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The Church and Michael Brown: The Influence of Christianity on Racialized Political Attitudes in Ferguson, Missouri

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Abstract

This study examines whether the Christian faith played a pacifying or inspiring role in racialized politics following the death of Michael Brown and subsequent uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri. To evaluate the role of religion in responding to racialized crisis, the author examines both the attitudes of individual citizens and the actions of faith leaders. Using data gathered from two exit-polls conducted by the author in Ferguson and the surrounding area during the period between the death of Michael Brown and the decision not to indict the officer who killed him and then again after the grand jury decision, the author finds religious and racial gaps in the acceptance of narratives about the death of Michael Brown. The analysis of exit-poll data also shows a racial cleavage in perceptions of congregational response to the Ferguson Moment. The author then uses interviews with clergy from across the St. Louis region to analyze the various ways faith leaders responded to the racial crisis and the doctrinal, demographic, and place-based variables that may have influenced these responses.

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right." 1 Peter 2:13-14

"Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." Proverbs 31: 8-9

"Both read the Bible day and night,

But thou read'st Black where I read white." – William Blake

Chapter 1: Introduction

The day before Michael Brown's funeral, John Eligon, wrote a story for *The New York Times* describing how Michael Brown Jr., just weeks before his death, reportedly saw an angel. According to Eligon, "It was 1 a.m. and Michael Brown Jr. called his father, his voice trembling. He had seen something overpowering. In the thick gray clouds that lingered from a passing storm this past June, he made out an angel. And he saw Satan chasing the angel and the angel running into the face of God." Eligon went on to write, "Michael Brown…was no angel" (Eligon 2014). These last words immediately became the subject of controversy.

Christopher Massie, writing for the Columbia Journalism Review, summed up the criticism by saying, "Teenagers, white and Black, rich and poor, are often emotionally volatile, dabble with drugs, listen to rap, attempt to rap, and commit petty crimes. Does that mean they deserve to be shot? Of course not, and… when they're white, they very rarely are" (Massie 2014). The term "no angel" is one that has commonly been applied to Black victims of state-sanctioned violence. Author and television host, Touré,

responded by writing, "It's as if a Black person must be a perfect victim to escape being thuggified, an angel with an unblemished history in order to warrant justice" (Touré 2014).

In what was probably a well-intentioned journalistic eulogy (there is no reason to doubt Eligon's intentions), the *New York Times* perpetuated a racist idea that puts an impossible burden on Black people by implying that in order to survive one must be so without fault as to be considered divine. Furthermore, although it is discussed less, calling him "no angel" publicly robs the deceased Michael Brown Jr. of status within the Christian afterlife because popular depictions of the Christian afterlife are harbored in the concept of resurrection of the dead into heavenly or angelic bodies. In his National Book Award winning book, Ibram X. Kendi argues that racist ideas are put into place to justify racist policies (Kendi 2016). Perhaps the "no angel" narrative is an example of one such idea used to justify state-sanctioned violence. Regardless of intention, it evokes the language of the Christian faith in a way that justifies the killing of young Black men in America.

This project seeks to address the ways in which the Christian religion helps Americans to interpret the prominence of police killings of Black people that, since the advent of online streaming and the ability to quickly share video footage, have become prevalent in the American social conscience. Broadly, this paper will address how race, religion, and politics - three of the most polarizing forces in American life - intersect in modern America. More specifically, this paper will use the Ferguson Moment and continuing racial unrest in the St. Louis region as a case study to examine how religious

attitudes and religious institutions help to influence responses to racialized state violence.

Ultimately, this paper will argue that while faith may seem to play a subtle role in responses to racialized politics, it can work as both a force stymieing progress for racial equity in criminal justice or inspiring advocacy for racial progress. Many factors including doctrinal beliefs, religious practices, congregational community, tradition and denomination, personal characteristics, and location seem can work as indicators for which of these paths a member of the clergy might take in his or her response to racialized violence. Additionally, this paper will show how many citizens in the Ferguson area perceive that their religious congregation is taking action to fight racial injustice, even to the point of encouraging civil disobedience. While at the same time, some religious institutions can act as centers of the white dominant political status quo.

1.1: Defining the Problem

According to Noll (2008), "Together, race and religion make up, not only the nation's deepest and most enduring moral problem, but also its broadest and most enduring political influence" (Noll 2008;1). Both forces divide Americans and shape American culture. Religion is a very significant wedge in American politics, perhaps second only to race, and this cleavage permeates throughout many areas of American life. Green (2010) found that in the 2004 presidential election, the gap between the Democratic and Republican candidates based on religious affiliation and religious attendance was greater than on income, region, rural/urban divide, gender, generation

and education; while the only gap shown to be larger was the race gap (Green 2010; 17). The influence of religious belief on American politics should not be underestimated.

Therefore, it is likely that *both* race and religion may influence how individuals respond to the Ferguson moment. Beyond the "No Angel" comment, many instances point toward the importance of religion in the world's reaction to Michael Brown's death including, among others: Michael Brown's family's church falling victim to arson[1], a group of Tibetan monks standing in solidarity with Ferguson protestors, and, most importantly for this study, the large number of religious leaders speaking out about Brown's death and the proper ways for their disciples to respond (Hafiz 2014; Lowery 2014; Religion and Politics 2014). The connection between racial tensions and religion in modern American life was made tragically clear when, less than a year after Michael Brown's death, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a historic Black church in Charleston, South Carolina, was the site of a racially charged mass shooting.

There is evidence that clergy played a strong supportive role in the demonstrations following the killing of Michael Brown. Leah Gunning-Francis (2015) uses interviews and other qualitative evidence to show how mainline protestant clergy became involved in the Ferguson demonstrations (Francis 2015). Francis shows that clergy actively demonstrated and provided resources to the young activists that led the

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[1] This parallels the fact that there were 40 Black churches burned in Mississippi in the early summer of 1964, and is part of a trend of several Black churches falling victim to arson in 2015.

demonstrations, but they most often did not take on leadership roles themselves (Francis 2015).

However, the media have shown examples of how other religious leaders in the St. Louis area responded to Michael Brown's death. One notable example is Ferguson resident and professional jazz musician, Brian Owens, who, according to *The Christian Chronicle*, proclaimed "Worship is our protest" at the predominantly African American Ferguson Heights Church of Christ, going on to say, according to *The Christian Chronicle's* paraphrase, that it was "the fight for hearts and souls –not the fight in the streets—that matters" (Ross 2015). The implication here is that spiritual revitalization is more powerful than political reform or perhaps that it will be the only way to achieve political reform.

These accounts represent two perspectives on the role of the church in response to Michael Brown's death and exemplify a continuing debate on the role of Christianity in African American political advancement. The two theories, as described by Harris (1999), are the opiate theory, in which an otherworldly focus turns religious institutions into "an instrument of political pacification and fatalism", and inspiration theory, which argues that Christianity has been a powerful and positive force in Black American politics (Harris 1999). Sociologist Christian Smith sums up the dichotomy quite well saying, "Religion *can* help to keep everything in its place. But it can *also* turn the world upside-down" (Smith 1996; 1). While there is evidence of both faces of religion within the history of the Civil Rights Movement and Black political advancement in America, the question this dissertation seeks to address is which of these theories better

describes the way that religion worked in the aftermath of Michael Brown Jr.'s death and the continuing racialized conflict in the St. Louis region. If it can be assumed that it probably works for both ends, then we must ask how.

In this work, I will try to answer these questions using a mixed method approach. First, I examine the question at the level of individual citizens, the rank-and-file faithful. I ask, in what ways do the religious beliefs and behaviors of individuals play into racialized attitudes within Ferguson. Second, I examine the question from the perspective of faith leaders. I ask in what ways did religious leaders within Ferguson and throughout the St. Louis region respond to the killing of Michael Brown? This two-level approach will help social scientists to better understand how both the clergy and the faithful rank-and-file responded to the death of Michael Brown. However, this study will also have important consequences for those doing racial justice work or those involved with Christian ministry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the introduction of this work, I discussed the significance of religion in the political realm in the United States. However, exactly how these two significant forces interact is up for debate. In this section, I will provide a brief sampling of the discussion on the role of religion in civic life, how political scientists measure religiosity among individuals, and the various gaps in political attitudes associated with variation in religious belief and practice in the United States. Having established this necessary context, I will then move on to a discussion of the theoretical framework on which this study is based: opiate and inspiration theory. Throughout the years this basic dichotomy has been discussed using various frameworks. I will relay a sample of those frameworks. I will also discuss how religion has been seen as an inspiring force for racial progress as well as a pacifying force working against racial progress throughout history and within the academy. Finally, I will describe some theological factors that may shape the influence of religion in politics under each theory.

2.1 Religion and Government

The roles of religion and government in public life have been discussed for centuries amongst philosophers, theologians, judges, politicians, and, of course, social scientists. Prominent writings on the relationship of church and state include Augustine of Hippo's *City of God*, H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, and the writings of Thomas Jefferson among myriad others. Augustine's position is that the political sphere is corrupted and can never be perfectly just, although it sometimes serves divine purposes (Augustine 426). In the second position, Niebuhr discusses several approaches

that one might take to understanding the two spheres including pitting them against

each other and the idea that they are not separate spheres at all (Niebuhr 1951). Finally,

Thomas Jefferson describes the ideal relationship between church and state as a "high

wall of separation" between the two spheres. This forms the basis of the American

constitutional answer to the question (Jefferson 1802). The debate continues. The wall

of separation is not as high as many secularists would prefer, and yet for many members

of American faith communities it is too high. However, it is certain that mobilized

religious interests are often able to influence elections, court decisions, and policy

outcomes in the United States, and that personal religious sentiments and ideals are

able to influence the civic lives and political decisions of individual citizens and policy

makers. In this section, I will briefly discuss how scholars of religion choose to study

religion's relationship to American civic life. Later, I will discuss religion's role in social

movements in more depth.

In the United States, religiously grounded moral arguments have been a force in

major historical debates on abolitionism, immigration policy, prohibition, race politics,

and the role of women in society, among many others (Morone 2003). Indeed, Morone

describes the history of the United States in terms of morality. As he explains, "The

nation develops not from religious to secular but from revival to revival" (Morone 2003;

3). For Morone, the defining force for change in the history of our nation has been a

series of what he calls "jeremiads." A term that references long mournful complaints

such as that of the prophet Jeremiah, jeremiads are calls for cultural repentance that

are often grounded in faith. However, these jeremiads are not always directed toward

equity. According to Morone, American faith has often moralized oppression, especially

based on race, yet at other times the faithful lead campaigns for social justice. Indeed,

faith and morality were motivators for both abolition and for slavery. While it is likely

clear to the casual observer that moralizing has taken place in the modern context of

Black Lives Matter and racial justice, regardless through which frame one observes the

events surrounding the death of Michael Brown and other racialized acts of police

brutality, the question remains: has the church response looked more like a call for

repentance to inequitable systems of criminal justice or has it moralized the oppression

of Black people?

Religion is clearly a powerful force across platforms of influence in the United

States. Since the early days of the nation, religious groups have effectively used the

courts to pursue their legal goals (Witte and Nichols 2011).   Religion is also a powerful

force in American elections. This is evident by the religious mobilization on both the

ideological left and the right. Political elites take great care in trying to reach religiously

mobilized voters. According to Djupe and Calfano (2014), politicians often use religious

communication, specifically, "implicit, coded cues" in order to target religious

constituencies (Djupe and Calfano 2014; 45). These cues are not recognizable to those

outside the target religious constituency, often evangelicals, but are both recognizable

to evangelicals and effective in persuading them (Djupe and Calfano 2014; 45). Djupe

and Cafano deem this phenomena "god talk". The concept is important and leaves us

with many questions, including: Are leaders using religiously coded calls to action when

they talk about responses to Ferguson? Why or why not? While Djupe and Calfano test

their god talk theory in a variety of policy arenas they do not address the question of whether religiously coded messages are effective when it comes to promoting progressive or conservative stances on racial justice.[2] While this study will not address how political leaders use religious messages, it will be evaluating the effectiveness of religious messages on creating political responses.

Americans are divided by religion in at least two ways. They are divided by the differing religious affiliations they identify with and by how religious they are. Likely the first sociological study of religion and politics, Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, discusses how varying religious traditions promoted diverging economic outcomes. Specifically, Weber argues that the development of the theological tradition of Calvinism helped foster the rise of capitalism, causing protestant nation-states to be more prosperous than their Roman Catholic counterparts (Weber 1958). This approach of viewing outcomes through the lens of religious traditions has continued on into modern studies of social science including the field of political science. Today, scholars often study social and political atittudes in the United States

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[2] Throughout this text I will often use the terms progressive and conservative. These words have different meanings if we are talking about politics, theology, or Black political and social advancement. Most often the term progressive used in this work will refer to racially progressive ideas, policies, or actions. I use Christian historian and writer Jemar Tisby's definition to ground my usage: "When racial inequality gets inscribed into policy those policies must change. Racial progress in the political realm necessarily implies "progressive" policies. Even though "progressive" has taken on a political and cultural significance all its own, in this context it simply means progressing beyond the harmful rules and practices that create and maintain racial inequality." (Tisby 2021). If the terms "progressive" or "conservative" are used in terms of politics or theology that will be indicated by the context.

through the lens of the four main Christian traditions which dominate the American culture: Evangelical Protestantism, Mainline Protestantism, Black Protestantism, and Catholicism (Fowler et al. 2010). While these traditions dominate the American religious landscape, a considerable effort has also been given in recent years to the study of those who have no religious affiliation. Also known as religious "nones", this religious demographic has become more important to scholars of American religion as it has steadily grown over the last decade or so, and is a large voting bloc of the Democratic Party (Chaves 2011). Of course, these traditions, while being the most dominant, do not account for the entirety of the religious diversity in the United States. Additionally, studies can be divided down further into viewing denominational or congregational relationships with political attitudes.

Political scientists have found that individuals from different religious traditions are mobilized on different issues and prefer to participate in politics in different ways. For example, evangelical Protestants are more closely associated with political conservatism while mainline Protestants are more associated with political progressivism. According to Fowler et al., the Catholic tradition plays an important strategic role in American politics as its members tend to be "swing voters", often being sought as an ally by those from both the mainline and evangelical tradition (Fowler et al. 2010; 40). Accordingly, Catholics tend to be less politically unified than evangelicals or Black Protestants. Black Protestants, while theologically very similar to evangelicals, vote overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party. According to Fowler et al. Catholics make up the largest percentage of the voting age population by religious tradition (25

percent), followed closely by White Evangelical Protestants at 23 percent, the religiously unaffiliated or "nones" at 15 percent, White Mainline Protestants at 14 percent and Black Protestants at 9 percent, with other traditions making up the rest of the population (Fowler et al. 2010; 83). Understanding religious tradition is necessary for understanding the interaction of faith and politics.

Going deeper, many scholars of religion (Nancy Ammerman is among the most notable) have turned to the study of individual congregations. The seminal study on religion and place is Ammerman's *Congregation and Community* (1997). In this work, Ammerman takes an ecological approach in order to describe how religious institutions respond to community change whether economic, cultural, or otherwise. According to Ammerman, congregations are "a part of a community's institutional infrastructure, a part of the structures and connections that make social life possible" (Ammerman 1997, 346). Ammerman goes on to point out that religious communities help maintain the communal life of neighborhoods within urban areas because they provide for "collective public commitment with particularistic belonging…[and] allow the full range of U.S. pluralism to be expressed (Ammerman 1997, 355). Congregations are important to the study of local politics because they are entities firmly grounded within the geography of a city that also sponsor a particular worldview that congregants use in interpreting their civic life. Ammerman's study is essential for this paper because of her focus on both congregation and place since this paper's main goal is to understand how congregations and faith elites (as well as individual beliefs and attitudes) helped to shape the public response to the Ferguson moment.

In addition to studying how political attitudes relate to religious traditions, many political scientists study differences in political behavior across values of religiosity. Religiosity, the measure of the intensity of religious belief and practice, is employed in several studies of human behavior. It is measured either through the frequency of attendance of religious services or a scale composed by adding the intensity of various religious behaviors. Olson and Green provide evidence of this type of religious division within denominations, or what they call "The Religion Gap", by showing that frequency of attendance of religious services is a positive indicator of political conservatism and Republican party identification (Olson and Green 2006). This gap exists within denominations and individual churches. In social science studies, religiosity has been used as an indicator of young marriages (Uecker 2014), contraceptive use in adolescents (Studer and Thornton 1987), and mood states of those coping with cancer (Fehring et. al 1997) to name just a few. In the field of political science, it has been used as an indicator of several important political traits including: authoritarianism (Altemeyer 1996), conservatism (Olson and Green 2006), Republican Party identification, intolerance and even good neighborliness (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Religiosity can also be used as an indicator of attitudes on several policy positions including: attitudes toward members of the LGBTQ community and on the issues of abortion, divorce, the use of contraceptives, gambling, pornography, welfare, the environment, and attitudes toward suicide and euthanasia. Because of its broad application, religiosity is clearly a useful tool in the understanding of religion and politics. Additionally, because of its relationship with politicized issues across party politics, it is worth examining as an

indicator of racialized attitudes within Ferguson which have also been deeply divided by party politics.

Some scholars of religion and politics have gone beyond just divisions in religiosity and tradition as indicators of social cleavages. For example, instead of focusing on differences in tradition or intensity, Guth et al. examines differences based on the concepts of orthodoxy and modernism. Guth et al. finds that religious orthodoxy and modernism among protestant clergy are becoming increasingly connected to where they fit on the political ideology spectrum, (Guth et al. 1998). Others have studied cleavages across individualistic and communitarian religion. Using evidence from the 2006 and 2008 American National Election Study, a large annual national survey of voters in the United States, Mockabee et al. were able to find a statistical indicator of whether one's religious belief is likely to lead to affiliation with either the Religious Left or the Religious Right (Mockabee et al. 2009). That indicator was two different factors of religiosity. The first, which is typically used in studies of religiosity, is the individualistic factor, developed using variables such as frequency of church attendance, frequency of prayer, etc. The second, the communitarian religiosity factor is not as widely used. It focuses on measuring an individual's attitudes toward collective worship practices. The factor uses variables on belief in substantiation through the Eucharist, and a variable asking "when you [try] to be a good Christian, which did you try to do more: avoid doing sinful things yourself, or help other people?." In this study Mockabee et al. found that the typical individualistic measure of religiosity has a positive relationship with Republican Party identification, while the communitarian

factor has a negative relationship with Republican Party identification (Mockabee et al. 2009). The individual religiosity factor also had positive coefficients on scales measuring views on abortion, gay rights, and the role of women while the communitarian religiosity factor had negative but weaker coefficients on all three of the topics (Mockabee et al. 2009). The concept of communitarian and individualistic religiosity is one that I do not believe has been given enough attention within the larger field of religion and politics, perhaps due to the fact that scholars might think that what is being measured does not indicate differences in factors of religiosity, but simply religious tradition. However, Mockabee et al.'s framework allows scholars to examine communitarian and individualistic pulls of religion within individuals who are imbedded in traditions. I suspect that these factors will play a role in how people react to instances of racial injustice and perhaps may prove to be better indicators of political attitudes than religious tradition or religiosity.

The examining of differences in religious tradition, congregation, and personal religiosity (among individuals), as well as theological differences across the orthodoxy-modernism spectrum and the communitarian and individualistic religion factors, are all examples of tools that will be used in this paper to help us understand how institutions and people of faith responded to the killing of Michael Brown. With the exception of the communitarian and individualistic religion factors, they all have been widely used throughout political science and sociological studies of religion. However, this project also looks for gaps in racialized attitudes that may be related to other theological beliefs

beyond these measures including eschatological beliefs and conceptions of the mission of Jesus.

2.2 Opiate and Inspiration: Religion and Black Political Advancement in America

This project is interested in the role religious institutions performed in the aftermath of the death of Michael Brown. Political scientists and sociologists have provided a dualistic literature of diametrically opposed authors on the subject of religion's capacity to create positive change for racial minorities in the United States or racial progress in general. Fredrick Harris refers to these two competing schools of thought as opiate theory and inspiration theory. Harris describes the former as the theory that "insists that Afro-Christianity promotes otherworldliness, functioning as an instrument of political pacification and fatalism" while the latter "makes exactly the opposite claim arguing that Afro-Christianity has played a central role in Black politics, catalyzing, for example, the collective involvement of African Americans in the modern civil rights movement" (Harris 1999; 4-5). In this paper, I will use the same terms, however, I will not limit their definitions to Black Christianity in America, but I will try to show how religion has inspired or discouraged Americans from all racial and faith backgrounds to act in response to the police killings of people of color in America, specifically the killing of Michael Brown. I expect for religion to inspire or pacify the reaction of Black Christians in different ways than white Christian traditions, but that is exactly why I plan on broadening the definition, to help uncover those differences. What follows in this chapter is a discussion of the origins and current statuses of these schools of thought.

Opiate Theory: How Religion Hinders Black Political Advancement

The term, opiate theory, in the African-American religious context is credited to Gary Marx (1967), who found that the more frequently a Black respondent attended church and the higher the importance placed on religion by the respondent, the lower the level of the respondent's civil rights militancy (Marx 1967). The creation of several secular Black interest groups (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League) throughout the early twentieth century as alternatives to Black churches coincides with this perception of religion as an opiate to militancy (Fowler et al. 2010).

However, the idea of religion as a pacifying force has its roots far earlier and its sentiment was popularized by another Marx. Karl Marx famously said, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx 1843). By this Marx meant that religion is a tool used by those in power to pacify the masses from overthrowing tyrannical economic and societal systems. In his thinking the abolition of religion, is therefore essential in the progress of human history and the liberation of the oppressed classes. According to Marx, questioning religion causes us to question all oppressive institutions of society. He goes on to say, "It is, therefore, the task of history, once the otherworld of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of this world... Thus criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics." Marx's eschatology is therefore a secular utopia in which the pacifying forces of religion are thrown out.

In this section, I will discuss opiate theory, or the theory that religion is a hindrance to the social advancement of those with less power. More specifically, in the American context opiate theory describes a worldview that causes Black Americans to act in ways that are counter to their self-interests and to refrain from participation in the political sphere even when their human and civil rights are being violated. I choose a looser definition, defining opiate theory as the phenomena of religion acting as a pacifying force that stymies anti-racisim and progressivism in general. I will attempt to discuss the thought behind opiate theory and the empirical evidence from the fields of sociology and political science that support it.

Marxism and Dialectical Materialism

For Marx, religion justifies the societal evils of this world because, "Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification" (Marx 1843). Religion provides a distorted interpretation of the world because religion is the product of humanity like the many other oppressive systems that mankind has created. In response to Hegel, Marx develops his worldview of "dialectical materialism" in which he perceives class struggles as the main way for understanding how history unfolds, as opposed to Hegel's focus on conflict of ideas. Marx approaches Hegel through Feuerbach's conception of materialism for whom, religion, "poisons, nay destroys, the most divine feeling in man, the sense of truth" (Thompson 2011). For Marx, ideas, and more specifically, religion, as constructs of humanity, do not help in the change and progress of human history because they are

prescribed by those who wish to maintain the status quo; they are untruths, a god

delusion. Rather, global change happens in real-world struggles not in the battlefield of

the heart or mind, because through those struggles of history exposes real truth. This of

course stands in conflict with the saying of Jesus in the Gospel of John, "I am the Way,

the Truth, and the Life."

Secularization

As Marx predicted that the role of history was to "uncover the truth" and, in the

process of doing so abolish religion, many social scientists began to document the

decline of religion as a prominent force in civic life. Secularization, the view that that the

modernization of society leads to the devaluing of religion, became the scientifically

accepted view of religion in the 1960's. Prominent pioneer scholars of secularization

include Bryan Wilson, David Martin, and Peter L. Berger among others. The theory

gained such wide acceptance in the academic community that, until recently, it was

mostly unchallenged. Katznelson and Jones (2010) sum up the theory, saying,

> [It] purported to describe a universal transition from a traditional religious
> picture of the world to a rational conception. Every society was thought to be
> caught up in this global trajectory, even if each progressed along it at different
> speeds. In this approach, the division and differentiation of church and state
> into separate spheres was identified with a progressive separation of politics
> from religion, an overall shift from a religious to a rational and scientific
> mentality, and a waning acceptance of religious authority (Katznelson and Jones
> 2010).

Secularization can encompass several different phenomena but usually comes in

at least one of three varieties: the decline of religious practice, the decline in power of

religious institutions, and the change in religious thinking (Wilson 1966). Whatever

form, secularization always means change. Wilson finds the latter of the three varieties, the change in religious thinking, to be the most dramatic for society; he says, "Religious thinking is perhaps the area which evidence most conspicuous change. Men act less and less in response to religious motivation: they assess the world in empirical and rational terms, and find themselves involved in rational organizations and rationally determined roles which allow small scope for such religious predilections as they might privately entertain" (Wilson 1966; 10). If religious institutions are declining in power and religious thoughts are not effective in swaying minds how then can religion be a force of any power in political advancement or in anything in the temporal world? Therefore, secularization is a denial of the ability of religion to have influence outside of its own sphere.

Wallis and Bruce (1992) describe the process of secularization as having three features, which seem to reflect the varieties of secularization discussed by Wilson. These include: social differentiation, societalization, and rationalization. The first of the three, social differentiation refers to the "process by which specialized roles and institutions are developed or arise to handle specific features or functions previously embodied in, or carried out by, one role or institution" (Wallis and Bruce 1992; 12). For example, in the United States, religious institutions used to perform much of the public health and welfare roles now provided by the state. While the church in the United States still works to provide for these functions at some capacity, the responsibility has been mostly relegated to the government. Societalization, the social change that has occurred over time causing individuals to view their lives as connected with society at

large rather than simply their own village or small community, fuels the privatization of religious institutions. Religion is now less likely to address broad popular concerns, but rather to mostly impact individuals. Finally, rationalization refers to the ever increasing reliance on rational thought rather than moral or sacred influences in the decision making processes of individuals. If true, all three forces would continually sap the ability of the church to be a force for equity in society.

However, the evidence for secularization is mixed. According to Chaves (2011), using evidence from the General Social Survey as well as the National Congregations Study, it is clear that many religious beliefs have remained fairly consistent among Americans since the 1970s, with the only real changes in beliefs being a decline in the belief in biblical inerrancy and a development of "diffuse spirituality" (Chaves 2011; 33). Additionally, Chaves finds that while religious service attendance may have been in decline during the 1970's and 80's, it has remained fairly stable since the 1990s (Chaves 2011; 47).

While religiosity in America may now be in a period of stability, that does not mean that modernity has not shifted *how* Americans practice their faith. According to Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2014), "Religion has certainly been touched and influenced by the modern world, but it is more accurate to speak of secularization as adjustment and adaptation than to employ the image of decline and fall" (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014; 17). While the roles of religious institutions have changed in their relationship to society, in the political realm it is still easy to see the role that religion plays in American elections through religious gaps at the voting booth. This paper seeks to address how

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this relationship has adapted to the modern context of post-Ferguson America. Is the relationship between the church and society nothing more than a hodgepodge of congregations that discourage active participation in combating societal evils, or is the Christian faith a more powerful contiguous institution that encourages societal change?

Structural Functionalism

Following secularization, the sociological theory of structural functionalism also precludes a prominent role for the church within the culture at large. According to Smith "This school of thought viewed religion as serving society's macro-functional need for cultural consensus and social integration…to the extent that religion survived the forces of secularization, it did so because it provided the shared values and norms necessary to promote social harmony and equilibrium" (Smith 1996; 2). Structural Functionalism can be thought of as an extension of the privatization of religious life from the secularist school of thought. Religion helps serve a purpose for individuals but is unlikely to overstep its bounds and go into the political sphere. People receive spiritual nourishment from religious activities and belonging to religious communities, but that does not affect their political attitudes or actions and certainly cannot influence policy change.

Elements of the American Christian Opiate

The Marxist theory of dialectical materialism provides no avenue for religion to influence social change because of its distance from material wealth and temporal struggle, while secularization simply precludes religion from being the seat of power as

modernity moves forward. The question then must be asked: are there aspects inherent to religion that preclude it from playing a role in social and political advancement even if we reject the notion of dialectical materialism and the impact of secularization?

H. Richard Niebuhr, in his classic book, *Christ and Culture*, discusses the interplay of Christianity and the cultural sphere through the development of a typology. Niebuhr defines culture as the "language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes and values" that human beings hold to (Niebuhr 1951). The types which describe how culture and the Christian faith interact are as follows: Christ against Culture, Christ of Culture, and Christ above Culture. The last of these types has three subtypes: Christ and Culture in synthesis, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and Christ as Transformer of Culture. Each of these types are positions that can and have been adopted by various institutions and individuals over the history of the Christian church. Of these, the first two types as well as the Christ and Culture in Paradox subtype fit in well with opiate theory, while the Christ as Transformer of Culture is an example of inspiration theory and Christ and Culture in synthesis is neutral.

Niebuhr's conception of the Christ against Culture is the theological perspective that Christians and the world are in conflict. This worldview is well in line with opiate theory because it calls Christians into reclusion. In this theology, Christians are the "new creation" and the people of God that will soon be brought into the "new Jerusalem". They therefore should be separated from the world which is corrupted while Christians are restored, or in the process of being restored. This theological worldview is largely

rooted in the Book of Revelation and the First Letter of John and Niebuhr claims that it

was espoused by Christian leaders throughout history from Tertullian to Tolstoy.

Notably, Niebuhr describes the former as taking the "positive and warm" ethics of love

from the New Testament and replacing it with negative morality and a focus on fearful

avoidance of sin—a trait that has been found to be related to individualistic Christianity

and conservative political behavior (Mockabee et al. 2009) . Niebuhr describes Tolstoy's

position as one in which "good government" is a nonsensical concept. Niebuhr describes

this position by saying, "Against [Government's] evil there is no defense except

complete nonparticipation, and nonviolent striving for the conversion of all men to

peaceful, anarchic Christianity" (Niebuhr 1951; 61). Therefore, Christians of this type

will avoid political action and, indeed, refuse to give politics much thought beyond a

general disdain.

According to Niebuhr, in this position, "The counterpart of loyalty to Christ and

the brothers is the rejection of cultural society; A clear line is drawn between the

brotherhood of the children of God and the world" (Niebuhr 1951; 47). Christians are

viewed as a new people, or a new race and are called to separation. A Christian with this

theological conviction is likely to withdraw from society altogether (Niebuhr provides

famed author Leo Tolstoy as an example), rather than try to actually transform the

cultural sphere. Christians and the world are at war against each other.

In addition to the Christ against Culture theology, Niebuhr describes a theology

of Christ of Culture, this position does not see a tension between Christianity and

Culture. According to Niebuhr, those who hold this faith-based worldview, "[I]nterpret

culture through Christ, regarding those elements in it as most important which are most accordant with his work and person; on the other hand they understand Christ through culture, selecting from his teaching and action as well as from the Christian doctrine about him such points as seem to agree with what is best in civilization" (Niebuhr 1951; 83) This position does not allow for the Christian religion to bring about much change in culture because it works to harmonize the two. While they see the culture through a Christian perspective, their Christian perspective is also seen through a cultural lens. Ancient Gnostics and more modern liberal protestants of the early twentieth century fit well into this type. Niebuhr criticizes this group as both not being very effective in proselytizing or in meeting cultural goals, and acknowledges that they face criticism from both the religious and the secular. Niebuhr says, "Christian liberalism is rejected by John Dewey as well as by a Barth. Marxists dislike Christian socialism as much as orthodox Calvinists and Lutherans do" (Niebuhr 1951; 108). Essentially, in an attempt to harmonize both concepts, they created a watered down Christianity alongside a powerless position in culture.

Niebuhr's third type is "Christ Above Culture". In this worldview, Christians rely on both Christ and Culture to live their lives. Niebuhr divides this into three sub-types. Of these Christ and Culture in Paradox aligns well with opiate theory while Christ Transforming Culture aligns with faith supporting and inspiring social action and Christ and Culture in synthesis is more neutral. I will discuss the paradox and synthesis worldviews here, saving the transformative position for later on in this work when I discuss the theological bases for Inspiration theory. Christ above Culture is distinctive

because it views the question as one of God and humanity rather than God and the world. Christ and Culture in Paradox is based on the idea that God is holy and man is sinful. God is able to redeem and provide Grace while humankind is prone to destruction. Christians must therefore uphold both merciful grace and divine judgement. Christians are called to be all-graceful (forgiving) and all-truthful (condemning). This might not seem as perplexing to the Christian as paradoxical concepts are present in many of the core theological concepts of Christianity including the incarnation (Jesus is both fully God and fully man) and the trinity (there is one God in three persons). Niebuhr traces this stance to the writings of the apostle Paul and tracks it through Luther and Kierkegaard. This perspective naturally supports political conservatism because it offers grace to those within the Christian community but condemns lifestyles and behavior that are not congruent with the moral codes of the community. Therefore, outsiders are often seen as wicked rather than deserving of grace.

The synthesis position tries to harmonize the Christian Church and Culture. Christians are to rely on both Christ and Culture in order to live fulfilling, God-fearing lives. This is seen clearly in the Christian tradition of providing proofs for God using both reason and faith. While reason is from the culture, it is seen as a gift from God. Proponents would contend both are needed in order to fully understand the Christian religion. This worldview is neutral in whether it supports or suppresses political action on social issues within the church. However, it seems like it leans more towards suppressing political action. This is because rather than taking the step to allow the

Church to transform the culture, this position can lead to the Church becoming simply

another institution within the culture. The most notable proponent of this position

from church history is Thomas Aquinas.

Another typology developed by a sociologist rather than a theologian comes

from Christian Smith who describes religion's relationship to culture as two faces that

roughly align with the conception of opiate and inspiration theory. To Smith, religion in

its pacifying role is the first face of religion (later he discusses how religion's second face

is one that inspires political activism). According to Smith,

> Religion typically is in the business of supplying meaningful worldviews and moral
> systems that help to integrate and harmonize societies; of providing comforting
> theodicies to those distressed and suffering; of rendering ideologies that legitimate the
> oftentimes unjust status quo (Smith 1996; 1).

In this view, religious institutions inspire little more than church attendance, and

while they can have a harmonizing effect on communities, they often lead to the stifling

of social progress. This is due to the fact that religious cultural systems all feature what

Smith calls, "sacred transcendence". This is, essentially, a focus on the otherworldly

which fundamentally shifts how one perceives reality. Religion, therefore, encourages

conservatism because it "helps to justify and sustain the world and life just as it is

experienced" (Smith 1996; 6). Religion can, therefore, cause those in lower social strata

to not strive for social advancement in this world but to pacify themselves so as to

achieve some form of heavenly prize. According to Emmerson and Smith, "By providing

significance and purpose to life as it is, religion provides legitimation for the world as it

is (Emmerson and Smith 2000; 17). This legitimation leads believers to passive

acceptance of the world, as well as its political and social systems, while diverting their

attention heavenward.

Another theological feature of American Christianity that hinders social progress

is premillennialism (Emmerson and Smith 2000). Premillennialism, generally, is the

Christian theological concept rooted in the Book of Revelation that claims that Christ

will return before establishing his heavenly kingdom that will reign for a thousand years

on Earth. While sacred transcendence is a focus on the otherworldly which justifies the

world as it is, premillennialism justifies the idea that the temporal world is unholy and in

a constant state of decline until the return of Christ (i.e. it is beyond saving). Souls are

to be saved, while the world is condemned, prompting believers to avoid political action

and spend their time proselytizing. The Great Commission to spread the gospel is

prioritized over the second of the great commandments to love others. Michael Gerson

in a column in *The Atlantic* describing the relationship between evangelical Christians

and the Trump presidency described premillennial theology and its effect on American

politics. According to Gerson,

> In this view, the current age is tending not toward progress, but rather toward decadence and chaos under the influence of Satan. A new and better age will not be inaugurated until the Second Coming of Christ, who is the only one capable of cleaning up the mess. No amount of human effort can hasten that day, or ultimately save a doomed world. For this reason, social activism was deemed irrelevant to the most essential task: the work of preparing oneself and helping others prepare for final judgment (Gerson 2018).

Premillennial theology is widespread throughout American evangelicalism and

plays into individualistic and exclusionary attitudes. One theological offshoot of

premillennialism that is common among more charismatic sects of Christianity is

dispensationalism. This theological argument holds that throughout history God has made several revelations or dispensations to mankind, establishing new responsibilities to humanity which man will ultimately fail to live up to. This ultimately leads to divine judgement. Dispensationalists argue that the "end times" are imminent, therefore, there is not much of a need for social activism, but rather proselytism. For example, studies have found that premillennialist and dispensationalist eschatology are negatively related to support for progressive environmental policy (Guth et al. 1995). The impending judgment compels believers to work less towards lasting social change and focus more on enforcing Christian moralism. Consequently, it should be expected that conservative eschatology leads to conservative politics across policy arenas. For premillennialists, the world is in a state of decay that can only be stopped through the Parousia, the second coming of Christ.

