation of Pastors vs. Adherents in the Mass Public



Note: Forty-five degree line indicates equal share of partisans among congregants and pastors.

Republican; in denominations that lean Democratic, the pastors are Democratic.⁸

⁸The biggest exceptions to this pattern are the Pentecostal denomination and Baptist General Conference, where the church members are quite Democratic but the pastors are quite Republican. This is likely due to the fact that nearly 30% of Pentecostals in the CCES data are African American, the majority of whom identify as a Democrat, while our clergy data contains no black Pentecostal pastors. For Baptist General Conference, nearly 40% of CCES respondents are African American, while only 9% of pastors are African American. This imbalance suggests two possibilities; first, pastors may be politically out of touch with their congregants if these Pentecostal and Baptist churches are racially integrated. Alternatively, the Pentecostal and the Baptist General Conference directories may fail to include black churches and our separate database of black churches does not make up for the holes in these databases.

Pastors are also clearly more one-sidedly partisan by denomination compared to the mass public. That is, in the more liberal denominations, where about half of the partisans are Democrats, 60-80% of the pastors are Democratic. For example, in ELCA churches, 46% of the members are Democratic while 73% of the pastors are registered Democrats. In the more conservative denominations, where 20-40% of congregants are registered Democrats, pastors tend to be 0-20% Democratic. The median denomination in Figure 2 exhibits an absolute difference between pastors and congregants of 19 percentage points.

Figure 2 summarizes partisanship by focusing on Democrats and Republicans (leaving out independents). But the one-sidedness in party affiliation among pastors compared to congregants does not appear to be related to the rates at which pastors or congregants identify as independent. Among pastors, 24% are not registered Democratic or Republican. Among CCES respondents affiliated with a denomination, 23% are not registered Democratic or Republican. What Figure 2 is showing, then, is that within any given denomination, adherents will be much less homogeneously partisan than pastors.

One simple way to summarize how informative denomination is of a pastor's party affiliation compared to a member of the public's is through a basic regression analysis. Consider an OLS regression where a binary variable for partisanship (1 for Democrats, 0 for Republicans) is predicted by age, gender, and race (categorical variables for Black, Hispanic, and other nonwhite), including state fixed-effects. For CCES respondents, the R^2 from this model is 0.16 (N=17,197) and for pastors, the R^2 is also 0.16 (N=45,430). Now, if we add fixed-effects for denomination, the R^2 for the mass public rises only from 0.16 to 0.20, but the R^2 for pastors doubles from 0.16 to 0.33. Simply put, once accounting for age, race, gender, and state, denomination does not explain much variation in partisanship among the mass public. For pastors, however, denomination adds a good deal of explanatory power, beyond demographics and state of residence.

5 The Policy Link

Consider two political issues that are thought to be related to religious views: abortion and gay marriage. In the 2014 and 2016 CCES surveys, respondents were asked if they think abortion ought to be always a matter of personal choice and they were asked if they think gays and lesbians ought to be allowed to legally marry. The country is nearly evenly divided on these questions as asked: about 55% support the liberal position in both cases. While these positions are highly correlated with partisanship, a quarter to a third of Democrats and Republicans hold the opposite position from what would be predicted by their party affiliation.

The question is: does religious denomination, which only modestly distinguishes Democrats from Republicans in the mass public, distinguish views on these moral policy matters? We model positions on these questions with an OLS regression. The liberal position is predicted for Democratic and Republican respondents by party affiliation, age, gender, race (dummy variables each for blacks, Hispanics, and other non-whites), state of residence, and by denomination fixed-effects. Catholics are the excluded category.

Figure 3 plots the fixed-effect for each denomination, with 95% confidence intervals. Denominations with positive values have more liberal views compared to Catholics and denominations with negative values have more conservative views. The y-axis presents the party affiliation of the pastors in each denomination. Each graph shows labels for the Church of God and Reform Jewish denominations, which are the extreme positions relative to Catholics on both abortion and gay marriage.

