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Policing Sexuality in America's Churches: Theological, Congregational, and Political Influences on Regulation of Same-Sex Behavior

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Abstract

Despite recent interest in examining church growth and decline, sociologists have not engaged in research aimed at determining what factors influence congregational doctrine. I analyzed factors affecting congregations' likelihood of adopting rules concerning same-sex behavior by testing several hypotheses related to potential influences. To do this, I used a nationally representative sample of congregations. I found that, in addition to theology and political ideology, church demographics and political developments influence church doctrine. These findings demonstrate that despite the existence of a formal church-state separation, congregational policy may not be immune to the influence of external social and political developments.

Although several religions have doctrinal teachings against same-sex behavior, many same-sex attracted persons belong to faith traditions (Yarhouse 2001 Haldeman 2004) and a number of religious denominations and sects officially recognize same-sex relations. Additionally, numerous individual congregations welcome non-traditional relationships and families as a part of their membership (Nugent and Gramick 1989). Despite much scholarly interest in religion and sexuality (e.g. Hasbany 1989; Comstock & Henking 1997; Rudy 1997), there have been no studies dedicated to a systematic analysis of the factors that contribute to the likelihood that a given congregation will have special rules concerning same-sex behavior.

Sociological study has cited factors other than theological/doctrinal ideology that exercise influence on congregational behavior. In this study, I form hypotheses using theories from the existing literature on religion in order to ascertain those factors that influence the likelihood that a given congregation will regulate same-sex behavior. Hypotheses are based on the following: theological and doctrinal tradition, political ideology, congregational make-up, church competition, and internal and external threats to moral standards. I test these hypotheses using a sample of churches by examining each church's characteristics in relation to having rules concerning same-sex behavior.

The resulting analysis indicates that theological tradition and political ideology influence a congregation's propensity towards regulating same-sex behavior. Evangelical congregations and those adhering to strict textual interpretations of the Bible are more likely than mainline congregations to regulate same-sex behavior. Additionally,

independent of the effect of theological doctrine, congregations identified as politically liberal or moderate are less likely than conservative congregations to have rules concerning same-sex behavior. The findings also suggest, however, that other factors outside of theological and political ideology influence a congregation's likelihood of regulating same-sex behavior. There is some support for the effect of congregational demographics, church competition factors, and internal threat factors. Most interestingly, significant support is found for the effect of external threat factors on a congregation's propensity towards regulating same-sex relations. Specifically, congregations in states with anti-sodomy laws in place are less likely to regulate same-sex behaviors than those congregations in states where such laws have been repealed or invalidated.

These findings are significant in that they suggest that, despite the existence of a formal church-state separation, external political developments influence religious organizations. Given this finding, further research should be undertaken to investigate more deeply the relationship between political and moral/religious policing of behavior.

In the sections to follow, I first discuss relevant theory and how it informed my hypotheses. I then turn to the methods used and the results of my analysis. Finally, I discuss my findings and their implications for further research.

Theory

Given the moral controversy surrounding homosexuality, the question of why some congregations have rules regulating same-sex behavior while others do not is an

interesting one. There has been an increase in scholarly attention to the challenge that sexual diversity increasingly poses to religious doctrine in recent times (e.g. Hasbany 1989; Comstock & Henking 1997; Rudy 1997). Although this interest has yielded a great amount of literature within theological and religious studies detailing and analyzing the policy positions of faith traditions ranging from largely rejecting to fully accepting of homosexuality (e.g. Nugent & Gramick 1989; Manza & Brooks 2002; Wilcox 2002), there is a dearth of analysis specifically aimed at explaining why congregations adopt the policies they do. As mentioned before, sociological literature on religion has been dedicated largely to explaining church growth and decline, with little attention to the factors that influence regulation within congregations. Despite the lack of explicit theoretical attention to explaining congregational regulation, existing theories suggest a number of possible influences including theological tradition, political ideology, socio-demographic factors, church competition, and political threat.

Theological/Doctrinal Tradition

Much research has found that evangelical-identified persons are more likely to be opposed to same-sex relations and behaviors than persons belonging to other religious groups (e.g. Wuthnow 1983; Manza & Brooks 2002). One explanation for this is that most evangelical denominations adhere to a textual interpretation of the sections of the Bible which have been traditionally understood as condemning same-sex behavior (Nugent & Gramick 1989), including Leviticus 18:22 and Romans 1:18-32.[1] This