Additionally, American Christians are able to draw on a wealth of scriptural support for opiate worldviews including passages that describe the sovereignty of political powers as well as passages that command peaceful living. Through these passages, Christians may see new ideas as creating division and not as living at peace with others. Within the American Christian tradition, "common sense" readings of scripture where historical/social context of the writings are largely ignored for how a particular passage can apply to the reader are common. Therefore, individual verses can be as important as developed theological frameworks, because they are influential in

the development of attitudes among individuals and their leaders. Here are a few

examples of passages from the Christian scriptures that justify an opiate position[3]:

- *"For the kingdom is the LORD'S And He rules over the nations." Psalm 22:28*
- *"And he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against you" 2 Chronicles 20:6*
- *"He rules by His might forever; His eyes keep watch on the nations; Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah." Psalm 66:7*
- *"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority expect from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but of evil. Do you want to have no fear of Authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same" Romans 13:1-4*
- "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." Matthew 5:39

Finally, beyond key biblical passages that may be used as justification for opiate

attitudes, how one values scripture may be related to attitudes on racial justice.

Biblicism, the view that the Bible should be read literally and is the ultimate source of

divine authority has been shown to be related to attitudes on criminal justice.

Specifically, Perry and Whitehead (2020) find evidence that race alongside Biblicist

readings of scripture interact to influence one's evaluation of which is preferential:

wrongful conviction or erroneous acquittal. Essentially, when it comes to the question

of which is better to let the innocent be imprisoned or to let the guilty go free being

white and biblicist views of scripture are positively related to the former. Perry and

Whitehead find that these variables interact in that whiteness moderates the effect of

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[3] All passages listed here are from the *New American Standard Bible.*

biblical literalism. Being a white biblical literalist is the strongest predictor of preferring

wrongful conviction over erroneous acquittal, while being a non-white biblical literalist

or a white non-biblical literalist are less likely to prefer wrongful conviction. At the same

time, being Black makes one unlikely to prefer wrongful conviction regardless of views

on the Bible. These preferences are tied to racialized attitudes because of the high

disparity in arrests, convictions, and sentencing between Black people and white people

(The Sentencing Project). If views toward the Bible can influence attitudes toward a

racialized criminal justice issue, they are likely to influence racist or anti-racist attitudes

more broadly.

Real World Evidence of Opiate Theory

Practically, we can see opiate theory at work throughout history and around the

world. Numerous religious groups seek to remain entirely separate from the political

sphere. These include the Amish, Jehovah's Witnesses, and who formally separate their

religious groups from the political sphere, but also many of the faithful avoid political

culture because they perceive it as creating disunity and not important to their mission.

Today despite Republican control of the legislative and executive branches of

government, and the Christian right being in a comparatively influential position in

American politics, Rod Dreher argued for a Christian retreat from American civil life in

his 2017 *New York Times* bestselling and widely discussed book, *The Benedict Option*

(Dreher 2017). For Dreher, Christians are opposed to culture and instead of entering

the Culture War, they should build their own secluded culture. Dreher's book responds

to the politics of the day with pessimism. He predicts the obliteration of Christian

America if Christians do not retreat into their own counter cultural communities. For Dreher this is the way to preserve the Christian faith rather than political action.

However, the opiate theory in practice looks less like a separation of the church from culture and more like religious values, language, and institutions promoting the status quo and moralizing oppression. In *The Color of* Compromise, Jemar Tisby describes the history of the Christian Church's complicity in racism in the United States. This history can be traced from the the pre-revolutionary period, through religious defenses of slavery in the antebellum period, as well as inaction during the Civil Rights Movement (Tisby 2019). Indeed, the religious alliance with conservative politics has done much to quell racial progressive social action in the United States.

Up to this point, I have discussed opiate theory as a phenomenon that suppresses political progressivism through a focus on otherworldly reward and a denial of the temporal world or of the role of the church as an active force in changing the temporal world. While this can lead to seclusion and isolation from the political sphere, there is, of course, another way that religion stymies political progressivism: through the facilitation of and alignment with right-wing politics.

The American Culture War

A widely discussed and divisive theory on how religion helps to form a divide in American civic life is the culture wars theory. James Davison Hunter is attributed by the literature as the first to coin the term in his book "Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America" and since then many have affirmed or countered his main claim that there is a division between the orthodox and progressive and that this division will lead to

increasing conflict inside and outside of the American political sphere (Hunter 1991).

The idea that, in America, religiosity is associated with the political right while

secularism is associated with the political left is often viewed through this lens.

However, Putnam and Campbell describe the development of religious polarization in

America as a series of "seismic societal shocks", the first being the sexual revolution of

the 1960s (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 3). This led to a growth of conservatism and

religious evangelicalism as a response. According to Putnam and Campbell, "as

theological and political conservatism began to converge, religiously inflected issues

emerged on the national political agenda, and 'religion' became increasingly associated

with the Republican Party" (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 3). This led to another "seismic

shock" in which many, especially the young, have begun to disavow religion.

This narrative provides evidence that there is a divide between the conservative

religious and the more liberal non-religious, but does not account for the divide

between the theologically conservative and progressive within the American religious

community.   Hunter dates the roots of the Culture War as much older than Putnam and

Campbell's societal shocks, over a hundred years and claims that theological progressive

initiatives within churches, synagogues and other religious organizations have been

countered by orthodox reactions for over a century. Some examples cited are:

protestant intellectuals who pushed for an interpretation of the Bible that was

reconciled with the findings of modern science and the orthodox groups who countered

in defending the scripture through the creation of dozens of Bible colleges and other

organizations, American Catholics who desired to make their religion more palatable to

protestant Americans of the time, and the papal condemnation of this Catholic

Americanism, as well as the formation of the reform movement in Judaism and the

struggle of the Orthodox to maintain their religious identities (Hunter 1991, 78-85).

The theory is not accepted across the board by the political science literature.

One of its biggest detractors is Morris Fiorina. Fiorina et al. argue that the American

electorate is not polarized along moral lines, rather that the political figures from whom

the electorate must choose are more polarized (Fiorina et al. 2010). Wolfe argues that

the perceived culture war is a product of journalistic sensationalism and that while there

has been a growth of religious conservatives, that does not necessarily mean that the

various denominations are split between orthodox and the theologically progressive

(Wolf et al. 2007). While there is evidence for both competing schools of thought, the

culture wars framework is useful in explaining the alliance between religious institutions

and the American political right and tracks with the current racialized division within

American life.

The Religious Right

The Religious Right is a conservative political movement in the United States

mostly made up of Christian evangelicals which can be traced back to evangelical

leaders such as Jerry Falwell and others within the Moral Majority organization in the

1970s.   The Religious Right tends to embrace the culture war narrative and believe that

they are "culture warriors" fighting for moral positions on family, education, and

sexuality (Lambert 2008). Among others, both Putnam and Campbell as well as Lambert

argue that this movement rose as a response to the counter-culture movement and sexual revolution of the 1960's (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Lambert 2008). While Jimmy Carter was able to get elected with the support of southern evangelicals, having said throughout his campaign that he is a born again Christian, his liberal policies on education and his views on family were a contrast to those of evangelicals at the time and allowed for the Christian Right to better motivate evangelicals to vote Republican (Lambert 2008, pages 196-205). According to Martin (2005), despite Ronald Reagan being less religious in his personal life than President Carter, Falwell and the rest of the Moral Majority supported him because he championed the family values agenda that they argued for (Martin 2005). Since this time, the Religious Right has played an active, and often a successful, role in the Republican Party nomination process, the formation of Republican Party Platforms at the state and national levels, lobbying Congress, and litigation (Wilcox and Robinson 2011).

According to Wilcox and Robinson, Americans join the religious right for one of two reasons. Either there is an aspect of one's personality that is linked to membership in the Christian Right, for example many argue that those who are more authoritarian or dogmatic are more likely to join up (Wilcox and Robinson 2011). Alternatively, Americans may join the Christian Right because the movement represents their political views and religious beliefs and allows them to have influence within Republican party politics (Wilsox and Robinson 2011).

Adorno et al. introduced the concept of authoritarianism as a type of personality trait, or a set of traits, that centers around the concept of obedience to authority, adherence to norms and procedures, and frustration towards out-groups (Adorno 1950).[4] According to Adorno, this concept is one that most often presents itself to those who have had a harsh upbringing.

Altemeyer (1988) has a more specific definition than Adorno. He defines authoritarianism as the combination of three attitudinal clusters: 1. Authoritarian submission, which is defined as "a high degree of submission to the authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives;" 2. Authoritarian aggression, which is defined as " a general aggressiveness, directed against various persons, that is perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities;" 3. Conventionalism, or " a high degree of adherence to the social conventions that are perceived to be endorsed by society and its established authorities" (Altemeyer 1988; page 2).

Authoritarianism is also an attribute that tends to be positively related to conservatism. In fact, in many studies it is not known simply as authoritarianism, but right-wing authoritarianism. There has been some debate over whether or not there is such a thing as left-wing authoritarianism, as many have claimed that some fascist forms

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[4] While both are attitudes that deal with frustration towards out-groups, authoritarianism should not be misconstrued with ethnocentrism.

of government were more left-wing in their ideals; Altemeyer presents the idea that in modern western societies it is hard to measure authoritarianism among those in the left because their political ideology is very far removed from that of the established government. (Altemeyer 1988, 258-264). Altemeyer (1988) says, "Communists in countries such as Canada and the United States will be very unsubmissive to the established authorities; they will favor free speech, the right to dissent, and so on, and thus they will be 'democrats.' In places such as the Soviet Union and Poland, however, Communists will be opposed to these things and so be highly authoritarian" (Altemeyer 1988, page 260).

Later, Altemeyer did develop a definition of left-wing authoritarianism which has the same components as his definition of right-wing authoritarianism only with a different direction (Altemeyer1996). Left-wing authoritarians have a high degree of submission to authorities who are dedicated towards overthrowing established authorities, a high degree of aggression towards those established authorities and those who support them, and a high level of conventionalism in regards to the norms and conventions of the revolutionary authorities (Altemeyer 1996, 219).   Still it is a concept that is, if not more present in those of the political right, hard to measure among those of the left.

Stenner (2005) has proposed a different view of the concept. For Stenner, authoritarianism is simply a psychological predisposition to intolerance. It is a predisposition where one values group authority and uniformity over individual freedom and diversity (Stenner 2005). On the other hand, Hetherington and Weiler

(2009) believe that the concept's root is in the need of many to impose order on ambiguous situations (Hetherington and Weiler 2009, page 34). Furthermore, while they agree with scholars such as Fiorina that the public is not as polarized as the media makes it out to be, they present evidence that the public does have polarized levels of authoritarianism and that it is possible that "those scoring at opposite ends of the authoritarianism tend to engage in different, and often incompatible, forms of moral reasoning" (Hetherington and Weiler 2009, page 187). Perhaps, therefore, the culture war is not against liberals and conservatives, or modernists and orthodox, but non-authoritarians and authoritarians.

In regards to religion, the literature conventionally points to the idea that those who are more religious are more authoritarian and vice versa. Altemeyer (1996) finds specific evidence that authoritarianism is correlated with religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

However, using various scales of religious maturity, Leak and Randall (1995) found that there is a negative relationship between authoritarianism and religious maturity (i.e. those who are more mature in their religious faith are less authoritarian than those who are immature in their religious practice) (Leak and Randall 1995). Religious maturity as examined by Leak and Randall includes, among other items, critical thought about one's faith, openness to doubt, and the ability to examine religious issues without reducing their complexity. As authoritarianism tends to be linked to conservatism, this is in direct contrast to the Religion Gap hypothesis that those who

attend church more often are more likely to be conservative than those who do not; it is also in contrast to Altemeyer's findings.

Inspiration Theory: How Religion Encourages Black Political Advancement

In this section, I will walk through the various theological concepts and historical movements that support the idea that faith inspires social action. Specifically, I will discuss Niebuhr's conception of Christ as the Transformer of Culture and postmillennial eschatology as worldviews that are associated with Christian political action. I will then take some time to discuss Christianity as a social force in U.S history by discussing the Social Gospel movement, Christianity as an inspiring force in the U.S. Civil rights movement, and finally evidence of religious faith as an inspiration to social action today. I will conclude this section with a brief review of Christian scriptural justification for the pursuance of social justice.

Christ Transforming Culture

As described previously, Niebuhr describes several types of Christian approaches to culture. One of which is "Christ Transforming Culture". In this view, while mankind is fallen and in sin, Christ is still sovereign over culture. Therefore, Christians are encouraged to participate in culture and to be Christ's agents in transforming the culture to look like the Kingdom of God. Relying on the Johannine writings in the New Testament, Christians of this perspective see themselves as "Kingdom Workers" in more than just the sense of proselytizing. Rather, they see working for societal good as part of God's redemptive work on earth. While there is sin on earth, the goodness of the earth

is emphasized while believers are meant to fix the deficits that come from the fall. Many who hold to this view of their role as Christians would see racism and other social injustices as a consequence of the fall of man and therefore seek to eliminate racial injustice in the world.

<u>Postmillennialism</u>

Postmillennialism is the Christian theological school of thought which interprets chapter twenty of the book of revelation as describing the second coming of Christ as occurring after the final millennium in human history, a time when Christian ethics and peace cover the globe. This school of thought runs counter to premillennialism described earlier in this chapter. While premillennialists believe that the world will fall further and further into decay until the second coming of Christ, postmillennialists often believe that it is their responsibility to help bring about the peace of the final millennium. According to Gerson, postmillennialism was widespread among American evangelicals during the Antebellum period and "As such, they were an optimistic lot who thought that human effort could help hasten the arrival of this promised era—a belief that encouraged both social activism and global missionary activity" (Gerson 2018).

Gerson describes how the Civil War, followed by advances in science led American Christianity to schism, with theological progressives seeking common ground with science, theological conservatives embracing fundamentalism, and both groups becoming generally less optimistic about the coming millennium. While this caused

postmillennialism to wane in popularity, during the evangelical era of postmillennialism we see both evangelical and mainline Christians push for moral reform including the Christian influence on abolitionism.

Social Gospel

Christian progressivism today has its roots in the Social Gospel movement of the early 20th century and the American Civil Rights movement later on (Fowler et al. 2010). According to Lambert (2008) the Social Gospel movement developed as a counterforce against the Gospel of Wealth. Lambert calls the movement, "a radical expression of Christianity, imagining the United States as a redeemed nation dedicated to a just society for all its citizens rather than a land of opportunity for a few rich individuals" (Lambert 2008). In this movement a focus on, as one leader of the movement, Walter Rauschenbusch, puts it, "crossing the racial boundary lines and outgrowing nationalistic religion" (Lambert 2008; Rauschenbusch 1918). Rauschenbush accepted socialist principles as practical answers to problems of the day, and his focus on Christ's teachings on the Kingdom of God lead him to both optimistically believe that society was progressing towards that ideal, while also deeming the concept of sin as applicable to society itself in addition to individuals (Rauschenbusch 1907). Under the theology of the Social Gospel, which encompassed mostly Christians but also those from other faiths, religious belief went hand in hand with political action.

Morone describes the moral cause of religious leaders who took part in The Social Gospel movement as moving from individualist sins to communal troubles. Indeed, he describes how the sins of puritan America (sloth, drunkenness, violence, and

lust) were turned on their head. Poverty is no longer the result of the sin of sloth, rather it was caused by societal sin. Drunkenness, violence, and even lust were viewed now as public health issues whose causes must be fixed (Morone 2003; 19). Morone says that while historians relegate the use of the phrase Social Gospel only to a few writers and thinkers at the end of the 1800's, Morone says it lived on and influenced American domestic policy for almost half a century (Ibid.)

To be sure, the spirit of the Social Gospel movement reappeared during the American struggle for civil rights and several large religious-political movements since including the religious crusade for temperance, and religion's campaign on life issues such as abortion and euthanasia. Martin Luther King Jr. was educated at the Rochester Theological Seminary, the same institution as Rauschenbush, which had a doctrinal emphasis on the social purposes of faith (Noll 2008). Findlay (1990) also identifies the remnants of the Social Gospel in the commitment of churches to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Findlay 1990).

<u>Christianity as a Politically Progressive Force Today</u>

While it is less visible than the "Religious Right", there are Christian political and racial progressives working to achieve political goals through party politics. While the Republican Party relies heavily on Evangelicals and the Religious Right as a loyal voting bloc, the Democratic Party relies heavily on religious "nones" as well as the growing Religious Left. While the Religious Left does not make headlines quite as often as the Religious Right, it is still a well-documented force in American politics that is more associated with the Democratic party and progressive politics. The reason for it being so

elusive to the public eye is, according to a Lambert (2008), likely due to the fact that

most religious liberals are members of the Democratic party, which has always been

"reluctant to promote any religious movement that could be defined as exclusive, or

that could be accused of trying to create a religious establishment"(Lambert 2008; 218).

However, Lambert points out that a series of failed elections has inspired leaders of the

Democratic party to organize the Religious Left as a viable alternative to the Religious

Right (Lambert 2008; 218). The success of these efforts is debatable, however, we can

see that the Pew Research Center has begun to include "Faith and Family Left" within

their political typology.

The Religious Left tries to provide a moral alternative to the Religious Right and

is becoming more organized. There is evidence that it is growing but has additional

hurdles that the Religious Right does not face, according to an interview with Robert

Jones, CEO of the Public Religion Research Institution (Merritt 2013). These include

ethnic diversity leading to less natural affinities between members of the Religious left,

geographical dispersion, and the fact that the Religious Left is more religiously diffuse

(i.e. religion is not always the main driver of their political attitudes) (Merrit 2013).

While there is organization within the Religious Left, according to Lambert, there

is some difficulty defining who makes up the Religious Left as it deals with a wealth of

policy issues and topics and it is largely a partisan designation. Therefore, many who

would be considered as part of the Religious Left do not choose to self-identify as such

(Lambert 2008; page 221-222). Many members of the Religious Left choose to self-

identify as "liberal Christians", "compassionate Christians" or "progressive Christians" or

simply as Christians (Lambert 2008; 222). While the Religious Left does include

evangelical Protestants, most politically progressive protestants are representatives of

mainline protestant denominations rather than evangelical Christianity.

In regards to white Christians, the literature is optimistic in seeing Christianity as

an inspiring force for civil rights, especially among evangelical protestants. Emerson and

Smith (2000) argue that white evangelicals have become increasingly more involved in

race relations, "calling for nothing less than a complete end to racial strife and division"

(Emerson and Smith 2000; 3). However, despite a shift among white evangelicals to this

goal, Emerson and Smith are less than optimistic about how religion can help achieve it.

According to Emerson and Smith,

> The structure of religion in America is conducive to freeing groups from the direct
> control of other groups, but not to addressing the fundamental divisions that exist in
> our current racialized society. In short, religion in the United States can serve as a moral
> force in freeing people, but not in bringing them together as equals across racial lines
> (Emerson and Smith 2000; 18).

However, focusing events centering around race including the elections of

President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump, the death of Trayvon Martin, and

the Ferguson moment may have tampered optimism that White Christianity is becoming

more focused on racial justice.

Biblical Justifications for Progressive Political Action

Biblical justifications for political progressivism are rooted in the idea of Christian

charity. Throughout the Old Testament, care for orphans, widows, and the poor is a

common theme. Some example verses include: Hosea 14:3, Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 82:3, and

Deuteronomy 10:18. The ancient texts called for the care of these groups of people who

were among the most marginalized and powerless in society. Jesus's teachings doubled down on the idea of caring for the poor. While this theme is carried out throughout the gospel narratives it is most notable in the gospel of Luke. Jesus's message calls for radical compassion to not just the poor, but to those considered the "least of these" (i.e. the most marginalized in society). Throughout the Gospel of Matthew we see Jesus's push for radical generosity and hospitality in his famous Sermon on the Mount as well as his speech concerning the "Judgement of the Sheep and the Goats" in Matthew 25. In this speech, Jesus provides criteria for avoiding God's judgement based on feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned. Here, Jesus calls his followers to seek out those who are oppressed or marginalized and provide them with care.

In addition to Christian charity, the New Testament encourages the pursuance of social and racial justice in many ways. Jesus seemed to defy racial and cultural barriers (for example, his association with the Samaritan woman at the well) and he often opposed societal norms and laws that he believed to be unjust. Additionally, the apostle Paul, often considered the true founder of the Christian religion, speaks for unity beyond national, gender, and socioeconomic barriers in his effort to create a religious sect that was multi-cultural.

Unconventional Partners: An Alternative to Opiate and Inspiration

Fowler, in his book, "Unconventional Partners: Religion and Liberal Culture in the United States" argues that the question is not whether or not religion supports or criticizes the societal status quo. Rather, Fowler argues that religious institutions are

escapes from the pressures of liberal society. Fowler defines liberalism as the societal

order that emphasizes rationality and skepticism, social tolerance, and individualism and

individual rights. Liberalism is reinforced by society through various institutions which

he calls, collectively, "the liberal order". In Fowler's conception, religion does not

contribute to liberal society and it does not challenge it, but rather makes it bearable.

He calls religion "a refuge from our society and its pervasive values" (Fowler 1989; 4). It

acts as an escape from two aspects of the liberal order: moral skepticism and

individualism. Religion provides this function by providing a set of values for those who

are religious to live by and through providing a sense of community. This concept is

similar to structural functionalism as it provides a role in society for religion. However,

that role is separate from civic life.

The Black Church: Opiate or Inspiration?

The role of the Black church, specifically, in Saint Louis public life has been in

dispute. While Bunch (1940) shows that African-Americans held the balance of power

between the major political parties in the region, and electoral engagement in the Black

church was widespread due to the self-interest of Black clergy, the changing political

landscape has called the role of such churches into question since at least the 1980's.

Jones (1987) relies on survey data from Black pastors in the Saint Louis area in order to

discuss this debate in a regional context. Eventually, Jones comes to the conclusion that

Black religious institutions in the greater Saint Louis area are willing to facilitate political

participation in the region but often are ineffective due to a lack of (Jones 1987).

However, Jones does not include data for many congregations deemed "too small";

these include data from the many storefront churches throughout Saint Louis City and Saint Louis County (Jones 1987).

Despite the opiate theory's claims, there is a wealth of research on how the Black church mobilizes its congregations into political action, specifically electoral politics. According to Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2014), Black churches are able to stimulate political action in three ways: first, by providing a platform for political learning, second, by empowering church members through increasing their social capital, and third, by communicating messages about the relevance of religion to public life (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). Harris and Smith (2005) describe churches as "mobilizing agents" in Black communities, and claim that they mobilize individuals both directly through such activities as having voter registration drives, and indirectly by providing information on community and political events and linking inactive church members with those who are already mobilized (Harris and Smith 2005).

However, Wald and Calhoun-Brown also explain the limitations that Black churches have in participating in politics which include, first, dissatisfaction from progress in electoral politics despite continuing support for electoral activity within Black churches, second, a class of secular leaders that have developed since the civil rights movement, and finally, difficulty in engaging politics outside of electoral politics (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). That being said, Wald and Calhoun-Brown show that religious organizations have often turned to civil disobedience when "motivated by intense and deeply felt commitments but lacking in other resources" or in order to "add moral weight to their position" (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014).

Fowler et al. (2010) place an emphasis on the role of the clergy within Black Protestant churches as the main link between African-American religion and politics. According to them, "African American pastors and churches are convinced that political activity is a legitimate and necessary means of improving the African American lot on Earth" (Fowler et al. 2010). They then cite Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) who provide evidence that 90 percent of African American clergy approve of political action (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). According to Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2014), "Because members of the clergy have more coherent worldviews, they can be particularly effective opinion leaders, framing grievances in a way that makes them politically relevant to parishioners", and by linking theological positions to political policies clergy are able to mobilize their parishioners on these "questions of morality" (Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2014). Interestingly, survey data from national polls shows that Black people tend to be more favorable of churches and clergy speaking out on social and political issues than White or Latinx people (Pew Research Center 2003).

If opiate theory is to be believed we can expect little political action from clergy in our study. This can be for one of two different reasons. The first potential reason would be that members of the clergy have strong politically conservative worldviews in which they see their faith as promoting political action to maintain the status quo. They will be unlikely to identify racial justice as a significant policy issue. The second is that clergy see their role as apolitical. In this case, clergy will be unlikely to say that they encourage political action among their congregations or engage in it themselves. Among citizens we can expect very little connection between religious attitudes and support for

racially progressive policy change or using contentious politics to achieve those ends.

They are likely to see their congregation as being disengaged in politics. On the other

hand, if we accept inspiration theory, we should expect to see faith leaders who link

their doctrinal beliefs with racialized problems and policy solutions. We would likely see

mission statements that include items beyond worship and proselytizing. We can also

expect to see religious citizens connect racial progress with their faith community.

2.3 Clergy and Racial Crises: Two Studies

Having provided a short summary on the relationship between religion and

politics in the United States, we must now turn to two important questions: how do

clergy respond to racialized crises and how do clergy engage in politics more generally?

Section 2.3 will answer the former, while 2.4 will explore the latter. How these

questions were answered in the Ferguson Moment will be explored in chapters three

and four.

Two studies in particular describe the reaction of clergy in instances of racialized

tension or violence. These are Campbell and Pettigrew's 1957 study of clergy and

school integration in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Sokhey's 2001 study of clergy reaction to

protesting and violence following the police killing of a young Black man in Cincinnati,

Ohio. These two studies are separated by several decades, and also the direction of the

racial tension.

Ernest Campbell and Thomas Pettigrew were the first to systematically study

clergy response to racial unrest in their study of ministers in Little Rock, Arkansas in

1957. The Little Rock case was a controversy surrounding an early instance of mandated school integration in which nine African American students were enrolled in Little Rock Central High School, which had previously been a whites-only school. The controversy led to both Arkansas National Guard and Federal troops being deployed to escort the students to school.

Neither Little Rock nor St. Louis are part of the "Deep South" yet both are states where slavery and segregation have left a major scar. The clear difference between Little Rock and Ferguson was the direction of the outrage. In Little Rock rioting broke out over a policy to integrate schools. The outrage was centered around an anti-racist policy, whereas in Ferguson, and the St. Louis region at large, racial tensions center around ongoing perceived racist policies and behavior by public officials. In Little Rock it was white people protesting to preserve a racist policy, while in Ferguson it was a diverse group that protested the actions of the Ferguson police.

In Campbell and Pettigrew's work we see Christian appeals to peace and law and order in Little Rock, rather than a Christian defense of desegregation. Campbell and Pettigrew describe a prayer meeting held some weeks after the rioting as a "ritualistic termination of any attempts by the clergy to direct the course of events in the racial crisis" as the clear goal of the service was to emphasize compromise and peace rather than moving forward toward racial justice. In this way the clergy were able to appease national pressure for church action, while not actually having to take steps that may have been deemed controversial by congregants.

The authors discover that certain institutional factors influence clergy to act in pacifying ways rather than to work for social reform. In particular, they find that institutional structures within religious congregations help clergy with anti-racist convictions to avoid developing guilt while maintaining their inaction.

Campbell and Pettigrew discuss three systems that help to determine whether a minister will be active in their integrationist views or remain inactive. These systems are: the self-reference system (SRS) or how one sees oneself and their own motivational factors, the professional reference system (PRS), occupational carrots and sticks outside of their own congregation, and the membership reference system (MRS), influence from one's congregation. While a member of the clergy's self-reference system and professional reference system tend to motivate action on racial justice, they are not as powerful as the membership reference system.

According to Campbell and Pettigrew, congregations expect ministers to act as a "cohesive force" and maintain harmony within the congregation, to show steady increases in church membership, and to encourage maximum annual giving for improvement and expansion of the congregation's resources. These goals are difficult to achieve by going public and taking action on divisive issues, including racial justice.

Additionally, one's SRS is able to pacify any guilt for inaction by allowing ministers to focus on their "role" as leaders of their congregation and through communication techniques such as talking about "deeper issues" or vague values rather than the temporal issues at hand. They are able to feel that they are doing their God-sanctioned duty by keeping peace rather than pursuing progress.

Campbell and Pettigrew note that all major Protestant denominations had made statements declaring support for school desegregation, yet they find that congregational pressures constrained the behavior of clergy in Little Rock. We can, therefore, expect similar behavior in St. Louis. While Christian leaders on a national scale may preach racial reconciliation and healing and call for systematic reform of criminal justice in response to the death of Michael Brown, local clergy may not for a variety of reasons, notably congregational pressure. Additionally, protestant denominations have become more independent of national denominational organizations. Campbell and Pettigrew look specifically at ministers from established denominations. Their scope does not include church leaders of independent congregations or faiths beyond or on the fringes of Christian orthodoxy.

However, the Little Rock study has several shortcomings. Campbell and Pettigrew conducted 29 interviews with minsters: 27 protestant and 2 Jewish. They attempted to interview Roman Catholic priests, but were unable to due to lack of cooperation.   Therefore, Campbell and Pettigrew can only speak to two of the major religious traditions in the United States but do not tell us anything about how Black Protestant or Roman Catholic clergy react to instances of racial crisis. Additionally, Campbell and Pettigrew look specifically at ministers from established denominations. Therefore, their scope does not include church leaders of independent congregations or faiths beyond or on the fringes of Christian orthodoxy. This is possibly due to Campbell and Pettigrew's use of the "snowball technique" rather than random selection in choosing who to interview. Indeed, it may be likely that they find similar behaviors and

pressures across their sample due to the fact that they chose to forego random selection. They acknowledge these shortcomings, explaining that their sample is weighted towards large, prestigious congregations or those who were reputed to have played active roles in the conflict.

Following Campbell and Pettigrew, Sokhey examines clergy behavior decades later in Cincinnati. In the year 2001, Cincinnati was a city rife with racial unrest following the shooting of Timothy Thomas, one of many young unarmed African-American men who have been killed by police in the United States. Outrage following the shooting led to passionate protesting. Using mail surveys and phone interviews to Cincinnati clergy, Sokhey (2007) studied the response of religious leaders to the racial unrest in the city following the death of Thomas.

Sokhey's study is unique because it focuses specifically on the role of proximity in determining how clergy respond to racial tension and protest. His main research question was whether or not being farther removed from the protests geographically leads to being farther removed from the issues that the protests address. Following Djupe and others, Sokhey is interested in what mobilizes clergy to political action and how clergy then mobilize their congregants.

The abuse and killing of young unarmed Black men by police in American cities followed by protest and intermittent violence has become a common event. While each city has their own histories and cultures, the scenario in Cincinnati bears considerable resemblance with the unrest that surrounded the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson.

Protesting, vandalism, looting, and rioting occurred in Cincinnati's Over-The-Rhine area for three days following the shooting of Timothy Thomas, although unlike in Ferguson, a mayor-ordered curfew helped to end the tumult just a few days after the shooting (Garretson 2001). Both uprisings led to national media attention, the influx of high-profile figures into the city including Revs. Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. While in Ferguson, the police officer who killed Michael Brown was not indicted, Cincinnati officer Stephen Roach was tried for the killing of Timothy Thomas but was found not guilty (Horn 2001).

Sokhey found fairly high amounts of engagement from Cincinnati clergy, although engagement breaks down differently across race and religious tradition and attention was self-reported (Sokhey 2007). According to Sokhey's study, Black protestant churches were the most likely to report clergy and congregational interest in race-related issues, followed by Roman Catholics. While 60 percent of Sokhey's survey responded that they believe that the Cincinnati government had not done enough to deal with the city's racial tensions, nearly 70 percent of the survey said that rioting was an unjustified response to Thomas' death. Additionally, 90 percent of the survey agreed that the church should be more active in handing racial reconciliation in the city.

Additionally, Sokhey found that race was a key determinant in how clergy responded to the racial unrest in their city; while only 10 percent of clergy in white churches reported that they believed the rioting was justified, 45 percent of clergy in churches with predominantly Black churches disagreed. There was also a racial distinction between who clergy believed was to blame for the riots. Half of the clergy

from Black churches blaming the police and only 12 percent of clergy from white churches saying the same. Clergy viewed the performance of churches in pursuing racial reconciliation differently along racial lines as well, with a larger percentage of the survey believing that Black churches had been successful in promoting racial reconciliation (40 percent) compared to white churches (15 percent), with an overwhelming majority of Black clergy (70 percent) saying that white churches were ineffectual.

How then did clergy behave in Cincinnati in the early 2000's? Sokhey found that clergy mostly responded to the racial unrest through public speech. Sokhey found a small increase in various activities across the board including hosting special worship services dedicated to racial reconciliation and hosting a community leader to discuss race relations. However, he finds that most of the change comes from congregations who were already engaged with these issues. Interestingly, however, Sokhey's survey reports a comparatively large percentage of Cincinnati clergy as participating in marches or rallies for racial justice (about 30 percent); African-American clergy were much more likely to participate in these less conventional forms of clergy participation than were clergy of predominantly white churches. Ultimately, Sokhey finds that in addition to congregational and community resources, race plays a large role in whether clergy actively participate in justice work.

Similar to Campbell and Pettigrew, Sokhey examines resources and motivations for clergy action. Sokhey found some differences in resources; clergy from Black congregations were more likely to report that their congregation was lower income than other nearby congregations. However, despite the lack of resources a much larger racial

gap exists in motivation to participate, where Sokhey finds clergy of Black churches were more likely to say that their congregations, their community organizations, and attitudes of other clergy were encouraging in reconciliation efforts.

One aspect that sets Sokhey's study apart from the previous works on clergy activism is his focus on distance as a predicting factor in clergy behavior. Sokhey looks at physical distance between congregations and the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood where most of the rioting took place. He finds that clergy whose churches are located farther from the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood were much less likely to pay attention to racialized political issues, and were also less likely to participate in reconciliation efforts in response to the riot by public speech or more active means. Sokhey's study ultimate concludes that clergy working nearer to racial crisis took on the role of community leaders and provided for a social network that encouraged prolonged and pronounced clergy participation in reconciliation efforts.

Sokhey's study is also unique because he attempts to explain what factors are predictive of different types of political action among clergy. He estimates three models, one in which all forms of reconciliatory actions are considered, one in which community-oriented action is considered and a third which focuses on individualistic activity. Within the model based around community-oriented action such as attending meetings or active protesting, he finds that personal interest and religious beliefs as well as whether or not the clergy were compelled by media or congregational pressures to participate in reconciliatory efforts as significant predicting variables. He also finds length of tenure in congregation and geographic distance from the uprisings to be

significant factors. However, in the model which examines individualized and personal

activities that are more within-church, personal beliefs still play a predictive role, but

distance is not a predictive factor, and congregational encouragement and racial

makeup are more likely to play a role in discouraging this type of political behavior.

While Campbell and Pettigrew examined personal beliefs, the congregation, and

denominational restraint, and as we shall see Djupe and Glibert added community

restraints as a predictive factor in clergy behavior in situations of racial unrest, Sokhey's

work is important because it confirms the effect of these influences. However, he also

adds distance from the incident of police violence and protesting as a significant factor

that needs to be considered in the sociological examination of religious response to

racial unrest. He also contributes significantly to our understanding of what factors

mobilize participation among clergy by his conclusion that the type of reconciliatory

activity that is being considered may be influenced more or less strongly by different

types of factors. By separating community and individualistic factors of reconciliatory

action, Sokhey wisely shows us that different factors influence different types of

behaviors. Sokhey's work shows how a clergy's personal beliefs, denominational

structure, congregational beliefs, and community pressure can press upon clergy the

role of community leader, causing them to take part in more outward facing actions

(Olson 2000). Whereas more individualistic activities such as public speech were

influenced more by congregational factors such as racial demographics and the political/

theological attitudes of the congregation regardless of distance from riots and protests.

While social networks and community ties do more to encourage outward prophetic

behaviors, White congregational homogeneity can encourage silence from the pulpit.

While the scenarios in Cincinnati and Ferguson are easily comparable, over a

decade separates the two tragic moments of racial unrest. Can Sokhey's study speak to

Ferguson? This author believes so, however, it would be unwise to assume that clergy

behavior in Ferguson would act exactly the same as that in Cincinnati. Additionally,

Sokhey tells us a lot about clergy mobilization but not much about the effectiveness of

clergy in mobilizing congregants or in helping the community beyond clergy's self-

reporting of overall church effectiveness. Sokhey also does not try to get to the bottom

of what factors of personal belief must be present to activate clergy activism. Is it

theological, political, or eschatological? While personal belief is a motivational a

predictor of both of Sokhey's factors of participation, what aspects of one's beliefs are

important? Are they socialized more from the seminary or from Main Street? Which is

more important, beliefs about God or beliefs about the importance of Community?

These are questions that Sokhey's study does not address.

2.4 The Political Behavior of Clergy

Scholars of religion and politics have published several studies examining how

faith elites behave politically as well as when and why they might be motivated to do so.

In "The Political Voice of Clergy" Djupe and Gilbert (2002) go farther than Campbell and

Pettigrew in answering this question. The authors ask whether or not clergy are

addressing important public issues in their public speech and what factors encourage

them to do so. They find that clergy speak out on issues when they are mobilized to do

so, but also as a way to represent their congregation to the public. They divide the issues that clergy might speak out on into two categories: moral issues, and importantly for this paper, social justice issues. Adding to Campbell and Pettigrew (1959), they suggest that there are several systems at work that act as determinants for clergy speech: political and ideological, personal, denominational, congregational, and secular community influences.

Using a survey of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Episcopal Church clergy, the authors find that there is not an especially clear pattern as to how ideological and political orientations translate to clergy going public on moral issues. However, ideological and political orientations are clear predictors to whether or not clergy go public on social justice issues such as gay rights and the environment, with political conservatives being less likely to address social justice issues publicly than political liberals. Unfortunately, Djupe and Gilbert use these two issues as their examples of social justice issues rather than policy issues more closely related to racial justice.