This figure tells us that - even when controlling for party affiliation (and state, and age, gender and race) - denominational affiliation explains variation in policy views in the mass public. Furthermore, the denominations where partisans tend to hold unusually liberal or conservative views on gay marriage and abortion are ones where the pastors in the that

Figure 3: Predicting Moral Issue Positions with Denominational Affiliations

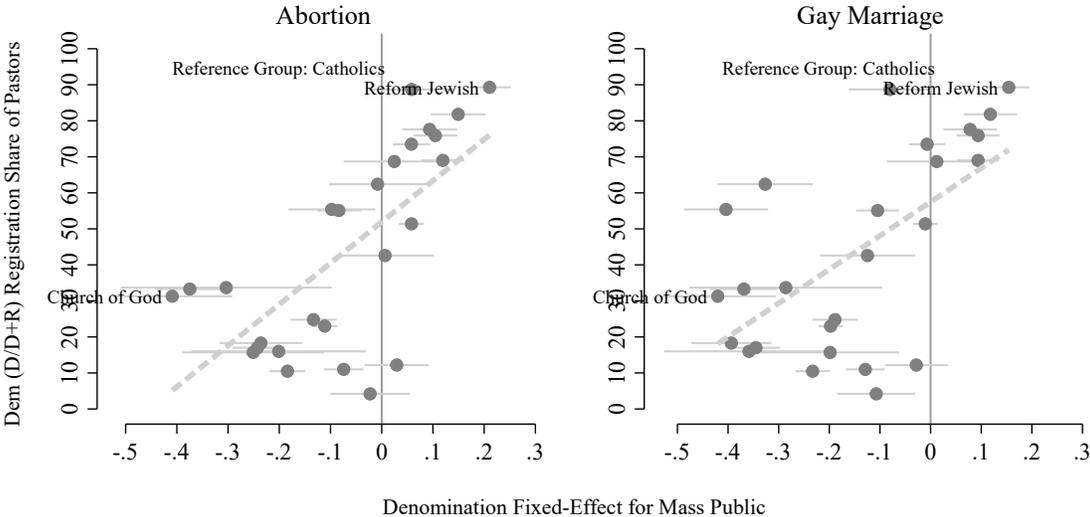
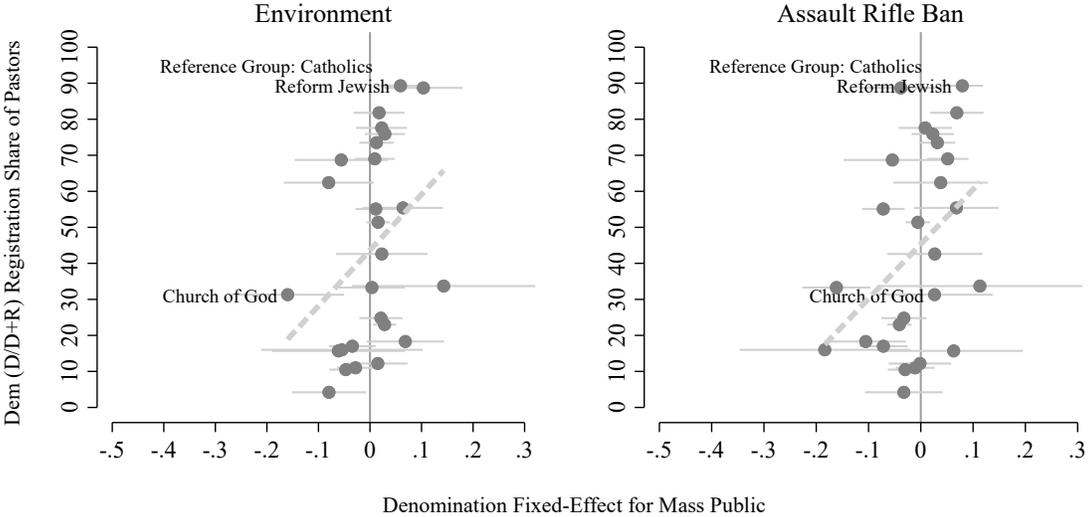


Figure 4: Predicting Less Religiously-Impinged Issue Positions with Denominational Affiliations



denomination are one-sidedly Democratic and Republican.

