

Spring 5-16-2014

Leap of Faith: Clergy in State Legislative Elections

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Leap of Faith: Clergy in State Legislative Elections

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Political Science

by

Victonio Spencer

B.A. Tulane University 2011

May 2014

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Abstract

This study expands the literature on clergy as political actors by shedding light on the relative electoral performance of clergy who hold office in state legislatures. Kinney's 2008 study on the occurrence of clergy in local office, as well as other works showing the divergence in attitudes towards church-state separation among racial groups and religious traditions, illustrate potential factors affecting the performance of clergy in elections. The analyses examine the factors related to differences in vote percentages, margins of victory, and campaign funding between clergy and non-clergy. These factors include racial and religious traditions and how their effects interact. The analyses find that clergy-legislators receive larger vote percentages, larger margins of victory, but less campaign funding. These effects, with the exception of campaign funding, tend to be the strongest when looking at black Protestant clergy compared to mainline Protestant clergy and non-clergy legislators.

Introduction:

The separation of church and state is an issue that has been ingrained in the American consciousness since the writing of the United States Constitution. Religious appeals during political discourse have made for controversy going back over 200 years, when our founders squabbled over the role of religion in the United States government (Witte 2010). In fact, for much of the first century of the country's existence, clergy were prohibited in many states from assuming public office (Silverman 2000). The citizens of the United States today carry on this fervent debate on the relationship between religion and the government. Over a third of American citizens believe politicians express their faith too much, while slightly less than a third think politicians do not express their faith enough (Pew 2012). Moreover, a majority of Americans are opposed to religious groups engaging in political activity, including campaigns (Wald 2010).

Considering the level of disagreement many Americans have with public expressions of faith by politicians and with religious groups engaging in politics, what does this mean for clergy members who take the leap of faith into campaigning for elected office? My thesis seeks to shed light on this topic. While clergy are no longer forbidden from being elected to public office, a lack of public support for such intermingling of religion and government may discourage clergy from running (Guth 2004). However, this reluctance may be less warranted for some clergy than others. This study seeks to examine the effects of being a "clergy-legislator" on vote percentages, margins of victory, and campaign funding. Further, it will test to see whether or not race and/or religious tradition have interactive effects with these factors. This study provides a much needed contribution to political science, as it not only examines whether or not being a clergy member affects a person's chances of winning an election, but it explores whether or not a

clergy member's chances of electoral success are also affected by his or her race and/or religious tradition.

Literature Review:

Church leaders play a unique role in American politics. The United States' conception of separation of church and state still permits clergy members to represent their own interests – and those of their religious group – in the political sphere, and even from the comfort of their own pulpit. Further, both major parties have received political gains from the mobilization of clergy. Clergy have provided political leadership in causes such as the Civil Rights movement and the illegalization of abortion. Moreover, clergy sometimes allow political candidates a forum to promote their campaigns in their churches (Wald 2010). Clergy enjoy a position of relatively high esteem and trust in American society. This, as well as the civic resources afforded to them by religious institutions, grants clergy great potential to influence public opinion on socio-political issues, particularly those of their congregants (Crawford 2001; Smidt 2004). Clergy members are not always allowed free rein to promote their own views, however, as church members often constrain church leadership to “articulate positions only on those issues with which the membership is in substantial agreement,” with negative consequences if leadership oversteps this constraint. For instance, the Catholic Church's birth control and abortion stance, as well as white mainline Protestant clergy's participation in Civil Rights, led to dissension and losses in membership (Djupe 2001, 191-192).

Limited research has been dedicated to exploring clergy in elective office. Looking at survey data from the International City/County Management Association on the structure and composition of over 4,200 U.S. cities, Kinney explored the contexts surrounding the occurrence

of clergy holding local office. Kinney (2008) found a few regional influences on whether a municipality has clergy in office. Large municipalities tended to have higher proportions of clergy in elective office. Corroborating previous findings by Crawford and Olson (2001), Kinney noted that these areas tend to have an interactive relationship with “urban racial or ethnic concentration,” as those areas which are more racially diverse are more likely to have clergy holding public office. However, she noted that clergy were not more likely themselves to be African-American. Moreover, Kinney found that “clergy officeholders are significantly more likely to be found in municipalities in the South” (2008). Though Kinney’s research explored the local contexts in which clergy are found at the municipal level, it did not specifically look at elections.

Research on clergy in the context of campaigning has been limited as well. Wald and Calhoun-Brown point out that the 1988 presidential campaigns of both Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson were built on the narrow backing of churches sympathetic to their respective cause (Wald 2010). Taking another look at the Pat Robertson campaign, Langenbach and Green (1992) analyzed Robertson’s electoral support among fellow clergy members. The researchers concluded that Robertson’s clerical constituency was very narrow, consisting largely of Charismatics similar to the candidate himself. While Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson were not able to win elections when using the church to mobilize their campaigns, other clergy, such as Andrew Young and John Lewis, have been elected to influential national offices, such as Congress (Crawford and Olsen 2001).

Clergy involvement in politics can vary based on religious tradition. For instance, evangelical and black Protestant clergy are much more likely to be politically active than mainline clergy (Jelen 2001; Smidt 2004). This is consistent with the divergent attitudes of

members of these churches, as a hefty majority of evangelical and black Protestant congregants support clergy involvement in politics, while less than half of mainline Protestants support such activism (Djupe 2001). The relatively low support in mainline churches is due in part to mainline clergy often being much less conservative than their congregants. Further, mainline churches are seeing drops in membership as conservative congregants switch to evangelical churches, and more liberal congregants are leaving the church altogether (Wald 2010).