[1] Liberal theologians hold that these scriptures: 1) are not relevant to modern society in that they condemn homosexuality as an "abomination"— the same condemnation used to prohibit the eating of certain foods — based on a concept of impurity that no longer holds significance for the majority of religious persons, 2) are largely concerned with homosexual rape or coercion, or else cast homosexuality as a choice; a concept

approach to determining moral standards contrasts with that of more mainline denominations which focus on philosophical ideas such as the inherent value of human love and sexuality and are more likely to consider empirical social science research findings when making decisions regarding the moral status of behaviors and lifestyles (Nugent & Gramick 1989). This orientation has led mainline denominations to make tremendous strides towards greater acceptance of sexual minority lifestyles over time (McKinney 1998), while there has been arguably less progress within more evangelical religious institutions. Based on these findings, one would expect evangelical congregations and those congregations that adhere to a literal interpretation of biblical texts to be more likely to regulate same-sex relations, leading to the first and second research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Evangelical congregations are more likely than mainline congregations to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Congregations that engage in literal Biblical interpretation are more likely than non-textualist congregations to regulate same-sex behavior.

If congregational regulatory practices develop independently of non-theological influences, then theological and doctrinal ideologies should explain nearly all of the variation in the regulation of same sex behavior between congregations. Consequently,

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that is largely contested today, 3) condemn homosexuality for reasons which we should find untenable, such as the protection of a social status quo built on gender, class, and racial inequalities, 4) were more concerned with unbridled passion and lack of reverence to God rather than homosexuality *per se* (Bird 2000, Fredrickson 2000,Via and Gagon 2003). On the other hand, more traditional interpretations hold that these scriptures: 1) are not outdated rules but apply to modern day society, 2) apply to all forms of homosexual behavior—coerced or freely chosen, between males or females, 3) demonstrate that homosexuality is contrary to nature and the will of God who designed men and women to complement each other spiritually and sexually (Via and Gagon 2003).

other factors will be largely insignificant in explaining congregational regulation of same-sex behavior. Alternatively, congregational rules might reflect other influences such as the political ideology of the congregation.

Political Ideology

It is a widely accepted idea that attitudes regarding sexual behavior are heavily influenced by political ideology (Wuthnow & Evans 2002). Furthermore, studies have found that while there is a large degree of overlap between religious and political ideology, liberal (or conservative) religious beliefs do not necessarily imply similar positions on a political dimension (Wimberley 1978). As such, it is likely that political ideology exerts an influence on congregational regulatory practices that is independent of theological/doctrinal tradition. In contrast to conservatism, the liberal outlook is one that perceives social change as largely positive (Hunter 1983). The liberal community is open to changing definitions of morality because it holds "that reason and the empirical method in conjunction with an opaque conception of the human good is the crucible that determines what is right and wrong" (Hunter 1983:161). This openness to change leads liberal communities to be more tolerant of transgressions of traditional moral norms. Therefore, it is expected that more liberal congregations will be less likely to have special rules concerning same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 3: Politically liberal congregations are less likely than politically conservative congregations to regulate same-sex behavior.

Socio-demographic Factors

Outside of theological doctrine and political ideology, the socio-demographic composition of a congregation (for example, the gender, age, race, socio-economic status, and educational attainment of participants) may have an effect on the development of congregational regulatory practices. For example, men have been found to be less likely than women to agree that homosexuality is acceptable and more likely to agree that it is detrimental to society (Kane & Schippers 1996). As such, one would expect that a male-headed congregation would be more likely to regulate same-sex behavior than a female-headed one.

Other theory suggests that older persons, being socialized at a time when social institutions were more reinforcing of traditional norms, are more likely to disapprove of non-traditional behaviors and activities (Woodrum 1988). Woodrum (1988) also makes the case that higher education prizes rationality and scientific knowledge over religious dogma and encourages individualism. As such, college-educated persons are less convinced by moral certitudes than less educated persons. This fact could also be related to salary earned in that it has been argued that higher education increases the probability of achieving economic success (Glick & Miller 1956). Several studies and theories have confirmed the idea that blacks are more likely than whites to hold conservative views (Woodrum 1988), including the view that homosexuality is morally wrong (Lewis 2003). Based on these theories I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 4: Male-headed congregations are more likely than female-headed congregations to regulate same-sex behaviors.

Hypothesis 5: Congregations with a larger proportion of persons over sixty years old are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 6: Congregations with a larger proportion of persons holding a four-year degree are less likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 7: Congregations with a larger proportion of persons residing in households with yearly salaries totaling more than a hundred thousand dollars are less likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 8: Congregations with larger proportions of African-American participants are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Church Competition

Socio-demographic factors reflect the influence that a congregation's members are likely to have on its policy development. It is likely, however, that churches are also influenced by their relationship to other congregations with whom they compete for members. Based on this idea, I also used this analysis to test hypotheses based on

sociological theories concerning congregational competition. Finke and Stark (1992) assert that churches that exercise greater regulation on the behavior of their members are less likely to lose members and are thus more likely to hold a stronger position in the religious marketplace than less strict churches. In keeping with this idea, I hypothesize that stronger churches will be more likely than weaker ones to regulate same-sex behavior. The number of regular participants, the percentage of the participants who are new to the congregation, the extent of the church's recruitment efforts, and the congregation's age are the variables used to measure church strength.