In contrast to Figure 3, see Figure 4. Here, we perform the same exercise but for policy issues that are generally thought to be less connected to religious values: the environment and gun control. To be sure, these issues can be connected to religious values, but they

aren't part of culture war fights in the same way. We focus on questions of whether the EPA should regulate carbon dioxide emissions and whether the country should ban assault rifles. On both these questions, respondents are fairly split (61% hold the liberal position on guns; 68% hold the liberal position on the environment). And about 20-30% of each party's respondents hold the view that wouldn't be expected based on their party affiliation alone.

Unlike in Figure 3, Figure 4 shows that once one controls for basic demographics, state of residence, and most importantly party affiliation, religious denomination does little to distinguish liberal from conservative respondents on these issues. It is on the perennial issues of personal morality, abortion and homosexuality, that we see denomination holding predictive power. While we do not know, from this analysis, whether the relationship arises from individuals' sorting into denominations that align with their views versus the persuasive power of pastors and their church communities, other work suggests it is unlikely that pastors are moving their congregants' views in line with their own (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Smith 2005). Instead, it is more likely the case that a significant portion of religious individuals select denominations with theological climates, proxied by pastors' partisanship, that align with their own views on important issues related to personal morality.

6 Evidence of Homophily

Across denominations, pastors are more homogenously partisan than their denominational affiliates, but how frequently are clergy actually politically mismatched from their own congregations? In some of the more lopsided denominations, Figure 2 makes clear that many congregants must be led by pastors of the opposite party. Consider, for instance, that a third of party-identifying Conservative Jews are Republican and a third of party-identifying Wisconsin Lutherans are Democratic. But there are hardly any Conservative Rabbis who are Republican or Wisconsin Lutheran ministers who are Democratic. Given

geographic constraints, it is essentially impossible that most of these Jewish Republicans or Democratic Lutherans could plausibly attend a congregation with a like-minded leader even if they wanted to.

For the larger and more diverse denominations, we need more detailed information to understand the extent to which pastors and their congregants identify with the same party. We will examine the evidence by zooming in to the regional level, metropolitan level, and finally congregation level. It is worth noting before we proceed that each of these analyses has limitations. In the regional analysis we use the pooled-CCES data to assess the party affiliation of, for example, Presbyterian respondents from the northeast. This probably stretches the CCES data too thinly as the CCES was not designed to be representative at this level of disaggregation. Our second cut at the data uses the pastor's precinct-level Democratic vote share as a proxy for the partisan disposition of the community in which the church is situated. The limitation here is the standard problem of ecological analysis, which is that the precinct vote share may not be indicative of the congregational attendees worshipping in or near these areas. Finally, we observe the pastors who we linked to their actual congregations through the NCS survey. This allows us to most directly compare pastor partisanship with congregation-level political disposition. The drawback is that for this analysis our sample size is in the hundreds rather than in the tens of thousands. Thus, as we explore partisan homophily in these three ways, readers should be attentive to the assumptions and trade-offs that are required in each case.

For ease of interpretation, this section focuses on six groups of faith traditions: Evangelical Protestants represented by Assemblies of God and Baptist;⁹ Mainline Protestants represented by Methodists and Presbyterians; Catholics; and Jews, for which we combine Conservative and Reform denominations and exclude Orthodox. Per Figures 1 and 2, Conser-

⁹We combine Fundamentalist Baptist, Independent Baptist, and Southern Baptists for this category.

vative and Reform denominations are similar in the partisanship of rabbis and congregants, and they differ from the Orthodox.

In Figure 5, we use the pooled CCES data to estimate the partisanship of denominational adherents within each U.S. Census region. We only include regions for which we have at least twenty or more respondents and twenty or more pastors per denomination.