In regards to congregational resources, Djupe and Gilbert say, "The role of the congregation in shaping clergy's political behavior lies at the intersection of congregational approval of clergy public speech and ideological agreement with the clergy" (Djupe and Gilbert 2002; 605). Congregational support provides job security for clergy and it is unlikely that they will behave in ways that will damage that support. Across both moral and social justice issues congregational support drives public speech. Djupe and Gilbert also checked several other congregational factors including tenure length, church size, and member loyalty but found no effects on public speech. They did,

however, find that the percentage of members involved in small groups within the church is a likely predictor of public speech on abortion and school prayer.

This emphasis on congregation seems fairly intuitive but it also seems to detract from the clergy's role as opinion leaders when they are only likely to speak out when their congregation is already like-minded on a particular policy issue. According to them, "Clergy become active participants in a policy debate when they sense an opportunity for change and when they are encouraged to participate by their secular ties and agreeable congregations" (Djupe and Gilbert 2002). So, contrariwise, clergy are less likely to speak out on an issue when they feel their congregation would react negatively, and are less likely to act if the status quo is hard to overcome. This seems to downplay their role as opinion leaders, since congregational opinion plays into whether or not they choose to go public on a social issue. However, this should prove valuable in our understanding of the political speech of clergy within Ferguson. Was Ferguson viewed as an opportunity for change, or as a precarious situation that needed to be navigated cautiously?

While one might expect to have found a relationship between denominational resources and the ability to pursue community development, Djupe and Gilbert find no relationship between denominational resources and whether or not clergy go public on either moral or social justice issues.

One of the biggest shortcomings of "The Political Voice of Clergy" is Djupe and Gilbert's inability to examine personal traits such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, or location due to low variance in their sample. They do, however, find that older clergy

are more likely to speak out on public issues due to their "socialization during more politically active periods, their deeper community roots, and their more secure position" (Djupe and Gilbert 2002; 606). It is likely that other demographic factors influence whether or not members of the clergy go public on issues, but this important study fails to answer exactly which ones.

According to Djupe and Gilbert (2002) as well as Djupe and Calfano (2013), clergy have a strong political voice through public speech, usually in the form of sermons or public prayer, and are able to use this tool to prime political attitudes. From these two works we find that clergy often go public by communicating publicly on an issue, but that this communication is typically done through priming certain values rather than directly discussing an issue.

Djupe and Calfano (2013) assess the effectiveness of clergy speech on political tolerance. They argue that faith elites are able to communicate religious values that affect political tolerance by affecting threat judgments. The priming of exclusive religious values influences the level of threat and thus decreases political tolerance. Similarly, exposure to inclusive values reduces the sense of threat that individuals feel for out-groups and indirectly encourages tolerance. Traditionally, studies on political tolerance are not able to perceive differences between individual cognitive structures and collective experiences; what is unique about this study is its ability to expose subjects to a value and therefore provide a collective experience. The authors suggest that exposure to different values is what is important because religious groups respond similarly to inclusive and exclusive value priming. Applying the work of Djupe and

Calfano (2013) to our understanding of Ferguson requires us to evaluate what types of values faith elites expose citizens to in the wake of this racialized tragedy.

The power of clergy as opinion leaders seems to be heightened among racial minorities. Fowler et al. (2010) place an emphasis on the role of the clergy within Black Protestant churches as the main link between African-American religion and politics. According to them, "African American pastors and churches are convinced that political activity is a legitimate and necessary means of improving the African American lot on Earth" (Fowler et al. 2010). They then cite Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) who provide evidence that 90 percent of African American clergy approve of political action (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). This is higher than among other groups; survey data from national polls shows that Black people tend to be more favorable of churches and clergy speaking out on social and political issues than Whites or Hispanic people (Pew Research Center 2003).

However, clergy are likely to be more effective as opinion leaders when they prime religious values rather than discuss specific political issues. Djupe and Gilbert point out that systematic misperceptions about the amount of political cues that clergy provide are based on whether or not a congregant has positive or negative attitudes towards the issue that the cue is intended to prime and the importance of that issue (Djupe and Gilbert 2009). Therefore, a focus on values is useful for clergy, because church members are likely to "erect defenses" against the political speech of clergy, however, by focusing on religious values, clergy are able to sidestep these defenses (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Djupe and Calfano 2014). In fact, Djupe and Calfano among

others have shown that clergy often lose credibility when they discuss political rather than religious issues, although as mentioned above this may be more of a problem for white clergy (Djupe and Calfano 2009; Djupe and Calfano 2014; Kohut et al. 2000). The problem is also compounded by congregants projecting their own political views onto clergy, especially when an issue is salient (Krosnick 1989; Krosnick et al. 1993). However, Djupe and Gilbert find that church goers are almost always able to correctly identify issues that are most frequently addressed by their clergy (Djupe and Gilbert 2009; 61).

By trying to influence individual political preferences through priming religious values, clergy are able to maintain credibility and indirectly influence political change. The religious values that Djupe and Calfano focus on in their study are exclusivity and inclusivity. Different institutions and faith elites emphasize different values. Emphasizing exclusivity may prime congregants to be less warm to out-groups, while emphasizing inclusivity would do the opposite. Djupe and Calfano find that members of clergy are more likely to promote inclusive values which makes them appear less effective because they are already engrained into congregants political attitudes, while the priming of exclusive attitudes are more rare and are more clearly visible in Djupe and Calfano's results (Djupe and Calfano 2014; 183).

Djupe and Calfano go on to argue that once this value priming occurs, it limits the options of policy elites who must either frame their message within the context of those values or have their policy cues shaped by the values environment (Djupe and Calfano 2014; 184). Djupe and Calfano go as far to say that the religious values priming

of clergy and religious insitutions "contributes to the diversity of the nation in such a way as to make it difficult for factious politics to survive" (Djupe and Calfano 2014; 184).

Djupe and Calfano find that primed values that are seemingly disconnected from politics can influence both foreign and domestic policy preferences (Djupe and Calfano 2014; 202). Their focus is on immigration issues. While we might assume that the effect of the religious priming of values would also be prominent on racialized issues, it does not tell us whether or not religious value priming is able to shape someone's attitudes on contentious politics or to motivate them to participate in contentious politics.

Another important voice in the conversation on the political influence of clergy is Laura Olson. Laura Olson seeks to answer what causes some members of the clergy to become active in politics while others avoid politics entirely. As in this study, Olson is interested in the political participation of clergy in so far as the political involvement is a part of the clergy's institutional role rather than as part of their personal lives. Olson says, "Clergy may have clear personal political beliefs, or they may even be active in interest groups or political parties, but if they do not bring their politics directly to bear on their congregations, they do not act as political leaders on behalf of, or even in reference to, those whom they lead (Olson 2000, 14). However, while this study is more concerned with the political participation of clergy, Olson is concerned with the political involvement of clergy. Following V. O. Key, this means that Olson is more interested with clergy's "orientations to the political realm" than she is with the specific actions that clergy take to influence the political realm (Olson 2000, 14; Key 1961). Olson's study is restricted to protestant clergy in urban Milwaukee, where she finds that both

religious tradition as well as community factors influence the mobilization of clergy on a wide span of issues.

Olson categorizes political involvement among clergy into three different types: disengaged, agenda setters, and political leaders. Disengaged clergy view their role as faith leaders as inherently apolitical. They focus on proselytizing and the spiritual needs of their congregants while avoiding direct involvement in politics within their institutional role. Agenda setters engage in public speech in order to prime their congregants for political action, but do not see their role as clergy as going beyond public speech. Political leaders are members of the clergy who are actively involved in politics as either activists or public officials. This group views the role of clergy and political involvement as intertwined and inseparable. Olson's sample is fairly evenly divided among the three groups with 16 clergy being categorized as disengaged, 17 being categorized as agenda setters, and 13 being categorized as political leaders.

Olson finds that politically disengaged clergy are mostly disengaged because of personal preference. However, some were constrained by congregational concerns, denominational norms and the lack of resources such as time. Disengaged clergy and their congregations are sometimes involved with acts of service in the community but they do not consider it political action.

Agenda setters use public speech to mobilize their congregations to political action yet do not go beyond public speech to overt political action. Olson's sample shows agenda setters as ranging from those who identify important political issues from

the pulpit but do not encourage members to respond through political behavior to those who identify political problems and clear strategies that the congregants should take to address them.

Olson argues that both religious tradition and socioeconomic factors within the local community influence whether or not and in what ways clergy go public on political and social issues. Olson's study includes 16 Mainline Protestant clergy, 16 Evangelical Protestant clergy, and 14 Black Protestant clergy, accounting for three of the four major American religious traditions.

While Olson believes that religious tradition is important, it is not as strong as a predictor of political involvement as is the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood which the clergy represent. She finds that neighborhood socioeconomic resources are negatively related with political activism among clergy. At first glance this seems counterintuitive. Verba and Nie (1972) have made the case that in order to participate in politics individuals must have the time and economic resources to do so (Verba and Nie 1972). However, the lack of resources within the neighborhood is actually what motivates the clergy to become a political actor. This is because congregants from wealthier neighborhoods and suburbs are more likely to already be socially or politically mobilized than congregants in less affluent neighborhoods. Clergy within these affluent neighborhoods, whose congregants are already involved within the neighborhood, have less incentives to work as opinion leaders or mobilizers than do clergy within less affluent neighborhoods, whose congregants are more focused on providing for their basic means of survival. Olson says, "Political leadership is in fact imperative for some

pastors regardless of their denomination, their theology, or even their race, as politically

active pastors tend to be those whose congregants face the most trying economic

circumstances" (Olson 2000; 11). So while a congregation may lack economic resources,

clergy of such congregations are more motivated to use their social capital to work for

political change and to mobilize their congregants to stand for their own interests and

community revitalization.

According to Olson, how clergy rank the importance of various political issues is

also predictive of how involved clergy will be in politics. She highlights that moral,

family, and reproductive issues tend to be more important among clergy who are less

involved with politics, while crime, racialized issues, and economic disparity are issues

taken up by those who are more active in the politics of Milwaukee.

Olson points out four personal resources that influence where a clergy might fit

in her typology of political interest. These include attitudes toward political involvement

among clergy, feelings of political efficacy, gender, and career stage. Notably, the

personal resources that Olson identifies are mostly strongly connected to contextual

factors. Gender and stage in career are largely related to congregational and

institutional power which tends to be restricted to women and novices. Olson assumes

that to some extent all members of the clergy have sufficient money, time, and civic

skills to have an active political orientation (Olson 2000, 44; Verba and Nie 1972). Olson

therefore chooses not to focus on these personal resources.

Clergy within Olson's survey took different stances on how involved clergy should be in politics. Subjects provided scriptural examples both for and against being politically interested. Those who believed that clergy should not be involved with politics also stated a lack of qualifications as a reason. On the other hand, several respondents who believed that clergy should be politically active believed that societal issues can only be addressed by the moral leadership of the church (Olson 2000, 35). Clergy classified as political leaders were unanimous in responding that clergy should be involved in politics, while agenda setters were almost evenly divided and the politically disengaged leaned towards answering that political activity is not acceptable. It stands to reason that political leaders believe that involvement in the wider world is an essential function of the clergy. While views on the institutional role of clergy are important, what factors influence where clergy acquire these views is outside the purview of Olson's study. Both those who oppose and support clergy involvement cite the Bible, but different passages using different hermeneutics. They also both cite the qualifications of clergy to address such issues. Olson leaves us with the question of what, if any, theological dispositions and political worldviews are predictive of these attitudes.

Olson finds that her sample was split as to the level of political efficacy that they feel. Perhaps to be expected, almost all of those classified as political leaders felt that clergy had a lot of influence when it comes to politics, whereas agenda setters and the politically disengaged mostly felt that clergy did not have much efficacy in politics (Olson 2000, 37).

Olson cites Carroll et al.'s 1981 study which finds that women of the clergy are more likely than their male counterparts to believe that their church ought to be involved in community politics, yet finds that women in the clergy are more likely to be politically disengaged. None of the political leaders in her sample are women. That being said, Olson's sample only includes four women. Women are much less likely to achieve ministerial status in protestant churches, especially in Evangelical and Black Protestant churches where women are major power players within their congregations but prohibited from official leadership and preaching roles. Three of the women in Olson's sample serve in Mainline Protestant churches while one serves in a traditionally African American church (Olson 2000, 39).   Olson finds that the major barriers that prevent women from higher levels of political involvement are mostly congregational constraints rather than a personal indifference to political action.

The last personal factor that Olson examines is career stage. Olson finds that clergy are most politically involved at mid-career. This makes intuitive sense as younger clergy who have yet to establish themselves may feel less confident in expanding their institutional role to include political issues, whereas clergy nearing retirement are likely to surrender institutional power to younger members of the pastoral staff. Ten of the thirteen political leaders in Olson's sample were in the middle of their career (those who had been in the ministry for over five years but who do not plan to retire within the next five years), while ten of the sixteen politically disengaged respondents were in the first five years of their ministerial career.

After breaking down personal resources in her sample, Olson turns to an examination of the various contextual resources that may help or hinder clergy from moving to higher levels of political involvement. These include both denominational traditions and socioeconomic factors. Once again, Olson is not so much concerned with personal time, money, and civic skills. A pastor's individual social capital is taken for granted, what is more important for Olson are denominational and neighborhood constraints on political involvement. While perhaps she is neglecting some personal factors, her work is a leap forward in viewing how context influences the political involvement and activism of clergy.

Following Guth et al., Olson's first contextual factor is the influence of denominational tradition. As her study focuses exclusively on clergy from protestant traditions, the constraints or opportunities for political involvement offered by the Catholic tradition are not discussed. Olson's study does represent the remaining three major religious traditions in the United States: Evangelical Protestantism, Black Protestantism, and Mainline Protestantism.

While Evangelicals at the time of Olson's writing and even more so today are major players in national elections and conservative political movements, Olson finds that the political involvement of evangelical public figures on the national stage, and evangelical individuals as a voting bloc does not translate to politically active clergy at the local level in Milwaukee at the time of her study. Half of the Evangelicals in her study were disengaged while all but one of the rest were agenda setters. Olson finds that within Evangelicalism, Pentecostals tend to be more involved than Evangelicals and

Fundamentalists in her survey. While the individualism associated with Evangelicalism

may have lead us to expect that Evangelicals would be more involved with politics

because of a lack of denominational constraints from doing so. However, Olson refers to

Jelen (1993) who discusses the strict separation between spiritual and political spheres

that has traditionally been prominent within the Evangelical tradition. As Evangelicals

have grown in political power within the United States would Olson's findings still hold

true? It would seem that for this study Evangelicals are likely not to play a strong role

within racialized politics as they have strongly been aligned with political conservatism,

the Trump presidency, and traditional social norms.

In her analysis by religious tradition, Olson finds no real consensus on political

interest among Mainline Protestant clergy. In fact, Mainline Protestant clergy are almost

equally divided into Olson's three types (Olson 2000, 49-50). Olson attributes this

division to Mainline Protestantism's history of social gospel theology at odds with the

encouragement of alternative readings of the Bible as well as real world pressures such

as declining congregational membership. Olson does find that more Mainline Protestant

clergy can be described as politically engaged than the Evangelicals in her survey.

However, Olson points out that the lack of consensus shows that studies by traditions

are not sufficient in identifying political differences among clergy.

Olson found that among the clergy she interviewed from Black Protestant

religious tradition three were disengaged, five were agenda setters, and six were

political leaders (Olson 2000; 51). So while African American clergy are known for being

more politically active than white clergy, still most of her sample were not full political

leaders. However, Olson points out that the disengaged clergy from this tradition all held secular jobs in addition to their role as clergy which might limit the amount of time they could devote to performing a political function within their church. Unlike this study, however, Olson is not looking exclusively at racialized political issues. It is very likely that in the wake of a tragedy like Ferguson, there will be a more pronounced gap between the political interest and activism of clergy of color compared to white clergy or clergy of churches that are not traditionally African American.

Overall, Olson does not find religious tradition to be a significant indicator of political interest in Milwaukee. Rather, she finds the socioeconomic status of neighborhoods to be a much more compelling predictor of political interest, although not necessarily in the direction that might be intuited. The conventional wisdom on political interest and activism is that individuals with better access to resources are more likely to participate in politics. Voters are wealthier and more likely to work white collar jobs than the average citizen; they are also more likely to be white than to be within a minority racial group. However, Olson finds that neighborhoods with the fewest resources are actually the ripest for clergy to act as political mobilizers (Olson 2000; 53).

Olson examines census data of the neighborhoods surrounding the churches in which the clergy in her sample work and finds a negative relationship between per capita personal income and the likelihood of a preacher being categorized as a political leader; she also finds a positive relationship between unemployment rates and percent living below poverty level with the likelihood of being categorized as a political leader.

While at first glance, this data seems counterintuitive, Olson provides strong theoretical

support for the data. She argues that churches in neighborhoods with higher

socioeconomic status have members that are more likely to be civically active already.

Therefore, clergy can focus on the spiritual needs of their congregation and community

rather than their physical and political needs. Additionally, Olson also makes the case

that low-income citizens may be easier for clergy to mobilize into political action by the

provision of civic skills through the church, skills which higher socioeconomic

congregants already are more likely to have.

Olson considers race as a socioeconomic factor as well. Milwaukee, like St. Louis,

is a highly segregated city where minority racial populations are likely to live in

communities with fewer resources. Olson finds that clergy in neighborhoods with higher

minority racial populations are more likely to be political leaders (Olson 2000, 57). The

theoretical support that Olson provides for this finding is that all-Black neighborhoods

tend to have high levels of racial solidarity and have been shown that, when mobilized

by an opinion leader, are more likely to become politically active. Compellingly, Olson

finds no significance in the race of the clergy themselves as an indicator of political

interest.

Taken together, Olson finds that contextual factors influence clergy to become

politically interested not because they have the means, but more so because of

necessity and responsibility. Clergy in neighborhoods that have more access to

resources do not see politics as part of their institutional role, because their congregants

are already well-positioned to be active in pursuing their needs through politics, while

clergy in lower resource neighborhoods pastor congregations who have more needs and less means of pursuing their own interests.

The final indicator of political interest that Olson examines is the political agenda of clergy. Which political issue clergy find most important can indicate what level of political interest she or he has. Olson asked clergy in her sample, "What political issue or set of issues concerns you most as a clergy member in this day and age?" (Olson 2000, 61). Olson typifies responses to this question across four categories: immediate life circumstances of those in their neighborhood, morality and family issues, discrimination against Christians and minorities, and nonlocal topics.

The first topic includes a wide variety of responses from gambling to welfare reform to education to crime to health care. Olson finds that half of those who mentioned these issues in her sample were political leaders, with political leaders being about three times as likely to mention economic issues and twice as likely to mention safety issues than were disengaged clergy or agenda setters (Olson 2000; 65). This provides additional support for Olson's findings on contextual sources that clergy in lower resource neighborhoods are more likely to be politically interested. Here, she finds that clergy who are political leaders have issues concerning the less well off on their mind. According to Olson, "This is yet another reason to believe that clergy in poor neighborhoods may be compelled into the political realm out of necessity. The problems they discussed clearly affect poor people more than the middle class, and it is poor people with whom central city clergy interact on a daily basis" (Olson 2000; 70).

Olson's second category, family and sexual morality, are issues often associated with the Christian Right including abortion and gay rights. These responses were mostly driven by agenda setters who made up half of these responses. Of those who responded in this way almost all were of the persuasion that America has wandered too far away from traditional Judeo-Christian sexual morality. Very few political leaders mentioned these issues. Many of those who claimed that these issues were of the utmost important were from an Evangelical tradition and were not very interested in politics.

The third issue category that Olson discusses is discrimination. This is discrimination both against Christians and against racial minorities. Olson finds that clergy who claimed that they themselves were discriminated against based on their faith tended to be Evangelical and not very politically involved. On the other hand, those in Olson's sample who believed that racial discrimination was one of the most important issues tended to be more politically involved.

Olson's final issue category was less pronounced than the others, that is nonlocal issues. These include institutions such as the state of Congress, the media or the presidency, as well as international issues such as war, genocide, and trade. Overall, nonlocal issues were not very high on the political agendas of clergy in Olson's sample. Most of those who identified these issues were agenda setters.

Overall, Olson finds that the issues that tend to lead clergy to higher levels of political interest tend to be those that affect the well-being of those in their neighborhood. These issues tend to be more associated with the American political left.

Clergy are motivated to political interest around these issues often out of necessity due to poor socioeconomic conditions within their neighborhoods and likely a lack of civically active congregants. At the same time, clergy who are interested in issues that tend to be associated with the American political right or the Christian Right ten to be less interested in politics as a part of their institutional role. These clergy tend to represent congregations outside of the inner city who are already civically involved and less likely to need opinion leaders to mobilize them to protect their interests. In this way, Olson's study runs counter to traditional common knowledge about the relationship between faith and politics which seems to many to be much more pronounced on the political right.

Olson's work is very thorough, but a case can be made that like other scholars of political actions of clergy, perhaps Olson is overlooking personal theological, political, and socioeconomic factors. Additionally, Olson's study does not discuss clergy and racialized politics as much as moral issues like abortion, crime, and family morality. As with Sokhey, Djupe and Gilbert, and others, this paper addresses whether Olson's study holds up under the intensely polarized politics that have emerged under the Obama and Trump presidencies and the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement. Furthermore, can Olson's findings hold true when transplanted to Ferguson and the greater St. Louis region?

The first portion of this study will test the hypotheses and conclusions of the above works to see if they are applicable to the context of St. Louis in the aftermath of the death of Michael Brown. Specifically, this study will seek to understand what

political narratives or frames are likely to be accepted and shared by clergy as well as the means through which they are shared. Systems of influence will be examined as well including the SRS, PRS, and MRS. These systems will be examined through the use of qualitative interview data in the hopes of understanding the factors that contribute not only to whether clergy speak out but to what clergy believe. If Djupe and company are correct in accessing that often clergy speak through priming values, the choice of clergy to "go public" on an issue is less important than what the clergy believes, because values associated with those beliefs can be presented rather without much thought as to their political connection. To be sure, clergy do not need to go public on any particular issue in order to prime values associated with that issue.

Furthermore, the above studies do relatively little to examine how theological beliefs and religious practices might influence political interest or action. This study will try attempt to increase our understanding of the association of these factors with clergy response to racialized state violence. Largely, this study is an attempt to use the concepts developed by the above works and to evaluate their capability for explaining clergy action and interest during not just a crisis, but a national focusing event on race and violence. The ultimate goal is to identify whether clergy are in Morone's conception participating in a jeremiad in demand of racial equity and justice or moralizing state violence.

2.5 Framing Ferguson

One final item that must be addressed before we move to our qualitative study of clergy and our quantitative study of the rank-and-file faithful of Ferguson: framing.

Framing is important in this study as it lies at the heart of our question. Responses to the death of Michael Brown (and virtually all incidents of racialized state violence) are centered around two frames: one that supports the state as properly exercising law and order, and one that sees that state action as unjust. The facts or non-facts that one accepts or rejects are often grounded in which frame one is predisposed to. For that reason, attention is needed on how the events of Ferguson have been framed.

Issue framing is an important early step in the policy process. How issues are framed can determine how they are evaluated and implemented. The Frameworks Institute, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to equip the nonprofit sector with the ability to frame the public discourse on social problems defines a frame effect as "a difference in the way people react to a particular choice depending on how it is presented" (Frameworks Institute). The group goes on to say that "changes in advocacy communication [i.e. speech in support of or against a policy alternative] lead to changes in public discourse, public opinion public policy and even outcomes" (Frameworks Institute). According to Lakoff (2006) "every word evokes a frame" (Lakoff 2006). Therefore, it is of utmost importance that policy makers and policy entrepreneurs discuss the policy that they are advocating for in a way that evokes the correct frame that they are trying to relate to the public. Frames and symbols are utilized universally throughout policy arenas, but this paper will seek to address how policy activists, political elites, and the media sought to define the issue surrounding the Ferguson Moment and the killing of Michael Brown by former Ferguson police officer, Darren

Wilson, and the subsequent killings of young Black men by police officers throughout the United States.

<u>Symbols, Language, and Stories within the Policy Process</u>

Defining the issue is a key strategic step in the policy process. According to Stone (1988) a problem definition is "a statement of a goal and the discrepancy between it and the status quo...it is the strategic representation of situations" (Stone 1988; 106). The classic maxim that there are multiple sides to any story holds true when we look at public problems and public policy. Stone argues that there is "no objective description of a situation; there can only be portrayals of people's experiences and interpretations" (Stone 1988; 106). A policy maker or activist must decide how to present the issue in a way that most successfully wins the public to their cause.

It can be argued that language rather than force is the basis of politics. According to Elder and Cobb (1983), "Whatever else may be involved, communication is central to politics. Certainly, who communicates what to whom, how, and with what effects go to the crux of the political process" (Elder and Cobb 1983; 9). Edelman (1964) addresses this point in his classic book, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. He asks, if politics is the question of who gets what then why is there so much talking rather than force? The problem with force according to Edelman is the potential for resistance or counterforce. According to Edelman, "Through language a group can not only achieve an immediate result but also win the acquiescence of those whose lasting support is needed" (Edelman 1964; 114). The public responds to the verbal cues of politicians, media, and policy activists. Edelman argues that it is the "consistency in the contexts in

which specific groups of individuals use symbols" that is crucial for understanding politics because "Meaning and response…are not the same for everyone, but a function of group interest or mutual role taking" (Edelman 1964; 115).

For Edelman one of the most important uses of language within politics is that it can either mobilize the public or keep them from becoming mobilized through the creation of sign structures. Sign structures act effectively as an issue frame within this paper, although they can be more broad conceptions such as "liberty" or "reason" or the Constitution of the United States; sign structures are essentially any "potent symbols justifying man's lot and his acts" (Edelman 1964; 129). So if the issue frame is prominent enough it would qualify as a sign structure. Edelman argues that these sign structures are powerful forces in political life and can even cause people to act against their own self-interests. According to Edelman,

> Syntax and the prevailing sign structure thus implicitly express the ideology of the community, facilitate uncritical acceptance of conventional assumptions, and impede the expression of critical or heretical ideas. A system of signs that objectively hurts a group can even be embraced and protected by the group it injures (Edelman 1964; 126).

Symbols are important for policy definition because, according to Stone, "They are means of influence and control, even though it is often hard to tell with symbols exactly who is influencing whom" because they are "collectively created" (Stone 1988; 108). Elder and Cobb describe symbols as the "currency" of the communication process. According to them, symbols "represent the focal objects of political attitudes and opinions and serve to define the procedural and substantive concerns of government" (Elder and Cobb 1983; 9). Symbols for Elder and Cobb also provide the

link between individuals and civic society (Elder and Cobb 1983; 27). These symbols once adopted by society can have intense effects on the individual. Edelman says, "Man creates political symbols and they sustain and develop him or warp him" (Edelman 1964; 1).

Stone points out four aspects of symbolic representation that is used in the policy definition process. These include narrative stories, synecdoche, metaphors, and ambiguity. First, the use of stories in policy definition is widespread. According to Stone, "Definitions of policy problems usually have a narrative structure; that is, they are stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end, involving some change or transformation…They have good guys and bad guys…and they have a moment of triumph" (Stone 1988; 109-115). Stone points to two different types of narratives that are common in the framing of issues. The first is the story of decline. This is an apocalyptic type narrative which starts with an allusion to "the good old days" and "ends with a prediction of crisis—there will be some kind of breakdown, collapse, or doom—and a proposal for some steps to avoid the crisis" (Stone 1988; 109). This is the narrative adopted by Donald Trump during his campaign for president through the use of the slogan "Make America Great Again". The second type of narrative is a story of control, which according to Stone, looks like this: "The situation is bad. We have always believed that the situation was out of our control, something we had to accept but could not influence. Now, however, let me show you that in fact we can control things" (Stone 1988; 113). Stone points out that both story types have alternate forms and that the stories of control "offer hope, just as stories of decline foster anxiety and despair"

(Stone 1988; 115). Policymakers present their alternatives as a way of either providing that hope or avoiding that despair.

The second symbolic form that policies take on is synecdoche. This is a literary tool where not so common examples are represented as what is typical. According to Stone, "It is common in politics that one part of a problem particularly catches the popular imagination, evokes a sense of horror, and confines the policy response to the part of the problem" (Stone 1988; 117). One example of this use of symbolic problem definition is Ronald Reagan's creation of the welfare queen myth. This leads to policy that is skewed to accommodate one aspect of the issue but does not address the issue as a whole. However, it is politically useful because "it can make a problem concrete, allow people to identify with someone else, and mobilize anger" (Stone 1988; 117).

The third aspect of symbolic representation widely used in public policy is metaphor. According to Stone, "On the surface, [metaphors] simply draw a comparison between one thing and another, but in a subtler way they usually imply a whole narrative and a prescription for action" (Stone 1988; 118). Metaphors are common place in policy language and usually imply prescription. Stone provides examples of metaphor in public policy including discussing institutions as living organisms or as machines, social problems as diseases, and the metaphor of war which can be seen in the War on Drugs and the War on Poverty.

The fourth aspect described by Stone is ambiguity, what she calls the "most important feature of all symbols" (Stone 1988; 123). The fact that one symbol can have multiple meanings depending on who is receiving the symbol "enables the

transformation of individual intentions and actions into collective results and purposes" (Stone 1988; 123). It allows for compromise. Stone calls attention to the connection of this important aspect to Elder and Cobb's study of symbols when they say, "To approach the study of politics from a symbolic perspective is to recognize the peculiar problems of synchronizing diverse motivations, expectations, and values so as to make collective action possible" (Elder and Cobb 1983; 28). Ambiguity is at once able to appease the polis while also allowing the policy leaders to "Carve out a sphere of maneuvering hidden from public view, where they can take decisive action on a problem" (Stone 1988; 124). It allows for both sides in a conflict to claim victory (Stone 1988; 125

Lakoff's Four Morals of Issue Framing

How then do we evaluate the strength of a frame? In the long run, by what percentage of the polis the frame is able to win over. However, in the crafting of frames, we need principles to help us determine what makes a strong frame. Lakoff describes four "morals" of issue framing. The first, as mentioned above, is that every word evokes a frame. The example that Lakoff provides is that the word 'elephant' prompts us to recall a specific image and specified knowledge (i.e. we think of an elephant) (Lakoff 2006). According to Lakoff, "ideas are primary—and the language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas" (Lakoff 2004)

The second "moral" provided by Lakoff is that "words defined within a frame evoke the frame". The example that Lakoff uses is the word "trunk" or "peanuts" evoking the idea of an elephant (Lakoff 2006). One example of this that we can sometimes deduce which side of an issue someone is on based on their vocabulary

when discussing the issue. When it comes to policy, it is hard to imagine the politically

far-right using terms such as "social justice" or "reproductive rights" because they are

words defined within a more politically progressive frame. It is disadvantageous for one

to discuss a policy while using language defined within an opposing framework.

Third, Lakoff says that "negating a frame evokes a frame." His famous example is

that it is impossible to tell someone not to think of elephant without them thinking of an

elephant. Acknowledging the opposition's definition of a policy problem is not a

successful way to promote one's cause.

The fourth and final of Lakoff's morals of framing is that every time a frame is

evoked it is reinforced. According to Lakoff, replacing existing frames takes time

because "reframing requires the rewiring of the brain" (Lakoff 2006). Additionally, it is

difficult to apply new frames to an issue or even to adapt old frames to new issues.

According to Elder and Cobb,

> "Discontinuities do, of course, occur as events and changing circumstances give rise to new demands on the political system. These demands are frequently couched in terms of familiar symbols in order to legitimate the demands and to solidify support. The new application of familiar symbols is likely to be unsettling to many and perceived as threatening to some" (Elder and Cobb 1983; 16).

We must keep these morals of framing in mind when we evaluate how

narratives about the death of Michael Brown are communicated.

Confirmation Bias

Bosso (1994) discusses the increase in focus on problem definition within the

public policy literature. He looks to the increasing fluidity of American politics, the loss

in power of traditional contextual bases of problem definition (the political party), and the idea that we may now be entering a period where "definitions of all public problems are up for grabs, a free-for-all of meaning that will eventually will settle into new cleavages" as potential causes for the increased focus on issue definition (Bosso 1994; 182). This observation was made during the early days of the internet and one can assume that this "ideological anarchy" that Bosso describes has only increased with the exponential increase in information sources from the development of the internet and social media.

It is well established that the values of symbols are not intrinsic to the symbol itself, but rather the meaning is "invested in it by the people who use it" (Stone 1988; 108). According to Elder and Cobb, "The same symbols may communicate different things to different people. What is perceived by some may be substantially at odds with what is perceived by others" (Elder and Cobb 1983; 10). Problem definition is, therefore, "affected by culture, societal values, and prevailing norms, but also by the formal structure of governing institutions and procedures within which politics takes place" (Bosso 1994; 192).

Here I will take the time to, first, discuss different sources of bias: biases from culture, biases from political systems, and finally biases from media. Culturally, people tend to reject information that is conflict with their already preexisting beliefs. This concept is known as confirmation bias. However, the process is constrained by reasoning and the amount of evidence provided. According to Kunda (1990), "people motivated to arrive at a particular conclusion attempt to be rational and to construct a

justification of their desired conclusion that would persuade a dispassionate observer.

They draw the desired conclusion only if they can muster up the evidence necessary to

support it" (Kunda 1990). Taber and Lodge (2006) found that when it comes to political

information people tend to accept without scrutiny arguments that favor their own

political persuasions and a higher tendency to counter-argue information that is against

their politically held beliefs; additionally, people tend to seek out sources of information

that confirm their preexisting beliefs (Taber and Lodge 2006). One's political

socialization is therefore important in how one interprets frames and symbols.

Governmental institutions and norms can be biased from allowing certain policy

issues a place on the agenda. This is described by Schattschneider as the mobilization of

bias. According to him, "All forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the

exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because

organization is the mobilization of bias. Some issues are organized into politics and

others are organized out" (Schattschneider 1960; 71). This is important to keep in mind

as we consider how the issue of Black political advancement remains off the legislative

agenda.

The news media plays an important role in the policy process by providing

political information to citizens and through its power to set the agenda (Birkland 2001;

88-90). However, Birkland points out that the media tend to dramatize news coverage in

an attempt to seek profits which can result in the distortion of people's perceptions

(Birkland 2001; 93). Iyengar (1994) finds empirical evidence that television shapes both

how the public understands the causes of political issues and also the needed solutions

to those issues (Iyengar 1994). Additionally, Iyengar finds that the media tend to discuss social problems outside of their context. In other words, they tend to discuss issues as episodic rather than discussing societal systems that may have caused the issue (Iyengar 1994). There is evidence that the media are also biased in favor of the status quo. According to Bosso (1990) it is difficult to change existing symbols because "Mass media… are unlikely to challenge the received culture, but will instead publicize deviations from… or threats to… orthodoxy (Bosso 1990; 199). Alternative media and social media are also growing in importance. Social media, in particular, has been under criticism from the mainstream media and the public for its spreading of misinformation and its potential effect on the 2016 United States Presidential elections (Isaac 2016).

Framing Ferguson

Now this paper turns to a discussion of what frames were employed by groups to interpret the death of Michael Brown and the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement and how successful were they. I will address how those frames were relayed by the media and how they were accepted by the public.

Both the racially conservative and the racially progressive seemed to respond to the killing of Michael Brown by deploying different variations of a control narrative as described by Stone. The Black Lives Movement adopted a narrative that closely follows Stone's model for control narratives, specifically, they argue that the systematic killing of young Black men at the hands of police officers is no longer something beyond the control of the people, and by standing up and speaking out these killings can be stopped. According to the Black Lives Matter network website, "Black Lives Matter is an

ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (Black Lives Matter).

On the other side, racially conservative and pro law enforcement framers use the victim blaming narrative, which Stone describes as an alternative version of the control narrative (Ryan 1971; Stone 1988). These groups portray Michael Brown as a thug and argue that if he would have peacefully followed Darren Wilson's orders that he would not have been killed. The Ferguson Police Department's release of video footage of Michael Brown pushing a convenience store clerk before leaving with a box of stolen cigarillos earlier on the day of his death has lead some to believe that the Ferguson Police Department were trying to reinforce that narrative (Vega et al. 2014). As discussed in the introduction to this work, controversy ensued when the *New York Times* published an article days before Brown's funeral in which the phrase "Michael Brown… was no angel" was used (BBC News). This reinforced the conservative narrative and outraged many on the other side of the issue. The alt-right has developed a different narrative to discuss racial politics more broadly, a narrative of decline. They evoke a jeremiad that describes the nation's acceptance of racial minorities as having led to the downfall of "American" culture, and argue that this American culture must be restored through racist and morally conservative policies.

Many other symbols and metaphors were adopted by competing factions debating the circumstances of Brown's death. One of the most prominent of those symbols was the slogan "Hands up, don't shoot." Regardless of the veracity of the slogan's origins, which has been debated, the slogan itself has been adopted into the

larger cultural zeitgeist. One example of popular public figures evoking this frame is when five team members of the St. Louis Rams took the field with their hands up in order to show solidarity with Ferguson protestors; this lead to subsequent criticism from the racially conservative and acted as a precursor for subsequent controversial displays by athletes advocating for racial justice (ESPN).