McKinney and Hoge (1983) found that, among the congregations in their study, recently established churches experienced the most growth. Given Finke and Stark's (1992) theory concerning the relationship between a congregation's regulation of its members and its competitive strength, McKinney and Hoge's finding can possibly be explained by the fact that a new church, like any newly formed group or organization, is likely to be more concerned with establishing and enforcing rules than a congregation that has been in place for a long period of time and therefore has a more established group identity. Therefore church age, combined with the number or regular participants, the percentage of new participants, and the extent of recruitment efforts, provide an indication of a given congregation's ability to compete with other churches for members. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 9: Congregations with more regular participants are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 10: Congregations with a higher percentage of new participants are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 11: Congregations that make efforts to recruit new members are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 12: Older churches are less likely than younger ones to regulate same-sex behavior.

Threat Factors

While economic theories examine the influence of competition on congregational behavior, churches may also respond to external socio-political development. To test this idea, I utilized literature discussing the effects of threat factors on criminal justice policy development. For example, Jacobs and Carmichael (2004) theorize that jurisdictions with large racial or ethnic minority populations will have higher numbers of death sentences. Additionally, Jacobs and Kleban (2003) found that jurisdictions with greater minority populations have higher rates of incarceration. They posit that these findings show that members of the racial majority successfully lobby for more punitive criminal justice policies as a way to stave off the perceived threat posed by an increased minority population and to maintain the social status quo. While much of this research is confined

to examining criminal justice policy, if regulation is viewed as an expression of reaction to a perceived threat, then these findings can be applied to religious organizations in examining the ways in which threats to moral standards may elicit reactionary measures.

If threat exercises influence on regulatory behavior, then congregations that perceive a greater amount of threat to the sexual status quo would be more likely to have special rules concerning same-sex behavior. As such, I hypothesize that congregations experiencing greater internal stability will be less likely to regulate same-sex behavior and that those faced with more external threat to moral standards will be more likely to regulate. The percentage of persons over sixty years old in the congregation and the percentage of new persons in a congregation are used as measures of internal stability. The higher the concentration of elderly congregants, the greater the amount of consensus on issues such as sexuality should be, given Woodrum's (1988) theory about older person being more supportive of normative moral standards. (This hypothesis competes with Hypothesis 5 which posits that a higher concentration of persons over sixty should lead to a *greater* likelihood of regulation.) Additionally, it has been argued that with new patrons comes an increased likelihood of instability and disruption (Schaller 1979). Thus I derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 13: Congregations with a greater proportion of persons over sixty are less likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 14: Congregations with a greater proportion of new

members are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

External threat is measured by looking at the regional location of the church as well as the kind of neighborhood in which it is located. If regulation is viewed as a reaction to perceived threat to the status quo, then churches in areas seemingly more tolerant of non-traditional lifestyles should be more likely to enact regulatory measures. The extent to which a certain behavior is legally regulated within a geographical community is an indicator of the level of acceptance or denunciation of that behavior within that community. As such, congregations located in regions with more states that have anti-sodomy laws intact will perceive less external support for same-sex behavior and will therefore be less likely to regulate same-sex behavior than those in regions with many states in which such laws have been repealed or struck down. Thus the next hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 15: Congregations located in regions containing more states with intact anti-sodomy laws are less likely to regulate same-sex behavior than those in regions with many states in which such laws have been repealed or struck down.

Wilson (1985) has found urbanism to be positively correlated with tolerance of "deviant" interests and practices. Given this finding, churches located in more urban areas would be more likely to perceive external threat to sexual moral standards and therefore more likely to regulate same-sex behavior.

Hypothesis 16: Congregations located in urban areas are more likely

than those in suburban and rural areas to regulate same-sex behaviors.

Method

To test these hypotheses, I examine the variation in regulatory behavior of individual congregations. It is often the case that individual congregations in the United Sates will adopt varying policies and rules rather than adhering to a centralized doctrine handed down from some external authority. Chaves (1997) illustrates this point in his discussion of the disjunction between formal denominational rules and actual practice regarding the ordination of women within individual congregations. Given this tendency towards variation at the congregational level, my analysis entails looking at individual churches and examining the factors which influence a given's church's likelihood of regulating same-sex behavior. I do this by analyzing the 1998 National Congregation Study (NCS), which contains data on a sample of 1,236 congregations in the United States. The NCS was conducted in conjunction with the General Social Survey (GSS) of 1998. The GSS is an in-person interview conducted with a representative sample of adults in the United States. The 1998 GSS asked respondents who reported attending religious services at least once a year to name their congregation. The NCS sample consists of the named congregations. The NCS obtained information about these congregations by way of interviews with a key informant such as a priest, rabbi, minister, or other congregational leader.