While there is a shortage of electoral research on black clergy, there is certainly a wealth of information regarding the black community, clergy, and politics. Black Protestant churches have a particular affinity for political activism among clergy, as the African American community has had a smaller concern than other racial or religious groups for church-state separation (Wald 2010). The politics of the black community has a uniquely symbiotic relationship with the church. In the black community, churches often serve as a hub for political activity (Harris 1999; Crawford 2001). Black clergy and their congregants are much more likely than white churches to mobilize for social action. It is commonplace in black churches to have community outreach programs which register people to vote and promote socio-political causes (Wald 2010). This is a historical difference dating back to the Reconstruction era, when “almost every black minister was something of a politician, and every black politician had to be something of a minister” (Marable 1983).

Theoretical Expectations:

Electoral success for clergy who run for state legislative seats is hard to predict. Many Americans, as we have seen, are ambivalent about the separation between church and state. Yet,

some strongly support that separation. Still, others support religious intervention in politics. Moreover, attitudes towards church-state relations vary among congregants of different religious traditions, likely leading to varying degrees of political mobilization among congregants of clergy who run for public office. This in turn could lead to equally varying electoral outcomes for clergy. Therefore I do not have a directional hypothesis on voter support, victory margins, or funding for clergy-legislators, in general. However, I do anticipate that clergy-legislators receive significantly higher votes and funding in districts with higher religiosity, given that religious citizens may be less likely to reject clergy involvement in politics. Given the relatively high religiosity of the South, I hypothesize that clergy-legislators perform better electorally when running for election in a southern state (Wald 2010; Green 2007). Furthermore, given Kinney's and Chalfant's findings that clergy are more likely to hold public office in urban districts, I anticipate that clergy-legislators perform better electorally than non-clergy in urban elections (Chalfant 1991; Kinney 2008). Further echoing Kinney's conclusions that clergy are more likely to hold office in minority and impoverished districts, I expect clergy-legislators to perform better than non-clergy in those districts with a higher percentage of black residents and lower-income residents (Kinney 2008).

Given the findings by Djupe (2001) and Wald (2010), who both noted the pitfalls of mainline Protestant clergy's participation in politics, I anticipate that mainline clergy-legislators will not perform as well as other legislators. Specifically, I expect mainline Protestant clergy-legislators to receive fewer campaign contributions, lower voting percentages, and face more competitive elections than other legislators, after controlling for individual and district characteristics. Furthermore, I hypothesize that evangelical clergy- and black clergy-legislators both will receive more voter support, larger victory margins, and more campaign funding than

non-clergy legislators, and more than mainline Protestant clergy-legislators. This is due not only to the relatively high support among their respective groups, but to the relatively high amount of civic resources with which they can mobilize a group of people, particularly their own congregations (Crawford 2001; Wald 2010; Marable 1983).

In addition, it is likely that black clergy members who run for public office perform better in elections than their white counterparts. Given that black clergy members tend to be evangelical in terms of social conservatism, but are more likely to be fiscally liberal, black clergy are possibly less likely to repel liberal voters than white clergy (Wilcox 2006; Wald 2010). Further, black candidates are likely to be stereotyped by voters as liberal (Jacobsmeier 2009). This could further undercut any negative effects of being clergy from the perspective of more liberal voters. Moreover, given the close relationship black churches share with political activism in the black community, compared to white preachers, black preachers likely have a more concrete socio-political framework through which to mobilize (Harris 1999; Crawford 2001). Therefore, I hypothesize that black clergy-legislators will perform better than white clergy-legislators in terms of vote percentage, margin of victory, and campaign funding.

Methodology:

The unit of analysis for this study is the state legislator. While studying legislative candidates more generally would be preferable, only state legislators seated during the 2010-2012 session are used in the analysis. While this is not the most optimal option, it is a reliable option that also provides the most parsimonious option at the state level, given that a database with employment information is not readily available for all candidates. Furthermore, the

biggest consequence this has on my analysis is to make finding significance more elusive, as only looking at election winners reduces the differences in vote percentages legislators in the sample received. Moreover, while every legislator in the sample won their election, not every legislator was an incumbent. The sample of legislators in the study consists of legislators from twelve states that served during the 2010-2012 session. The sample was selected from the database of U.S. state legislators compiled by Brown (2011). Brown's dataset is a compilation of lists of state legislators in each state that consists of some of their main characteristics, as well as links to each legislator's "Project Vote Smart" page (2012). The sample consists of all of the legislators serving in the 12 states who are either current or former clergy, as well as a sample of non-clergy legislators.

The 12 state legislatures used in the study are states which had a legislature of at least 1% clergy. 1% was used as a threshold to reduce the amount of time needed to select the sample of legislators. While 12 states may seem limited, only 21 states currently have at least one clergy legislator ("National Conference," 2012). The twelve states include six southern and six non-southern states. The southern states selected are Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and North Carolina, while the non-southern states are Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, and Oklahoma. The total sample consists of 317 state legislators, with subtotals of 111 clergy-legislators and 206 non-clergy legislators. The original sample included 111 clergy and 112 non-clergy, collected with roughly the same number of clergy and non-clergy per state. An additional sample of 90 non-clergy legislators was later added, using random number generation in conjunction with Shor and McCarty's state legislator dataset (Shor 2011).

The three dependent variables in the study are "electoral support," "margin of victory," and "campaign funding." In this study, "electoral support" refers to the percent of the vote that a

legislator received in their most recent general election. Further, the “margin of victory” is the vote percentage differential between the legislator and their closest competitor in their most recent election. Lastly, “campaign funding” equals the amount of money each legislator reported in their campaign finance reports in the previous election, expressed as a z-score computed as a function relative to other legislators in the same state (National Institute on Money in State Politics 2013; Thompson 1998). Each of the models in the study is operationalized in two ways: 1) Comparing clergy to non-clergy, and 2) Comparing clergy of three religious traditions to each other, as well as to non-clergy. While the main analyses control for uncontested elections, separate analyses of the Voter Support models excluding uncontested elections can be found in Appendix A.