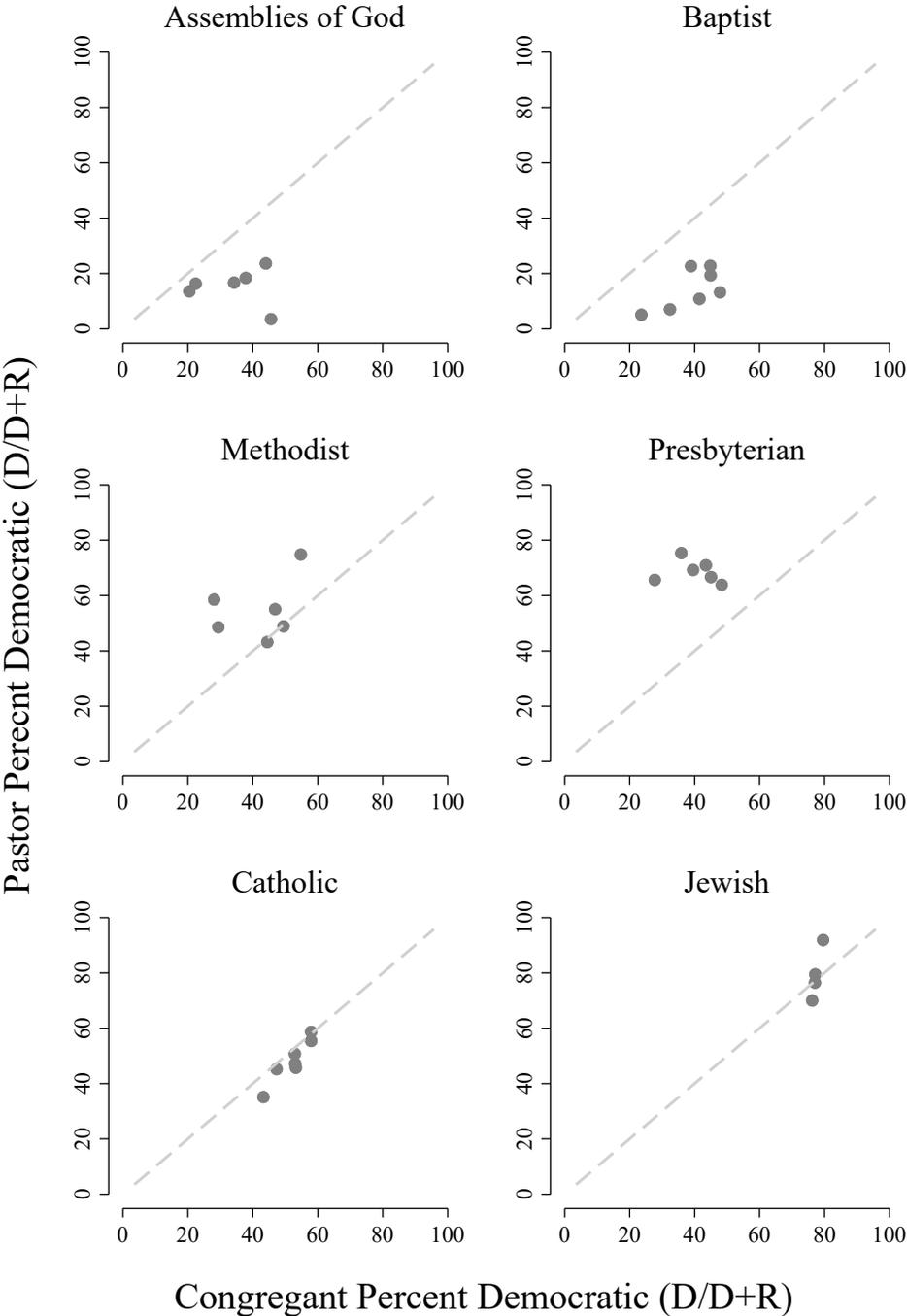
Pastors are more lopsidedly partisan than congregants in the national analysis; here we examine whether this is generally true within region. In all denominations except the Catholic Church, the partisanship of the congregants in the region bears no systematic relationship to the partisanship of the pastors. We do not see evidence, then, that churches are recruiting pastors who reflect the regional disposition of their denominations' members.