The dependent variable in my analysis is whether "the congregation has special

rules concerning homosexual behavior", Question 121 of the NCS Survey (Chaves 1998: 35). This is a dichotomous variable in that the response will either be "Yes" coded as one, or "No" coded as zero. The majority of the congregations surveyed (60.6%) reported having such rules. I used several independent variables designed to test the various hypotheses. The descriptive statistics for all variables are found in Table 1.

The variables used to test these Hypotheses 1 and 2 are whether the congregation is evangelical and whether the congregation views the Bible as literal and inerrant, respectively. The variable testing Hypothesis 3 is whether the congregation is reported as politically liberal, moderate, or conservative. The variables used to test Hypotheses 4 through 8 are: gender of head clergy, the percentage of persons over sixty years old in the congregation, the percentage of persons in the congregation living in households earning more that one hundred thousand dollars a year, the percentage of college-educated persons in the congregation, and the percentage of African-American persons within the congregation.[2] The number of regular participants, the percentage of the participants who are new to the congregation, whether the congregation makes efforts to recruit new members, and the congregation's age (taken as the number of years since its founding) are the variables used to test Hypotheses 9, 10, 11, and 12. The percentage of persons over sixty years old in the congregation and the percentage of new persons in a congregation test Hypotheses 13 and 14, respectively. The variables indicating the regional location of the congregation test Hypothesis 15 while those related to the kind of

[2]The distribution of the percentage of a given congregation that is African-American is highly skewed. To correct for this skew, I include a dummy variable if the congregation is reported as 100% African-American. For all other congregations, I use a logarithmic-based transformation of the percentage of the congregation that is African-American (multiplying this percentage by 200 and taking the natural log of this product, which results in all cases having natural logged adjusted percent African-American above zero). Cases with 0% African-American congregants thus serve as a reference category for both the 0% <x<100% and the 100% African-American variables.

neighborhood in which the church is located (rural, suburban, or urban) test Hypothesis 16.

A dichotomous dependent variable requires using a logistic regression for analysis (Allison 1999:184). This is required in order to linearize the nonlinear relationship that exists between independent variables and dichotomous dependent variables (Pampel 2000:14). The resulting equation provides a prediction of the logged odds that a given congregation will have special rules concerning same-sex behavior. The relationship between the variables is determined by noting the magnitude and direction of statistically significant coefficients.[3]

In order to subject the hypotheses to sufficiently rigorous analysis, I employ nested equations using four different models. The Chi-square statistic associated with each model indicates the improvement in the -2 log likelihood which reflects the improvement made in the model with the addition of new variables.

Analysis

Table 2 shows the results of the four nested models. Model 1, which tests the influence of theological/doctrinal tradition, represents an improvement over the intercept-only model. The addition of political tradition in Model 2 improves on Model 1, as illustrated by the observed improvement in the –2 log likelihood as measured by the Chi-square value. Similarly, Model 3 improves on Model 2 with the inclusion of congregation demographics such as the age, income, and race of participants. The addition of church

[3] This procedure does not provide an interpretation as simple or intuitive as that of linear regression coefficients, but a clearer relationship between variables can be illustrated by calculating the predicted probability for each dependent variable. This is done by first exponentiating the logged odds and then deriving the probability from the odds.

characteristics such church age, regional location, and neighborhood type in Model 4 further improves the equation. Calculated tolerance statistics (with a minimum of .511, which is well above the critical value of .20) indicate that there is no collinearity problem among the independent variables in Model 4. These tolerance statistics indicate that any correlation between independent variables is not such that regression coefficients need to be questioned (Menard 2002: 76). Additionally, studentized residuals for all cases are below an absolute value of 2.25, indicating that each model is a good fit for all cases (Menard 2002: 84-85). Calculated standardized Cook's (dbeta) values are all below 1, indicating an absence of overly influential cases (Menard 2002: 85).

In keeping with the literature, the models provide support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. In all four models, the coefficients corresponding to whether or not the congregation believes the Bible to be inerrant and whether or not it is evangelical demonstrate an increase in the likelihood that same-sex regulation will be present if the answer is yes in each case. It is important to note, however, that while the effect of whether or not the congregation is identified as evangelical remains more or less consistent across the four models, the magnitude of the coefficient corresponding to the congregation's textual interpretation of the Bible decreases somewhat significantly between Models 1 and 4. This result is an indication that other factors outside of theological/doctrinal tradition affect the likelihood of regulating same sex behavior.