Following the protests in Ferguson, law enforcement representatives took to the media to speak out against what they perceived as an attack on law enforcement and the criminal justice system from the Black Lives Matter movement, arguing that police killings of young Black men was not a systematic problem but simply "a few bad apples" within the criminal justice system (Sigel and Kumanyika 2016). They argue that Black Lives Matter uses synecdoche, pointing to these instances of police violence against young Black men as representative of systematic failure, when perhaps it is episodic in nature as police groups claim. However, they also continually use synecdoche to argue that Black Lives Matter protesters are anti-American and violent. Unfortunately, a system to gather complete data on police use of lethal force is not in place (Klinger 2008). This results in the opposing sides relying on varying data. This is important in priming as, according to Stone, "There are many possible measures of any phenomenon and the choice among them depends on the purpose for measuring" (Stone 1988; 127). Therefore, the data one uses depend on the frame one is presenting. However, the increase of the appearance of these types of killings in the media, as well as evidence within the criminal justice literature tend to point to the fact that this is a systematic issue (Albonetti 1997; Alexander 2011; Bates 2010; Brennan 2008; Sweeney and Haney

1992). Additionally, experimental studies have even shown a racial bias in police officers' decisions to shoot suspects (Correll et al. 2007).

Other sources document racial differences in perceptions of how fair the criminal justice system is toward Black people (Hurwitz and Peffley 2010; Bobo and Johnson 2004; Sigelman et al. 1997; Tuch and Weitzer 1997). This is a textbook example of how individuals and groups interpret political information and symbols differently. In my own research I have found that within Ferguson steep racial cleavages exist as to how Ferguson voters interpret the death of Michael Brown (Udani et al. 2014; Udani 2014). Unfortunately for the Black Lives Matter movement, their opponents and perhaps some within the movement itself have framed the conversation as one of Black people versus police, when middle white America tend to see police as national heroes.

Elder and Cobb argue that symbolism in politics may heighten racial disparities in attitudes toward Black political advancement. Elder and Cobb, citing Anton (1967), say that often actual policy outcomes do not align with the symbols used to justify those policies (Anton 1967, Elder and Cobb 1983; 22). Additionally, many policy outcomes are mere symbolic gestures that are

> Sufficient to assuage anxieties and to reassure the public that a problem has been resolved…Implicit in this reaction is a tendency to perceive officially sanctioned and appropriately processed statements about a problem as a solution to a problem (Elder and Cobb 1983; 22).

When symbolic gestures toward Black political advancement are made, whites "see the 'legitimate' grievances of Black Americans as largely answered; [for Black people to] expect more [is considered] unreasonable" (Elder and Cobb 1983; 22).

The Media and Michael Brown

As discussed above, reporting from news media tends to be episodic rather than systematic (Iyenger 1994). Additionally, episodic frames tend to cause viewers to see problems as caused by individual responsibility rather than as caused by society or institutions (Iyenger 1994). These concepts strongly tie in with debates surrounding the death of Michael Brown and subsequent killings of young Black men by police and the ways that the problem is framed. If the media characterize these killings as episodic, rather than discussing police killings of Black men on as systematic, then we can expect for media consumers to deny the frame that these killings are pervasive within the criminal justice system and that steps must be taken at an institutional level rather than an individual level in order to combat them.

Media tends to add fuel to the fire of racial myths and racism, often through neglecting to share the views of racial minorities and barring racial minorities from on camera positions (Campbell 1995). According to Campbell (1995), the news media ignores "life outside of middle-American/dominant culture parameters, [which] contributes to an understanding of minority cultures as less significant, as marginal" (Campbell 1995). Additionally, Mendelberg (2008), Entman (1997), and Huber and Lapinski (2008) argue that the media tends to prime racial resentment (Entman 1997; Huber and Lapinski 2008; Mendelberg 2008). Entman's study shows, "ample support for a hypothesis that local television's images of Blacks feed racial anxiety and antagonism at least among the portion of the white population most predisposed to those feelings" (Entman 1997). Gilliam et al. (1997) discuss how television news coverage of crime can distort reality for viewers, causing them to view racial minorities as having a higher

"propensity to commit different types of crime". According to Gilliam et al. "This distortion is likely to impede thoughtful discussion of racial divisions in contemporary America" (Gilliam et al. 1997)

Specifically, in regard to the Ferguson moment, Suebsaeng (2014) and others have pointed to unflattering portrayals of Michael Brown by both traditional and alternative news media (Suebsaeng 2014). Additionally, there is evidence that the news media in this case have opted to discuss the problem in more episodic terms (Al Jazeera 2014; Deggans 2014). Deggans also finds evidence that cable news tailored its reporting of Ferguson to cater to how their audience views race, specifically calling out Fox News for denying racial bias within law enforcement, while acknowledging that MSNBC took a more personal approach to killings of young Black men by police (Deggans 2014). Finally, both sides of the issue point to the spread of misinformation surrounding the death of Michael Brown.

Evaluating the Frames in Ferguson

Taking Lakoff's four morals into account which frame is more successful? It seems that the media have tended to promote, perhaps unintentionally, the episodic frame while failing to discuss killings like Michael Brown's within a larger systematic context. Every time a frame is evoked it is reinforced and it appears that the media, one of the main channels of political information for everyday Americans, reinforces racially conservative frames. This is what the literature would lead us to hypothesize, and this hypothesis seems to be confirmed by anecdotal evidence, although a more systematic study to this question in the tradition of Iyengar is needed.

Additionally, Black Lives Matter has other hurdles in that the police effectively act as a symbol evoking overwhelmingly positive images within white America. The symbol of the heroic policeman is hard to overcome and effectively bars racially progressive narratives from reaching many Americans. To criticize policing is to criticize police, and to criticize police is to criticize American heroes. It is likely, therefore, that some Americans are threatened by these new symbols as would be predicted by Elder and Cobb.

However, there is hope for the Black Lives Matter movement. Every time their frame is evoked, it is reinforced, and many have taken up the cause to continue discussions of police violence towards Blacks and to promoting their narrative. Additionally, according to Lakoff, every time their frame is negated it is also reinforced. Therefore, every time a conservative pundit disputes the historicity of "Hands up, Don't shoot" they remind information consumers of police brutality. As of now, little effective progress is being made within our government to advance a more equitable criminal justice system. Framing is an early step in the policy process. To be sure, the battle is still over what frames the American people will accept about police violence and race.

These competing frames also track well with different theories on the relationship between the religious and political spheres. The main biblical story is one of redemption. Throughout the Old Testament, God continually leads his people out of captivity and oppression. Within the New Testament, Christ's sacrifice on the cross is meant to redeem those who believe in him. This would seem to indicate that Christians should be receptive to jeremiads that call for more liberatory change. However, the

Bible, as well as many Christian liturgies, is also full of themes that emphasize

obedience, order, and authority. These clearly relate to the pro-police frames that

resulted after the death of Michael Brown. Because of the clear relationship between

biblical themes and racialized frameworks, it is important that we understand what kind

of frames are accepted and passed on by faith elites in the St. Louis region when it

comes to racialized politics.

Chapter 3: The Response of Clergy to Racialized Violence in Ferguson

So far, we have established the basics of the complex relationship between religion and politics in the United States from what we currently know in the literature and discussed theological and philosophical ideas of how that relationship should look. We have also briefly looked at how religion and politics have interacted in the United States throughout history and how different narratives about the death of Michael Brown are shaped. Now we proceed to answer our research question of what the religious response to racialized police violence looks like in America today. We will be searching for answers to this question in two levels: faith leaders and the rank-and-file faithful. This chapter deals with the former.

Much of this research is consistent with the current understanding of the political action of clergy. For instance, clergy are often constrained from acting politically by their congregation. However, this paper will also provide evidence that perceptions of mission are important indicators of political action and interest. Additionally, communal religiosity such as the sacraments also seem to have bearing on political interest and activism. Ultimately, this chapter will find that religious leaders pick from various paths, some pursue peace, others justice, and others the status quo.

3.1 Methods

In order to investigate how clergy responded to the crisis surrounding the death of Michael Brown, I conducted interviews with various clergy from throughout the St. Louis region. Interviews were conducted throughout the fall of 2019 into the early part of 2020. The five-year gap in time allowed for members of clergy to discuss what is

different about serving in their role since the death of Michael Brown and how their congregations have changed. However, the gap in time has led to some setbacks. Often, congregational leaders who had served during the Ferguson Moment are no longer in their posts. If this was the case, efforts were made to talk with both current leaders and their predecessors.

An unforeseen problem with the timing of the interview process was the onset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent quarantine. At the onset of the crisis I decided to halt interviews for two reasons. First, safety was of concern and although phone interviews could be conducted, the quarantine has added a considerable amount of stress onto churches, especially those with fewer resources. I did not feel that in good conscience I could add additional burdens to potential respondents at this time. Second, the findings would likely be skewed by responses gathered post-quarantine. For example, some questions selected for the interview portion of this study asked about the most prevalent issues facing the St. Louis region. Responses to these questions would be radically different post-quarantine as public health, individual liberties, joblessness, and other issues became radically more important. While responses to interview questions are often affected by the timing of the interview, this dramatic scope of the pandemic is likely to radically shift responses. While this limits the amount of data that was able to be gathered for this portion of the project, the interviews alongside evidence gathered from news sources provide solid data for how churches in St. Louis responded to the crisis in Ferguson. As the year went on and more incidents of racialized violence focused national attention on racism in the criminal justice system, I

was more satisfied with my decision to stop interviewing. The Black Lives Matter movement has become embraced by the mainstream American populace, a much different scenario than what the clergy in St. Louis faced in 2014 when Michael Brown was slain in the street. Societal and congressional pressures to go public were likely much different in 2014 than they would be in 2020. For further research, I wish to compare reactions to justice movements in 2020 with those early days in 2014. However, that is beyond the scope of this project.

Interviews consisted of fourteen questions representing three main topics: doctrinal and theological issues, social and political issues, and questions regarding attitudes and reactions to the Ferguson moment. Interviews usually lasted around an hour and a half. Interviews were conducted in-person when possible, although some clergy opted to be interviewed over phone or via Zoom video-conferencing software.

Churches were selected in order to include the four major religious traditions within the United States: Black Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, and Catholic. However, it was very difficult to find Catholic clergy who were willing to participate in the study. The snowball method was employed in which I asked respondents who they believe I should talk to and I then made an effort to interview the contacts that they pointed me toward. Ten interviews were conducted representing nine different churches covering all four traditions. Of these, one respondent represented Catholicism, five represented Mainline-Protestantism, two represent Black

Protestantism, and two represented Evangelical Protestantism.[5] Responses included

three Black respondents, one Latinx respondent, and six white respondents.[6] Eight male

clergy and two female clergy were interviewed.

As this project seeks to evaluate how frames around the death of Michael Brown

are accepted and transmitted within religious circles, the main dependent variable for

this study focuses on what information the member of clergy believes about the death

of Michael Brown. Clergy are asked directly what they think happened the day that

Michael Brown died. Their responses are then examined by the researcher and

categorized as being a narrative that is police favorable or Black Lives Matter favorable.

For example, one respondent provides information that they believe a bullet hole was

found in Darren Wilson's car from Michael Brown firing off the police officer's gun.

There is no actual evidence of this occurring, however, the member of clergy heard this

evidence and internalized it. This would be categorized as a police favorable narrative as

it promotes the idea that Michael Brown's death was an unfortunate incident of self-

defense. However, if a statement rejects the idea that Darren Wilson acted in self-

defense it would be deemed a Black Lives Matter favorable narrative. In addition,

variables around issue interest, political interest, and political actions also act as

depended variables in this section of the study.

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[5] Note: When classifying based on tradition, I chose to follow Pew Research Center's
approach and identify churches that are predominantly Black/African-American but that
are associated with a Mainline Denomination as a Mainline church rather than as part of
the Black Protestant tradition (Masci et al. 2018).
[6] Demographics information such as race, age, sex were interviewer-perceived.

3.2 Hypotheses

The main question that this study seeks to answer is whether or not religion has an inspiring or opiate effect on political action after moments of racial crisis. I expect to find that in some cases religion works as an inspiration, but that it will more often act as an opiate. That is not to say that there is no active response by churches and their leaders in response to racial crisis, but rather that these responses will be more focused on community care than social/political change.

Additionally, I hope to find evidence as to whether differences in doctrinal and theological attitudes are related to difference in political attitudes and responses to racial crisis among clergy. I expect to find that members of the clergy that believe that the mission of the Church or that the mission of Jesus Christ to includes a political component to be more likely to be politically interested in social justice issues and to have a more change-minded than peace-minded in their response to the death of Michael Brown. At the same time, I expect to find those who do not emphasize a political component, but rather focus on sharing the gospel and forgiveness of sins, to have a more peace-minded response and to be more politically-focused on morality issues.

Following the studies discussed above, I expect to find that congregational demographics and location are closely related to responses to the Ferguson Moment and what types of issues clergy are politically interested in. I expect that clergy from congregations that are composed of more people of color to be more mindful of social justice issues than those who lead congregations that are predominantly white or

located in predominantly white neighborhoods. Additionally, I expect that mainline

protestant clergy and Black protestant clergy will be more likely to be politically

interested in social justice issues rather than morality issues, compared to evangelicals

who I expect will put a greater emphasis on morality issues. Finally, those who preach

more often on end-times may be less likely to be politically interested in social justice

issues over morality issues and also may be less change focused due to the idea that the

world is in a state of decay.

I also expect to find that clergy take a pacifying approach over a change-oriented

approach in how they discuss the death of Michael Brown. Specifically, when asked

about the events surrounding the death of Michael Brown, I do not expect many clergy

to openly endorse one narrative or another. Rather, I think that when asked, clergy will

take qualifying stances or try to answer in a way that is conflict averse. Furthermore, I

expect that clergy will not be likely to believe that the church should be actively involved

in politics.

Finally, I believe that clergy in the sample will be likely to say that the Ferguson

Moment changed their congregation in some way, but I believe that how that change

looks will vary. As a focusing event, it is likely that the death of Michael Brown and

subsequent protests could have activated a new focus on social and racial justice within

churches in our sample. Another possibility is that churches may have split or lost

members due to their proximity to Ferguson, or due to disagreements on how to

respond.

3.3 Findings

Overall, the sample is mixed on how they responded to the death of Michael Brown. Two respondents communicate about the Ferguson Moment in a way that evokes a police narrative, five communicate in a way that is resonant with a Black Lives Matter narrative, two were unsure about the events of that day and it was difficult to classify their responses as either supporting a police or a Black Lives Matter narrative and one chose not to speculate on the events that led to Michael Brown's death. Half of the sample's political interest was devoted to justice issues such as race or economic inequity, while the other half of the sample were mixed in their responses indicating issues that can be classified as justice issues or morality issues such as abortion. Notably, no respondents indicated that their sole political focus was on issues of morality.

All of the clergy in the sample indicated that their church was changed in some way by the Ferguson Moment, but their responses varied. They responded to the death of Michael Brown in a variety of ways including: speaking from the pulpit, protesting, working as de-escalators, providing for needs in the community, creating or joining small groups focused and racial justice and reconciliation.

I examine political attitudes and responses to the death of Michael Brown as a dependent variable related to three different types of independent variables: doctrinal, demographic, and place-based. The first looks at relationships between theological and doctrinal beliefs and political attitudes. Next, I consider relationships between demographic variables such as personal characteristics of the clergy themselves as well as demographic characteristics of the congregations that they shepherd. Finally, I look at

place-based variables. These include proximity to the location where Michael Brown lost his life and responses to questions how different or similar a church is from neighboring churches.

3.3.1 Doctrinal Beliefs and Liturgical Practices

There are a variety of doctrinal differences between the clergy interviewed for this project. The most basic difference is the Christian tradition to which they subscribe. Additionally, there are differences in practices such as how the clergy approach baptism or the practice of communion. There are also differences in how the clergy view the mission of their congregation, the mission of Christianity more broadly, and the mission of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, cleavages exist in beliefs around the end times and the frequency of end times preaching. One of the main research questions for the interview section of this project is whether these differences are related to political attitudes and responses to the death of Michael Brown.

Given that the most basic theological differentiator among the clergy in the sample is religious tradition, we are compelled to ask whether there is a relationship between religious tradition and racialized attitudes. As stated above, the survey consisted of five Mainline Protestant clergy, one Catholic priest, two Evangelical Protestant clergy, and two members of clergy from the Black Protestant tradition. As can be seen in Figure 3.3.1, Mainline Protestants in the sample were the most likely to make statements consistent with the Black Lives Matter narrative (80%) although one Mainline Protestant clergy made statements consistent with the police narrative that Darren Wilson acted in self-defense. One Black Protestant respondent made statements

consistent with the Black Lives Matter narrative while the other said that they were unsure about what happened and did not relay information that can easily be described as promoting either narrative. Among Evangelicals in the sample one responded in a way that was consistent with the police narrative while another was unsure. The Catholic priest in the sample opted not to answer. In the sample, Evangelicals are less likely than Mainline or Black Protestant clergy to accept the Black Lives Matter narrative, this does not hold statistical significant using the Pearson Chi-Square test [Chi2(9)=15.9; Pr=0.069]. Additionally, according to the data gathered, tradition does not predict what sorts of action clergy might have taken in response to the death of Michael Brown or whether or not clergy identify race or police brutality as issues of concern within St. Louis in any way that would allow us to make inferences about clergy in St. Louis as a whole.

Acceptance of Narratives Concerning the Death of Michael Brown
By Religious Tradition
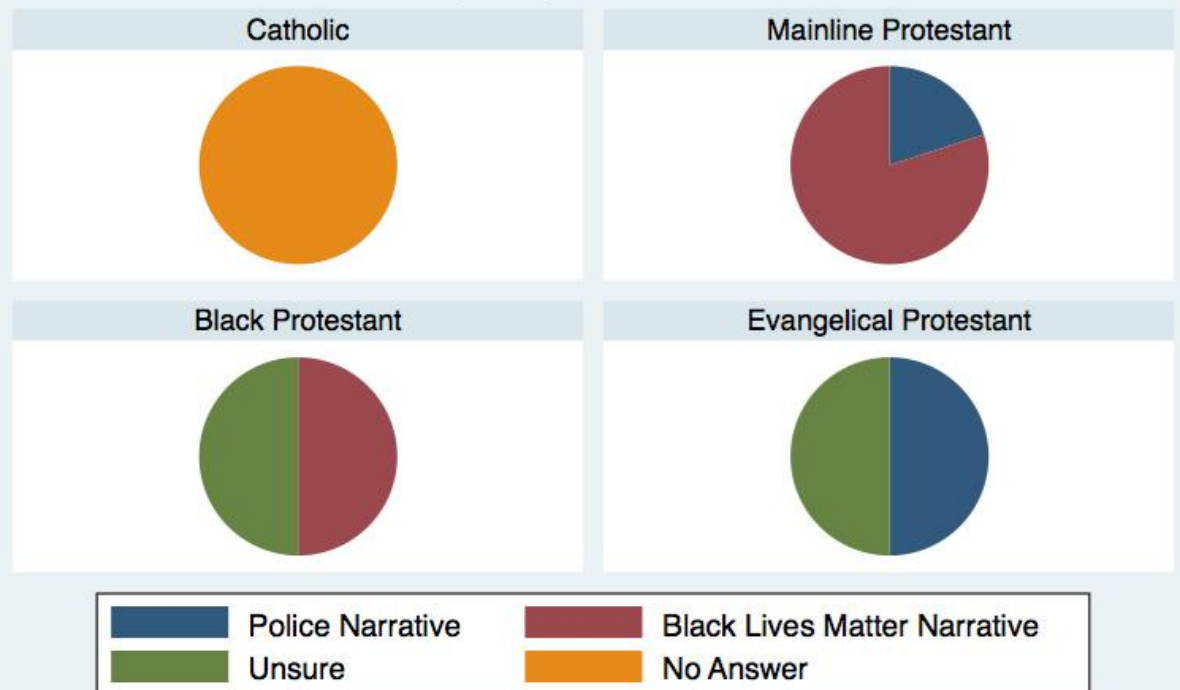
Figure 3.3. 1

The type of issues that clergy are politically interested in varied by tradition as well. Mainline Protestants in the sample were the most likely to be solely focused on justice issues (80%). Fifty percent of Black Protestants were solely focused on justice issues, and all of the Catholic and Evangelical respondents were interested in both justice issues and moral issues [Pearson Chi^2=4.8; Pr=0.187]. This is consistent with my hypothesis. It makes sense the those of the Catholic and Evangelical traditions would be interested in moral issues as well as justice issues.

Clergy varied on how and when they practiced two of the most notable sacraments of the Christian faith: baptism and communion. Attitudes on baptism and

communion are important as Mockabee (2009) relates higher views of these sacraments with more community focused faith rather than individualistic faith. These factors are then related to progressive politics and conservative politics respectively. Six of the clergy members believe in the practice of adult-only baptism while three led congregations that practice infant baptism. While baptism was clearly important to all respondents in the project, some had a higher view of baptism than others. One respondent representing an evangelical megachurch spent a considerable amount of time discussing the importance of adult baptism as an essential aspect of personal salvation. He said, "It's immersion not sprinkling or pouring. It's to dip or to plunge. In the book of Acts every time we see someone receive Jesus as savior they are baptized." Only one interviewee reported representing a church that practices speaking in tongues. Frequency of communion varied in the congregations led by the clergy interviewed. Three represented churches that practice communion weekly, three represent churches that practice communion monthly, two practice communion every other month, and two failed to answer how frequently they practice communion. It should be noted that frequency of the practice does not necessarily mean that it is held in higher regard. For example, a mainline clergy member in our sample said, "When it comes to the Lord's Supper, we believe that it is important but I'm fairly into the idea that important does not necessarily mean often. We don't practice it every week. We do every fifth Sunday and thanksgiving, but it is the focus of the service when we do it. We highlight and give it attention as being important."

The data does not point to any discernable relationship between how the sacrament of baptism is practiced and which narratives around the death of Michael Brown the member of the clergy is likely to accept. However, all three members of clergy whose congregation practices infant baptism said that race is one of the most important issues in the St. Louis area at the time of the interview. Those who said that they only practice adult baptism were split three on each side [Pearson Chi2(1)=2.2.5; Pr=0.134]. This tracks with what might be expected because infant baptism is more community focused because it is about bringing children of church members into the community. On the other hand, adult baptism is often seen as an individual's expression of faith. Therefore, it makes sense that we would see those who practice infant baptism to put more of an emphasis on racial justice. This is represented graphically in figure 3.3.2. Interestingly, when looking at the traditional moral issue of abortion, we see the same split among those who hold to adult baptism, while those who practice infant baptism are unified in not identifying abortion as an important issue. However, there is no trace of a relationship between the frequency of communion and racialized attitudes
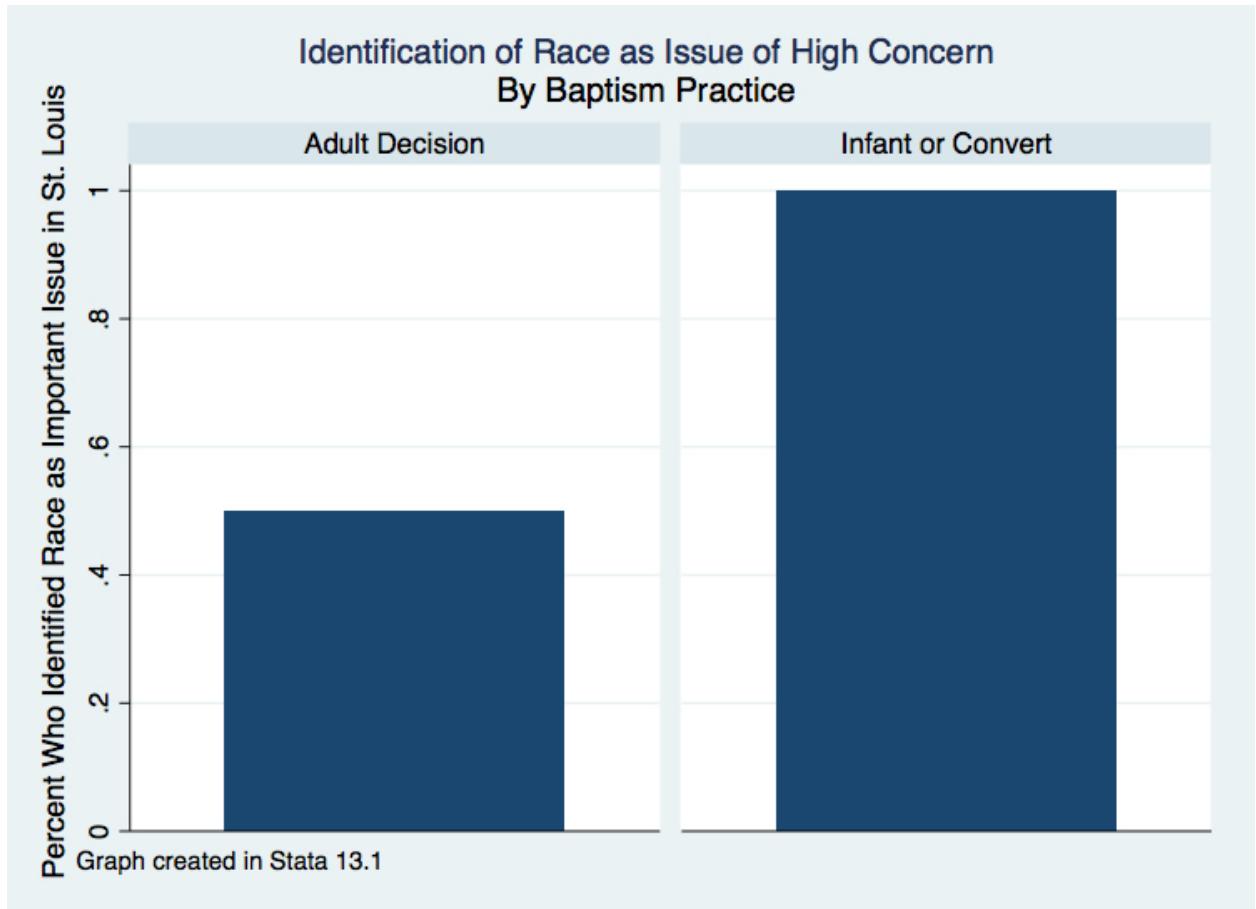
in the sample.

Identification of Race as Issue of High Concern By Baptism Practice

Figure 3.3. 2

Clergy were asked three questions to help clarify what role they see Christianity playing in the world. They were asked to explain their church's mission statement, the mission of the Church, and the mission of Jesus Christ. Additionally, clergy were asked which is more important, avoiding sin or helping others, a survey question whose responses have been linked to individualistic religion and communitarian religion respectively (Mockabee 2009). Together these responses help give an understanding of how St. Louis clergy perceive their role and the broader purpose of the Christian faith in the world today.

The table below presents responses to the three mission questions from the interview. Some clear themes are present. First, proselytizing is almost always mentioned in discussions of mission. Many clergy in the sample appeal to the "Great Commission" from scripture when discussing the proselytizing aspect of the Christian mission. Additionally, love is very prevalent as a theme in responses to these missional questions. Scriptural references to Jesus' commands to love God and love others were often appealed to in discussions of both congregational mission and the mission of the Church. When it comes to the mission of Jesus, responses centered around two different themes: salvation and justice. First, many responses were focused on Jesus's mission to save the lost. How this was accomplished seems to be in debate among those in the sample. Specifically, two clergy are opposed in their responses as they discuss whether or not Jesus came to die. Many responses mention Jesus as a saving or reconciling figure. Another prominent theme is justice. Two respondents mentioned that Jesus came to set captives free. Perhaps, this is related to saving the lost and forgiving sins, but it also seems to be related to ending temporal oppression as well. Other responses specifically discuss justice or care for the outcast. Below you can see a breakdown of congregational, ecumenical, and Christological mission statements provided by the respondents in the sample.

Table 3.3.1 Respondent Identified Mission Statements				
Church ID	Church Tradition	Congregational Mission	Mission of Christianity	Mission of Jesus Christ
A	Mainline Protestant	Love God and love neighbor	"I think the mission statement of the Church should be the same as Jesus' response and the prophets' response to 'What are the greatest commandments?' Love God and love your neighbor as yourself."	"Compassion and Justice and also to praise God to give thanks for God's love and mercy."
A	Mainline Protestant	"We're not a real doctrinal church, but if you ask what the mission is it would be to love God and love neighbor. Jesus's two commandments. It's about all we can agree upon."	Same as congregational mission.	"His mission seemed to be summarized by Luke in chapter four. Certainly healing, crossing boundaries with the outcasts, the poor, exorcisms was certainly a big part of that as well seemingly; to seek and save the lost."
B	Mainline Protestant	"To make Jesus famous"	"More broadly I think the mission of the church is in the commission in the gospel of Matthew, 'Go you therefore make disciples, baptizing and preaching, and sharing what you learned with me with one another.' I've always believed that's the message of every church."	"Scripturally, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah, I'm not going to quote it perfectly, but he has come to set the captives free, to loose the bonds that bind us, the spirit of the lord was upon him to preach liberty to preach freedom to eliminate the bondage of sin and to provide life. Life is temporal as well as eternal, and not just life but life abundantly. I

				believe Jesus to be the great liberator, the emancipator."
C	Evangelical Protestant	"Leading people to find and follow Jesus"	"To fulfill the great commission of Jesus, to lead people to find and follow Jesus, to take Jesus to the culture where you're at so people can see how Jesus loves them by how we live out the faith. We are to live it out so that people are drawn to him. We're not just to do good things for Jesus but to change people's lives. We partner with people all around the world to take Jesus effectively to the cultures whatever they are and of course there are several different cultures here in St. Louis."	"To me it was to come and give us the gift of salvation and hope, and so we can understand who God is and God's purpose for us. In Philippians chapter 2, it says he left heaven, he came to earth, took on our debt-- our sin paid for-- so that we can be forgiven of our sin. But I believe it wasn't just to bring salvation but that we can understand and see who God is. He came as messiah to redeem us so that we would have hope so that we could have an eternity with Jesus so that we could be one with Jesus. We could not pay for our sin ourselves he did it for all of us."
D	Black Protestant	"Our mission is to share the hope of Jesus Christ in a hopeless world. Our vision is to take the city for God".	"The great commission says, 'Go into all the nations baptizing, teaching in the name of the father son and holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things.' We've got to go to the parts of the world that we don't necessarily want to go to. We've got to get out of the comfort of the four walls of our church."	"He ministered to the poor, to the brokenhearted… Isaiah 61 says, "The spirit of the sovereign lord is upon me because he has anointed me… to set the captives free" And that's what Jesus did he came, he preached to the poor. The rich thought he would come to them and be their person. They were looking for this rich royal king and he was born in a manger. He was born in a barn with animals all around. He was born to a carpenter and a young girl. I'd like to say Jesus is for everybody. He's relatable for all mankind."

E	Mainline Protestant	"Living the good news"	"We are not removed from the world, but doing things for the good of God's creation. Reconciliation work, because Jesus came to reconcile people to God. Hungry people fed, lonely people comforted."	"To reconcile all people to God."
F	Evangelical Protestant	"Lead people to love god, love others, and become devoted followers of Jesus Christ"	"In general, I would sum up in the great commission that Christ gave which is to go and make disciples and he elaborates on that about baptizing and teaching them to follow his commands. It's about making followers, but that is not independent of Jesus's nature which was not coercion but showing the love of Christ by meeting people's needs, in trust that they'd follow Christ."	"He had his own mission statement he said, "the son of man came to seek and save the lost". In a holistic way Jesus cared about people, we see his desire to care for emotional, physical, tangible needs, at the same time his ultimate goal is to care for spiritual needs. The church has been divided over which is more important. I think it's both. Jesus came to lost people who are separated from God, but there's also people who need help so it's both."
G	Catholic	"Proclaiming acceptance and hope"	"Well first to proclaim the saving message of Jesus and second to extend his kingdom of love and justice on earth."	"I would say the same thing I said about the church. Proclaiming that saving message and extending the kingdom of God."
H	Black Protestant	"Preaching the gospel, Changing the world"	"One of the problems with church is people want to put it in a box. Christianity is designed for life. If life changes we make change the method of how to apply the message. We don't change our message… Churches have to change their method to reach out more affectively to others. Now there are so many social needs as	"The mission of Jesus Christ was to come and be the payment for our sins. He therefore came with the mission knowing that he was going to die but also knowing he had the power to rise from the grave and from that give a gospel message to all people Jew and Gentile that they all could be saved by

			well. Churches have to take the message of the gospel and make it much more life-applicable so people have answers to their life today."	establishing a fellowship with God. His mission was (Romans 3:23) the propitiation, the payment for our sins. Without him there would be no faith. He's the author and finisher of our faith."
I	Mainline Protestant	"Our mission statement is to be an open minded, open hearted, open door community"	"Christianity in the 21st century is called to be inter-faith. We cannot live on an island and imagine that our message is the only thing that we are concerned about that we don't see the other people who are willing to engage the community. We don't say that others' faith is not valid. Open to the movement of likeminded people in the world. Likeminded in being respectful of others' religious traditions, and likeminded in the sense of how we practice compassion, mercy, charity, engagement. Christianity today no longer conceives of community as a resource for church growth. For some, the community is just a vehicle by which you grow your church. The church must be much more integrated in the community and the wellbeing of the community is dependent on the church being responsive to the needs of the community."	His mission, historically and theologically, was to come and be faithful to the God who sent him. I don't think he came to die, he came to live, but he was not afraid to die for what he believed in and that is God's coming Kingdom. When he was forced to make a decision between violent revolution, or being faithful to his calling as a healer as a prophet as a liver of the faith, he decided that he would choose the path of giving himself. When I say he didn't come to die, I think he truly saw himself as a reformer of Judaism, not the starter of a new religion. That was Paul probably. He started a movement.