The Catholic Church stands out in Figure 5 as an exception to this rule. In each region of the country, the partisanship of priests tracks almost perfectly with the partisanship of the CCES Catholic respondents. Two distinctive features of the Catholic Church likely contribute to this remarkably tight relationship: first, the Catholic Church is different from other denominations in the top-down placement of priests into local churches; second, priests typically serve churches within their home diocese. These structural factors likely make matches between clergy and their congregations more likely, due to bishop oversight of placement decisions, and because clergy likely look politically similar to the congregants in their home diocese.

For a different take, we zoom in to conduct a much more granular geographic analysis. In Figure 6, we focus on five large illustrative metropolitan areas: Charlotte, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, New York City, and Philadelphia. For each metro area, we situate pastors in their residential voting precinct. The figure shows the precinct-level two-party Obama vote share from 2012 on the x-axis with the party affiliation of each pastor plotted for each metro area arrayed along the y-axis.

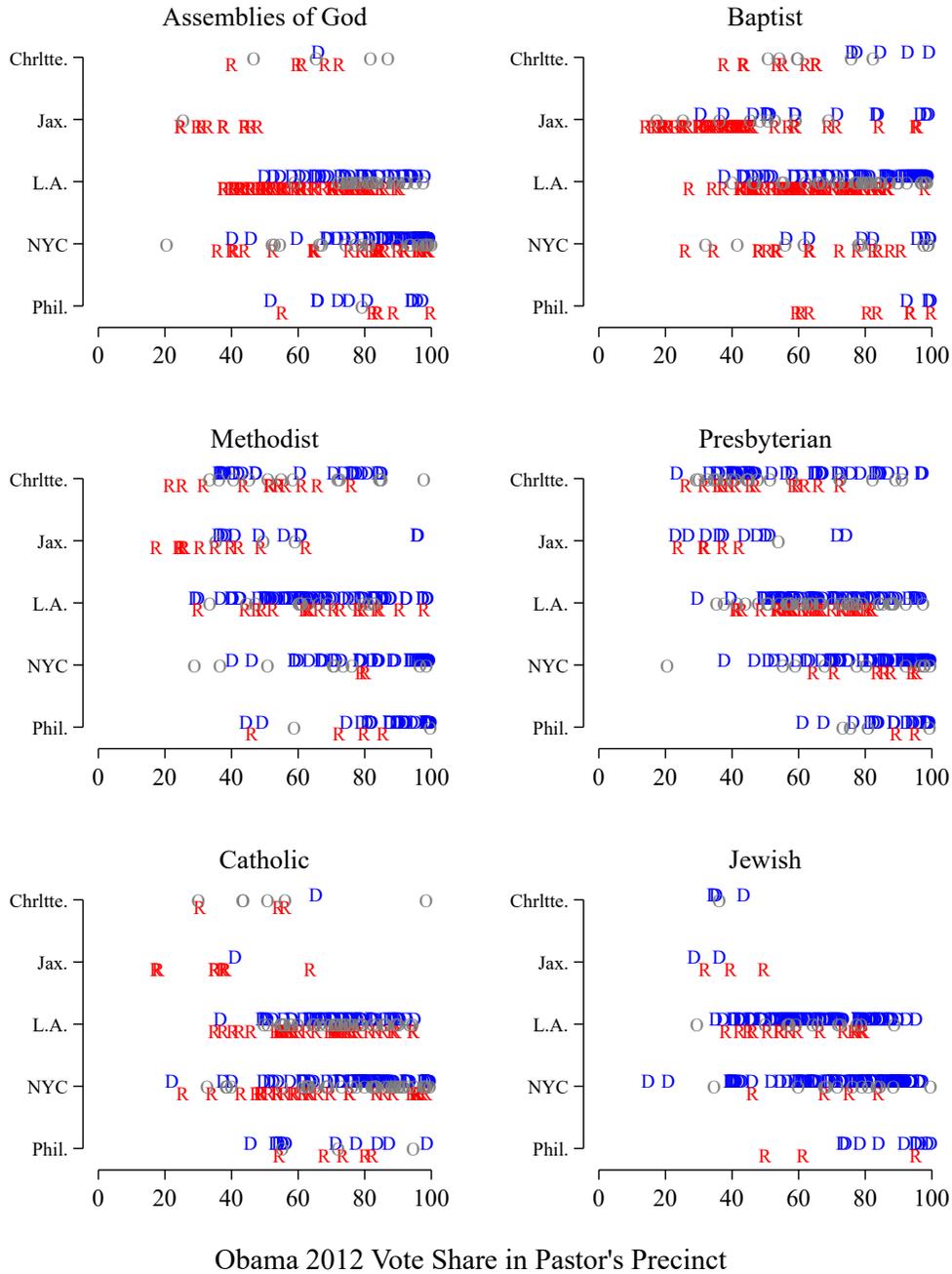
Assume for a moment that the precinct in which the pastor lives is representative of