Negative coefficients measuring the likelihood that liberal and moderate congregations will regulate same-sex behavior as compared to the likelihood that

conservative congregations will engage in such regulation support Hypothesis 3. The influence of liberal political orientation is strong, as indicated by the magnitude coefficient measuring the likelihood that a liberal church will regulate and is robust across the three models in which it is included. There is no significant change in the magnitude of coefficient corresponding to the likelihood of regulation in a moderate church across the models.

The analysis provides some support for socio-demographic variables. There is a significant relationship between the concentration of older persons in a congregation and the likelihood that that congregation will regulate same-sex relations. In contrast to Hypothesis 5, however, it is a negative relationship indicating that as the concentration of older persons increases, the logged odds that there will be special same-sex rules decreases. This finding supports the idea behind Hypothesis 12 that a greater concentration of older persons means more internal stability and therefore less need for special rules. The coefficient measuring the relationship between having an all-black church and having rules regulating same-sex behavior indicates an increased likelihood of regulation as compared to a church with zero percent African-American participants, supporting Hypothesis 8. The percentage of African-Americans has no significant effect on same-sex regulation if the church is less than one hundred percent black, however. Coefficients corresponding to the gender of head clergy, attainment of college education, and household income of participants are all non-significant.

The hypotheses related to the influence of church competiton variables also

receive some support from the analysis. There is some support for Hypothesis 9 with each additional one hundred regular participants being correlated with an increase in the likelihood of regulating same-sex behavior. The effects of the percent of new members and of efforts to recruit are non-significant. Hypothesis 12 also receives some support with a decrease in the logged odds that a congregation will regulate same-sex behavior for each additional year in church age.

Examination of the coefficients corresponding to the regional location of the congregation yields significant support for Hypothesis 15. Congregations in the Middle Atlantic, East North Central, and East South Central regions are more likely than those in the South Atlantic region to regulate same-sex behavior.[4] Table 3 presents the predicted probability that a congregation will have special rules concerning same-sex behavior based on the median characteristics of all churches with regional location as the only variable. Such a congregation in the Middle Atlantic region is approximately 28% more likely than an equivalent congregation the baseline South Atlantic category to have such regulations. A congregation displaying median characteristics in the East North Central region is 25% more likely than one in the baseline category to regulate same-sex behavior, while such a congregation in the East South Central region is 24% more likely. Given that the South Atlantic category consists of such "Bible Belt" states as Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, while the others largely consist of more liberal states such as New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, this finding appears to be rather curious. The status of anti-sodomy legislation in each state in 1998 indicates, however, that these

[4] The NCS utilized regional definitions taken from the US Census. See Appendix I.

findings provide significant support for the external threat hypothesis.[5] In the baseline South Atlantic category, six of the nine states still had anti-sodomy laws in place in 1998 when the survey was conducted. In contrast, all the states in the Middle Atlantic region, four of the five in the East North Central region, and two of the four in the East South Central region, had had their anti-sodomy laws repealed by 1998.[6] This finding supports the idea that churches in regions posing more threat to traditional moral norms concerning sexuality will be more likely to have special rules against same-sex behavior. The type of neighborhood in which the church is located is non-significant.

Discussion and Conclusions

Using hypotheses derived from the existing literature, this study attempts to determine what factors exert influence on the likelihood that a given congregation will have special rules concerning same-sex behavior. The empirical analysis offers support for the hypotheses related to the influence of theological/doctrinal tradition and political ideology, but there is evidence suggesting that other factors also exert considerable influence on the likelihood that a congregation will have such rules.

All socio-demographic congregational characteristics except those measuring the influence of age and race of participants are not significant predictors of regulating same-sex behavior. Model 3 is a significant improvement over Model 2, however, suggesting that socio-demographic factors do exert some influence on congregational regulation independent of theological and political ideologies. Congregations with one hundred

[5] Information regarding sodomy laws was obtained from the ACLU. See Appendix II for a complete list.
[6] For a more detailed representation of this information see Appendix III.

percent African-American participants are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior, providing some support for Hypothesis 8. Interestingly, however, this effect occurs only when the congregation is exclusively African-American. That is, the concentration of African-American participants has no effect in cases where it is less than a hundred percent. This finding might indicate that African-American congregants lack the power to influence policy within churches that are not exclusively black. While the coefficients corresponding to the percentage of participants over sixty are significant, they do not support the idea that older congregants are likely to be in favor of greater regulation. Rather, the percentage of persons over sixty is inversely related to the likelihood of regulation, supporting the influence of internal threat as expressed by Hypothesis 13.