For the purposes of this study, I define clergy as any person who is either currently or formerly an ordained minister in a Christian Church, and held or holds the title of “priest,” “elder,” “pastor,” “bishop,” “minister,” or “deacon” (Dictionary.com 2008; National Conference of State Legislators 2013). I determined whether legislators are current or former clergy members based on whether they acknowledged this in the “Professional Experience” section of their Project Vote Smart page. In the 12 states represented in the sample, clergy-legislators held the titles of pastor, minister, deacon, or elder.

The main independent variable is operationalized in two ways. “Clergy” is a dichotomous variable separating legislators who are non-clergy from those who are current or former clergy. The second version of the variable is a series of dummy variables aimed at differentiating among religious traditions. The “evangelical Protestant-Clergy,” “mainline Protestant-Clergy,” and “Black Protestant-Clergy” variables compare clergy-legislators from three religious traditions to the reference category of non-clergy legislators. These variables are

also tested against each other. Legislators' Project Vote Smart pages report legislators' church denomination, while the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), as well as Steensland have already classified certain denominations and churches as "evangelical Protestant," "mainline Protestant," and "black Protestant." Consistent with previous research, all black clergy-legislators are classified as "black Protestant" (Pennsylvania State University 2013; Steensland 2000).

There are of course several control variables included in the study, as well. The models not including the black Protestant clergy variable will include a dummy variable for whether or not a legislator is black. Gender and race have previously been found to affect the electoral fortunes of legislators, in terms of both voting and in campaign funding (Hogan 2010; Thompson 1998). The analysis includes two dichotomous variables for these factors, which compare female legislators to male legislators and black legislators to white legislators, respectively. Much research finds that whether or not an election is in the South can affect electoral outcomes (Canon 1992; Jewell 1991). Therefore, the study includes a dummy variable that is coded "1" for any legislator in the sample who holds office in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Further, control variables for whether or not a legislator is Republican, and whether they are a member of the upper chamber of their legislature are included.

Further, the analysis includes a control variable estimating the ideological congruence between legislators and the voters in their district. I measured legislators' ideology using Shor and McCarty's legislator ideology data (2013), while the district ideology was estimated by comparing the district's average two-party vote margin in the last presidential election to the national average in the same elections. Using the residuals from a regression of these two

variables serves as a proxy estimate of the ideological congruence between legislators and their district, and the impact it has on votes and funding. A district religiosity variable - interacted with whether a legislator is a clergy member - is included as well, measuring the percent of citizens in the district that are members of a Christian congregation, according to the ARDA (2013). This interaction serves to test the hypothesis that clergy perform better electorally in districts with high religiosity.

As previously mentioned, separate analyses excluding elections in which a legislator was unopposed were run in addition to the wider analyses including both unopposed and contested elections. While some previous research excludes unopposed elections, others include opposed elections while including a control variable (Abramowitz 1988; Jacobson 1989; Grose 2004). Not only do I include legislators who were not opposed by any other candidate in their election, but also any candidate who received more than 95% of the vote; this allows the inclusion of a few candidates who faced minimal competition in the form of write-in candidates. Furthermore, a control for whether a legislator faced a quality opponent is included. Consistent with previous research, an opponent was labeled as a quality opponent if he or she held any elected office prior to the election (Jacobson 1981; Abramowitz 1988; Cox 1996).

Whether a legislator holds a leadership position in the legislature can likely have a positive impact on a legislator's electoral outcomes, so a dummy variable for this variable is included in the models (Holbrook 1993). Further, incumbency also has a positive influence on electoral outcomes, so every model includes a control for this as well (Jacobson 2004). Previous research has also found that urban districts have higher levels of campaign funding (Hogan 1998). Such research conclusions, as well as Kinney's findings that clergy were more likely to be found in urban districts prompted me to include a variable interacting clergy with whether or

not their district is urban. Rural-Urban continuum codes from the USDA's Economic Research Service were used for this purpose (USDA 2013). This interaction variable tests the hypothesis that clergy tend to perform better electorally in urban districts. Likewise, Kinney's study (2008) illuminated the role that the percent of minority citizens has on whether clergy hold public office in a given municipality, therefore, my analyses also include a variable interacting clergy with the percent of black citizens in a legislative district. This interaction tests the hypothesis that clergy perform better electorally in districts with higher minority populations.

Several controls were included specifically in the Campaign Funding Models. The models include a control for the average income level. Further, they also include an interaction of the clergy variable and the percent of citizens living in poverty (U.S. Census 2013). This interaction tests the hypothesis that clergy perform better electorally in districts with higher poverty. In addition, the analysis includes the logged dollar amount raised by the candidate's campaign, based on the data collected from FollowtheMoney.Org (National Institute on Money in State Politics 2013). Moreover, I also control for state GDP, as collected from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (2013). Furthermore, my analysis also controls for differences in state campaign finance laws. I operationalized this using a re-scaled version of Witko's "Composite Stringency" measure, using a 1 to 5 scale (2005).

Results:

For the purpose of providing context, my analysis starts with descriptive statistics on clergy-legislators and their districts in comparison to that of other legislators.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Clergy	Non-Clergy
Percent of Legislators that are Republican	56.8%	49.0%
Percent of Legislators that are Black	30.6%	13.6%
Percent of Legislators that are Female	8.1%	25.7%
Percent of Legislators Elected to an Urban District	30.6%	41.3%
Black District Percent		
Average Percent	31.7%	20.5%
Percent of black citizens more than sample mean (> 24.4%)	55.9%	36.4%
Majority Black District	21.6%	10.2%
District Religiosity		
Average Religiosity	54.2%	48.0%
District religiosity more than sample mean (> 50.2%)	64.0%	41.7%
District Percent in Poverty		
Average Percent	20.4%	16.2%
Impoverished citizens more than sample mean (> 17.8%)	65.8%	45.6%

There was a slight difference in party compositions, as clergy in the sample were a majority Republican, while a slight minority of non-clergy were Republicans. Further, nearly one-third of clergy-legislators were black, while the same could be said for only 13.6% of non-clergy. Moreover, clergy-legislators were overwhelmingly male, as less than one in ten were women. This was much smaller than the proportion of one-fourth of non-clergy who were women. Contrary to what might be expected given Kinney's study (2008), sampled clergy were actually less likely than non-clergy to be elected to office in an urban district, as less than one

third of clergy served in an urban district, substantially less than the more than four in ten non-clergy elected to urban districts.