Based on the responses above, variables were created indicating whether Christological mission statements referred to two key justice indicators. The first is whether the respondent made a clear indication that there was a political component to Jesus' ministry. The second variable is whether or not the clergy's description of Christ's mission included care for the poor. Figures 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 display how these beliefs are distributed across Christian traditions.
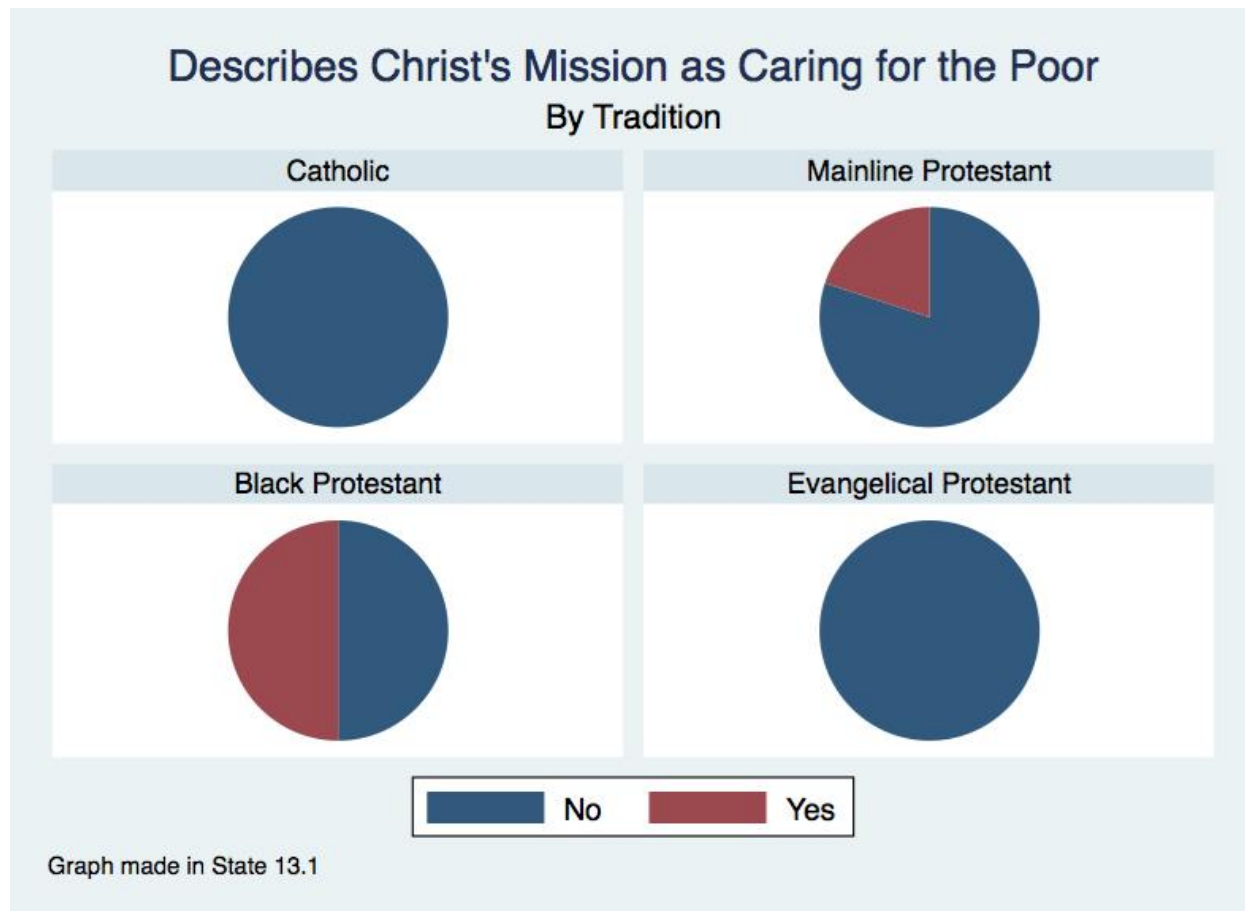

Figure 3.3. 3

Describes Christ's Mission as Political
By Tradition

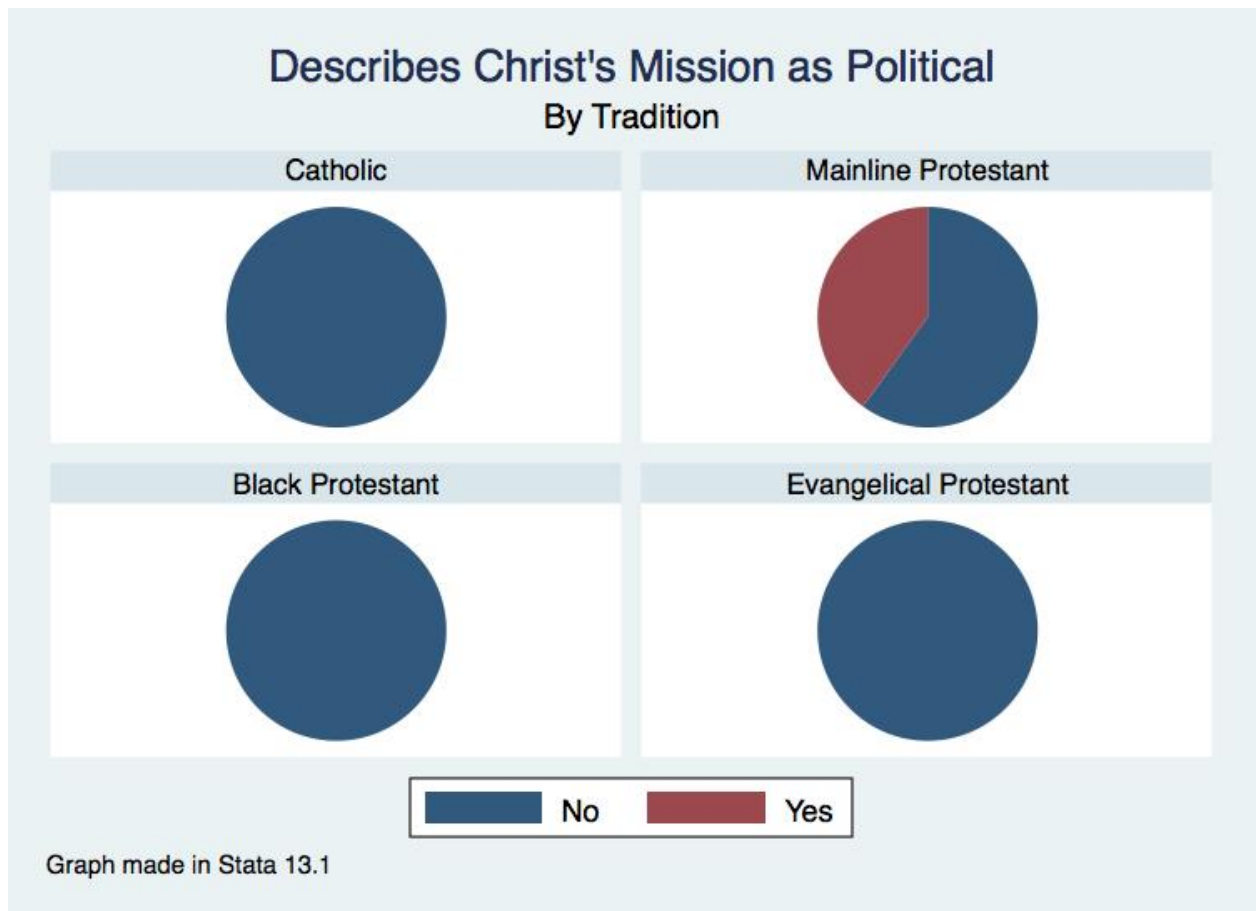| Catholic | Mainline Protestant |
| Black Protestant | Evangelical Protestant |

No ■   Yes ■

Graph made in Stata 13.1

Figure 3.3. 4

Although inferential statistics are not promising due to the small sample size, within the sample there seems to be a relationship between each of these variables and acceptance of narratives around the death of Michael Brown (See figures 3.3.5 and 3.3.6). One hundred percent of respondents who see aspects of Jesus' mission as political make statements that align with the Black Lives Matter narrative, while those who do not identify a political component to Jesus' mission are more divided on the issue [Pearson chi^2(3)=2.5; Pr=0.475]. Of those that say Jesus' mission was not political

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37.5 percent make statements aligned with the Black Lives Matter narrative, 25 percent

make statements aligned with the police narrative, and the remainder provided answers

that showed they were unsure of which narratives to accept or chose not to

answer(37.5 percent). The variable on Jesus' mission being to the poor shows a weaker

pattern. Here those who believe Jesus's mission was, at least in part, to care for the

poor was split between the police narrative and the Black Lives Matter narrative fifty-

fifty. Whereas those who did not mention Jesus' mission as being related to the poor

also had fifty percent of the respondents favoring the Black Lives Matter narrative,

however, here 25 percent were unsure, 12.5 percent did not give a response, and 12.5

percent accept the police narrative. Curiously, however, these variables do not seem to

have any directional relationship with identifying race as a major issue of concern in St.
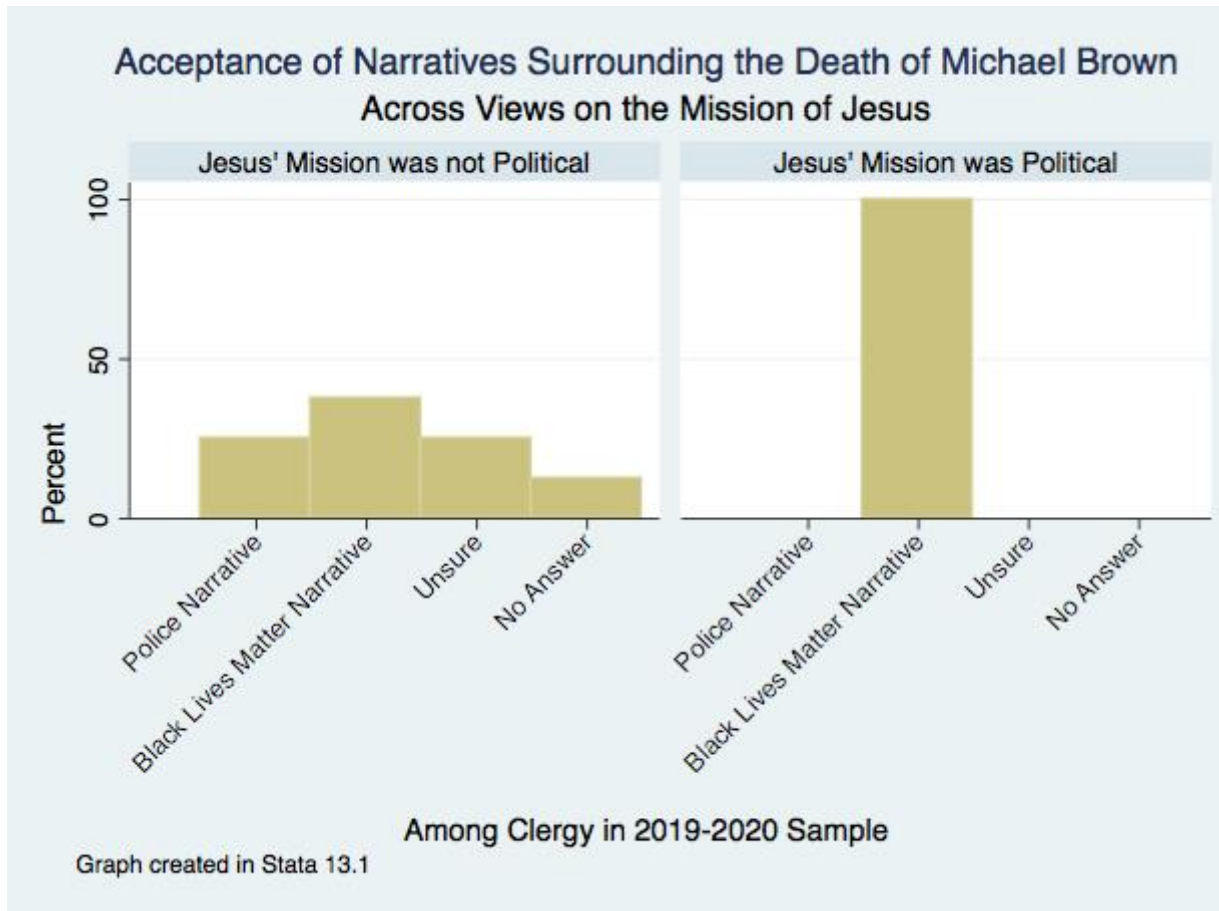
Louis.

Acceptance of Narratives Surrounding the Death of Michael Brown Across Views on the Mission of Jesus

Figure 3.3. 5

Acceptance of Narratives Surrounding the Death of Michael Brown
Across Views on the Mission of Jesus

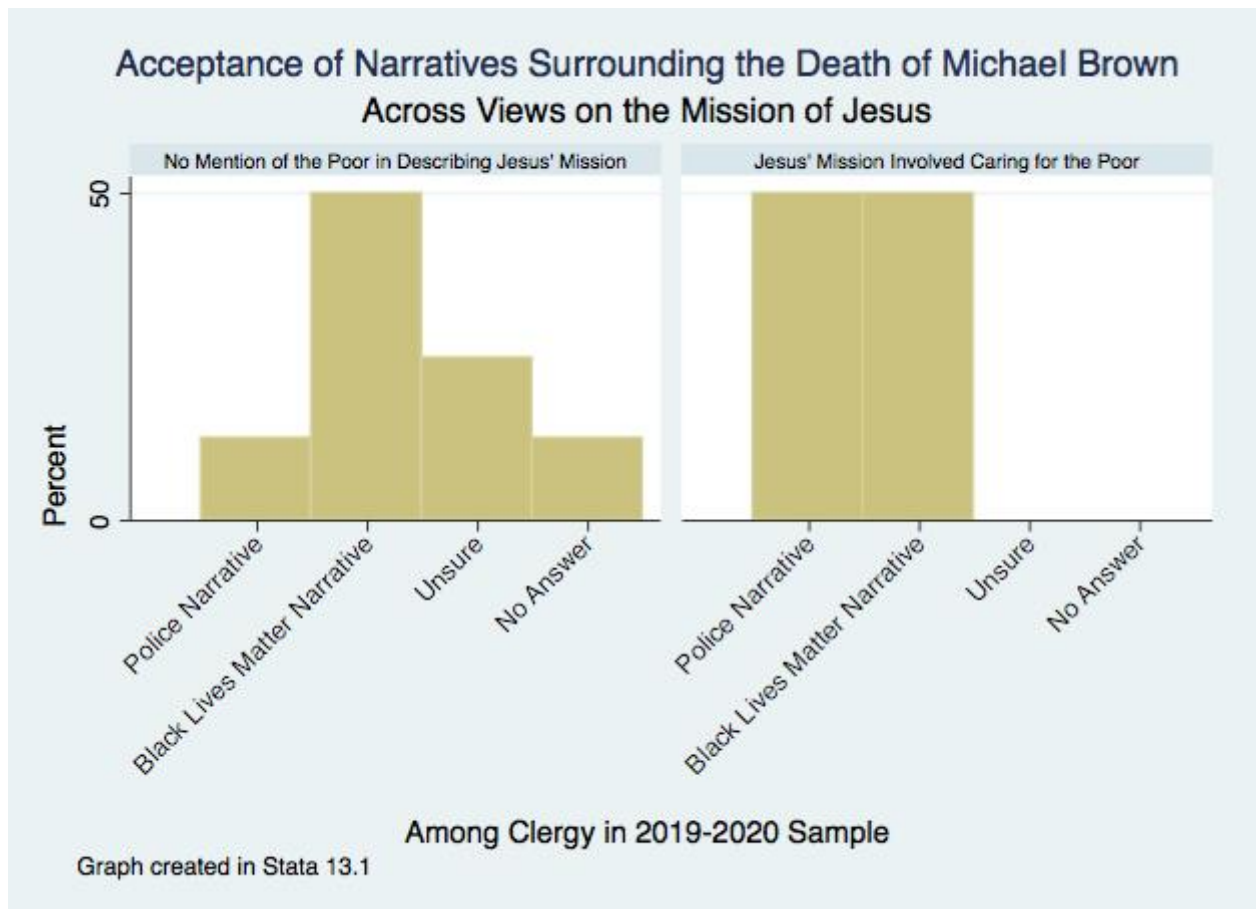Among Clergy in 2019-2020 Sample

Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 3.3. 6

As mentioned earlier in this work, Mockabee has shown that asking whether it is
more important for Christians to avoid sin or help others is a useful survey question
related to attitudes of political conservatism or liberalism (Mockabee et al. 2009).
However, this question does not seem to translate well in an interview project
conducted among thoughtful experts of Christianity. Most respondents (70%) failed to
answer or gave a compromising answer such as "It's not a matter of either/or. They are
connected." Three respondents said that helping others is most important for
Christians. All three of which were from the Mainline Protestant tradition. However, it
might be notable that no respondents answered that avoiding sin is more important.

While most respondents gave a compromise answer or no answer, 100 percent of those

who said that helping others is more important to the Christian life identified race as a

major issue of concern in St. Louis compared to fifty percent of those who gave a

compromise answer, and sixty percent of those who refused to answer [Pearson

Chi^2=1.9048; Pr=0.386]. Once again, this finding does not have inferential power but still

it is useful in describing our sample. As figure 3.3.8 shows below, those in our sample

who chose helping others over avoiding sin were more likely to communicate Black Lives

Matter adjacent themes than those who gave compromising answers or opted not to
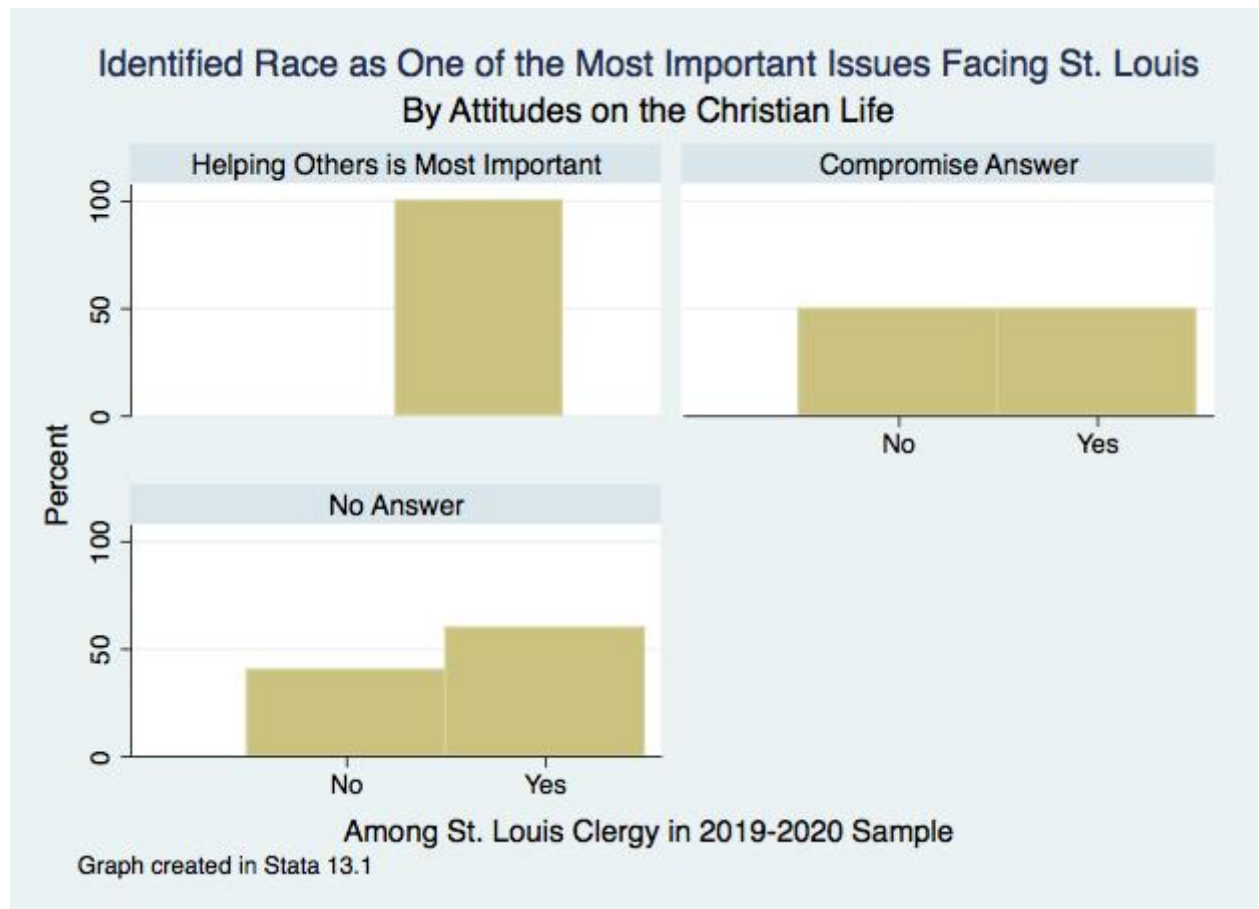
answer [Pearson chi^2(6)=3.433; Pr=0.753).

Figure 3.3. 7

Acceptance of Narratives Surrounding the Death of Michael Brown
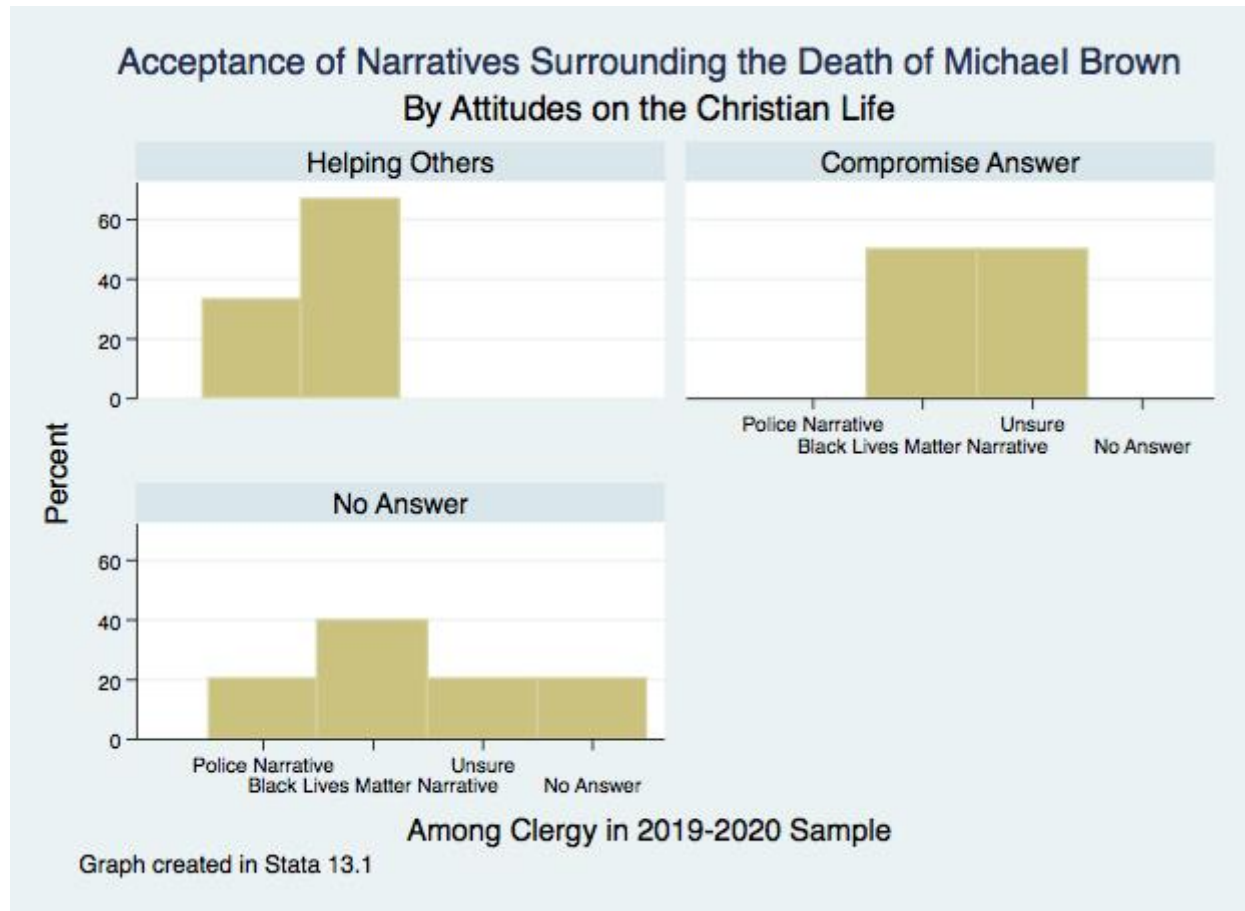By Attitudes on the Christian Life

Figure 3.3. 8

Clergy responded in a variety of ways when asked whether and to what extent

churches should be involved with politics. Four respondents (40%) gave answers

indicating that they do not believe that the church should be very involved in politics.

The responses given were very similar regardless of differences in Christian

backgrounds. One minister representing an evangelical megachurch in neighboring St.

Charles County said,

> I think we need to help people, but I don't go political in the church and my primary
> reason is because of the example of Jesus. It's not the threat of losing my 501c3 license;
> that's not what motivates me. I just look at Jesus and what he did and that's where I'm
> going to go. Politics divides people and can sidetrack a church from where its supposed
> to be. I will speak out for life and against hatred, against arrogance against pride. That
> fits both sides of the fence in a huge way.

Another respondent representing the Catholic tradition said,

I would say that the catholic church sees its role as informing consciences so we preach values, but then it is the role of the member of the church as a citizen to live out their values, but they do have to make their own decisions. The church doesn't say vote for this person or not that person. It does at times say that certain proposals are intrinsically immoral or not but we don't endorse or prohibit explicitly any one person.

While these respondents represent very different church traditions, they both subscribe to the notion that their role is more about shaping consciences by preaching values rather than speaking directly on issues of politics. However, one respondent who represents the Mainline tradition discussed his hesitancy with getting political due to congregational pressure:

We've been into all kinds of things since then and typically we lose members because sometimes we're too involved but sometimes we gain members because people say I agree with them. There's no secret that mainline protestants have been diminishing in size and influence since the 19th century and part of that is the sense that religious leaders have been too political about things. It's a dance man; it's a dance for a pastor to have to do. You're almost danged if you do and danged if you don't kind of thing. If I don't get political about some issues coming down the pipe I have colleagues that will criticize but some of us who are more in the coasts try to say that but it's hard in the Midwest. On social media in our groups I'll put my two cents, I'm as progressive as the next guy here but until you pastor my church you can't tell me how to pastor my church. Because my congregation they don't want their preacher to be too political. I think we're confused about the purpose of the church.

Another respondent, representing a Mainline congregation, provided a qualifying answer, saying that the church should be somewhat involved in politics. They describe the church as a place where community members can become engaged with real issues of the day, but they stress that the church's involvement in politics should not go so far as to associate with partisan politics. According to him, "The Church is where people are animated to engage. However, they are going to engage in their work, but if the church becomes affiliated with political parties the church loses." The fear

here is a loss of power for the American church. The minister bemoans the state of the church in Europe, blaming the lack of Christian influence on partisan politics. However, it is also an appeal to peace and to maintaining strong attendance. He says, "When you're too involved with politics you are drawing a line down the congregation."

Within our sample, those who gave answers indicating that the church should be involved in politics, whether very involved or somewhat involved, were more likely to advance a Black Lives Matter adjacent narrative than were those who said the Church should not be involved in politics [Pearson chi^2(3)=7.9167; Pr=0.048). This is significant at the .05 criteria of significance, meaning it has some inferential power for clergy in St. Louis more broadly. Figure 3.3.9 shows that 83.33 percent of respondents who said the church should be involved in politics advanced the Black Lives Matter narrative compared to zero percent of those who said the church should not be involved in politics at all. Additionally, those who support a politically active church were more likely to report using public speech from the pulpit in response to the death of Michael Brown [Pearson Chi^2(1)= 2.8571; Pr=0.091]. Respondents who favored a politically active church were slightly more likely to have participated in protest politics following the death of Michael Brown as well (33 percent compared to zero percent of those who felt that the church should not be active in politics; Pearson Chi^2(1)=1.6667; Pr=0.197).

Acceptance of Narratives Surrounding the Death of Michael Brown By Attitudes on Church Involvement in Politics

Graph created using Stata 13.1; Statistically Significant [Pearson Chi2(3)=7.9167; Pr=0.048.
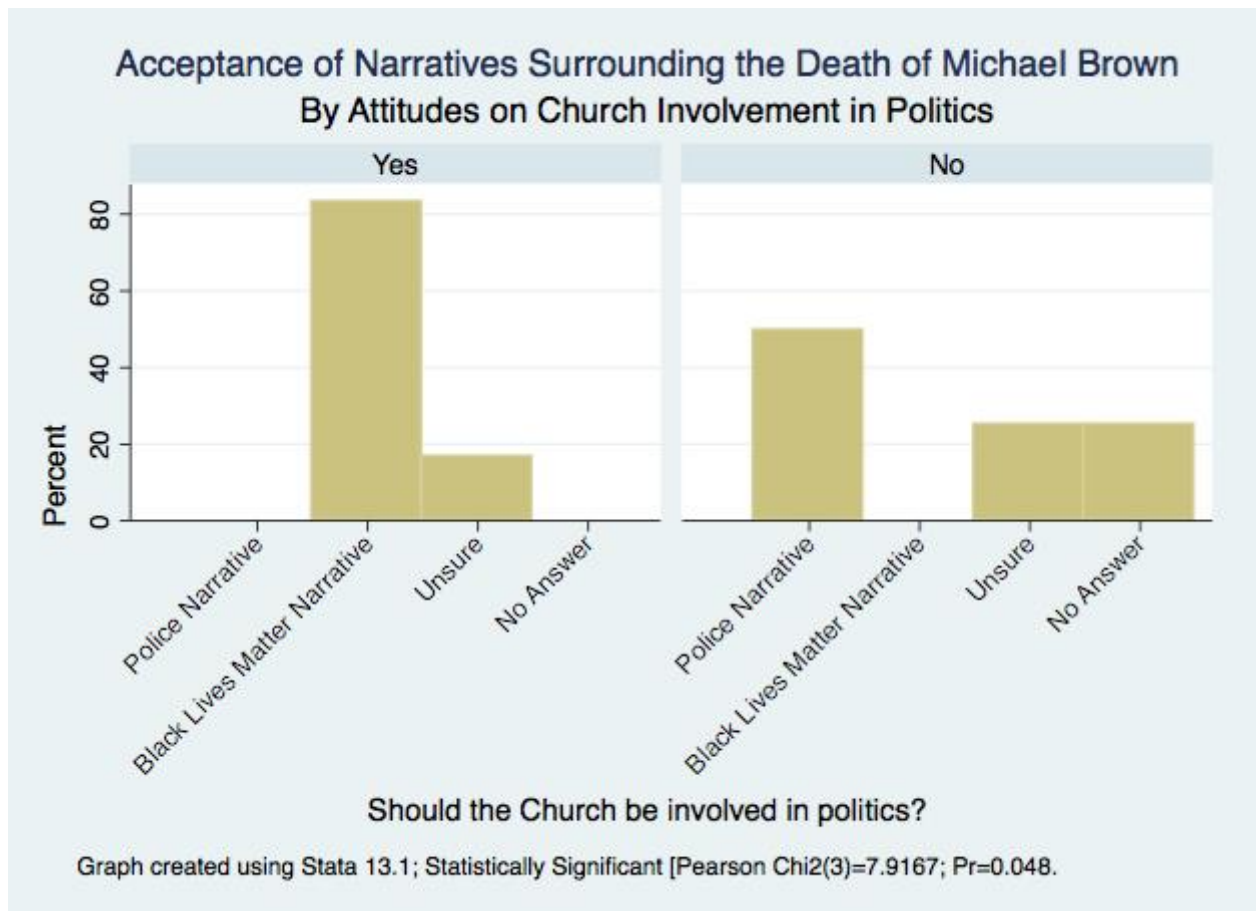
Figure 3.3. 9

Perhaps a belief that the church should be politically active is related to clergy

who are more likely to promote a racial justice narrative than a status quo narrative

because they feel more empowered to create change in the political sphere. Another

possible explanation is that this question connects to individual and communal

theologies described by Mockabee 2009. Indeed, as can be seen in the figure 3.3.10,

when we look at responses to this question by tradition, the Evangelical respondents,

known for a tradition of individualism, all answer in the negative, while Mainline

Protestants and Black Protestants, traditions known for communal religiosity,

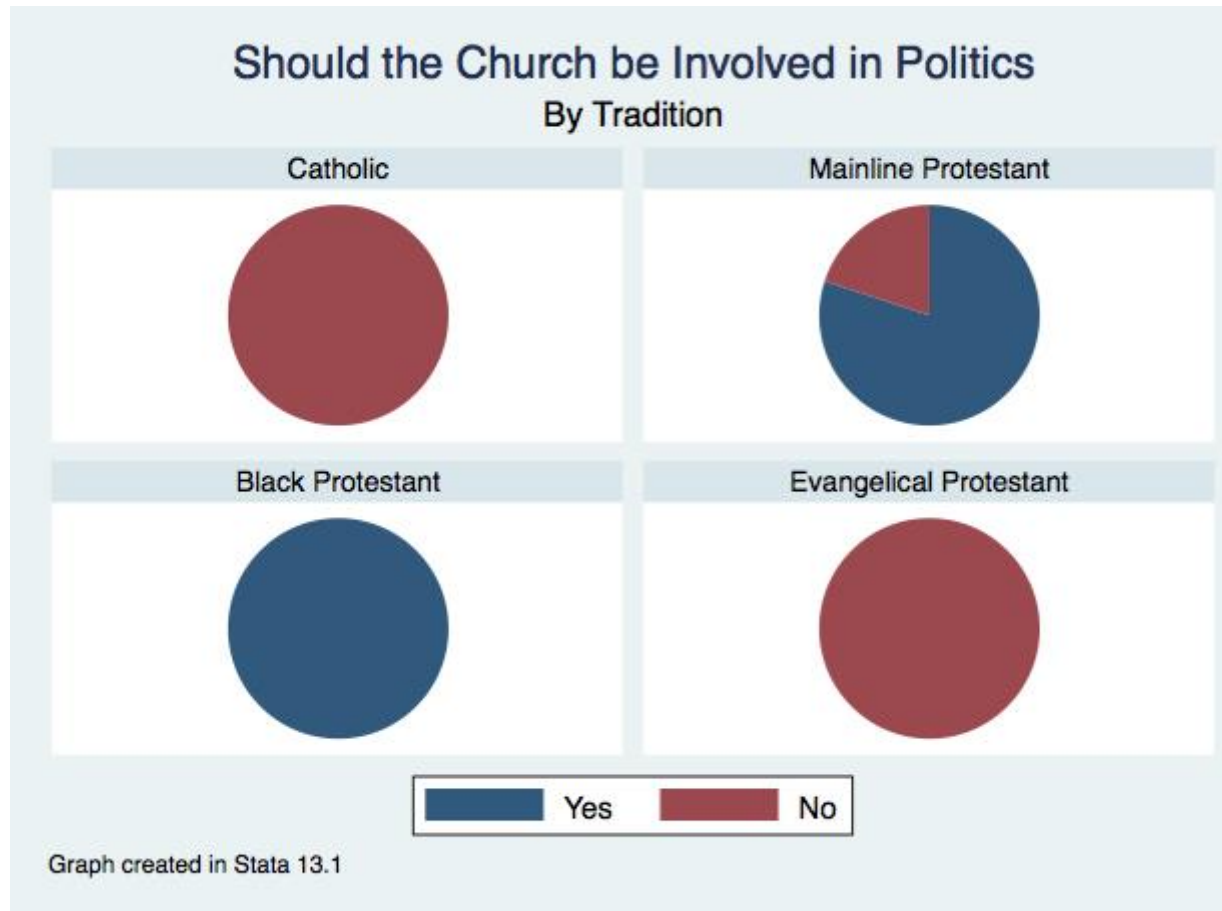overwhelmingly responded that the church should be politically active.

Should the Church be Involved in Politics
By Tradition

Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 3.3. 10

Overall, the clergy in this sample do not have an end times focus in their
preaching. One respondent said that they preach on the end times somewhat
frequently, one said that they never preach on the end times, and the rest said that they
rarely if ever preach on the end times. Unfortunately, the lack of variance in frequency
of end times preaching makes it impossible to discern a directional relationship between
end times preaching and political attitudes such as the types of issues that clergy are
interested in or narratives around the death of Michael Brown.

Having established variance in theological beliefs and religious practices among
clergy in our sample and how those may relate to political interest, political actions, and

responses to the Ferguson moment. Another variable must be considered. How similar are clergy from their congregants both doctrinally and politically? Additionally, where do clergy feel pressure to remain silent or to take action on political and social issues?

Most respondents in the sample reported that their congregation was theologically similar to them. In fact, no respondents said that their congregation was theologically dissimilar. Seven respondents said their congregation is either very or somewhat similar with themselves and three said that they were unsure. However, when asked how politically similar their congregation was to them a plurality of the clergy said they were unsure. Three clergy felt that their congregation was politically similar, three felt that their congregation was politically different, and four responded that they were unsure. However, there does not appear to be a relationship between perceived similarity between clergy and their congregation and political action or interest in this sample.

The membership reference system clearly does play a role in whether and how clergy respond to social issues. However, the mechanics and outcomes of that referential system can vary widely depending on the faith leader and their congregation. Many clergy in the sample reported pressure to speak out or remain silent on political issues from their congregations. However, of those who described this pressure, most said that the pressure came from both sides and often contradicted each other. Indeed, for some members of the clergy, navigating reactions to social issues is difficult because one can offend members of their flock on either side. One clergy member gave an anecdote about how measured a clergy member might have to react to such pressures.

Pastor F says, "I feel pressured both directions. We have people in my church. I have a gentleman who made my life miserable with intense pressure to come out against a president and make my preaching more political. On the other hand, I've had people who are very angry because they think I'm too political."

This pressure leads some to avoid using public speech to address social issues. Minister A says, "In my role, I would say from the pulpit I have to be very careful not to sound political in a partisan way. Which when you bring up the great issues of the day whatever they might be you're being political in a sense, but the congregation is not happy if they smell partisanship." Minister A goes on to explain that if they ground their teachings in scripture they can speak to social issues of the day without expecting so much "flack." However, the difficulty and complexity of avoiding an appearance of partisanship keeps him from going into social issues very often who later criticizes mainline seminaries doing more "to create activists than create pastors."

Navigating these paths can be very difficult as controversies resulting from perceived pastoral partisanship can result based on very minute details. For example, Minister E recounts an anecdote where a member of their church decided to leave because of his use of the word "slain" rather than "shot" or "killed" in describing the death of Michael Brown. While in that anecdote the clergy member decides to stand by his choice of words, his reaction was not without a cost.

Others in the sample acknowledge congregational pressures to speak out or remain silent but believe that those pressures have no sway on the message that they present or the actions that they take. Clergy B says,

I have felt pressure to be silent but I have resisted that on every side. I believe that I'm called to live faithfully to the gospel. All of my members don't share my political beliefs and at this time in society when we have so much dissidence among people, so much division... I guess I have members in my congregation, a majority would identify politically as being Democratic, but I do have Republican members in my congregation. When I preach, most of my sermons include current day political issues. There are members in my congregation who think that I should not talk about such things or bring them in the pulpit. There are people in my congregation who were upset when I moved the flags from my sanctuary. There used to be two flags in my sanctuary. One was a United States flag and one was a Christian flag. I had both flags removed because Jesus was neither American nor Christian. Jesus was Jewish. There are those who disagree with me about those things. It hasn't been antagonistic because I can hear them and they can hear me. We don't always agree. What we do agree on is that we're called to love one another even in our disagreements. I have people who disagree with my politics. I have people who disagree with same gender loving people being the embodiment of Christ and I've had disagreements with people about the willingness to welcome as well.

3.3.2 Congregational Size, Demographics, and Location

The clergy interviewed in this study represent different congregations in terms of size, demographics, and location. Size and demographics were reported by clergy themselves during the interview process rather than being estimated by the interviewer from service observations. Therefore, it must be noted that what is being examined here is not necessarily the true demographics of the congregation, but rather the perceived demographics of the leaders of these congregations. The question of import here is whether or not these perceived demographics are related to political attitudes and reactions to racialized crises among the clergy. The clergy members themselves carry various identities and characteristics that are also important to examine. For example, are there differences in the political attitudes of male and female clergy members? Are White leaders as responsive as Black leaders in responding to racial crisis?