There is also limited support for the influence of church competition. The effect of the percentage of the participants new to the church is non-significant. Church recruitment efforts are also marginally non-significant, but in the predicted direction. The number of participants exercises a significant effect on regulation with an increase in the likelihood that a congregation will regulate same-sex behavior with each additional one hundred participants. Also significant is the effect of church age with the likelihood of regulation decreasing with each additional year. As noted above, the internal threat hypothesis receives some support with a higher percentage of persons over sixty being negatively correlated with the likelihood of same-sex regulation. The other measure of internal threat, percentage of new participants, is non-significant, however.

The analysis provides significant support for the influence of external threat.

Specifically, congregations located in regions with more states with repealed or invalidated anti-sodomy laws are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior than those in regions containing more states with intact anti-sodomy laws. This finding indicates that while conservative churches are likely to disapprove of same-sex relations, they may not feel the need to have explicit rules against this kind of behavior if the surrounding environment affirms this moral stance. On the other hand, a conservative congregation situated in a liberal environment will be more likely to have and enforce rules concerning same–sex behavior. This is a very significant finding in that it indicates that external policy-making activities influence regulatory practices within religious organizations.

Further research in this area could more systematically look at the interaction between political and theological ideology within congregations and the prevailing ideology in the wider community and the effect that this interaction has on the likelihood of same-sex regulation in conservative as well liberal and moderate congregations. Additionally, research could be designed with the aim of discerning whether or not religious regulation regarding other issues is also influenced by external legal and political developments.

It is possible that the limited supply of variables within the NCS data set to test economic and internal threat factors resulted in compromised results. As such, further research should be undertaken to better test these propositions. The concentration of older persons and the number of new members were the variables used to test internal stability. Availability of more direct measures of internal threat such as the concentration of openly

same-sex attracted persons would perhaps provide a more accurate measure of this factor's influence. The hypotheses based on church competition theory were tested using the number of regular participants, the recruitment efforts of the congregation, the percentage of new members, and the age of the congregation. While these provide some idea as to how strong church membership is, their explanatory power is perhaps somewhat limited. For example, the extent to which recruitment efforts reflect congregation strength could be interpreted in differing ways. It could be that a large amount of recruiting means a weak congregation is trying to strengthen its membership, but it could also be that the relationship runs in the opposite direction with a congregation having strong membership precisely because of its recruitment programs. Also, congregation size as a measure of church strength is relative, as a good size for one congregation might be too big or too small for another.

I would also like to make a note regarding the dependent variable under analysis in this study. This variable was operationalized using the respondents' answers to Question 121 of the NCS Survey: "Does the congregation have special rules concerning homosexual behavior?" (Chaves 1998: 35). Admittedly, we do not know exactly what meaning was attributed to the phrase "special rules" by the researchers and respondents in the NCS study. Given the findings of my analysis, however, it is most likely that the rules in question are those that would express some form of institutional disapproval of same-sex behavior. We can conclude this because the analysis indicates that evangelical, textualist, and politically conservative congregations were found to be more likely than

mainline, nontextualist, and politically liberal congregations to have the special rules in question.

Even given the interpretive challenges discussed above, the findings illustrate that there are at least three factors that exert some influence on churches' regulatory behavior beyond theological doctrine and political ideology: socio-demographic make-up, church competition, and perceived threat. Most significantly, congregations located in regions with more states with repealed or invalidated anti-sodomy laws are more likely to regulate same-sex behavior than those in regions containing more states with intact ant-sodomy laws. This is a significant finding in that it indicates that politico-legal developments influence religious/moral policy-making. This suggests that, despite the existence of a formal church-state separation, religious organizations are not immune to external political activity. In light of this, further research is needed to more closely inspect both legal and religious/moral policing of sexual behavior and the ways in which each influences the other.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Special rules about same-sex behavior [Y=1, N=0]	.6064	1	.48883
Views Bible as inerrant [Y=1, N=0]	.6457	1	.47851
Gender of head clergy [M=1, F=0]	.9423	1	.23332
Percent over 60 y. o.	28.431127	25	18.67119
Percent of adults with household income over $100,000	10.246331	5	15.14461
Percent with 4 yr degree	36.9725	30	27.30651
Church age	76.0402	68	52.72127
All black congregation [Y=1, N=0]	.0526	0	.22330
Congregation between 0% and 100% black [Y=1, N=0]	.6278	1	.48358
Congregation 0% black [Y=1, N=0]	.3196	0	.46650
Number of regular participants, in 100s	10.4395	3.60	1868.726
Does congregation recruit [Y=1, N=0]	.9034	1	.295
Percent of new participants	14.0960	10	13.64843
In New England [Y=1, N=0]	.0461	0	.20982
In Mid Atlantic [Y=1, N=0]	.1383	0	.34541
In East N. Central [Y=1, N=0]	.1602	0	.36693
In West N. Central [Y=1, N=0]	.0744	0	.26258
In East S. Central [Y=1, N=0]	.0833	0	.27650
In West S. Central [Y=1, N=0]	.1238	0	.32947
In Mountain [Y=1, N=0]	.0599	0	.23734
In Pacific [Y=1, N=0]	.1181	0	.32288
In S. Atlantic [Y=1, N=0]			
Evangelical [Y=1, N=0]	.4539	0	.49807
Politically Moderate [Y=1, N=0]	.3510	0	.47777
Politically Liberal [Y=1, N=0]	.0833	0	.27650
In Suburb area [Y=1, N=0]	.1448	0	.35206
In Rural area [Y=1, N=0]	.2233	0	.41663