There was also a substantial difference in the district racial composition of clergy and non-clergy, as African-Americans averaged slightly less than a third of the citizenry of districts served by clergy-legislators, while African-Americans comprised just over a fifth of the citizens of non-clergy-legislator districts. Further, most clergy-legislators served a black electorate that was higher than the sample mean of 24.4% of districts. Further, sampled clergy-legislators were more than twice as likely as non-clergy to be elected by a majority black electorate.

Confirming a logical assumption, there was not a large difference between the average district religiosity of clergy and non-clergy, there was a large chasm between the proportion of clergy and non-clergy serving a majority Christian district; Over one-half of clergy-legislators were elected to a majority Christian district, while just over 41% of non-clergy served a majority Christian district. There was only a slight difference in average district poverty between clergy and non-clergy. However, consistent with Kinney (2008), clergy-legislators were substantially more likely than non-clergy legislators to serve districts with higher than the sample poverty mean of 17.8%.

Voter Support Models

Table 2. Voter Support Model 1: Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators (table cont.)

Variables	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients
Clergy	0.056* (.015)	0.038** (.013)	0.040** (.013)	0.037** (.013)	0.041* (.020)
Black	0.041** (.016)	0.039* (.016)	0.039* (.016)	0.039* (.015)	0.036* (.016)
Female	-0.014 (.015)	-0.013 (.015)	-0.011 (.015)	-0.013 (.015)	-0.012 (.015)
Republican	0.026 (.021)	0.028 (.021)	0.028 (.021)	0.030 (.020)	0.028 (.020)

Table 2. Voter Support Model 1: Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators (table cont.)

Senate	0.004 (.015)	0.005 (.014)	0.004 (.014)	0.003 (.014)	0.009 (.014)
Ln(Funding)	-0.021** (.007)	-0.021** (.007)	-0.020** (.007)	-0.021*** (.007)	-0.024*** (.007)
Unopposed	0.299*** (.014)	0.296*** (.015)	0.296*** (.014)	0.294*** (.014)	0.288*** (.014)
Incumbent	-0.014 (.014)	-0.015 (.014)	-0.012 (.014)	-0.014 (.014)	-0.014 (.014)
Holds Leadership Position	0.020 (.013)	0.019 (.013)	0.019 (.013)	0.019 (.013)	0.025 (.013)
Quality Opponent	-0.270*** (.018)	-0.273*** (.018)	-0.268*** (.018)	-0.270*** (.018)	-0.263*** (.018)
Ideological Congruence	0.005 (.011)	0.005 (.011)	0.003 (.011)	-0.001 (.012)	-0.001 (.012)
Clergy x Urban District	-0.050* (.025)	-	-	-	-
Urban District	0.005 (.015)	-	-	-	-
Clergy x Black Citizen Percent	-	0.006 (.012)	-	-	-
Black Citizen Percent	-	0.009 (.004)	-	-	-
Clergy x Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	-0.020 (.012)	-	-
Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	0.229* (.109)	-	-
Clergy x District Religiosity	-	-	-	-0.008 (.012)	-
District Religiosity	-	-	-	0.132** (.049)	-
Clergy x South	-	-	-	-	0.010 (.025)
South	-	-	-	-	.038* (.015)
Constant	0.641*** (.021)	0.642*** (.022)	0.602*** (.029)	0.579*** (.031)	0.624*** (.022)

Dependent Variable: Percent of Vote Legislator Received in Election

N=317, Adjusted R²=.7721; N=317, adjusted R²=.7689; N=317, adjusted R²=.7720; N=317, adjusted R²=.7744; N=317, Adjusted R²=.7742.

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

The first set of Voter Support models provide support for the idea that clergy-legislators tend to receive higher vote percentages than other legislators, when controlling for individual and legislative district characteristics. The clergy variable was significant for every test of the model. Contrary to the expected result, clergy tended to receive lower vote percentages when they

served in an urban district. Notably, campaign funding was negatively correlated with vote percentage. This could likely be a by-product of using only seated legislators, as one strain of research on state legislative campaign finance observes that incumbents tend to spend more money when they are seriously challenged, and therefore, likely to have a lower vote percentage (Olson 1983; Giles 1985). A particularly unexpected result was that black legislators tended to receive higher vote percentages than white legislators. Upon further testing, I found that this was driven by the fact that black legislators in the sample were more likely to be running unopposed. Further surprising results were that legislators elected in districts with higher poverty and districts with higher religiosity tended to receive higher vote percentages, though this effect was not felt by clergy-legislators. Further, legislators running in southern districts tended to receive lower vote percentages. The findings of this model were upheld even when excluding uncontested elections – with the exception of the models testing the district religiosity and South variables. A detailed table of the results for the model with only contested elections can be found in Appendix A.

Table 3. Voter Support Model 2: Religious Traditions (table cont.)

Variables	Reference Cat. = Non-Clergy	Reference Cat. = Black Prot. Clergy	Reference Cat. = Mainline Clergy	Reference Cat. = Evangelical
Non-Clergy	-	-.085*** (.021)	.004 (.026)	-.029 (.016)
Black Protestant Clergy	.091*** (.021)	-	.096** (.033)	.061* (.025)
Mainline Clergy	-.001 (.027)	-.087** (.033)	-	-.031 (.030)
Evangelical Clergy	.031 (.016)	-.054* (.024)	.035 (.029)	-

Table 3. Voter Support Model 2: Religious Traditions (table cont.)