Figure 5: Party affiliation of Pastors vs. Adherents Across US Census Regions



Note: Each dot represents a Census region.

Figure 6: Pastor's Party and their Precinct's Obama Vote Share



Note: Ds Rs and Os represent the party affiliation (O is independent/other) of individual pastors, situated in voting precincts based on their home address.

their congregation's politics. The strength of this assumption varies by denomination; in some denominations, the pastor almost always lives in the neighborhood of the church and this neighborhood would appropriately reflect the party disposition of congregants. Given that priests often live on site and that Catholic churches are often neighborhood churches, this assumption may hold for Catholics. In other denominations, we are less confident about this assumption, though existing data suggests it is plausible for white Protestant denominations.¹⁰

Consider the case of Baptists in Charlotte. The Baptist pastors live in a range of slightly Republican to very Democratic precincts. In the more Republican precincts, the pastors themselves are Republican. In the more Democratic precincts, the pastors are Democrats. We see similar sorting among rabbis in Philadelphia and Methodists in Charlotte.

However, like Catholics in the previous figure, these examples are largely the exception rather than the rule. In most denominations in most cities, the pastors live (and work) in a diverse set of neighborhoods. And the partisanship of those neighborhoods, as measured by Obama vote, does not bear a strong relationship to the pastor's party affiliation. That is, supposing that the precinct is representative of the congregants and supposing that congregants cannot or do not travel to a different neighborhood to attend a church they find more appealing, then many congregants who are partisans of one party are attending churches with pastors who are partisans of the other party.

The heterogeneity of congregants and uniformity of pastors may be exacerbated in small towns compared to the larger metro areas shown in the graphs. In a small town that can only

¹⁰ Survey data suggest that most regular church attenders do not travel very far to their houses of worship; 68% of Christians report traveling 15 minutes or less to their house of worship; roughly 50% of evangelical and mainline Protestants travel 15 minutes or less. See <https://www.baylor.edu/baylorreligionsurvey/doc.php/292546.pdf>

support one Catholic Church, area Catholics have no choice but to attend the local church, providing less opportunity to select into a church with a politically similar pastor. On the other hand, smaller towns may be more politically homogenous, and our results suggest their priest would likely reflect the political orientation of the area. Thus, the preceding results suggest possible local trends, but we caution against generalizing outside these urban areas.

While Figures 5 and 6 offer insights into regional variation within denominations, to really understand the extent to which congregants encounter opposite-minded pastors, we must look at the level of the individual church. To do this, we link our data to the National Congregations Study, giving us data on the political characteristics of pastors own congregations.

The church representative who responded to the NCS survey (in some cases a member of the clergy, in other cases administrative staff) was asked to identify the congregation as ideologically liberal, moderate, or conservative. The respondent was also asked to classify the congregation as theologically liberal, moderate, or conservative. Table 2 presents the percentage of Democratic, Republican, and “Other” pastors serving churches classified by their ideological and theological orientations.