Source: National Congregation Survey, 1998.

Table 2. Special Rules Concerning Same-Sex Behavior Regressed on Theological Tradition, Political Ideology, Congregation Demographics and Church Characteristics

Independent Variable	***Model 1***	***Model 2***	***Model 3***	***Model 4***
Theological / Doctrinal Tradition				
Evangelical [Y=1, N=0]	.498** (.174)	.418* (.178)	.399* (.196)	.430* (.211)
Views Bible as inerrant [Y=1, N=0]	.820*** (.174)	.738*** (.176)	.623*** (.186)	.585** (190)
Political Ideology *(With* conservative *as reference category)*				
1) Middle [Y=1, N=0]	--	-.445** (.158)	-.478** (.170)	-.451** (.170)
2) Liberal [Y=1, N=0]	--	-1.013*** (.280)	-1.147*** (307)	-1.164*** (.316)
3) (Conservative)				
Congregation demographics				
(Socio-demographic factors)				
Gender of head [M=1, F=0]	--	--	.509 (.350)	.472 (.364)
Percent of cong. Over 60	--	--	-.012** (.004)	-.011* (.004)
Percent of cong. with 4yr degree	--	--	-.005 (.003)	-.005 (.003)
Percent of cong. earning > $100,000	--	--	-.003 (.006)	-.001 (.006)
Percent African American (with 0% as baseline)				
1) 100 % black [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	.755+ (.416)	.838* (.427)
2) Between 0% and 100% black [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	-.014 (.167)	-.012 (.186)
3) (0% black) [Y=1, N=0]				
(Other demographic factors—competition and threat measures)				
Number of regular participants (by 100s)	--	--	.027*** (.006)	.027*** (.007)
Percentage of new participants	--	--	.003 (.006)	.004 (.006)
Church characteristics				
(Competition measures)				
Congregations makes effort to recruit [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.498+ (.272)
Church age	--	--	--	-.003* (.002)
(Threat measures)				
Region of the country *(With* South Atlantic *as reference category)*				
1) New England [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.316 (.410)
2) Middle Atlantic [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.992*** (.292)
3) East North Central [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.827*** (.255)

4) West North Central [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.322 (.319)
5) East South Central [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.781** (.315)
6) West South Central [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.425 (.294)
7) Mountain [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.657+ (.365)
8) Pacific [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	.367 (.287)
9) (South Atlantic) [Y=1, N=0]				
Type of neighborhood (*With* urban *as reference category*)				
1) Suburb [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	-.101 (.231)
2) Rural [Y=1, N=0]	--	--	--	-.057 (.219)
3) (Urban) [Y=1, N=0]	--			
Constant	.247 (.370)	.046 (.142)	-.101 (.428)	-.807 (.569)
-2 Log likelihood	1107.956	1090.622	1043.061	1019.458
Model Chi-square	67.500***	84.834***	132.395***	155.999***
Degrees of Freedom	2	4	12	24
Step Chi-square	67.500***	17.334***	47.561***	23.604*
Degrees of freedom	2	2	8	12

+ p>.10, * p> .05, ** p> .01, *** p> .001

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
N=876
Source: National Congregation Survey, 1998.

Table 3. Predicted Probability That a Given Congregation Will Regulate Same-Sex Behavior by Region

Region	Predicted probability of same-sex regulation
South Atlantic (Baseline)	.647
Middle Atlantic	.831 (*28% more likely than South Atlantic to regulate)**
East North Central	.807 (*25% more likely than South Atlantic to regulate)**
East South Central	.800 (*24% more likely than South Atlantic to regulate)**

* This is a comparison of the probability of same-sex regulation in congregations displaying the median characteristics in each region.