Female	-.010 (.015)	-.011 (.015)	-.010 (.015)	-.010 (.015)
South	.027* (.013)	.028* (.013)	.027* (.013)	.027* (.013)
Republican	.023 (.021)	.019 (.020)	.023 (.020)	.022 (.021)
Senate	.001 (.014)	.001 (.014)	.001 (.014)	.001 (.014)
Ln(Funding)	-.033** (.011)	-.032** (.011)	-.032** (.011)	-.032** (.011)
Unopposed	.292*** (.015)	.292*** (.014)	.292** (.014)	.292*** (.014)
Incumbent	-.017 (.014)	-.019 (.014)	-.018 (.014)	-.018 (.014)
Holds Leadership Position	.029* (.014)	.029* (.014)	.029* (.014)	.029* (.014)
Quality Opponent	-.261*** (.018)	-.262*** (.018)	-.261*** (.018)	-.261*** (.018)
Ideological Congruence	.004 (.012)	.004 (.012)	.004 (.012)	.004 (.012)
Constant	.794*** (.054)	.878*** (.055)	.790*** (.059)	.822*** (.057)

Dependent Variable: Percent of Vote Legislator Received in Election

N=309, Adjusted R²=.7696; N=309, Adjusted R²=.7684; N=309, Adjusted R²=.7696; N=309, Adjusted R²=.7693.

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

The second set of Voter Support models finds strong support for the hypothesis that black Protestant clergy tend to receive higher vote percentages than non-clergy legislators, as well as other clergy-legislators. However, the results of the model are mixed, as they do not support the hypothesis that mainline Protestants receive lower votes than non-clergy nor evangelical clergy-legislators. Likewise, the model did not find that evangelical Protestants receive higher percentages of the votes in their elections than non-clergy legislators. While some of the coefficients were not significant, they were all in the expected direction. The coefficients for

mainline Protestant clergy-legislators were slightly negative, while the coefficients for evangelical Protestant clergy-legislators were positive except for the one compared to black clergy, as expected. Refer to Appendix A for detailed results of this model excluding uncontested elections; excluding uncontested elections did little to affect the results.

Margin of Victory Models:

Table 4. Margin of Victory Model 1: Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators (table cont.)

Variables	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients
Clergy	0.138** (.046)	0.091* (.039)	0.100* (.040)	0.087* (.040)	0.129* (.062)
Black	0.125** (.048)	0.122* (.051)	0.127** (.048)	0.124** (.048)	0.134 (.048)
Female	-0.027 (.047)	-0.018 (.047)	-0.022 (.047)	-0.019 (.046)	-0.024 (.047)
Republican	0.010 (.063)	0.006 (.064)	-0.002 (.064)	0.010 (.064)	0.005 (.063)
Senate	-0.036 (.043)	-0.037 (.043)	-0.038 (.043)	-0.037 (.043)	-0.041 (.043)
Ln(Funding)	-0.031 (.020)	-0.033 (.020)	-0.032 (.020)	-0.033 (.020)	-0.028 (.021)
Unopposed	0.665*** (.043)	0.662*** (.045)	0.667*** (.043)	0.659*** (.043)	0.676*** (.044)
Incumbent	0.020 (.042)	0.028 (.043)	0.029 (.042)	0.028 (.042)	0.030 (.042)
Holds Leadership Position	0.044 (.041)	0.046 (.041)	0.046 (.041)	0.045 (.041)	0.039 (.042)
Quality Opponent	-0.254*** (.055)	-0.240*** (.056)	-0.243*** (.055)	-0.242*** (.055)	-0.247*** (.056)
Ideological Congruence	0.004 (.035)	-0.004 (.035)	-0.002 (.035)	-0.011 (.036)	-0.002 (.036)
Clergy x Urban District	-0.126 (.077)	-	-	-	-
Urban District	0.086 (.045)	-	-	-	-
Clergy x Black Citizen Percent	-	0.022 (.037)	-	-	-
Black Citizen Percent	-	-0.032 (.112)	-	-	-
Clergy x Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	-0.005 (.038)	-	-

Table 4. Margin of Victory Model 1: Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators (table cont.)

Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	-0.102 (.338)	-	-
Clergy x District Religiosity	-	-	-	0.011 (.150)	-
District Religiosity	-	-	-	0.085 (.150)	-
Clergy x South	-	-	-	-	-0.046 (.079)
South	-	-	-	-	-0.022 (.047)
Constant	0.165* (.066)	0.200** (.067)	0.213* (.088)	0.151 (.096)	0.202** (.069)

Dependent Variable: Margin of Victory

N= 317, Adjusted R²=.5638; N=317, Adjusted R²=.5587; N=317, Adjusted R²=.5585; N=317, Adjusted R²=.5592; N=317, Adjusted R²=.5599.

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

Version 1 of the Margin of Victory models supports the hypothesis that clergy-legislators enjoy larger margins of victory in their elections than non-clergy. Though several control variables are significant, and in the expected direction, the black dummy variable surprisingly indicated that black legislators in the sample won with significantly higher vote margins than white legislators in most of the models, with the exception of the model testing the South variable.

Table 5. Margin of Victory Model 2: Clergy of Religious Traditions Compared to Non-Clergy (table cont.)