Table 2: Partisan Diversity of Congregations Within Theological and Ideological Orientations

Pastor Party	<i>Church Theology</i>			<i>Church Ideology</i>		
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
% Democrat	18	58	87	20	42	87
% Republican	58	21	3	52	44	2
% Other	24	21	10	28	14	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	225	65	44	189	106	34

Note: column entries represent the partisan distribution within a given theological or ideological orientation. Partisan distribution by faith tradition is found in Appendix Table A4.

The most notable finding is that liberal churches are overwhelmingly led by Democratic

pastors, while moderate and conservative churches are led by more politically diverse clergy. For example, among ideologically conservative churches, only 50% are led by Republican pastors, while a full 86% of liberal churches are led by Democratic pastors. The partisan breakdown is similar for theological orientation, with 57% of conservative churches led by Republican pastors and 87% of liberal churches led by Democrats. Importantly, these trends appear to be driven by mismatches among Mainline Protestant churches, where conservative congregations are often led by more liberal clergy¹¹ (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Hadden 1969). Clearly, pastors are not mirror images of their congregations in terms of political leanings.

Let us summarize what we have learned. Pastors within denominations tend to be more homogenous in their party affiliation than members of the mass public who identify with the denomination, yet pastors' partisanship is strongly correlated with adherents' views on theologically-relevant issues like gay marriage and abortion. We have also learned that the partisan differences between clergy and adherents tend to hold even within geographic region. Whether one lives and worships in a conservative or liberal area of the country or a conservative or liberal neighborhood within a city does not provide a strong indication of the political affinity of one's local religious leader, once controlling for denomination. Third, we have shown in a representative sample of churches the rate at which congregations are led by pastors whose partisan affiliation is different from the congregation. Most strikingly, a fifth of congregations that identify as theologically or ideologically conservative are led by Democratic pastors. Another quarter to third are led by registered Independents. This occurs much less frequently for liberal churches, close to 90% of which are led by registered Democrats.

¹¹See Table A4 in the Appendix for a breakdown of pastors' ideological orientation across faith traditions.

7 Discussion

Fewer than 20% of church attenders say that they chose their congregation for its political or social views (Putnam and Campbell 2012). More than twice as many claim that the style of worship or the preferences of their spouse were important to their decision. This may translate into similar rates of Democrats and Republicans across a range of denominations. If politics is not why congregants choose a particular church or denomination, the fact that there is quite a lot of partisan heterogeneity is unsurprising.

However, it would be a mistake to conclude from data on the mass public that denomination is not an important signal of a church's political orientation. Our data on pastors' political affiliations provide support for the hypothesis that denomination is a powerful proxy for the political affinities of pastors. Different religious denominations have profoundly different orientations toward politics; such differences are likely due to theological traditions and orthodoxy, as well as denomination-specific norms surrounding politics and political behavior. Furthermore, denominational adherents' views on theologically relevant social issues are strongly correlated with the partisanship of their denomination's clergy, suggesting that while partisanship *per se* may or may not be driving individuals' decisions to affiliate with denominations, their decisions do appear to be motivated by broad theological concerns closely tied up with politics.

These patterns in party affiliation and policy views among pastors and their congregants suggest important questions regarding the nature of pastors' political influence and how this influence might vary by denomination. Denominations that are comprised of congregants who exhibit a wide range of party affiliations, but are led by pastors who overwhelmingly identify with one party, provide the context for cross-party interactions at church. In an environment of partisan differences between the pulpit and the pews, pastors may moderate their political engagement, especially their issue messaging, to avoid ostracizing congregants

and negatively impacting the health of their congregations.

With the release of our data accompanying this article, we hope future scholarship on the intersection of religion and politics can examine pastoral leadership in even greater detail. Pastors' political worldviews are likely to seep into their leadership in ways small and large. Scholars of religion and American politics should examine whether and on what issues clergy perceive congruence and incongruence with congregants, and how this varies by denomination. Furthermore, on issues where pastors are deciding, perhaps unilaterally or perhaps with consultation of their congregation, about whether to take political action like providing a sanctuary for immigrants, future studies with these data could help shed light on the kinds of leaders and communities that make different decisions on such matters.