The sizes of the congregations varied widely among the clergy that were surveyed. Half represented churches with congregation sizes of two hundred or less. Of those two clergy members led congregations smaller than one hundred regular attendees and three led congregations that were made up of one hundred to two hundred members. The other half of the sample shepherded congregations consisting of five hundred or more regular attendees; of these four had between five hundred and eight hundred regular attendees and one, an evangelical megachurch, had over two thousand regular attendees across multiple Sunday services. These size demographics seem to make sense in light of recent trends in congregation size in the United States. According to Chaves, most congregations are small in the United States, the median church size being less than one hundred regular participants (Chaves 2011; 64). However, Chaves also points out that the median church goer attends a congregation with about four hundred regular participants. The bimodal distribution of congregation size is shown in figure 3.3.11.
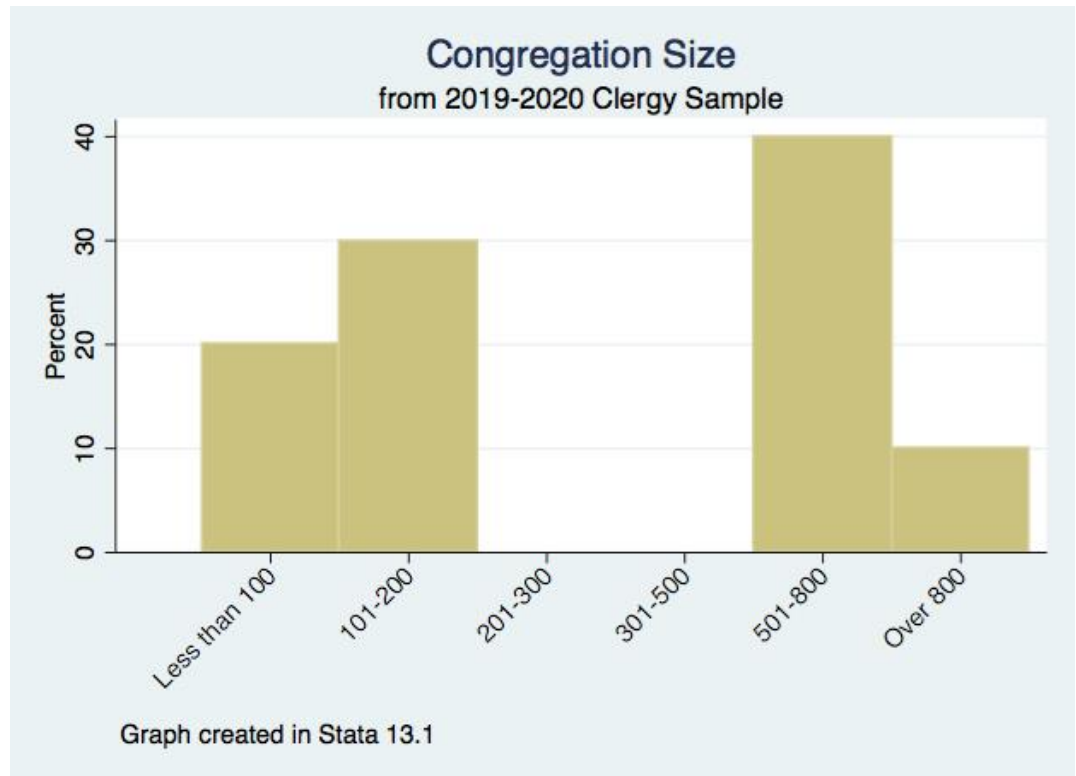
Congregation Size
from 2019-2020 Clergy Sample

Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 3.3. 11

Because of the bimodal distribution of the sample and the small sample size, I

created a binary variable categorizing responses as either from a small church (500 or

less) or a large church (501 or greater). The distribution of responses in this variable is

fifty-fifty. Small churches in our sample are more likely to share views consistent with

the Black Lives Matter narrative (60 percent) compared to forty percent among large

churches [Pearson $Chi^2(3)$=1.2; Pr=.753]. However, it must be noted that this is not a

large substantive difference as it amounts to a difference in only one respondent.

Additionally, almost all of the clergy who represented small churches in the sample

reported race as being a major issue affecting St. Louis, while large churches were less

likely to identify race as an issue of concern (Pearson $Chi^2(1)$=0.47; Pr=0.49). Figure
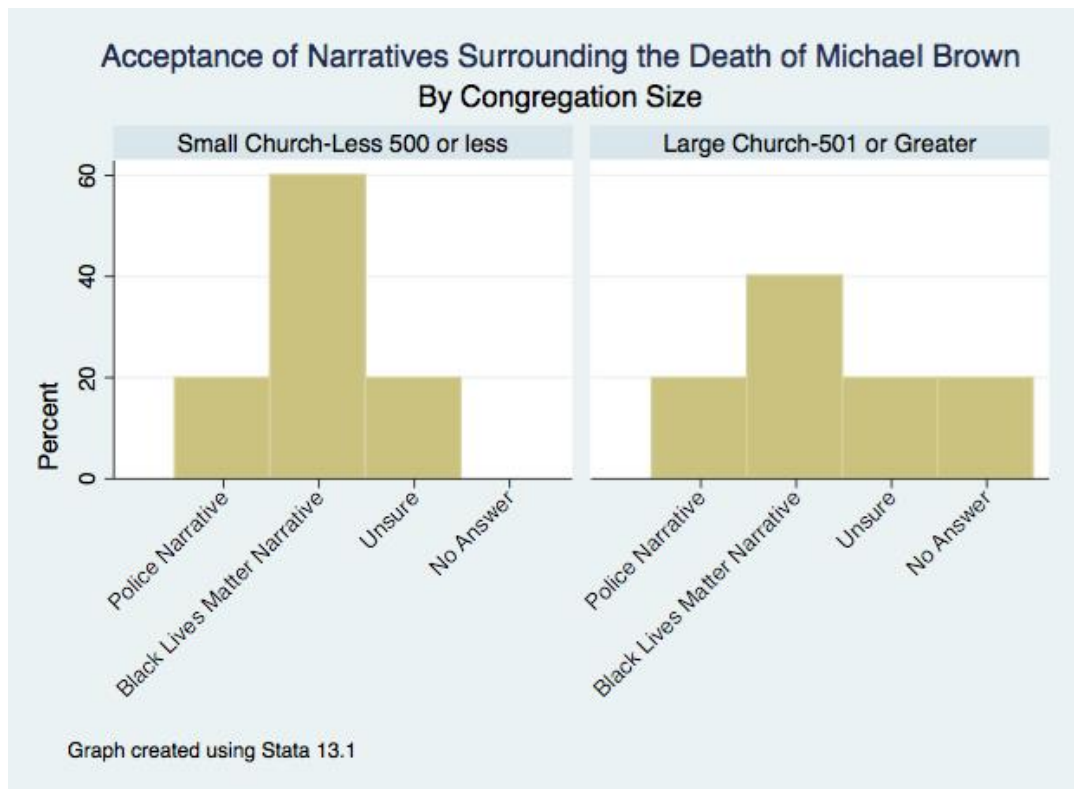
3.3.12 and 3.3.13 show more details.

Acceptance of Narratives Surrounding the Death of Michael Brown
By Congregation Size

Graph created using Stata 13.1

Figure 3.3. 12

Identification of Race as One of the Most Important Issues Facing St. Louis By Church Size
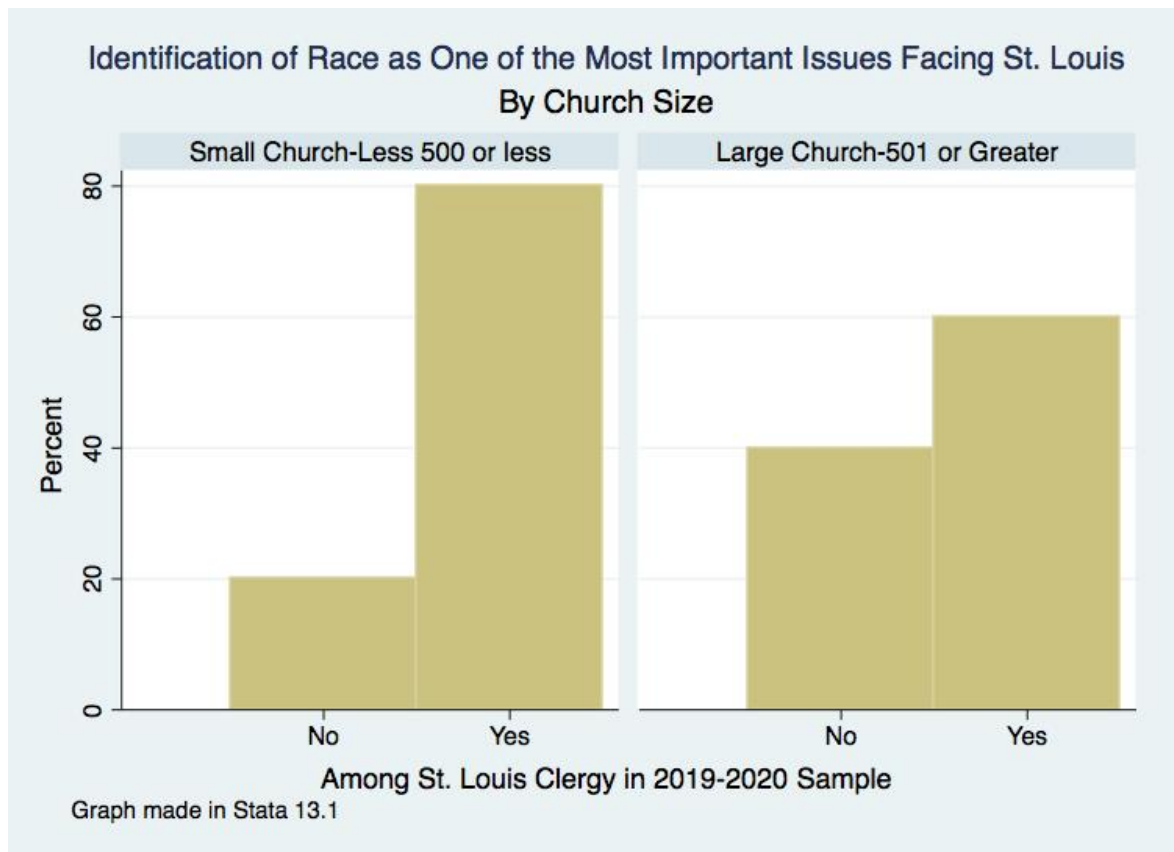
Figure 3.3. 13

Congregational demographics are also varied regarding age, class, and race. Four

out of ten clergy said that they represent congregations that are made up of mostly

older congregants. One responded that they represent a mostly middle-aged

congregation and one responded that they represent a mostly younger congregation,

one said that their congregation was not predominantly made up of any particular age

group, and three failed to discuss the age demographics of their congregation. It would

make sense to find predominantly older congregations as, according to Chaves, older

people tend to be more highly represented in congregations, especially today (Chaves

2011; 63). Given the sporadic responses to age demographics and the small sample size

it is hard to determine any sort of relationship between congregation age and political

interest or action.

Congregations had little variation in terms of class. Overall, clergy described their

congregations as middle class with some wealthier congregants and some less well off.

Besides one clergy member, leading a predominantly Latinx Catholic parish, who said

that their congregation was mostly lower/working class and one who failed to answer all

other respondents said that they lead churches that are predominantly middle class.

The clergy interviewed for this project represent congregations that are not

diverse racially or ethnically. One interviewee said that their congregation was

somewhat diverse, but mostly white. This member of clergy gave their response

because while their Mainline Sunday services tended to be predominantly white, their

church hosted many community activities throughout the week which were mostly

attended by people of color. He said,

> We have about fifty people in our worshipping community, but we also have community events throughout the week including meals, co-sponsored events with the local Ba'hai community, music programs and classes, circus classes, and a food pantry that feeds one hundred families each week. We also have bible studies and home-schooling groups. So our fifty person worship services are about seventy-five percent white and twenty-five percent Black, but those figures reverse for our community events. Our community events are about seventy-five percent Black and twenty-five percent white.

Besides this interviewee, each respondent said that their congregation was not

diverse but predominantly represented one racial or ethnic group. This lack of within-

congregation diversity is typical for American churches. According to Chaves,

"Congregations with more than a smattering of minority presence… remains very rare

and difficult to sustain over the long run" (Chaves 2011; 28). However, Chaves does

point out that there are more predominantly white congregations in the United States that have at least some people from ethnic or racial minorities in the congregation. This seems to be the case for most of the white congregations represented in our sample. Half of the clergy interviewed (five) lead churches that they report as being not diverse and mostly white. Most mentioned that they have a few Black or Latinx worshipers and one said that they have a small number of Asian congregants. One respondent representing a mega-church in St. Charles county, which neighbors northern St. Louis County said, "We are a mostly white church and we have a growing number of minorities and I've been speaking to that in the last few years. I think we reflect our community in a good way as far as our part of St. Charles county which is predominantly white. I'm thankful that we're not an all-white church."

Three respondents said that their congregation is not diverse and mostly Black. These churches were often less racially diverse than the predominantly white congregations. One respondent said, "We have one white member, which would constitute all of the racial diversity in our congregation." Another said, "We are ninety-nine percent African-American; we have one Caucasian."

Finally, one respondent said that their congregation is not diverse and mostly Latinx. He leads a north St. Louis County Catholic parish that regularly has eight hundred attendees, of which seven hundred are Latinx.

While clear variation in the racial and ethnic compositions of congregations represented in this study are present, this compels us to ask how and when these

congregational compositions are related to political attitudes and actions of their clergy.

The clergy whose congregations are reported as being predominantly white were split in

the narratives that they present about the death of Michael Brown. Of the five

respondents, two made statements congruent with the police narrative, two made

statements that reflected the Black Lives Matter narrative and one was unsure and did

not represent either position. Clergy who represent predominantly Black/African

American congregations mostly shared statements that represented the Black Lives

Matter narrative, although one of the three was unsure. In fact, clergy who represent a

predominantly Black congregation were over twenty percent more likely to make

statements congruent with a Black Lives Matter narrative than other churches

[$Chi^2(3)$=1.9048; Pr=0.592]. Also, of note in this sample is the fact that only churches

who represent predominantly white congregations describe the death of Michael Brown

in a way that reflects a police narrative. Additionally, the only respondent to say that

she responds to critical issues facing the community through protest politics represents

a predominantly Black congregation. In research using exit-poll data gathered for this

study (see the next chapter), it was found that individuals in polling places that were

predominantly white were more likely to accept police narratives about the death of

Michael Brown than those who were in precincts that were predominantly Black. It was

also found that in addition to the racial composition of one's surroundings, that

proximity to Michael Brown's death was also related to perceptions about Michael

Brown's death (Udani et al. 2014). In his study of racial unresent in Cincinnati, Sokhey

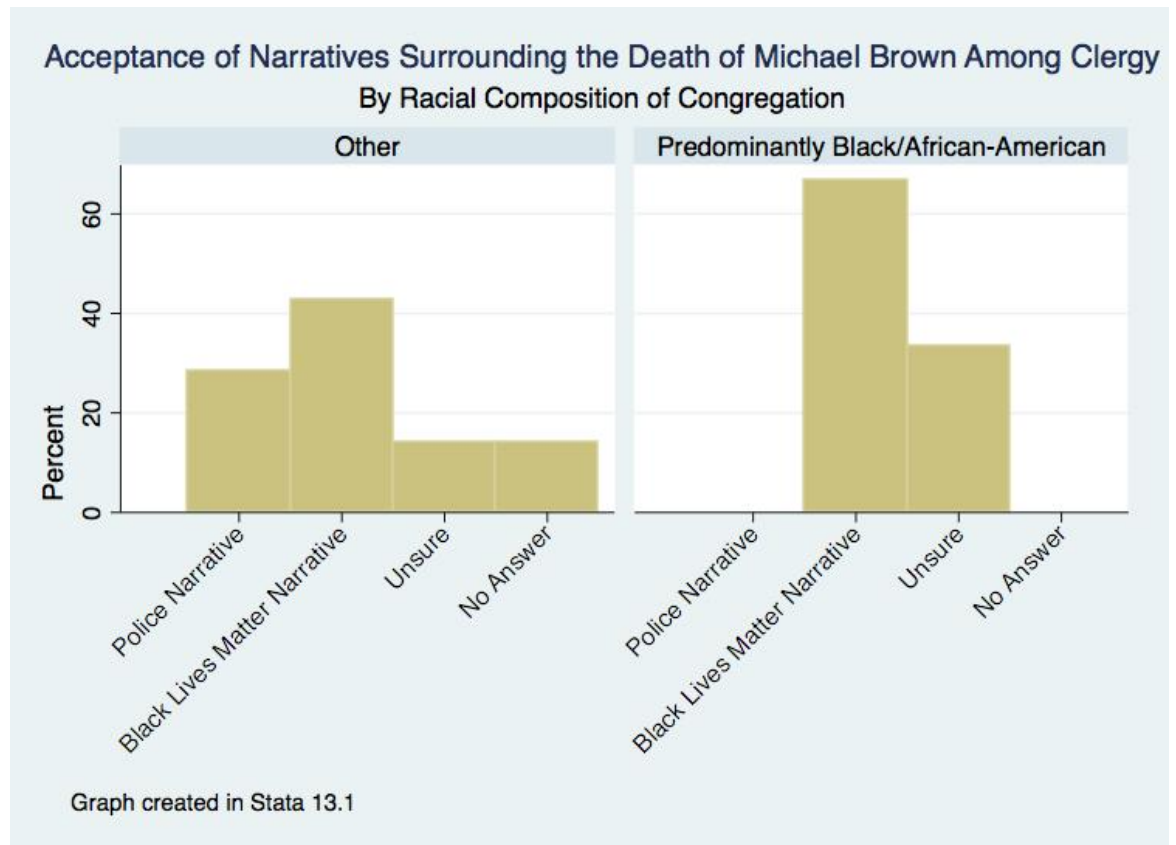(2007) concludes that clergy working nearer to racial crisis took on the role of

Figure 3.3 14

community leaders and provided for a social network that encouraged prolonged and

pronounced clergy participation in reconciliation efforts. In *Faith & Ferguson*, Francis

(2015) documents the active and racially progressive response of Mainline Christian

leaders from across the St. Louis region. However, out of the 22 faith leaders she

documents, only one is from within the Ferguson municipality, while two others are

within a mile or so of the site where Michael Brown was killed. This prompts us to

question whether the location of a church is predictive of how it responds to racial

crisis. In particular, we can examine two different items related to location. The first of

which is proximity. How does distance from the location where Michael Brown was

killed influence response? Second, following (Djupe and Gilbert 2002) we can examine

the level of perceived similarity or difference between the church and churches that are

nearby.

First, let us address proximity. One pastor of a predominantly white mega-

church in St. Charles County, across the Missouri River from Ferguson and about a

twenty seven minute drive (19.2 miles) from Canfield Green Apartments, describes

feeling insulated from what was happening just across the river from his church. He

says,

> During that time we just hunkered down. We're pretty far removed from Ferguson
> geographically. We are a whole different community but realizing that we have families
> that live in Ferguson we reached out to them. They were fearful and they were sad that
> their city was being seen this way. There was so much pain, that the world saw them
> this way, so we cared for them, but community-wise we didn't really do anything at the
> time. Like what do we do? Whenever African Americans came up on the platform to talk
> about it and help people understand we definitely made it a matter of prayer but as far
> as actions we didn't do a whole lot.

Churches within Ferguson sometimes felt at least somewhat detached from the

death of Michael Brown even though its repercussions were being felt all around their

community. Multiple preachers said something like this statement from a leader of a Black Protestant church within Ferguson: "Most people in Ferguson did not even know that Canfield Green Apartments were even in Ferguson."

From how the leader of Church E describes it, the clergy response to the death of Michael Brown tended to be more from churches that were outside the Ferguson community. He says, "A lot of clergy could roll into town, be in front of the camera for protests and get in their car and drive back, but that didn't materially change the state that the people in the community were living in." This is corroborated by the map in Gunning-Francis' book, *Faith and Ferguson*, where most of the congregations she documents as participating in protest politics are from the St. Louis region but are mostly from outside the Ferguson community (Francis 2014). Indeed, there seems to be a different dynamic at work in Ferguson than in Sokhey's study of Cincinnati, where distance from Ferguson allows for either insulation to what is happening or opportunity to participate in ways that are less focused on peace and reconciliation and more focused on policy change.

I calculated distances between the church locations and the Canfield Green apartment complex where Michael Brown was killed. I then calculated mean distances across narrative categories. The total mean of the sample is 5.4 miles with distances ranging from 2.2 miles away to 19.4 miles. Indeed, the data seems to show the transferability of Sokhey's findings. The mean distance from the Canfield Green apartments of those who accept a police-positive narrative is 10.8 miles while the mean distance for those who accept a Black Lives Matter narrative is only 3.78 miles.

However, for those who responded to the death of Michael Brown through protest politics in response to social issues the mean distance is higher than for those who did not (6.15 miles and 5.2 miles respectively).

The second location-based variable that we must examine is the perceived level of difference or similarity that leaders of a church have with the churches near them. Three of the clergy interviewed for this study said that their churches were very similar to those near them. Four said that their church was somewhat similar to those near them. Two said somewhat different and one failed to answer. No respondents felt that their congregation was very different from those nearby. There does not seem to be any relationship within our data between perceived difference and narrative acceptance or responses to the death of Michael Brown. The literature focuses on perceived difference indicating more politically active clergy. However, there is not much perceived difference in our sample to speak of. Rather, while clergy in the sample might feel that their church has something unique to offer, they mostly feel like other churches in the community are a part of the same work.

The personal identities and characteristics of the clergy themselves is likely to be an indicator of political interest and action, as well as responses to the racial crisis in Ferguson. When introducing the sample of respondents, I briefly discussed some of their demographic variables. How predictive are these variables to narrative acceptance, political interest, action, and response to the Ferguson moment? It is important to note that demographic information of the clergy was perceived by the researcher.

First, let us examine whether sex is a predictor of racialized attitudes among the clergy in our sample. It is notable, although not statistically inferential, that while the men in our survey are divided in what narratives they share, the women in the sample all accept a Black Lives Matter narrative (compared to 37.5% of the men in the survey) [$Chi^2(3)=2.5$; Pr=0.475]. The women both participated in protest in response to the death of Michael Brown, although one only as a monitor, while only one of the eight men in the survey said that he participated. Both women described either police injustice or race as important issues facing St. Louis compared to only 75% of the men.

An age variable was created across three categories: under forty, forty to fifty-nine, and sixty and over. Those classified as sixty or over seem to be less likely to support a Black Lives Matter narrative about the death of Michael Brown than those in younger age groups [$Chi^2(2)=0.5333$; Pr=0.766]. On the other hand, only those who were under forty in the sample failed to identify race or police injustice as an issue of major importance in the St. Louis region, while 100% of respondents over the age of forty saw race or police injustice as a major issue [$Chi^2(2)=10$; Pr=0.007].

In regards to race, it is not surprising to find that Black respondents were significantly more likely to accept a Black Lives Matter narrative than white respondents [$Chi^2(6)=11.5$; Pr=0.074]. One of the Black respondents expressed that they were unsure about the events that led to the death of Michael Brown while the other two expressed views that reflect a Black Lives Matter narrative. Two of the six white respondents made remarks consistent with a police narrative, three made remarks consistent with a Black Lives Matter narrative, and one was unsure. The one Latinx respondent declined to

comment on the events surrounding the death of Michael Brown. While all the white respondents in the sample cited either "race" or injustice in policing as one of the most important issues facing St. Louis. One Black respondent and one Latino respondent did not. The former said that gun violence, crime, and education were the most important issues; while the latter focused on immigration and abortion.

3.4 Discussion

The data presented in this chapter provides support for many conclusions that have already been drawn about the connection between clergy and politics. First, most of the clergy in the sample are reluctant to get "too political". Instead, their response to crisis is to focus on community needs such as through providing food or cleanup, or to advocate for peace rather than policy change. Second, most of the clergy in the sample use public speech to indirectly influence their congregations through preaching values. Third, clergy feel pressure from their congregations as to whether they should "go political" on an issue. Finally, like most churches throughout the United States, the churches represented in our sample were not racially diverse.

However, some of the data and narratives presented might make us second guess what we know about the political nature of clergy. First, when it comes to instances of racialized crisis (and perhaps politically charged crisis in general) distance might work in more than one way. Sokhey (2007) argues that those closer to the crisis are more likely to respond. The interviews conducted in this chapter paint a picture of more localized clergy advocating for peace over policy change, while clergy with more distance are able to either completely ignore the issue or to become politically active. It

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does so by at once insulating congregations from the unrest while also freeing them to take action without as much risk of congregational or community backlash.

It might be intuitive, but the evidence drawn from this admittedly small sample provides evidence that religious factors and other variables within the SRS (Self Reference System) might be more influential than what is usually considered. While the sample for this interview project was small, it provided variety in location, race, sex, and importantly religious ideas and practices. Within the sample, there did seem to be a relationship between religious tradition and acceptance of narratives around the Ferguson Moment. Specifically, Evangelicals were less likely than Black Protestants and Mainline Protestants to discuss the death of Michael Brown in a way that is consistent with a Black Lives Matter narrative. However, tradition does not seem to be predictive of what actions a member of the clergy performed to respond to Michael Brown's death. Religious practices may also be related to political interest. Take, for instance, baptism. Within the sample, there was a gap in identifying race as an important issue in St. Louis based on whether one practices infant or adult baptism, with the former being more likely to do so. This tracks theoretically as infant baptism tends to be viewed as a more communal practice compared to adult decision baptism which tends to be viewed as more individualistic. Perhaps this supports Green et al.'s conclusion that communal and individualistic forms of religion are related to different political attitudes.

Additionally, clergy represented in this sample had different attitudes on the mission of Jesus which reflected differences in political attitudes. Those who believed that Jesus' mission was political were more likely to discuss the death of Michael Brown

in a way that reflected a Black Lives Matter narrative rather than a more pro-police narrative. As Jesus is the center of the Christian faith, it would make sense that beliefs about his mission, work, and character would be reflective of attitudes and actions of Christians today. Indeed, one of the strongest takeaways from this study is that how one perceives Jesus and his mission is indicative of how one interacts with the cultural sphere.

While the question of which is more important for the Christian life: helping others or avoiding sin, works as a great question on surveys of rank-and-file Christians, in an interview setting with faith leaders, most opted for a non-answer or compromising answer. However, still the few who chose to say helping others are more likely to frame the death of Michael Brown using a Black Lives Matter narrative. Additionally, attitudes about whether the church should be political are related within the sample to attitudes on the death of Michael Brown. Those who are more supportive of a political church are more likely to accept a Black Lives Matter narrative.

Congregational factors also seem to be related to how clergy discuss the death of Michael Brown as large churches were much less likely to accept a Black Lives Matter narrative than small churches or to identify race as one of the most important issues facing St. Louis. Additionally, as might be expected, the racial demographics of a church are related to attitudes and responses to the death of Michael Brown and the protests which followed.

The individual characteristics of the clergy in the sample also seem to be related to attitudes and actions around racial crisis. Specifically, women in the sample were more likely to have politically progressive attitudes and actions. Still, in the United States, relatively few Christian denominations allow for women to take on ministerial positions, especially in lead pastoring roles. However, as the women in this survey are a part of the same denomination as a male member of the clergy who presented much more conservative views, this is likely not due to the religious environment from which the women are drawn.

Ultimately, the data produced by this study is not as conclusive as the researcher would have liked due to the small sample size. However, the most valuable contribution that it makes is that it provides clear evidence for the importance of qualitative research as a method of understanding the relationship between race and faith in the United States. Especially in instances of racial crisis, interviews and observation should be utilized in order to better understand the pressures, attitudes, and resulting actions of clergy in their communities. Furthermore, this study provides evidence that understanding how clergy perceive the mission of Christ can be important in how they process and perform their role. The evidence presented in this chapter will be supported by the vignettes presented in the next.

Chapter 4: Vignettes

Having used the data gathered from my interviews to discuss the relationship

between various variables with political interest, political action, and responses to the

Ferguson Moment. I now present a few narratives that seem pertinent in helping us to

understand how the clergy in my study navigated the crisis in Ferguson. These are

meant to supplement the data in order to give the reader a more complete picture of

the responses that faith leaders took in response to the death of Michael Brown.

4.1 A Tale of Two Churches

One story that is drawn from this study that relates the influence of the racial

composition and the location of a congregation on the ability of clergy to behave

politically is that of two churches representing the same mainline denomination. Three

clergy representing two different churches within the same mainline denomination

were interviewed for this study. The denomination is one of the largest within the

tradition. While this denomination allows for a large degree of doctrinal freedom

amongst its member churches as well as the individuals who attend them, the main

differences between the two churches are their location, the racial composition of the

congregation, and the racial identity of the clergy who lead them.

One of these churches, Church A, located in the center of Ferguson off of South

Florissant Road, has a predominantly white and aging population, and due to

congregational in-fighting has resorted to at least three leaders or interim leaders over

the last decade or so, and these leaders have all been white. I interviewed two of these

leaders, the current one and an interim leader who was in charge of the church during

the Ferguson Moment. This church's response to the death of Michael Brown is one that can be characterized by fear. When asked about how the church has changed since the tragedy, the current minister said,

> It scared the bejesus out of people who were here. It started a miniature wave of people moving away. I'm going to say that because of the information that got out that a lot of our people were getting which seemed to suggest that it wasn't simply a matter of a white police officer gunning down a Black man in the street but there might have been an altercation. A lot of people here who lived here when there was rioting in the streets it made them angry that people reacted in that way. And I daresay that it created a little more racial animosity in their hearts because they felt like it was an overreaction.

His predecessor, a woman who was the interim minister at the time, described the response similarly, noting the fear and racial animosity of the congregation. She said,

> The congregation mostly responded in fear. They wanted to lock the doors. People would say, they knew I was involved in demonstrating a little bit so they'd say "pastor when is it going to stop? Can you make it stop?" and I said "what would change if it stopped? Don't you think racism, the inequity in the school systems…"-Most of them were retired teachers and they saw what happened in Normandy and other schools- "what part of that is okay for Black kids?" I'd say if people stopped protesting then nothing is going to change about policing, about schools, about Black wealth. So mostly they just wanted to lock the doors, stick their fingers in their ears and go "lalalala". I heard horrific anti-Obama stuff. That had already been a rumbling. So, I don't know how it changed them.

It is clear that the two ministers feel constrained in how they are able to address racism in their roles as members of clergy. The current minister describes the situation as if his hands are tied and so he often avoids "getting political". He describes congregational pressure outweighing social pressure from his social justice minded peers and colleagues. He says that he will occasionally speak broadly about racism and might mention the Ferguson Moment when he does, but he describes his role as one that is not overtly prophetic, rather subtly communicating values. He says,

It makes my job more difficult, there's not overt racism in my church, but it is a white congregation you're going to get what you get. People are going to respond to something like the Michael Brown thing, what one person feels it's going to spread and trickle out. I have to be very careful when I mention it but I will say, "You know five years ago this happened and it helped spur the Black Lives Matter movement…". I talk about it but I don't say you're white and you're bad, but I can talk about all the issues where it just creates more awareness. That's the way I've been trained to approach these things: not overtly. Everybody is on a journey, I can't force things down people's throats but I can plant seeds.

Unlike the current leader of the church, his predecessor calls out the denomination as being overtly racist. Although, she admits that she was slow to start, she tried to take an active role in responding to the tragedy. Her congregation was aware that she was involved in some sort of demonstration and this created more tension. She says, "I do this because Jesus called me to, but they're writing my check. So I had to evaluate what does Jesus want me to be spending my time doing and what does the church want me to be spending my time doing because those aren't the same thing."

In one anecdote she gives about her time at Church A following the death of Michael Brown, she describes a request that a community member who was involved in nursing ministries made to the church. The community member had secured a team of crisis-response EMTs who were specially trained to handle protest activities to come to Ferguson to provide their services. She had a family member who attended Church A and so requested that Church A would house the team during their stay. The interim minister says that the church would not allow the team to stay on their premises, but added that the community member, "was gracious enough to let the church find a way

to *say* they did something, so they allowed the EMTs to store some of their equipment there;" the clergy member sarcastically adds, "WooHoo".

In addition to pressure from her congregation, she described other hinderances to her participation including a constant barrage of emails, texts, and other communications, many events that were not communicated widely, and racial segregation among clergy. She describes the latter of these by saying, "A lot of Black clergy are bi-vocational and work during the day and white clergy scheduled meetings during the day and very often Black clergy aren't able to go to those meetings, so there wasn't a time where we were able to connect." However, she began attending events organized by Metropolitan Congregations United and was also trained to become a deescalator, and she sometimes went out into the street wearing her orange vest that said "CLERGY" and talked to members of the community. Her denomination began providing resources which she shared with her flock. She encouraged members of her congregation to go to an anti-racism training with her and managed to bring along six people. She also invited speakers to her church. While she played a much more active role than her congregation was comfortable with, she talks about the time as a time where she could have done more but was unable. The current pastor described the reaction to her work by saying, "The interim pastor here, a female pastor… she took to the streets and there was some negative feedback about that, but most understood that she was really a part of a larger group of clergy that was trying to mitigate what was happening and quell what was happening." In his understanding of her work, she was working less for radical political change than for peace and reconciliation.

Despite being in the same mainline denomination, Church B responded very differently to the crisis. Church B is just a twelve-minute drive away from Church A in unincorporated space just north of Highway 270. The congregations are similar in size. They are also similar in their doctrines and practices. However, while Church A is made up of an almost entirely white congregation and is led by white pastors, Church B's congregation is made up almost entirely of Black people and is pastored by a Black woman. Their response to the Ferguson moment was drastically different as well. The pastor of Church B became one of the most prominent religious figures in the modern fight for racial justice in America.

When the current pastor of Church A was asked how he responds to social and political issues he says that he hosts a bible study dedicated to examining justice issues and he also occasionally speaks from the pulpit, although he says it is more values based and he is hesitant of being too pushy. The pastor of Church B's response is quite different. She said, "I preach. I protest. I bear witness. I give my resources. I galvanize my church to give resources. I confront politicians of my time." She also took a much more active role in her response to the death of Michael Brown than the interim pastor of Church A, and her focus seemed to be much more on creating tangible political change rather than providing for community needs and de-escalation work.

Here is how the pastor of Church B recounts her work after the death of Michael Brown and how it changed her and her congregation:

> The killing of Michael Brown is where I became more known in political circles and public circles through showing up in those spaces and doing that work within the

community. Led largely by the young people who were out in the street and doing this work, but also being called to do that work myself. My church was transformed by that because we became a meeting place for lots of the gatherings that happened… I became a spiritual companion for many of the young people who were involved in that and it catapulted me to the work I do now. Before Michael Brown was murdered I was not involved in the church in the way that I am now… We continue to serve as a resource for community. We continue to hold events to care for the community. We are right now collecting money because we want to begin 2020 with a year of jubilee and we want to abolish about a million dollars of medical debt in our community, all of those things happened in the aftermath of what happened to Michael Brown. It transformed us as a church and hopefully we will continue to help transform others as we go on.

Above, the pastor of Church B describes the death of Michael Brown as a transformative experience for her congregation that made them more involved in the community, while the pastors of Church A described it as a fearful experience that led to many wanting to lock the doors of the church or leaving altogether. Indeed the pastors of Church A indicated that some of their flock were highly skeptical of the response made by Church B and their leaders. While pastors of both churches speak to the fact that they have congregants who do not always agree with their politics, the congregation of Church B seems much more willing to allow for political speech and action from their leader. She says, "It hasn't been antagonistic because I can hear them, and they can hear me. We don't always agree. What we do agree on is that we're called to love another even in our disagreements." However, it is unclear why this is the case.

What makes one church respond in a way that is community responsive and one that is closed off from community? We see clear differences in both congregational demographics and congregational willingness to accept political action by their leader. Perhaps leader personality is also at play. The pastor of Church B describes herself by saying, "I am rarely silent. It's just not my nature." While she also speaks of listening and love, it is clear that she is one that will value taking a stand when she perceives injustice

over keeping the peace. From the evidence gathered in this study it is difficult to determine which of these three factors is the most powerful in predicting the response of clergy and their congregations to racial crises. Perhaps, they all play a role. However, all three pastors do describe a level of push back from their congregations when it comes to political actions and yet the two churches have very different outcomes.

4.2 The Slow Start

One church in this study felt especially insulated from the events of Ferguson. While only being twenty minutes away, Church C is located on the other side of the Missouri River in the much whiter and wealthier St. Charles County. Church C is an evangelical megachurch with about 2400 attendees across multiple Sunday services on a large campus whose main building has a large worship center, a smaller chapel, a coffee shop and bookstore and a large area for children's care. Two additional buildings house offices for the large staff and the middle school and high school ministry. Church C is comprised of mostly white congregants. The church is predominantly middle aged, but its largest area of growth is with twenty-somethings.