Appendix I. Census Bureau Regions

Region 1: Northeast	
Division1: New England Connecticut Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire Rhode Island Vermont	*Division 2: Middle Atlantic* New Jersey New York Pennsylvania
Region 2: Midwest	
Division 3: East North Central Indiana Illinois Michigan Ohio Wisconsin	*Division 4: West North Central* Iowa Kansas Minnesota Missouri Nebraska North Dakota South Dakota

Region 3: South		
Division 5: South Atlantic Delaware District of Columbia Florida Georgia Maryland North Carolina South Carolina Virginia West Virginia	*Division 6: East South Central* Alabama Kentucky Mississippi Tennessee	*Division 7: West South Central* Arkansas Louisiana Oklahoma Texas

Region 4: West	
Division 8: Mountain Arizona Colorado Idaho New Mexico Montana Utah Nevada Wyoming	*Division 9: Pacific* Alaska California Hawaii Oregon Washington

Source: http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf.

Appendix II

Crime and Punishment in America: State-by-State Breakdown of Existing Laws and Repeals
June 9, 2003

Legislative Repeal (26 + District of Columbia)
Sodomy laws that have been repealed through legislative action

Alaska (1980)
Arizona (2001)
California (1976)
Colorado (1972)
Connecticut (1971)
Delaware (1973)
District of Columbia (1993)
Hawaii (1973)
Illinois (1962)
Indiana (1977)
Iowa (1978)
Maine (1976)
Nebraska (1978)
Nevada (1993)
New Hampshire (1975)
New Jersey (1979)
New Mexico (1975)
North Dakota (1973)
Ohio (1974)
Oregon (1972)
Rhode Island (1998)
South Dakota (1977)
Vermont (1977)
Washington (1976)
West Virginia (1976)
Wisconsin (1983)
Wyoming (1977)

Invalidated by Courts (10)
States whose sodomy laws were struck down by courts

Arkansas
Jegley v. Picado, 80 S.W.3d 332 (Ark. 2001)

Georgia
Powell v. State, 510 S.E.2d 18 (1998)

Kentucky
Commonwealth v. Wasson, 842 S.W.2d 487 (Ky. 1992)

Maryland
Williams v. State, 1998 Extra LEXIS 260, Baltimore City Circuit Court, January 14, 1999

Massachusetts

GLAD v. Attorney General, SJC-08539 (Mass. Supreme Judicial Ct. 2002)

Minnesota
Doe v. Ventura, No. MC 01-489, 2001 WL 543734 (Minn. Dist. Ct 2001)

Montana
Gryczan v. Montana, 942 P.2d 112 (1997)

New York
People v. Onofre, 415 N.E.2d 936 (N.Y. 1980)

Pennsylvania
Commonwealth v. Bonadio, 415 A.2d 47 (Pa. 1980)
(The state legislature later repealed the law in 1995.)

Tennessee
Campbell v. Sundquist, 926 S.W.2d 250 (1996)

Existing Same-Sex Laws (4) and Their Penalties
States with sodomy laws that target only same-sex acts

Kansas (6 months/$1,000)
Missouri (1 year/$1,000)
Oklahoma (10 years)
Texas ($500)*

Existing Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Laws (9 + Puerto Rico) and Their Penalties
States with laws prohibiting sodomy between both same-sex and opposite-sex partners

Alabama (1 year/$2,000)
Florida (60 days/$500)
Idaho (5 years to life)
Louisiana (5 years/$2,000)*
Mississippi (10 years)
North Carolina (10 years/discretionary fine)
Puerto Rico (10 years)*
South Carolina (5 years/$500)
Utah (6 months/$1,000)
Virginia (1-5 years)*

Existing Laws -- Status Unclear (2) and Their Penalties

Michigan (15 years)
Missouri (same-sex only) (1 year/$1,000)

* Court challenge pending

Source: http://www.aclu.org//lgbt/crimjustice/11982res20030609.html

Appendix III: Status of Anti-Sodomy Laws in 1998 by Region.

South Atlantic (Baseline Category):
Florida: Law in place
Georgia: Law in place
Maryland: Law in place
North Carolina: Law in place
South Carolina: Law in place
Virginia: Law in place
Delaware: Law repealed (1973)
District of Columbia: Law repealed (1993)
West Virginia: Law repealed (1976)

Middle Atlantic:
New Jersey: Law repealed (1979)
New York: Law invalidated (1980)
Pennsylvania: Law invalidated (1980)

East North Central:
Michigan: Law in place
Indiana: Law repealed (1977)
Illinois: Law repealed (1962)
Ohio: Law repealed (1974)
Wisconsin: Law repealed (1983)

East South Central:
Alabama: Law in place
Mississippi: Law in place
Kentucky: Law invalidated (1992)
Tennessee: Law invalidated (1996)

Sources:
http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf.
http://www.aclu.org//lgbt/crimjustice/11982res20030609.html