Variables	Reference Cat. = Non-Clergy	Reference Cat. = Black Prot. Clergy	Reference Cat. = Mainline Clergy	Reference Cat. = Evangelical
Non-Clergy	-	-.217*** (.064)	-.052 (.082)	-.104* (.050)
Black Protestant Clergy	.219*** (.065)	-	.167 (.101)	.114 (.076)
Mainline Clergy	.041 (.085)	-.176 (.102)	-	-.063 (.092)
Evangelical Clergy	.100* (.049)	-.113 (.073)	.049 (.089)	-

Table 5. Margin of Victory Model 2: Clergy of Religious Traditions Compared to Non-Clergy (table cont.)

Female	-.022 (.047)	-.023 (.047)	-.022 (.047)	-.022 (.047)
South	-.046 (.040)	-.044 (.040)	-.044 (.040)	.045 (.040)
Republican	-.035 (.064)	-.040 (.063)	-.036 (.063)	-.038 (.063)
Senate	-.041 (.043)	-.039 (.043)	-.040 (.042)	-.039 (.042)
Ln(Funding)	-.066 (.034)	-.064 (.034)	-.065 (.034)	-.065 (.034)
Unopposed	.672*** (.045)	.671*** (.045)	.672*** (.045)	.671*** (.045)
Incumbent	.018 (.043)	.015 (.043)	.018 (.043)	.017 (.043)
Holds Leadership Position	.045 (.045)	.043 (.045)	.044 (.045)	.044 (.043)
Quality Opponent	-.239*** (.057)	-.240*** (.057)	-.239*** (.057)	-.239*** (.057)
Ideological Congruence	.013 (.037)	.014 (.037)	.014 (.037)	.014 (.037)
Constant	.576*** (.167)	.787*** (.169)	.626*** (.181)	.678*** (.176)

Dependent Variable: Margin of Victory

N=309, Adjusted R²=.5499; N=309, Adjusted R²=.5506; N=309, Adjusted R²=.5502; N=309, Adjusted R²=.5505.

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

The second version of the Margin of Victory model finds significant results for the black Protestant clergy coefficient in one model, indicating that black Protestant clergy in the sample received higher margins of victory than non-clergy legislators. Further, the model offered mixed support for the hypothesis that evangelical clergy-legislators also win with higher margins of victory than non-clergy legislators.

Campaign Funding Models:

Table 6. Campaign Funding Model 1: Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators (table cont.)

Variables	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients
Clergy	-0.198* (.087)	-0.160* (.075)	-0.159* (.074)	-0.145 (.074)	-0.295* (.119)
Black	-0.190* (.091)	-0.186 (.095)	-0.172 (.090)	-0.180* (.090)	-0.213* (.090)
Female	0.070 (.089)	0.075 (.089)	0.062 (.088)	0.078 (.087)	0.075 (.088)
Republican	-0.044 (.122)	-0.023 (.121)	-0.027 (.120)	-0.038 (.119)	-0.036 (.120)
Senate	0.402*** (.079)	0.400*** (.078)	0.381*** (.078)	0.399*** (.077)	0.407*** (.078)
Ln(Funding)	1.281*** (.067)	1.281*** (.067)	1.295*** (.066)	1.314*** (.067)	1.273*** (.066)
Unopposed	-0.236** (.083)	-0.240** (.085)	-0.214* (.083)	-0.210* (.083)	-0.266** (.083)
Incumbent	-0.019 (.083)	-0.027 (.083)	-0.033 (.082)	-0.028 (.082)	-0.017 (.082)
Holds Leadership Position	-0.149 (.080)	-0.147 (.079)	-0.144 (.079)	-0.152 (.079)	-0.121 (.080)
Quality Opponent	-0.163 (.106)	-0.156 (.108)	-0.171 (.105)	-0.171 (.105)	-0.139 (.107)
Ideological Congruence	-0.124 (.067)	-0.120 (.067)	-0.124 (.066)	-0.093 (.067)	-0.123** (.068)
Clergy x Urban District	0.153 (.148)	-	-	-	-
Urban District	-0.112 (.096)	-	-	-	-
Clergy x Black Citizen Percent	-	0.112 (.069)	-	-	-
Black Citizen Percent	-	-0.289 (.240)	-	-	-
Clergy x Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	0.144** (.070)	-	-
Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	-2.237* (.893)	-	-
Clergy x District Religiosity	-	-	-	0.058 (.070)	-
District Religiosity	-	-	-	-0.931** (.305)	-
Clergy x South	-	-	-	-	0.213 (.149)
South	-	-	-	-	0.123 (.100)

Table 6. Campaign Funding Model 1: Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators (table cont.)

Ln(State GDP)	-0.625*** (.137)	-0.618*** (.137)	-0.603*** (.135)	-0.597*** (.134)	-0.690*** (.135)
Ln(Average District Income)	0.363 (.301)	0.214 (.293)	-0.337 (.420)	-0.027 (.288)	0.388 (.290)
State Finance Laws (z-score)	-0.127*** (.026)	-0.134*** (.027)	-0.137*** (.026)	-0.143*** (.026)	-0.103*** (.027)
Constant	-3.866** (1.467)	-3.176** (1.359)	-0.422 (1.957)	-1.892 (1.372)	-3.792** (1.353)

Dependent Variable: Campaign Funding Relative Other Legislators in the State (Z-score)

N= 317, Adjusted R²=.6657; N=317, Adjusted R²=.6690; N=317, Adjusted R²=.6740; N=317, Adjusted .6764;

N=317, Adjusted R²=.6742.

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

The first version of the Campaign Funding model found a significant relationship between a legislator being a clergy member, and the amount of campaign funding they received. Further, though legislators overall tended to raise fewer campaign funds in districts with higher poverty, clergy-legislators' fundraising efforts were less affected by the effects of district poverty. However, the findings were contrary to the hypothesis, as clergy-legislators were less likely than non-clergy to raise more campaign funds than other legislators in their state. Once again, candidate race and district religiosity were found to have significant effects on their own, with black legislators tending to raise fewer campaign funds than white legislators. Further, legislators running in districts with higher religiosity tended to raise few campaign funds than others in their state.