The pastor of Church C, an older white man, described their church's mission by saying, "Our mission is to fulfill the great commission of Jesus to lead people to find and follow Jesus to take Jesus to the culture where you are at so people can see how Jesus loves them by how we live out the faith. We are to live it out so people are drawn to him." He goes on to say, "We're not just to do good things for Jesus but to change people's lives." When asked to describe the mission of Jesus he responded that it was not only to bring salvation but also to reveal to the world who God is. The church's

evangelical doctrine is made distinct from similar churches around it by a heavy

emphasis on baptism and communion. These are practiced by all Christian sects, but

unlike many Evangelical churches, communion is practiced on a weekly basis and

baptism is a more central aspect of the process of salvation. Rather than just a public

declaration of faith and a symbol of a renewed life, Church C holds baptism to be critical

because it is the occasion of regeneration or rebirth. Rather than talking about "getting

saved" the leaders of Church C are more likely to talk about being baptized or immersed

which their movement sees as a better translation of the original Greek word and also

emphasizes the difference between other sects' practice of "sprinkling" baptism

performed on infants.

Political and social issues of interests to the pastor of Church C includes racism,

crime, and abortion. The main form of action that he takes to address these social issues

is public speech from the pulpit. On racism he says,

> Racism makes me crazy. To me that is just wrong. its sinful. It bothers me a great deal
> that people who are followers of Jesus can be racist and justify it. There's a lot of pain
> where that comes from in the past, but it is just wrong…. Racism, antisemitism, Christian
> attitudes towards Muslims, even how people treat those of a different sexual
> preference. Jesus never degraded or put someone else down at all ever.

While the pastor may have had personal convictions about racism and shared

them from the pulpit, from how he describes it, the Ferguson Moment catalyzed a new

focus on the sin of racism for Church C. However, this was a slow process. The pastor

described initial reactions to what was happening in Ferguson as "a time of chaos and

emotion. It was not a time of understanding." He also uses the words pain and

confusion to describe that time. He says, "We definitely made it a matter of prayer, but

as far as actions, we didn't do a whole lot." He talked about that time with a sense of regret at not doing more. Like other white ministers in this project, his initial action was to continue educating himself through joining groups, inviting speakers, etc. More recently, throughout the 2019 summer a special focus on the sin of racism was the center of a sermon series. In the early part of 2020, the church hosted a movie night to watch a documentary about the Emmanuel AME Church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina.

However, the church has decided to take more direct action in ministering to the community of Ferguson. They acquired a church building from an evangelical church in the same movement within Ferguson that had been hemorrhaging members since the Ferguson Moment and eventually voted to close its doors. Church C plans to open a satellite campus there. According to the pastor of Church C, "We don't want to be the white church coming in. We are praying for an African American campus pastor. Now, we are trying to react. This our city, how do we help them to understand who Jesus is? We live out faith with them. I don't think that means we need to be on the riot line, but we can't be hunkered down and say 'what's the problem over there?'"

When asked about the actual events that occurred on the day that Michael Brown died, the pastor of Church C tends to speak in line with the police narrative. He says,

> Well, I believe Michael and his friend caused a disruption at a gas station or a place and then he was spotted on the road the policeman gave him some commands there seems to have been some sort of struggle in the car and the young man went off and the police man killed him because he felt threatened. I do not know the specifics. But the police officer, the charges were dropped against him.

However, he also says that he has tried to understand the impact that it had on others who see the events of that day differently than he has. Immediately after saying how he perceived what happens he tells of an interaction he had with someone who interpreted what happened in Ferguson in a totally different way and described the need for empathy:

> There's a believer I know from north city, his dad is in jail, he had a single mom, he grew up in a very poor part of town and when he was a teenager he said 'I can't tell you how many times the car I was in was pulled over… and every time he was arrested and put in jail because he was a Black man from a bad part of town and he assumed they knew his dad. Just because his skin color and where he was at they thought he was bad. He struggled with that emotionally. When Michael Brown died he knew that it was time to stand up, he did not know the details with Michael Brown, but he knew the emotion. He will say he knows there's crime and he knows officers do what they do, but he also knows there's a lot of pain and society says we know you're bad and you're going to be bad so some people act that out. So I believe telling young people that god has put a call on their life you're here for a reason. That's not what they've been told many times by their family or by society.

The pastor of Church C is dedicated to the idea that positive change in the world comes about through the sharing of the gospel rather than through political action. He does not see Jesus as a political figure and sees politics as a force of division. It makes sense then that his focus is on changing hearts within his congregation to be more accepting of people of different identities, while also planting a new church in Ferguson. However, it is unlikely that the first measure would have been such a primary focus or that the second measure would have happened at all if it was not for the Ferguson Moment.

4.3 The Next Generation

Church D has two campuses in different parts of St. Louis. One is located in St. Louis' historic Black neighborhood, The Ville, and the other located in Florissant, a St.

Louis suburb located on the northern border of Ferguson. The church has about seven

hundred regular attendees across the two campuses each week, almost all of them are

African American. Church D is currently pastored by a young African American minister

who has recently taken over for his father who pastored the church for forty years.

The interview was conducted in the church. The young reverend's office carried

a sense of history, but also felt youthful as jerseys for the L.A. Lakers were prominently

displayed on the walls. The vision of Church D is to "take the city for God" by "sharing

the hope of Jesus Christ in a hopeless world". The reverend says, "We've got to go to

the parts of the world that we don't necessarily want to go to. We got to get out of the

comfort of the four walls of our church. They've asked why you are still down here in

the city, not moved to the county. This is where we're needed, we can't abandon our

community." Indeed, Church D's leader points out some problems within the

community surrounding the church in the city, specifically education, crime, and gun

violence:

> The issues that concern me are our schooling for our children, making sure that they
> have accredited schools to go to. Also, to the safety in the city. So, I have members that
> are afraid to come down here because there is not enough police presence there have
> been too many crimes, too many shootings, too many murders. So that concerns me.
> Down the street in the Central West End they have two hundred cameras in a small are,
> in the central west end where right outside of that you may have fifteen or twenty and
> maybe two blocks away.

When asked about the end times, the reverend said that his congregation

recently went through a series on the Book of Revelation. He says, "In the end, we win

but there is going to be a time of tribulation and a time of suffering before the Lord

comes back and I believe we are actually in those times." For him, the state of the world

is one of decay. Things are getting worse. He describes a "great falling away from the church" that has already occurred. Next, perhaps reflecting on the ministry of his father, he says, "To the world today God can be anything, church is not of importance, church leaders don't have the same respect as they once did. Therefore, many people are pushed away from the church and don't see the point to church, to God, to having a church community or Christianity."

When asked about the mission of Jesus, before mentioning salvation, Church D's pastor says that Jesus came to the poor and the brokenhearted. He says, "That's what Jesus did he came, he preached to the poor. He didn't just, the rich thought he would come to them and be their person. They were looking for this rich royal king and he was born in a manger; he was born in a barn with animals all around. He was born to a carpenter and a young girl. I'd like to say Jesus is for everybody. He's relatable for all mankind."

The reverend feels that it is his duty to speak out against injustice in his community. Public speech inside and outside the church building is his preferred way of bringing about change. He says he does not really feel pressure around speaking out one way or another from those around him. Rather, he is compelled to do so out of a sense of duty. He said that he is getting more opportunities to do so the longer he has been in his father's position and it was clear that he viewed the interview process as an opportunity to speak out about the issues that concern him.

He describes one incident where he spoke out about gun violence, saying, "We had a young boy who was killed literally across the street, ten years old. We went out to his mother's house prayed with her, gave her a gift basket, ministered with her, attended the funeral, and I stood up at the vigil and said this has to stop. I talked about gun safety and protecting our children, and this has to stop."

Political involvement of the congregation, especially voting, is of import to Pastor D as well. When asked how involved the church ought to be with politics, he said that it is very important for him and his church to be involved. He notes that political involvement is especially important for the Black church. He says:

> It's extremely important because of the issues that are out there and to making sure we get our people out to vote that we're registered to vote. I guess down in the city many people depend on public transportation, so we have collaborated for people to get rides. We're a polling place as well, here and our north county campus. It's very important that we are involved. We have days where we register people right after church, so we try to make sure we do our part.

Talking about how he and his father responded to the death of Michael Brown, he said that he was at another church in the city and their main response was to start a social justice ministry. At the same time, his father and leaders from Church D were active in Ferguson demonstrations and marches. He says, "They tried to be as peaceful as possible and show a clergy presence." When asked about what he thinks happened on the day Michael Brown was killed, the young reverend who had just taken over for his father thought mostly about the next generation:

> Do I think the death could have been prevented? Yes. The reason why, this is the same narrative that we hear and see over and over again and then there are this is the main one that we've heard about, this is one of the biggest one's we've heard about. It's still going on. I have three boys and a daughter. My son is now sixteen, he drives. I fear

every single time he leaves the house. It's hard and I have two more boys coming up after him so its tough trying to grapple with that and knowing that this city seemingly if your son is murdered there is no justice. That's just how it is. That's how our community feels. So I don't know how that happened. We all speculate, but there are people who know what happened. Darren Wilson knows what happened. Will we ever know? I don't know.

4.4 For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Something to Eat

Church E is a mainline church that seems to focus more of its efforts on community events than actual Sunday services. Their mission is "living the good news." The minister of the church defined the phrase as bringing people into right relationship with God through Jesus, but also as a focus on loving others. The list of social and community programs that the church provides is expansive: art programs, music classes, community meals, youth events, circus classes, a food pantry and more. They also partner with other community groups, some of which are not the most expected in order to make these events happen including the local Baha'i Community and the 4-H Club. This communal attitude is present in another aspect of Pastor E's religious practice. Citing biblical passages such as the beatitudes and the judgement of the sheep and the goats, the pastor of the church said, "We do reconciliation work because Jesus came to reconcile people to God. Hungry people are fed. Lonely people are comforted." For Pastor E, an older white man who wears the uniform of a Black shirt with a clerical collar, the work of the Christian is primarily that of helping others rather than avoiding sin.

Pastor E indicated that repeated communal liturgies that are shared throughout his denomination are at the center of the work that he does on Sunday mornings. These practices are done communally as a church but since they are done with others in

connecting bodies within the denomination they create a sense of community that is outside of the congregation as well. Faith is not an individual practice for Pastor E or for his flock.

For Pastor E the church is called to be political in the sense that it is engaged with the community, but not to the point where it is aligned with political factions. For him, racial equity and economic justice are the social issues that must be addressed in St. Louis today. The physical needs of the community are related to the spiritual needs of the community. Therefore, Pastor E works for change through public speech and community support. He describes instances of preaching about what Jesus would say about gun violence as well as calling landlords to make sure conditions are livable for community members who have asked for his help.

His response to the Ferguson Moment was similar to his responses to other issues that he believes are social injustices. Here he describes hearing about Michael Brown's death: "I heard on twitter. Nobody knew a lot at first. I got a phone call from an African American woman in my parish. She had gone to the prayer meeting at the police department which was disrupted by protesters who said, 'We don't want your prayers, we want your help". So rather than participating in protest, Pastor E tried to focus on community needs. He says,

> What early on became clear is that people were having a hard time getting food. The streets around Canfield Green were crowded with protesters, police, and press. It was hard trying to distribute food when stores were closed. So, we started collecting and distributing food. We were able to get through police lines with a van of food and with a clerical collar.

4.5 The Police Chaplain

Church F is a small Southern Baptist church in Florissant, a small community that shares a border with Ferguson. The church has an average attendance of 50-60 congregants who are mostly white. Around ten of the regular attendees are people of color including African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans. The pastor of Church F, a middle-aged white man with a grey and white beard who wore a polo shirt met with me in his office where posters for faith-based movies hung prominently on the small amount of wall space that had not been taken over by bookshelves. He said, "There are not many wealthy people in our congregation, but I wouldn't call ourselves a poor church. There are a lot of retirees."

The church is notably different from many of the surrounding churches. Church F is a part of the Southern Baptist denomination and therefore evangelical while Florissant is a predominantly Catholic area. Pastor F points this distinction out without being prompted at the start of the interview. He says, "Actually, our church was originally not allowed almost 80 years ago when we were first planted; we weren't allowed to build the church inside Florissant. However, the relationship with the community has strengthened." He goes on to describe the difference between his church and those around him by saying:

> One of the great things about being in Florissant is walls of separation between denominations a lot have come down. Our minister of music leads a community choir that includes Presbyterians and Catholics, on some issues there's a lot of unity: the birth of Christ, the resurrection, the crucifixion, but when you move out to things like baptism, the lords supper, are we justified by grace and faith alone or do we need to add works to that.

The mission of Church F is to "lead people to love god, love others, and become devoted followers of Jesus Christ". Pastor F explains that the church's mission is grounded in the Great Commission. The focus is on making disciples. He connects the mission of Jesus to the church's mission, explaining that Jesus came to give salvation, but that he also loved those around him and provided for their needs. He says, "In a holistic way Jesus cared about people, we see his desire to care for emotional, physical, tangible needs, at the same time his ultimate goal is to care for spiritual needs. The church has been divided over which is more important. [Between avoiding sin or helping others,]I think it's both."

Pastor F says that he is pressured to go political in both directions. He says, "I have a gentleman who made my life miserable with intense pressure to come out against a president and make my preaching more political. On the other hand, I've had people who are very angry because they think I'm too political." Pastor F says that he does not endorse political candidates or encourage his congregants to align with one party or the other. Rather, he says that he prefers to use his personal relationships with people to influence values rather than his influence as a pastor to directly try to influence his flock politically. Pastor F makes a distinction between political issues and moral issues. He defines moral issues as those in which he is compelled to act and to Pastor F the most important issue is abortion. However, he says that he is pro-life "for the whole life". He cites the film, *Just Mercy*, before discussing his thoughts on the death penalty:

I believe that while, I'm not a pacifist per se, but while the Bible doesn't oppose the death penalty, it only approves it under very strict circumstances. Our judicial system is so fraught with injustice that, while I'm not opposed to capital punishment in principal, I'm opposed to it in practice if one of every nine people on death row we later discover is innocent. That's terrifying to me.

When asked how he responds to the social and political issues that he finds important, he says the main way he responds is through volunteerism. Specifically, he volunteers as a chaplain for a local police department. He says, "My role in that is to try to be a healing and helping presence both for the police --but I'm not doing it in a political role-- is to be out there to help the police officers but also to be out there with the public." He also became involved in a small group of ministers from different racial backgrounds that meet regularly to talk about issues of racial justice. He says, "I don't feel I'm called to politics; I'm called to be a pastor of people. But I think we can move the ball forward from small things that people don't have to be defensive. You're a human being, I'm a human being. I want to treat you with dignity. Can we listen to each other and not just find out what we believe but also why?"

Pastor F describes the Ferguson Moment as a tense time but also as one that has led to increased understanding for him and for those in his church. Here Pastor F describes his congregation's reaction to the death of Michael Brown:

Some of my mostly white congregation get very defensive because sometimes there is an appearance that racism is about whiteness and of course it is not, not anymore than criminality is about Blackness. At the beginning it was negative, people taking sides, but there have been some really wonderful attempts in our community to try to bridge those gaps. We do, for example, as horrible as the death of Michael Brown and the rioting after were, a positive thing about that is we pastors in our group once a year do a unity service together and we swap pulpits with each other. I have an African American in my pulpit, he invites me to speak at his church. These aren't huge steps but they're exciting. There's an intentional group of north county African Americans and Anglo-

American preachers that address these issues in groups, much like my little group that we are going to be doing as well [within our church].

Reactions were spiritual, service-oriented, and relational but the political was avoided. In addition to new ministerial study groups and the tradition of the unity service, Pastor F says that he responded through individual and communal prayer. He also says that they tried to be of assistance to a church that was pastored by a friend of Pastor F in community cleaning efforts following nights of protest. He says, "They asked if we could clean up the streets and organize to pray and that's what we did. On the political end we did virtually nothing, but on the personal end we tried to listen and not just have an opinion and spout it." However, Pastor F says that there were pressures to not respond even in a relational or service capacity. He says, "It was so hard because at the beginning it seemed like whatever you did people thought you were taking a side."

Pastor F, attributing his perspective to his time working as a police chaplain, is skeptical of the Black Lives Matter narrative. He expresses his frustrations with how the world might perceive his community and the people around him. At the same time he says that he is listening to voices that see injustice in Ferguson. He says,

> I think one of my great frustrations of the whole thing was… like that there was a narrative that people were trying to advance and just trying to find facts to make it. I'd see something on the national news and think 'Wait a minute I was on that street that's not true.' I'd get frustrated. When people would say how horrible people here are and say that we are racially intolerant and I'd think that's not true. But even people who would disagree with that would show me there really is injustice.

Later he says his thoughts about the events that led to the death of Michael Brown. He describes an effort to empathize with Black voices while at the same time

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discussing why he believes police narratives are often undervalued. He discusses

Brown's death in episodic rather than systematic terms:

> So, for my friends in the African American community, it highlighted a very real issue and I'd never want to minimalize that, but as a police chaplain I think people do not understand how hard it is to make a decision in the moment. So, I don't know what happened. What was tragic is his body's lying in the ground and no one is there to come to get him, so the whole thing became a community and cultural phenomenon that existed way beyond the facts between those two people. It's hard for me to say. I think they've taken on a view beyond what actually happened between those two men and I don't know how you could ever peel that away. Obviously, it exposed a nerve within the African American community, but I think that saying that police are predominantly racist is so unfair too. I'm with police officers every week and they're people too. I had one officer say to me, 'You know chaplain, in my experience as a police officer, a percentage of my time is spent with a lot of people who break the law and some are pretty bad people, and it tends to color my view of the world so that I think worse of the world. I'm spending 90% of my time with 10% of the people who want to break the law and cause trouble. I can understand that some parts of minority communities, they're dealing with a percentage of police officers that are terrible, but I would argue that my view of the population in general is askew with my experience with more of the bad people than the average person is, but I think there are people who are minorities whose views on police officers are skewed for the same reason.' It's just a reminder that all of us have to be careful, whether you're growing up in the south from a long line of racists, that is totally off base, but it's just as off base to say that a person who has been sworn as a police officer to uphold the law, to step away and say that all police officers is not fair either. One of my missions in life is to try to strip stereotypes on both sides and say we gotta see people.

4.6 The Priest

The priest of Church G, a Catholic parish and school located in north county,

answered my call for a phone interview in Spanish. Switching to English, he says that a

lot of the work that he does is conducted in Spanish. Regular attendance at Church G

features about eight hundred attendees. Of these, about seven hundred are Latinx.

While there is diversity in age, most members are blue collar, working as day laborers or

in construction.

From images posted on his church's website, he is a younger man who sometimes chooses to sport a beard over his friendly smile. He keeps a busy schedule. It took several attempts to find a time when we could meet and we eventually settled on talking over the phone. His answers are often brief and to the point. However, one reason for this may be the questionnaire that I used. For many interviewees, theology and doctrine is something to be defended and carved out. Those in the protestant tradition enjoy taking the time to discuss the peculiarities of their belief and practice because it is what makes them unique. Whereas, when I would ask the priest of Church G questions on topics like the importance of baptism, he would simply answer with a "very important" and be ready to move on. Of course, the Catholic practice of baptism does not look very similar to many protestant forms of the practice. However, it seems like the priest of church G did not feel the need to go into the details on the tradition when a copy of the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church would be readily available to me. When asked how similar or different his theology is from other churches nearby, he responds that he would not be able to say.

He does say that he believes that understanding the end times is of little importance, whereas the sacraments are of a great deal of importance. He views the mission of Jesus as proclaiming a message of salvation and "extending the Kingdom of God". He sees his church as working toward that mission as well. He relays that the motto of his church is proclaiming acceptance and hope. Reciting a story about a Marian apparition, he provides part of the reasoning for this emphasis. He says,

We believe that in 1531, shortly after the Spaniards showed up and were conquering the indigenous groups, that Mary appeared to an indigenous man named Juan Diego and encouraged him to have a church built in [the location where she appeared] outside of Mexico City. But really she was inviting Spaniards and indigenous Mexican people to come together around her son in faith and so we see ourselves in continuing that mission and that message of calling people together around Jesus and his mother Mary.

The priest of Church G is protective of his flock. When asked what pressures he feels to either speak out or be silent on political issues, he says that his congregation is his motivation. He explains, "I would say that I feel moved to preach on social issues for the sake of my flock so that if they are being victims in some way they know that they are cared about and also to instruct and encourage them to live out our call from Christ to fulfill the demands of justice in society." When asked to identify which social issues he believes are most important in St. Louis today he responds, "I do not think I can point to something in particular in St. Louis that has me concerned," but he goes on to say, "I am concerned about racial profiling of my parishioners, as well as abortion and immigration." According to him:

> We as Catholics believe that all life is precious including life in the womb and so it is an offense against God and against the dignity of the human person that the unborn can be killed legally. So that would be a very big issue. On the other hand, I would say that a very big issue is the fact that this country that was founded by immigrants and for immigrants is seemingly rejecting and persecuting certain classes of people who are not deemed desirable immigrants.

He indicates that the response of Catholic priests should be to use public speech in order to indirectly influence change. He says,

> I would say that the catholic church sees its role as informing consciousness, so we preach values but then it is the role of the member of the church as a citizen to live out their values, but they do have to make their own decisions. The church doesn't say vote for this person or not that person. It does at times say that certain proposals are intrinsically immoral or not, but we don't endorse or prohibit explicitly any one person… In preaching, I try to recall to everyone's minds both the value of the unborn child and

the immigrant. Both are deserving of respect. In their daily life and their political life, they are called to bring these values to bear and respect human life created by God.

The priest was not assigned to Church G at the time of Michael Brown's death and chose not to give any comment on what he believes may have happened or how it might have affected his church. However, he does say that he is aware that the church participated in some community events and that more work was done on the level of the archdiocese.

4.7 The Bishop

Church H is a Black Pentecostal church led by an older African American bishop who takes pride in being a lifelong resident of St. Louis. During the interview, he often communicates using scripture or various statistics that he has gleaned. The church that he pastors has a mission of "preaching the gospel; saving the world" and is housed in a large 36,000 square foot building off of Highway 270.

Church H has about seven hundred regular attendees, almost all of which are Black and middle-class although there are some wealthier and less well-off members as well. The bishop of Church H says that he wishes there was more diversity. They are not members of an official denomination, but rather they are a part of an apostolic assembly, which he describes as a "brotherhood". The bishop says that his church is mostly similar with other churches in his neighborhood except for two distinctions. First, the church is distinct in how it practices baptism. The bishop says, "We baptize by submerging in water and we baptize in the name of Jesus. Not in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Because the reality is what is the name of the

father the son and the holy ghost? It's Jesus." This is a somewhat idiosyncratic practice

that might indicate a closer doctrine of trinity than what is held by most of mainstream

Christianity which often evoke all the names of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Second, the church also practices speaking in tongues. They consider it a spiritual gift

that they expect will manifest in the life of a believer as evidence of his or her salvation.

Bishop H downplays the difference saying that other churches "still believe in the Holy

Spirit, but not that it will manifest in that way."

When it comes to politics, the bishop says that he does a lot to encourage his

congregation to vote. He says, "I encourage the congregation to do one thing: to vote.

Not only vote but be knowledgeable when you vote. It's the ballot box that changes the

course of things." He says he also allows political candidates to speak at the church, but

he refrains from endorsing candidates, saying that he instead encourages the

congregation to think of what is best for the community.

While discussing the situations in which the church must be involved Bishop H

invokes words like social justice and fairness and he mostly sees political injustice

through the lens of economics. He says, "Slavery wasn't a racist thing it was an

economic thing, but racism came to justify it. It was about having cheap labor and

making a huge profit. That's what Hispanics are going through now." In passing, he

refers to President Trump as "courting the dictators of the world." He discusses

historically racist housing practices in St. Louis including restrictive housing covenants

and the resulting depreciation in value of Black-owned homes. He bemoans the loss of

jobs to the exportation of American industry to other parts of the world but at the same

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time points out the injustice of taking advantage of cheap labor. He says, "How many manufacturing companies do we have in other parts of the world paying much less? That's another injustice in our nation instead of trying to see my brother do well and me do well. I want to do well off your back." He also expresses regret that Amazon, the large online retailer, did not locate operations in St. Louis.

In addition to economic injustice, Bishop H discusses how he believes education in America needs to change. First, he discusses disparities in resources within schools across St. Louis, but he also discusses the lack of faith in public education as central to America's moral degradation:

> When the Supreme Court took prayer out of school…like why should it be done? How is faith negatively impacting education? Now you have a problem kids being killed in school. If prayer was still there maybe there would be less shootings, kids wouldn't be so depressed. I'm amazed to find out how many kids you talk about higher education they're not even interested. I do believe that Christianity can help by people having a mindset to develop for excellence in their lives.

Finally, recounting two times when he was pulled over by a local police officer, Bishop H discusses problems with policing in St. Louis. In one story, he describes coming home from church and getting pulled over on his street. He says the officer who pulled him over asked if he was drunk and would not believe him when he said otherwise. Finally, once he told the officer where he lived, he was let go. In another story he says, "I didn't have my tags renewed. That's my fault. A Ferguson police officer followed me to the church parking lot. I get out of the car, he shouts at me to get back in it." He says in both instances he told the officers involved that he was a member of the clergy and of the second incident he says, "The chief of police took care of that for me." However, he says, "I hear horror stories" about interactions with police in St. Louis.

Bishop H does not believe that America is a Christian nation. He quotes religious

demographics and says that while many Americans attend church, many of those do not

practice Christianity. He says, "We profess Christianity, but we don't live the Christian

principles. If we lived the Christian principles, there would be more love, much more

forgiveness." America for Bishop H is a flawed but not entirely bad place. He says,

"America has always been about social justice and fairness for all people even though

historically our history doesn't show that."

When discussing how the killing of Michael Brown affected his church, Bishop H

mentions a history of racism in his community alongside a willingness of his church to

serve that same community. He describes the Ferguson Moment as an opportunity for

his church to become more involved in Ferguson. He says,

> I was very moved by what I heard, but also wanted to leave an open ear. People were
> very emotional. A man laying down on the ground. Most people in Ferguson did not
> even know that Canfield Green Apartments were even in Ferguson. Our congregation
> wants to serve people, they were more than willing to get involved and help and they're
> still willing to do that. The community was something that we were very much, we were
> always taught to be involved. What happened when we were building this church, we
> were told that "the boys didn't want a 'coon' church built over here." Ferguson did
> everything it could to stop this church from being built. I didn't hold it against anybody. I
> tried to get involved in the city way before but there was never a door open. Michael
> Brown's death opened the door for us to get involved in this city. Which is tragic, but
> what we're trying to do now is expand what we do but do it within our means. What can
> we do? If people need food, if we can only do 10 bags of groceries a week, we do it. If
> we can do a thousand. If everyone does a little bit of something it makes a big
> difference.

In describing his reaction to what he calls "a sad Saturday" Bishop H says that he

had just gotten off an airplane when he heard of Brown's passing. He says, "As soon as I

got off the plane I came right here to the church. I called the mayor. I did not get a

return phone call all week. I called the police chief. Nobody called back. What was so

unique about it, is I see all the clergy up in arms on tv about what needs to be done and the mayor does not turn to his own natural resources: the clergy in the community of Ferguson."

Bishop H allowed for community events to take place at the church including rallies and official city meetings. He says that in one media appearance at that time a news anchor, "jumped down my throat, 'why would I allow a rally to be at my church with a guy like Al Sharpton?' Because he's considered more of an agitator by some folks. It's real simple. I called the mayor and police because I want to help, and they didn't call back. Then I got a call asking if we'd do it, so I did. The family needs comfort, the community needs comfort." On allowing the city to have a town hall meeting at the church he says, "To continue to be fair, when the city council wanted their meeting here we did it to be fair. Jesus, he was always trying to be fair. With the Sadducees and the Pharisees, he was always trying to talk to them, the people who would listen to him, those folks. We just wanted to be a help."

From the pulpit, Bishop H says that he mostly asked his congregation to pray for Michael Brown's family in the weeks following Brown's death. He also says he spent time teaching people "how to conduct themselves". He says, "My son he got stopped once and he called me and told me to pray. He was so polite the officer just told him to go. Don't put yourself in harm's way. There's some people I don't care what you do it's not going to help. Make sure you don't contribute to giving a police officer a right to do any harm to you." However, he says that he did not spend time denouncing the police from the pulpit. He says, "Here comes one of the dangerous things. Unless you have all

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the facts, you cannot tell folks these are racist police. You can't do that." When asked

what he thinks happened between Darren Wilson and Michael Brown, Bishop H said

that he cannot say. However, it seems that Bishop H has internalized some of the police

narrative as he does refer to a deceptive viral photograph that claimed to be of Darren

Wilson with major bruising on his face. That photograph has been proven to be a fraud

as it is not of Darren Wilson. Bishop H says, "We know something happened. But what

actually happened we don't know. One scenario said, I drove to Canfield Greens just to

kind of see, supposedly he told him to get out of the street and get on the sidewalk.

Supposedly, Michael Brown charged the police officer and he shot him. I have not seen

enough evidence. There was a picture where supposedly the police officer's face was

beaten. If you punched a police officer, they're going to lose their cool. The shooting

might not have been justified, but the aggravation..." Ultimately, he says that the death

of Michael Brown is shrouded in ambiguity. He says,

> But then you have a guy, Eric Garner in New York who you could see visibly on TV, I'm a fat guy and when you're on your stomach you cannot breathe, and you see him saying he can't breath and they're choking him. That for me was truly a social justice problem. The thing with Michael Brown, you don't hear about it much this year. It really has died down because there are a lot of different stories with what happened to Michael Brown. The police need to keep their cool and citizens need to keep their cool.

4.8 The White Church

The Pastor of Church I tells me that his church is the oldest protestant church

still standing in Ferguson as we eat sandwiches at Marley's Bar and Grill, a Ferguson

establishment on Florissant road that is near empty on an early Sunday afternoon right

after church. He is white and older middle aged. "It's over one hundred and forty years

old," he says, "and at this point it has about one hundred and forty members." The

church is predominantly white, although there are a few older African American members. Pastor I says, "Even in Ferguson it is known as 'the white church' which most of the white churches here are *very* white." The church is predominantly middle class, although it used to be more affluent. Pastor I says, "Many of the more affluent folks have died or moved out." The pastor seems concerned about the demographics of his congregation and says,

> I'm pretty convinced that there is no programmatic way that you become a multi-racial inclusive congregation. Leadership is the key, but there are ways of preventing people from coming and feeling comfortable. If you're going to invite people into the life of the church, you have to give them a seat at the table. You invite people to come to the table.

The church, which is an affiliate of a large mainline protestant denomination, has a core value of openness. Pastor I says, "Our mission is to be an open-minded, open-hearted, open door community." He explains that they are open minded in that they would not characterize themselves as either liberal or conservative when it comes to theology. Pastor I says that serving the community is at the center of their work as well as being welcoming to whoever might walk through the doors: "Christianity today no longer conceives of community as a resource for church growth… The church has to be much more integrated in the community and the well-being of the community is dependent on the church being responsive to the needs of the community. The emphasis on community is central." Later on, in the interview he would say, "You can't have a healthy church without a healthy community. That's something I used to know but couldn't articulate. People have seen the church as independent of the community for too long. Without a healthy community you can't have a healthy church."

Despite, or possibly because of the rejection of being on either end of the theological spectrum, Pastor I places an emphasis on ecumenicalism in the Christian life. "Christianity in the 21st century is called to be inter-faith," he says, "We don't say that other's faith is not valid. We are open to the movement of likeminded people in the world, likeminded in being respectful of others religious traditions and likeminded in the sense of how we practice compassion, mercy, charity, engagement."

For Pastor I, the world is in a state of redemption rather than a state of decay. He does not focus much on the study or preaching of the end times. He says, "I don't spend much time talking about the end times even during the season of advent when we are called to expect Christ. My perspective is that we are called to be faithful in the here and now and let the end times take care of the end times."

Pastor I's view on the mission of Jesus is unique among the clergy interviewed for this project. There is no mention of forgiveness of sins, rather Jesus was a faithful, and pacifistic, follower of God who started a movement:

> His mission, historically and theologically, was to come and be faithful to the God who sent him. I don't think he came to die, he came to live, but he was not afraid to die for what he believed in and that is God's coming Kingdom. When he was forced to make a decision between violent revolution or being faithful to his calling as a healer as a prophet as a liver of the faith, he decided that he would choose the path of giving himself. When I say he didn't come to die, I think he truly saw himself as a reformer of Judaism, not the starter of a new religion. That was Paul probably. He started a movement.

Jesus plays an important role in the church still today as "lord of the conscious." This is a concept that Pastor I says is important for his denomination as a whole that "we don't castigate people because they hold different views on issues" and "just because a

majority wins doesn't mean it's right." Pastor I believes that the church is often wrong

on social and political issues. He lists LGBTQ+ rights, as well as women's rights, and

slavery as a few examples. In fact, Pastor I talks a lot about how his church welcomes

LGBTQ+ people and how this might make his church distinct from other local

congregations. He says that he does not want his church to be "bedroom police." By this

he means that his church does not want to overemphasize sexual morality because it

would be intrusive.

He grounds this perspective on how exegesis is performed at his church.

Specifically, he says, "We interpret scripture by other scripture, so we tend not to lift up

texts that condemn homosexuality to say that 'that's what the bible is about'. I also

treat the scripture as authoritative in faith and practice, but not necessarily in science

and history." This second point is important because at the root of what makes the

church unique is not their attitudes towards social issues or people groups, but rather

how they read scripture and where they believe scripture to be authoritative. However,

this different approach to scripture leads to different social outcomes. Pastor I also

holds a less demanding definition of biblical inspiration than would his evangelical

counterparts. When talking about the historiography of the Book of Job he says, "Is it

inspired? Yes, but not in the sense that every word has been thrown down by God.

What we call scriptures are reflections of real communities of faith trying to understand

what their commitment to God is in the world." Pastor I says that he likes to teach a

historical critical method of reading scripture. "One of the great tragedies is sometimes

we haven't helped people to learn what we learn in seminary and what we believe

about the scriptures and we allow a somewhat elementary school education approach to scripture…" he says, "People don't understand that because they haven't been taught. People are capable of learning and discerning what the Bible is saying."

America, for Pastor I, is not a Christian nation, and he does not hold the title "American" as having much value for the Christian either. He says, "I am Christian who happens to be an American. I'm not an American who happens to be Christian. The defining thing for me is my faith and how I view God in the world not just in America. That's my stance on American exceptionalism too." He does describe America as an "experiment" in religious freedom and acceptance but says that today America is not exceptional in this.

When it comes to politics, he believes that the church must be involved but he feels more pressure to be silent. According to Pastor I, "I don't think you can get around being in politics. I think if you talk about partisan politics, no. But if you're talking about what is happening in communities and the world. We can't stay silent when moral issues come up, but to imbed ourselves in political ideology is against who we are as [members of our denomination] and antithetical to being Christian." However, he says, "You have to pay attention to social issues, you can't avoid them. But you can't be on a soapbox either; Sunday morning is the worst time for that. I don't see the pulpit as being used that way." He attributes this position to the value of openness. He knows that members of his congregation have different political beliefs, he notes that many in his congregation voted for Donald Trump and many did not, but says, "I find Trump abhorrent but I don't feel the need to preach against him." He says that he does

sometimes preach about issues, citing children being detained at the border and the death of Michael Brown. He says, "I'm more about dialogues than monologues and Sunday morning is a monologue."

Pastor I describes his own political views as progressive saying, "I don't like liberal and conservative. They are meaningless terms nowadays. By progressive I mean more community centered and community led. Issues of poverty and race and important to me." The issues that he sees as most important in St. Louis today are poverty and race. He says, "Theologically, I think God calls us to be about God's coming reign in equality, and justice, and mercy. Look in Micah chapter six and other verses. On the whole scripture leads towards greater inclusiveness, greater justice, compassion and equality." He says that he does not often use his role to speak out for change on these issues, but rather does so just as "a person of faith." He says, "I try to keep the relationships I've built over the fifteen years that I've been in that church. I tell people you're responsible for how you use your faith and how your faith informs your priorities."

"What are the ramifications of Michael Brown's death?" said Pastor I, "At the very least it was the loss of a young man that I think the people who felt like Darren Wilson did the right thing did not have much compassion for. I think it's a tragedy that any young person dies at the barrel of a gun no matter who he is or what he's done." Pastor I goes on to explain that different community members saw what happened through different lenses. He says, "It became apparent that the African American community had seen it in such personal terms, in a way that most white folks couldn't

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understand. They saw it as an issue of law and order instead of an issue of tragedy that's

been in the Black communities for years." Later he adds:

> There are people who felt that Michael Brown's case should be reopened and those
> who believe that it was a farce and clear cut. It made us much more aware of the
> difference that exist powerfully in our community. It has forced us to reassess given the
> fact that we are 99% white. People from both camps are in the church."

Pastor I says that Ferguson is not unique in its racialized struggles despite his

assertion that Ferguson might have been wrestling with them for longer. Ultimately,

though, he says that the death of Michael Brown revealed how the progress that the

city of Ferguson thought they were making was not effective. He says:

> Ferguson is no different than most communities in St. Louis. You can ask why this
> experience happened here and not in a lot of other communities... Ferguson has been
> working on race longer than a lot of communities in St. louis. Several Ferguson ministers
> went to Selma to march. There was a group in the 70s called pride that engaged in racial
> issues. We are probably the most multiracial community in the St. Louis area. The
> tragedy in Ferguson was successful in revealing that some things we thought we were
> moving toward were not successful at all.