8 Appendix

Table A1: Denominations Names and Directory URLs

Denomination	Full Name	URL
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church	https://www.ame-church.com/directory/find-a-church/
Adventist	Seventh-Day Adventist Church	http://eadventist.net
American Baptist	American Baptist Churches USA	http://www.abcis.org/public/ChurchSearch.asp
Assemblies of God	-	www.ag.org/top/church-directory/
Baptist General	Baptist General Conference	https://converge.org/locate-converge
Black Churches	-	http://theblackchurches.org/churches/
Brethren	The Brethren Church	http://www.brethrenchurch.org/upload/documents/CHURCH_LISTS/2016_May_Churches.pdf
Catholic	The Catholic Church	http://www.thecatholicdirectory.com
COG General Conf	Church of God General Conference	http://www.cggc.org/connect/directory/pastor-search/
COG Anderson	Church of God (Anderson, IN)	http://www.jesusisthesubject.org/church-finder/
Christian Reformed	Christian Reformed Church in North America	https://www.crcna.org/church-finder
Churches of Christ	-	http://www.churches-of-christ.net/usa/index.html
Church of God	-	http://www.churchofgod.org/index.php/church-locator
Disciples of Christ	-	http://disciples.org/find-congregation/
EFCA	Evangelical Free Church of America	https://churches.efca.org
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	http://www.elca.org/tools/findacongregation
Episcopal	The Episcopal Church	http://www.episcopalchurch.org/browse/parish
The Evang. Church	The Evangelical Church of North America	https://www.theevangelicalchurch.org/churches
Foursquare	The Foursquare Church	http://www.foursquare.org/locator
Fundamentalist Baptist	-	http://fundamental.org/fundamental/churches
Greek Orthodox	Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	http://www.goarch.org/parishes/
Independent Baptist	-	http://baptistinfo.org/directory/index.shtml
Jewish, Conservative	United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism	https://uscj.org/network
Jewish, Orthodox	Orthodox Union	https://www.ou.org/synagogue-finder/
Jewish, Reform	Union for Reform Judaism	https://www.urj.org/congregations
Missouri Synod	The Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod	http://locator.lcms.org/nchurches_frm/church.asp
WELS	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	https://yearbook.wels.net/unitsearch
Methodist	The United Methodist Church	http://www.umc.org/find-a-church/search
Nazarene	Church of the Nazarene	http://nazarene.org/find-a-church
OCA	Orthodox Church in America	https://oca.org/parishes
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America	http://www.pcaac.org/church-search/
Pentecostal (PCG)	Pentecostal Church of God	http://www.pcg.org/findchurch
Pentecostal (UPCI)	United Pentecostal Church International	https://www.upci.org/home
Presbyterian	Presbyterian Church (USA)	https://www.pcusa.org/search/congregations/
Reformed Presbyterian	The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church	http://arpchurch.org/arp-church-directory/
Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist Convention	http://www.sbc.net/churchsearch/
UCC	United Church of Christ	http://www.ucc.org/find
Unitarian	Unitarian Universalist Association	https://my.uua.org/directory/congregations/

Table A2: Summary Statistics of Merged and Full NCS Sample

	Matched	Non-Matched	Full NCS
% Catholic	9	3	5
% Evangelical	43	49	48
% Mainline	38	14	20
% Black Prot.	8	25	20
% Non-Christian	2	9	7
Total %	100	100	100

Note: column entries represent the distribution of major faith traditions within NCS samples.

Table A3: Theological and Ideological Representativeness

	<i>Theology</i>			<i>Ideology</i>		
	Matched	Non-matched	Full NCS	Matched	Non-Matched	Full NCS
% Conservative	62	64	64	58	55	56
% Moderate	23	24	24	29	35	34
% Liberal	15	12	12	13	10	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: column entries represent theological and ideological distribution of respective NCS sample.

Table A4: Partisan Diversity Across Faith Tradition

	Catholic	White Evangelical	Black Protestant	White Mainline	Non-Christian
% Democrat	14	9	67	57	87
% Republican	24	69	5	30	13
% Other	62	22	28	13	0
Total N	25	134	29	97	4

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