Table 7. Campaign Funding Model 2: Clergy of Religious Traditions Compared to Non-Clergy (table cont.)

Variables	Reference Cat. = Non-Clergy	Reference Cat. = Black Clergy	Reference Cat. = Mainline Clergy	Reference Cat. = Evangelical Clergy
Non-Clergy	-	.337** (.117)	.090 (.152)	.051 (.092)
Black Protestant Clergy	-.358** (.120)	-	-.267 (.186)	-.306* (.140)
Mainline Clergy	-.104 (.158)	.236 (.188)	-	-.051 (.170)

Table 7. Campaign Funding Model 2: Clergy of Religious Traditions Compared to Non-Clergy (table cont.)

Evangelical Clergy	-.054 (.091)	.279 (.135)	.035 (.088)	-
Female	.053 (.088)	.057 (.088)	.054 (.087)	.054 (.088)
South	.212* (.086)	.208* (.086)	.211* (.086)	.211* (.086)
Republican	.021 (.119)	.033 (.118)	.022 (.119)	.022 (.119)
Senate	.414*** (.079)	.413*** (.079)	.414*** (.079)	.414*** (.079)
Ln(Funding)	1.26*** (.066)	1.26*** (.066)	1.26*** (.066)	1.26*** (.065)
Unopposed	-.263** (.084)	-.262** (.084)	-.262** (.084)	-.263** (.084)
Incumbent	-.005 (.082)	.002 (.082)	-.002 (.082)	-.003 (.082)
Holds Leadership Position	-.131 (.080)	-.129 (.080)	-.130 (.080)	-.130 (.080)
Quality Opponent	-.101 (.107)	-.099 (.107)	-.101 (.107)	-.101 (.107)
Ideological Congruence	-.144* (.068)	-.146* (.068)	-.144* (.068)	-.144* (.068)
Ln(State GDP)	-.686*** (.136)	-.685*** (.136)	-.686*** (.136)	-.685*** (.136)
Ln(Average District Income)	.458 (.288)	.486 (.289)	.460 (.289)	.459 (.289)
State Finance Laws	-.088*** (.027)	-.087** (.027)	-.088** (.027)	-.088*** (.027)
Constant	-4.27** (1.35)	-4.61*** (1.35)	-4.37*** (.135)	-4.32*** (.135)

Dependent Variable: Campaign Funding Relative Other Legislators in the State (Z-score)

N=309, Adjusted R²=.6697; N=309, Adjusted R²=6691; N=309, Adjusted R²=6696; N=309, Adjusted R²=6697

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

The second set of Campaign Funding models in Table 6 once again found the opposite of the anticipated results, as black clergy-legislators were found to raise fewer campaign funds than

non-clergy, evangelical, and mainline Protestant clergy-legislators. This seems to be largely driven by the fact that black Protestant clergy in the sample were significantly more likely to run unopposed, and therefore, had less of a reason to raise funds. A further test of the model - excluding unopposed candidates – corroborates this notion, as it did not find a significant difference of funding between black clergy-legislators and other legislators.

Conclusions:

This study supports the idea that despite the controversies of church-state separation, clergy who run for elected office may not necessarily be hindered. A limitation of the study, however, is the fact that it only includes candidates who won election to state legislative office. It is plausible that the clergy who are able to get elected to office are exceptional, and not indicative of the overall population of clergy who run for state office. However, my analyses lends credence to the idea that clergy who are able to win election actually outperform non-clergy in a number of key electoral outcomes: Clergy-legislators in the study received higher vote percentages, won by higher margins, but raised less money during their campaigns than their non-clergy counterparts. The latter finding is likely explained by the fact that a higher proportion of clergy-legislators ran unopposed, and such clergy therefore found less of a need to fundraise in order to be elected.

In terms of district context effects, contrary to the hypothesis, clergy were actually found to receive lower vote percentages when they ran for office in urban districts. Further, clergy faced less difficulties than other legislators in raising campaign funds when they campaigned in an impoverished district. In regards to district religiosity, district poverty, and the percent of black citizens in a district, the analyses could not lend support for the respective hypotheses.

The analyses in this study largely support the idea of racial effects in regards to the performance of clergy in elections. The Voter Support model supports the hypothesis that black clergy receive higher vote percentages than non-clergy legislators, mainline Protestant clergy-legislators, and evangelical Protestant clergy-legislators. Furthermore, the analyses found that black clergy also received higher margins of victory than non-clergy legislators. However, they actually raised less campaign funds than other legislators.

In regards to the effects of the other religious traditions and clergy-legislator performance in elections, there was mixed support for the hypotheses. Evangelical Protestant clergy-legislators did not receive higher vote percentages than non-clergy or mainline Protestant clergy. However, they did win with higher vote margins than non-clergy legislators. The only significant finding relative to mainline Protestant clergy was receiving significantly lower vote percentages than black Protestant clergy.

Research on clergy in elections is a very limited field, and much ground needs to be covered to further illumine the performance of clergy as candidates. Perhaps the most significant way to expand the generalizability of the findings in this study would be to expand the sample to cover state legislative candidates in general, rather than just election winners. Further, while only 21 states currently have clergy-legislators, expanding to all 50 states would further clarify the differences in contexts that grant clergy room for political success. On the other hand, it could also reveal just how limited clergy may be in their ability to win election in the United States. For now, it is unclear whether there are so few clergy-legislators because they tend to lose their elections, because so few clergy run for office, or some combination thereof.

An expansion of the racial and religious tradition categories would be another potential progression of the research. For instance, being a Hispanic or Catholic clergy member would

likely have different effects than being an evangelical Protestant. Furthermore, the research could also expand to looking at the intersection of gender, clergy, and politics, as differences in attitudes toward female clergy among congregants could affect female clergy's ability to mobilize a successful campaign (Deckman 2003).

Moreover, though my study mentions attitudes toward church-state separation, it likely does not go far enough in connecting church-state attitudes to voting behavior, as it does not approach the subject from the individual level. Extrapolating survey data down to the district level, or even experimental design could be potential avenues to further the knowledge base on the church-state attitudes and the propensity to vote in a clergy member for elective office.

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Appendix A:

**Table 8. Voter Support Model 1 (with only Contested Elections)
(Clergy in Comparison to Other Legislators)**

Variables	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients
Clergy	0.088*** (.021)	0.041** (.019)	0.047* (.020)	0.052 (.077)	0.052 (.028)
Black	0.035 (.023)	0.018 (.024)	0.037 (.023)	0.035 (.023)	0.033 (.023)
Female	-0.007 (.022)	0.001 (.022)	0.001 (.023)	-0.003 (.022)	-0.003 (.022)
Republican	0.026 (.029)	0.036 (.030)	0.033 (.030)	0.032 (.030)	0.030 (.030)
Senate	-0.015 (.020)	-0.007 (.020)	-0.010 (.020)	-0.004 (.020)	-0.007 (.020)
Ln(Funding)	-0.029*** (.009)	0.033*** (.009)	-0.031*** (.009)	-0.038*** (.009)	-0.032 (.009)
Incumbent	0.024 (.020)	0.020 (.020)	0.024 (.020)	0.023 (.020)	0.023 (.020)
Holds Leadership Position	0.016 (.020)	0.016 (.020)	0.013 (.020)	0.016 (.020)	0.023 (.021)
Quality Opponent	-0.198*** (.030)	0.208*** (.030)	-0.209*** (.030)	-0.206*** (.030)	-0.199*** (.030)
Ideological Congruence	0.013 (.017)	0.007 (.017)	0.009 (.017)	0.002 (.017)	0.003 (.017)
Clergy x Urban District	-0.129*** (.039)	-	-	-	-
Urban District	0.023 (.021)	-	-	-	-
Clergy x Black Citizen Percent	-	0.000 (.018)	-	-	-
Black Citizen Percent	-	0.123* (.055)	-	-	-
Clergy x Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	-0.011 (.019)	-	-
Citizen Percent in Poverty	-	-	0.248 (.161)	-	-
Clergy x District Religiosity	-	-	-	-0.021 (.144)	-
District Religiosity	-	-	-	0.199** (.071)	-
Clergy x South	-	-	-	-	-0.014 (.037)
South	-	-	-	-	0.046** (.021)
Constant	0.625*** (.030)	0.609*** (.032)	0.587*** (.041)	0.533*** (.045)	0.608*** (.032)

Dependent Variable: Percent of Vote Legislator Received in Election

N=240, adjusted R²=.2638; N=240, adjusted R²=.2474; N=240, adjusted R²=.2330; N=240, adjusted R²=.2548; N=240, adjusted R²=.2438

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***.p >.001

Consistent with the main analysis, in Table 7's results, clergy-legislators were found to receive higher vote percentages than non-clergy in 3 out of 5 of the models, even when excluding unopposed elections.

Table 9. Voter Support Model 2 (with only contested elections)
(Clergy of Different Religious Traditions in Comparison to Non-Clergy)
(table cont.)

Variables	Reference Cat. = Non-Clergy	Reference Cat. = Black Prot. Clergy	Reference Cat. = Mainline Clergy	Reference Cat. = Evangelical
Non-Clergy	-	-.108*** (.027)	.023 (.030)	-.027 (.019)
Black Protestant Clergy	.123*** (.028)	-	.146*** (.040)	.096** (.033)
Mainline Clergy	-.017 (.032)	-.127** (.041)	-	-.045 (.035)
Evangelical Clergy	.029 (.018)	-.076* (.031)	.052 (.033)	-
Female	.0003 (.018)	-.002 (.018)	.0004 (.018)	-.0002 (.018)
South	.021 (.015)	.023 (.015)	.021 (.015)	.021 (.015)
Republican	.023 (.024)	.018 (.024)	.024 (.024)	.022 (.024)
Senate	-.008 (.016)	-.007 (.016)	-.008 (.016)	-.008 (.016)
Ln(Funding)	-.038* (.015)	-.038* (.015)	-.039* (.016)	-.038 (.015)
Incumbent	.001 (.016)	-.001 (.016)	.001 (.016)	.0004 (.016)
Holds Leadership Position	.040* (.017)	.039* (.017)	.040* (.016)	.039* (.017)
Quality Opponent	-.174 (.025)	-.175*** (.025)	-.174*** (.025)	-.175*** (.025)
Ideological Congruence	-.004 (.014)	-.003 (.014)	-.004 (.014)	-.003 (.014)
Constant	.802*** (.072)	.912*** (.072)	.781*** (.075)	.827*** (.075)

Dependent Variable: Percent of Vote Legislator Received in Election

N=235, adjusted R²=.5186; N=235, adjusted R²=.5119; N=235, adjusted R²=.5192; N=235, adjusted R²=.5174

*p >.05, **p >.01, ***p >.001

Like the analysis including both uncontested and contested elections, the analysis excluding contested elections found the black Protestant clergy coefficient significant, indicating that they tended to receive higher vote percentages than non-clergy, evangelical clergy, and mainline clergy.

Vita:

The author was born in Lawrenceville, Georgia in 1988, and lived in Stone Mountain, Georgia during most of his childhood. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sociology from Tulane University in the spring of 2011. He enrolled in the University of New Orleans Political Science graduate program in the Fall of 2011 to pursue a Master's degree. He currently works for the City of New Orleans at the Office of Performance & Accountability. His research interests lie in American Politics, geared towards elections and public opinion, as well as the intersections of race, religion, and politics.