Pastor I took a few different approaches to responding to racialized unrest in the

community. First, he gathered his colleagues together with the intention of speaking out

against what happened and networking with African American clergy. He argues that

this was important because of racial segregation within churches in the community. He

says, "That's a tragedy in the American church today the church is organized on the

basis of the color line and economics."

Pastor I also designated his church as a "sanctuary space" for protestors to take

refuge if needed. He says, "We told the police that we would not allow them to come in

if they were chasing some of the protesters to the best of our ability, we created

sanctuary space for anyone to come. For the community people who did not feel safe,

for protesters, for police. We stayed open 24 hours a day for 3 days." However, he goes

on to say that the space "was not utilized by many folks," adding, "Our space was

mainly utilized by other clergy from the African American community who came and

parked in our parking lot and they were more involved with monitoring and being a

presence in the protests."

Pastor I participated in some clergy events but seems to be jaded by some of the

experience, especially when it comes to nationally recognized leaders who came to

Ferguson as well as the uprisings that caused property damage. He says:

> There was a Cornell West and Jim Wallace prayer meeting at Wellsprings and then we
> marched to the police office. That was a turning point for me. The dual nature of what
> was happening… it was a dog and pony show. Wallace and West wanted to get arrested.
> It was mainly clergy there. Young protesters there had a somewhat abused look on their
> face that this was not authentic. I'm not saying that the motives were wrong. What was
> supposed to happen was the religious community would go before the police and say
> that we are all in need of repentance for what has happened, as religious leaders and
> law enforcement leaders. There would be a dual commitment to repentance and new
> action. What happened was it was just the police who were characterized as needing
> repentance. I found that to be disingenuous. After three hours, I left… We went to
> several meetings; groups were working with protesters and trying to make it as safe as
> possible while still getting the message across. We monitored police violence and things
> like that. They said to us, 'Either you are for the police or for us.' And I said, 'I can't do
> that.' In my own mind I thought saying either you're for us or against us was not healthy
> or hopeful. It's not that you can't hold the police accountable for their actions, its either
> do you validate what we're doing or what the police are doing. I'm not validating either
> one. I'm not validating the violence on both sides. For those people who felt the need to
> loot… a very small percentage of those who were really invested. There's stories of
> protesters going to Kathy's Kitchen and vandalizing and the main group of protesters
> who were meeting with clergy and trying to work with police to understand what we
> will or will not be able to do surrounded the building saying we will not allow this to
> happen. Those who did commit acts of vandalism and violence did not have the
> conviction to stand up for what is right.

While he cannot recall specifically what he said from the pulpit during that time,

he does note that the church hosted race workshops and the he later spoke at five year

anniversary events. He also discusses a coalition that met in the aftermath of the

Ferguson moment. He says:

> We work with a group called One Ferguson. Dwayne James, former city councilman, got people together and said we have to talk about this. Each person who was part of the initial group invited someone they knew. One of my church members invited me. We got together and met for about a year trying to find ways to bring about reconciliation, healing, and justice. One of the members served on the Ferguson commission. It was a diverse group racially and economically. It was our attempt to say that we need to model a different way of dealing with the situation. I was in that group for a year to a year and a half. I think we did some good work in the midst of that time, creating new kind of networks. One Ferguson lasted for about 2 years and its created lasting relationships that still have life.

When it comes to what happened between Michael Brown and Darren Wilson,

Pastor I is agnostic, although he places more responsibility on Wilson than on Brown. "It

was a 26 year old and an 18 year old got in a pissing match," he says. "I used that

euphemistically. It was a competition between a 26 year old and an 18 year old that got

out of control. In terms of what happened I don't know, but the person who had the gun

had the most responsibility in the midst of the escalation of what happened."

4.9 Summary

The vignettes presented above supplement the data in the previous chapter.

Together they show evidence that perhaps the leadership style, ambitions, theology,

and outlook of clergy should be considered more deeply in our discussions of clergy and

politics. While all documented receiving pressure from their congregations to speak or

act on political issues from a variety of directions, all responded in different ways based

on their own experience, characteristics, and the narratives that they chose to accept.

Interviews allow the researcher to understand these nuances in a way that survey data

cannot. Take, for instance, the pastor who acts as clergy to a local police force in their

spare times and the influence that his work has on their political voice. Or, on the other

hand, take the example of Church D where the pastor is working to follow in the

footsteps of his father in a way that helps the community as well as proclaims the

gospel.

While there are glimmers of inspiration theory throughout the vignettes above,

the overall bent of the church is in line with opiate theory. Even among some of the

more politically progressive voices in the sample, peace is more often the objective

rather than long-term policy change. Reconciliation is the goal rather than reparation.

Out of those interviewed only one respondent makes political change central to their

work. Others did work towards providing for the tangible needs of the community

during the crisis by providing food, refuge, meeting space, and cleanup, often to both

parties. Many people in the sample spoke to both the problem of racial inequity and

violent uprisings side by side. While many respondents accepted a Black Lives Matter

narrative in discussing the Ferguson Moment, most did not actively go political.

However, many did pursue peace seriously as well as diversity through joining or

creating various inter-racial ministerial groups or study groups within their churches.

Some spoke out from the pulpit as well, but mostly through value priming rather than a

direct jeremiad.

Chapter 5: The Response of Citizens to Racialized Violence in Ferguson

Having examined how faith leaders in the St. Louis area have responded to the death of Michael Brown, we now turn to the question of how the religious faith of individuals influence their views on Michael Brown's death. In order to try to satisfy the question, I have conducted, with the help of fellow graduate students and professors within the University of Missouri—St. Louis political science department, two exit poll surveys of Ferguson voters. The first survey was conducted in November 2014, before the decision of a grand jury not to indict Darren Wilson, followed by a second survey during the Missouri Presidential Primary in the Spring of 2016.

In this study, I find evidence that Ferguson is a fairly religious community and that religion in Ferguson has a role to play in response to the death of Michael Brown. Congregations within and around Ferguson fight for social justice in different ways and to different extents. The political ideology of congregants is related to perceived congregational behavior, specifically Democrats are significantly more likely than Republicans to attend a congregation that they believe encourages civil disobedience or protest. Additionally, there are racial differences in whether or not one sees their church as encourages civil disobedience or fighting for social justice. I also find evidence that religious traditions may influence the narratives that one rejects or accepts during racialized tragedies. Finally, I find evidence that in Ferguson, being Catholic is associated with support for police and pro-police narratives about the death of Michael Brown, helping to maintain the white dominant power structure in the community.

5.1 Research Questions

One of our main questions that stems from this literature is whether or not congregants believe that their congregations are fighting for social and racial justice in the community. While an exit-poll does not allow us to empirically test religion's success in the fight for justice, or even whether or not a congregation's priority is social justice as respondents may reflect their own political views onto their church, we are able to see if voters perceive their church as working toward such goals. While this does not provide direct evidence for either the opiate or the inspiration theories in the modern context of the Black Lives Matter movement, it does show us how the citizens of Ferguson view the work of the church toward justice.

I also wonder whether more voters in Ferguson belong to churches that have responded to Brown's death through encouraging protest and civil disobedience or if they turn to community needs or attempt to insulate themselves from the protests. Are there racial, political, or economic differences between respondents who say they attend one type over the other?

Finally, do religious beliefs or behaviors relate to any pressing policy concerns that stem from the death of Michael Brown? Does religiosity affect one's concern with racial justice or police brutality? Does it even go so far as to predict perceptions of the events leading up to Brown's death?

I hypothesize that there will be evidence of congregational action in the field of social justice but that it will not be universal due to religion's bend toward conservatism. It is difficult to anticipate to what degree religion is working in Ferguson without data.

While we have some anecdotal evidence of religion fighting racialized society in response to the death of Michael Brown, there is also evidence of congregations tending to the spiritual rather than political needs of the community. I also expect that there will be a statistically significant rift between Black and White respondents as to whether or not they feel that their congregation is fighting for social justice, and that this rift will carry on to whether or not one's congregation is encouraging civil disobedience or protest.

5.2 Methods

In order to interpret the data on religion and response to the death of Michael Brown among individuals, I rely heavily on descriptive statistics as well as some basic inferential techniques such as chi-squared tests for statistical significance. This test determines whether the observed data is significantly different from the null hypothesis, the assumption that the independent and dependent variables are not related. The chi-squared test is one of the most common and reliable tests used in cross-tabulation analysis according to Pollock (2012). I also run a binary logit model to test whether or not religion is a significant indicator of whether or not respondents believe Darren Wilson was injured while controlling for other variables such as education and income.

5.3 The Pilot Survey

The preliminary exit poll conducted in November 2014 was administered in four Ferguson precincts: two in predominantly white neighborhoods and two in predominantly Black neighborhoods, compared to eleven total precincts in the 2016

poll. In total, 129 voters participated in the survey. A majority of respondents identified

as Black (58 percent); over a third identified as white (35.5 percent); and, a handful of

respondents identified as Asian, Latinx or other.

The survey consisted of 28 questions. About a third of the questions were

devoted toward political attitudes or policy preferences (ex: What are the most

important issues facing your community?), about a third regarded the respondents'

religious attitudes or asked about their church (ex: How frequently do you pray?), and

about a third were demographic variables (What year were you born?).

Obviously, the small sample size of this data has its limitations, which is one

reason we decided to follow up by conducting the 2016 survey. Additionally, exit-polls

have their own limitations in reliability and validity due to their non-random nature due

to issues with non-response bias and respondent self-selection. Fully acknowledging

these limitations, this survey is one of few, if not the only scientific poll to focus

specifically on Ferguson residents' attitudes during the time between Michael Brown's

death and the grand jury decision not to indict, and provides us a snapshot of voter

attitudes during a historic moment for the community and for the nation.

When drafting our poll our team was interested in identifying any racial

cleavages on policy and police favorability, any similar cleavages based on religion

rather than race, and lastly, voter perceptions on whether community churches are

mobilizing to meet the problem of racial injustice in Ferguson and the greater St. Louis

area. While our findings on the racial gaps in racialized political attitudes can be found

in other places (Udani 2014; Udani et al. 2014), I will now take some time to summarize

the results of the pilot poll before discussing the 2016 Ferguson survey.

5.4 The Pilot Study Results

In our sample, 24.4 percent of respondents identify as Catholic 17.3 percent

identify as Protestant, 11.8 percent identify as Spiritual, 6.3 percent identify as Atheist

or Agnostic, with 29.1 percent identifying as other and 10.2 percent do not identify with

any particular faith. Here are some additional demographics: the median response for

party identification was Democrat; the median ideology was moderate; the median

birth year was 1961; the median sex was female; finally, the median race was Black.

To answer our first research question, whether Ferguson voters feel that social

and racial justice are being pursued by communities of faith, I asked, "If you practice a

religion, how active is your congregation in fighting for social justice in regards to race?".

Respondents were provided with three options to answer: Very Active, Somewhat

Active, and Not Active. I found that a plurality (44.3 percent) of respondents said that

their congregation was "very active" in fighting for social justice in regards to race, with

slightly fewer (43.4 percent) saying that their congregation is "somewhat active" and

only a handful of respondents (12.3 percent) indicating that their congregation was "not

active" in fighting for social justice. While there is a gap in the sample (see the figure

below), I found no statistically significant difference between Black and White

respondents that they perceive that their congregation is very active in fighting for

social and racial justice (Chi^2(2)=3.8552; Pr=0.145). However, the direction suggests that

Black respondents tend to report belonging to congregations that are more active in

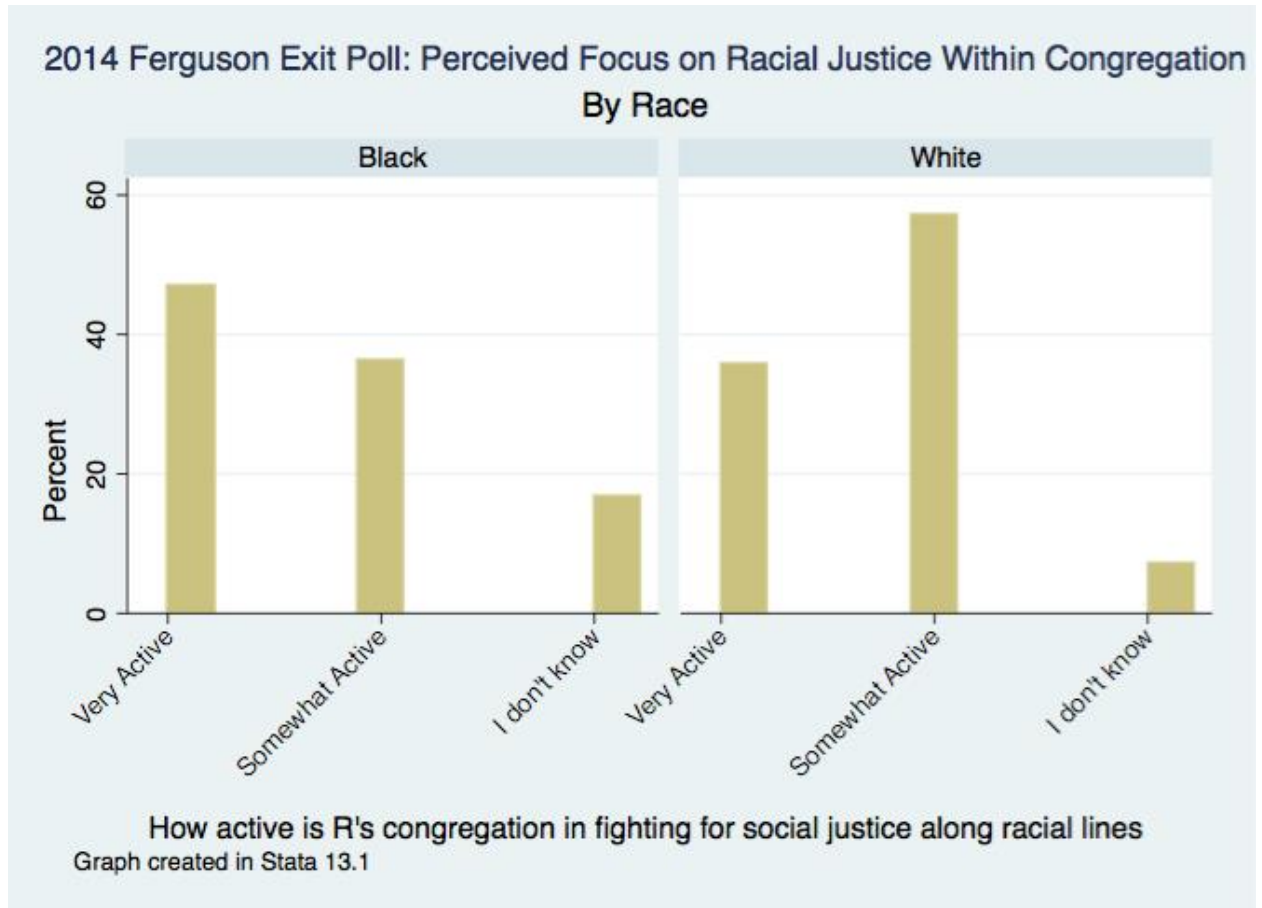fighting for social justice than White respondents.

2014 Ferguson Exit Poll: Perceived Focus on Racial Justice Within Congregation By Race

How active is R's congregation in fighting for social justice along racial lines

Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 5.4 1

I also asked respondents to identify how diverse they believe their church to be. I

asked respondents, "If you practice a religion, how racially diverse is your religious

congregation;" respondents were provided with five options: "Very Diverse,"

"Somewhat Diverse," "Not Diverse, Mostly Black/African American," "Not Diverse,

Mostly Asian-American/Pacific Islander," "Not Diverse Mostly White," and "Not Diverse,

Other." Overall, 28.2 percent of the sample said that their congregation is very diverse;

40 percent answered somewhat diverse, 19.1 percent answered not diverse, mostly

Black/African American; 4.6 percent answered not diverse, mostly white; lastly, 8.2

percent answered not diverse, other. No respondents responded that their

congregation was not diverse, mostly Asian-American. At 26.9 percent, Black

respondents were more likely than white respondents (12.9 percent) to say that they

attend a congregation that is not-diverse and mostly their own racial group.

Additionally, 29.9 percent of Black respondents said that they attend a congregation

that is very diverse compared to 19.4 percent of White respondents 34.3 percent of

Black respondents said that they attend a congregation that is somewhat diverse

compared to 58.1 percent of White respondents.

While this information can be helpful for identifying political cleavages along

congregational diversity lines, I acknowledge that asking for individual responses is less

than ideal. The literature shows that members of the majority group tend to

overestimate the proportion of minorities around them (Nadeau et al. 1993; Sigelman

and Niemi 2001). However, understanding how Ferguson citizens perceive their own

congregational diversities is also of importance for understanding how race is perceived

in the community.

When I broke down the question on whether or not the respondent believes

that their congregation fights for social and racial justice along these lines we found that

those who said that they attend a very diverse church were the most likely to say that

their church fights for social and racial justice (60 percent), while 38.1 percent of those

who claimed that their church was somewhat diverse said the same. As for those who

said their congregation was not diverse and predominantly Black, 42.9 percent said that

their church was very active in fighting for social justice. Those who said that their

congregation was predominantly white and not very diverse had only 20 percent claim

that their church was active in fighting for social justice in regards to race [$chi^2(8)=16.44$;

Pr=0.04]. This finding is statistically significant. This indicates that in Ferguson

congregational diversity is associated with greater action on social justice issues.

It is difficult to discuss what role resources play in whether or not congregations

are perceived as fighting for social justice in Ferguson as we found no statistically

significant relationship between income and whether or not a respondent views his or

her congregation as active in fighting for social justice. I also found no statistically

significant difference between Protestants and Catholics in answering this question.

Recall that our second research question is to address whether religious

institutions in Ferguson tend to encourage or discourage participation in protest or civil

disobedience. In order to try to answer this question we asked respondents, "If you

practice a religion, does your congregation encourage civil disobedience or protesting?"

For this question, we provided three answer options: "Yes", "No" and "I Don't Know".

Once again, we are only able to look at voter perceptions of their congregations,

however we find that, overall, 31.8 percent of our sample say that their congregation

encourages civil disobedience or protest, 42.7 percent say that their congregation does

not encourage civil disobedience or protest, and 25.5 percent responded that they do

not know.

When we break down responses by race we find much less cohesion than we did

on the social justice question. Whites in our sample were far less likely to respond that

their congregation encourages civil disobedience than non-whites. A large majority (72.4

percent) of white people said that their congregation does not encourage civil

disobedience or protest, while Black respondents were split on the question with a

plurality (37.7 percent) responding yes, 31.9 percent responding no, and 30.4 percent

answering that they do not know [chi2(8)=19.10; Pr=0.01]. This difference is statistically
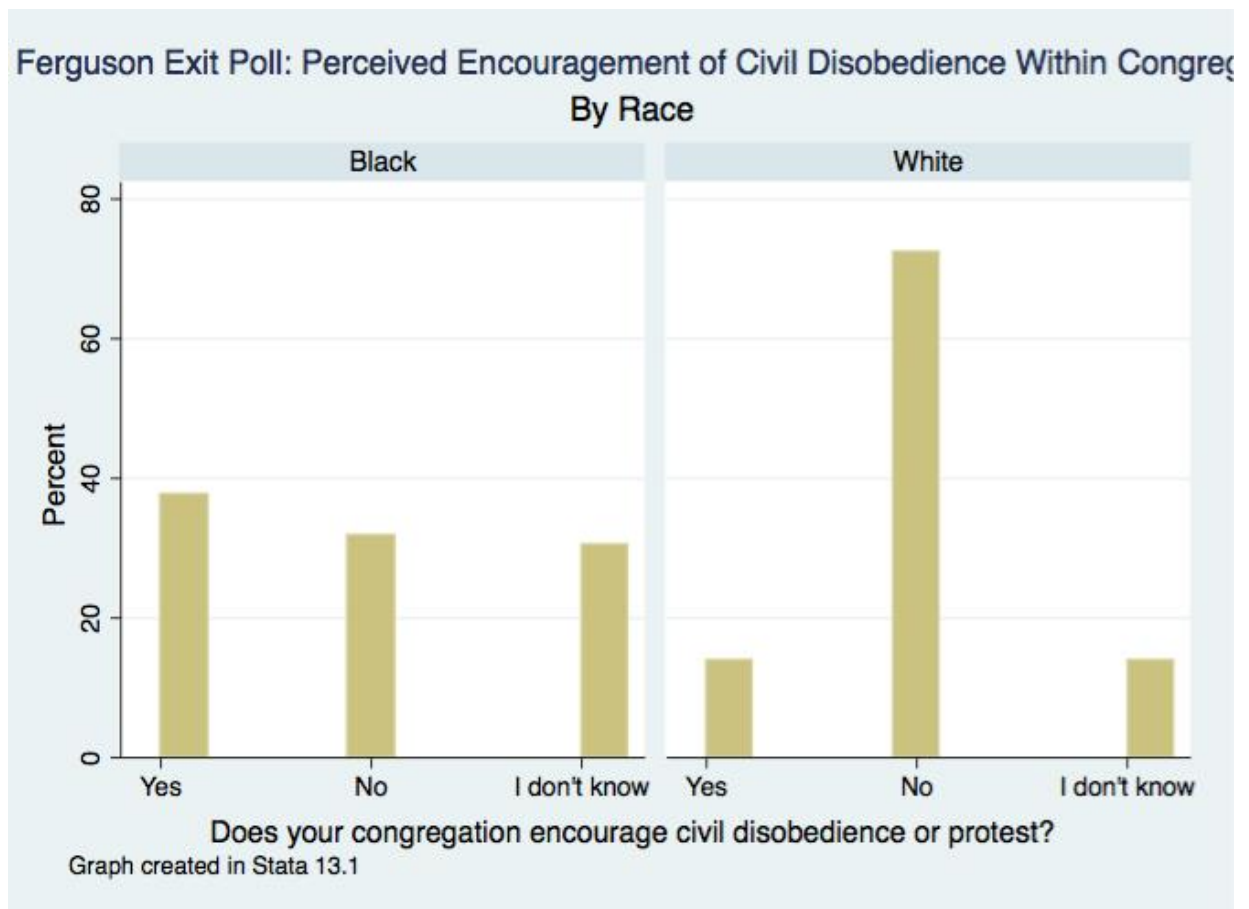
significant. Please refer to the graph below.

Figure 5.4 2

There is also a gap in response to this question based on party identification.

While Democrats are split on whether or not their congregation encourages civil

disobedience (36.4 percent said "Yes" while 35 percent said "No"), no respondents who

identify as Republican answered in the affirmative; this difference is statistically significant (chi^2(2)=9.52. Pr=0.01).

Next, we turn to whether or not these congregational behaviors translate into divisions on policy attitudes relevant to the Black Lives Matter movement. One question that we were particularly interested in during the drafting of our exit poll was public perceptions of the events leading up to Michael Brown's death. Specifically, we asked if Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson was seriously injured during his confrontation with Michael Brown. This question is important because believes that Wilson was seriously injured support a police narrative while a belief that Wilson suffered no serious injuries supports a Black Lives Matter narrative of the event. Therefore, answers to this question act as an indicator to whether respondents make inferences that favor one narrative or the other. This question works well for this task because in the weeks after the killing, Darren Wilson went into hiding for all intents and purposes. He did not speak to the press until after the grand jury decision not to indict him. Consequently, the general public did not know if he was injured or not. In the end, it was revealed that he was not seriously injured, although that fact was not revealed to the public until after the exit poll was conducted. In our previous work, we revealed racial and geographical cleavages on this question with 71 percent of white respondents responding that they believe that Wilson was seriously injured, while only 9 percent of Black respondents said the same (Udani et al. 2014; Udani 2014).

Here, I examined responses to this question across values for whether or not a respondent says their congregation is active in fighting for social justice in regards to

race, as well as whether the respondent's congregation encourages civil disobedience or protest. Remember, that there was little racial division to the congregational social justice question. We also did not find any statistically significant differences in perceptions on whether or not Wilson was injured along respondent identified levels of congregational social justice. However, the data reveals that of those who belong to a congregation that encourages civil disobedience only 16.1 percent believe that Darren Wilson was injured, while 36.6 percent of those whose congregation does not encourage civil disobedience said the same [Chi^2(6.36); Pr=0.04]. This provides evidence that one who attends a church that encourages civil disobedience might be more distrustful of the police and less likely to accept police narratives on racialized state-sanctioned killing.

We also asked respondents what they believed the most important issues facing the community were. We gave them seven options: Crime/drugs, Police-Community Relations, The Economy, Race, Education, Transportation. To examine which individuals prioritized the race and police issues that came to light in the wake of Brown's death I used a cross-tabulation, to again find no statistically significance difference on prioritizing these issues across those who claim that their church is very active in fighting for social justice. However, I found that of those who claim that their congregation encourages civil disobedience or protest, 71 percent said either race or police-community relations were the most important issues facing the community, while a weaker majority 53.3 percent of those who said that their congregation does not encourage civil disobedience said the same [chi^2(2)=8.06; Pr=0.02]. These results

suggest that churches encouraging civil disobedience promotes the prioritization of justice issues among their members.

Those who attend congregations that encourage civil disobedience also have overwhelmingly unfavorable views on the police. We asked respondents to share their opinion on police, providing them the answer options of "Favorable", "Unfavorable", or "No Opinion." The results show that 67.7 percent of those who said their congregation encourages civil disobedience have an unfavorable opinion of the police, while only 36.4 percent of those whose congregation does not encourage protest feel the same [chi^2(4)=26.22; Pr=0.00]. Once again, we found no statistically significant difference among those who said that their church is active in fighting for social justice.

While we found that individuals who attend congregations that encourage civil disobedience to have less favorable opinions of police, that did not necessarily translate to policy preferences. The results show no statistically significant difference across responses on the congregational social justice question or the congregational encouragement of civil disobedience question on individual preferences for a policy requiring police to wear body cameras. Nor did we find statistically significant differences on the topics of welfare or affirmative action.   Please see the table below for a break down on how perceived congregational encouragement of civil disobedience influences attitudes on racialized issues.

Congregations and Racialized Attitudes in 2014 Pilot Study	Congregation Encourages Protest	Congregation Does Not Encourage Protest
% who believe race and/or police community relations	71%	53.3%

are the biggest issue facing the community		
% who have an unfavorable opinion of the police	67.7%	36.4%
% who believe that Darren Wilson was severely injured by Michael Brown	16.1%	36.6%
Note: All of these differences are statistically significant at the .05 criterion of significance		

Table 5.4 1

The findings from our pilot study indicate that the perceived behavior of congregations is related to the attitudes of the congregant, specifically if a congregation encourages civil disobedience or protesting then congregants are much more likely to be skeptical of the police and to believe that race is one of the most important issues facing the community. This is consistent with inspiration theory. Some religious institutions are able to prime congregants to fight for Black political advancement and social progress.

5.5 2016 Survey

The second survey was conducted in the spring of 2016, coinciding with municipal elections. The number of polling places and sample size was quite larger for the 2016 survey. We sampled at 11 different polling places across the Ferguson municipality and Ferguson School District. Our sample contained 399 total respondents. For median responses to demographic variables such as race, income, and birth year please see the table below or consult Map 5.6.1 for a graphic representation of racial demographics by polling place, while Figure 5.6.1, 5.6.2, and 5.6.3 display additional demographic information.

Snapshot of 2016 Ferguson Exit Poll Respondents (Median Responses)	
First-Time Voter	No
Party	Democrat
Ideology	Moderate
Income	$40,000-$49,999
Education	College Graduate
Sex	Female
Race	Black
Birth Year	1964

Table 5.5 1

Precinct Race

Map 5.5 1

2016 Ferguson Exit Poll: Racial Composition of Sample

Figure 5.5 1

Figure 5.6 1

2016 Ferguson Exit Poll: Respondents' Year Born
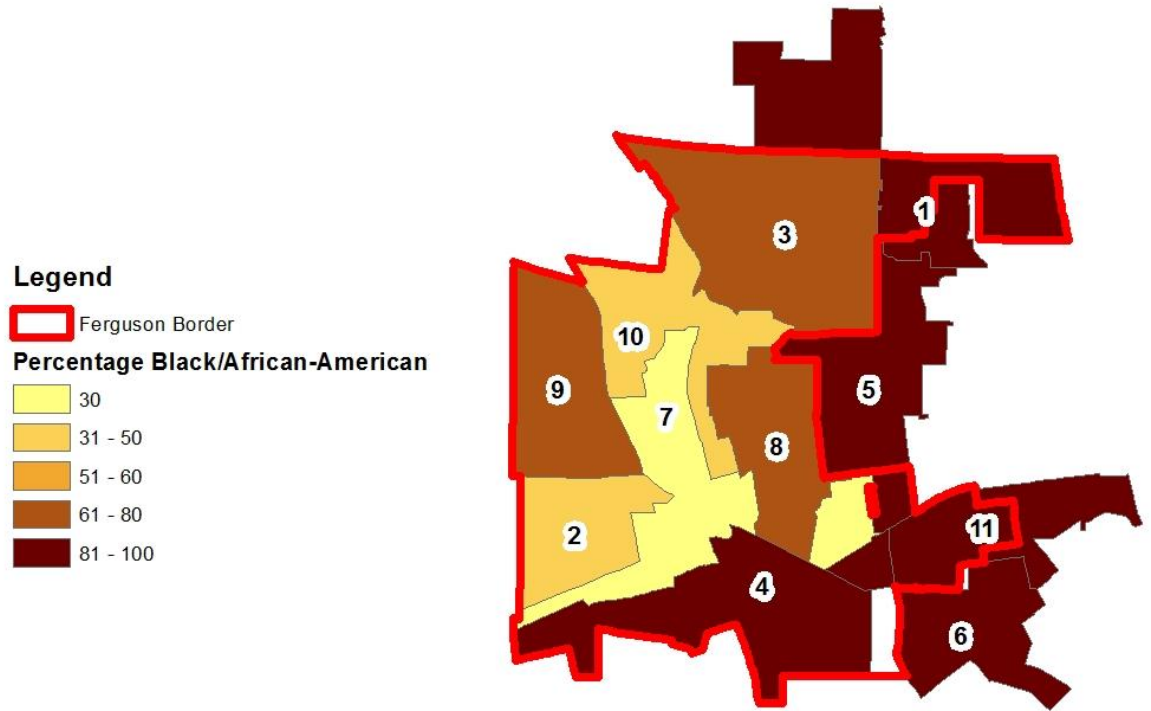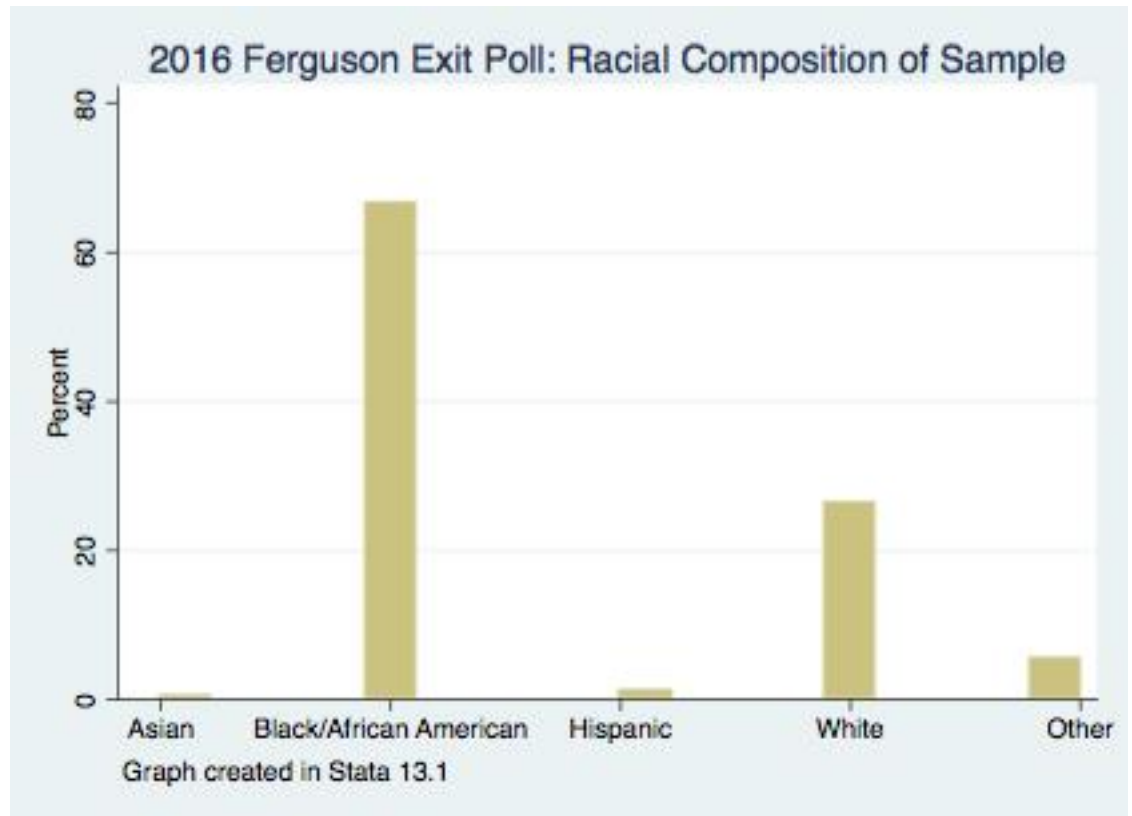
Source: 2016 Ferguson Exit Poll
Graph created in Stata 13.1
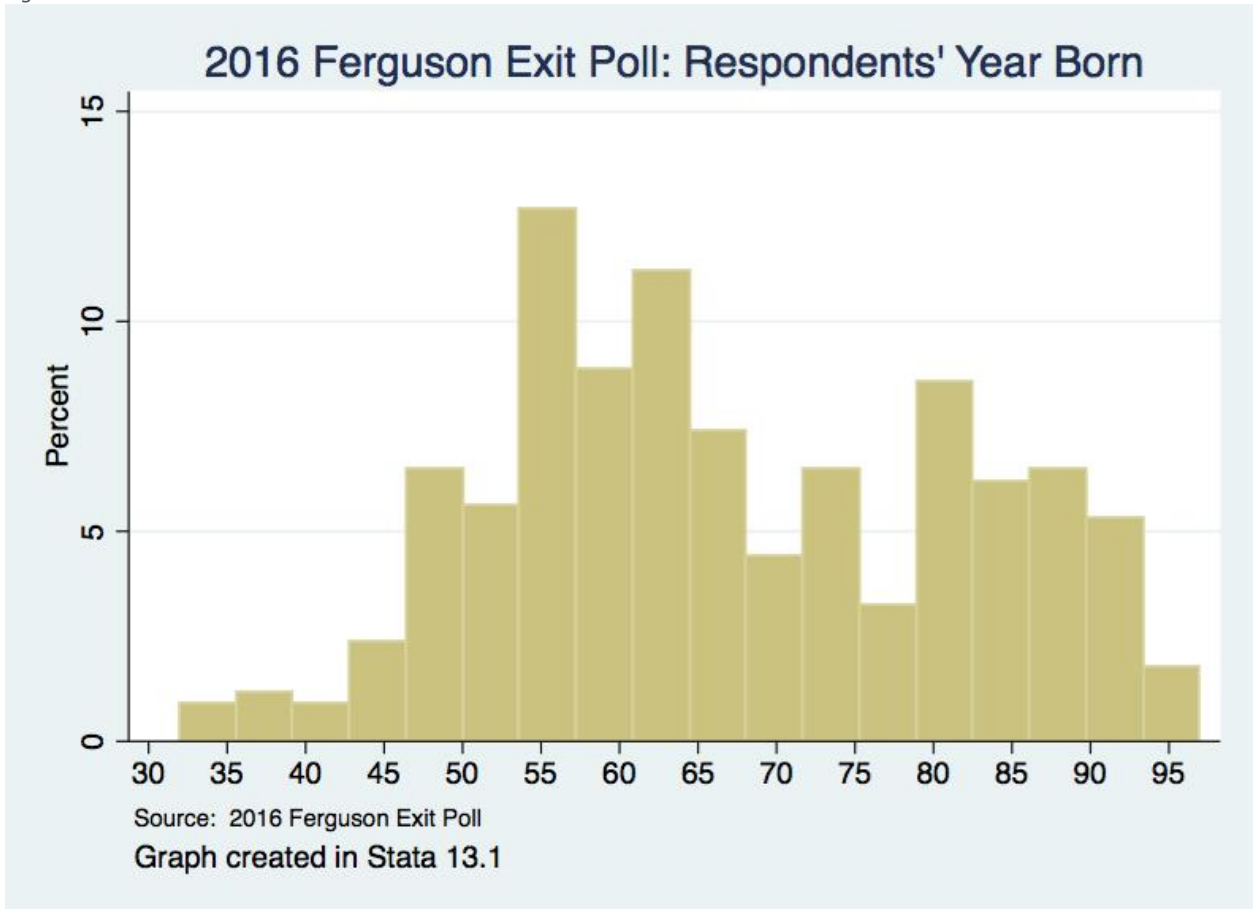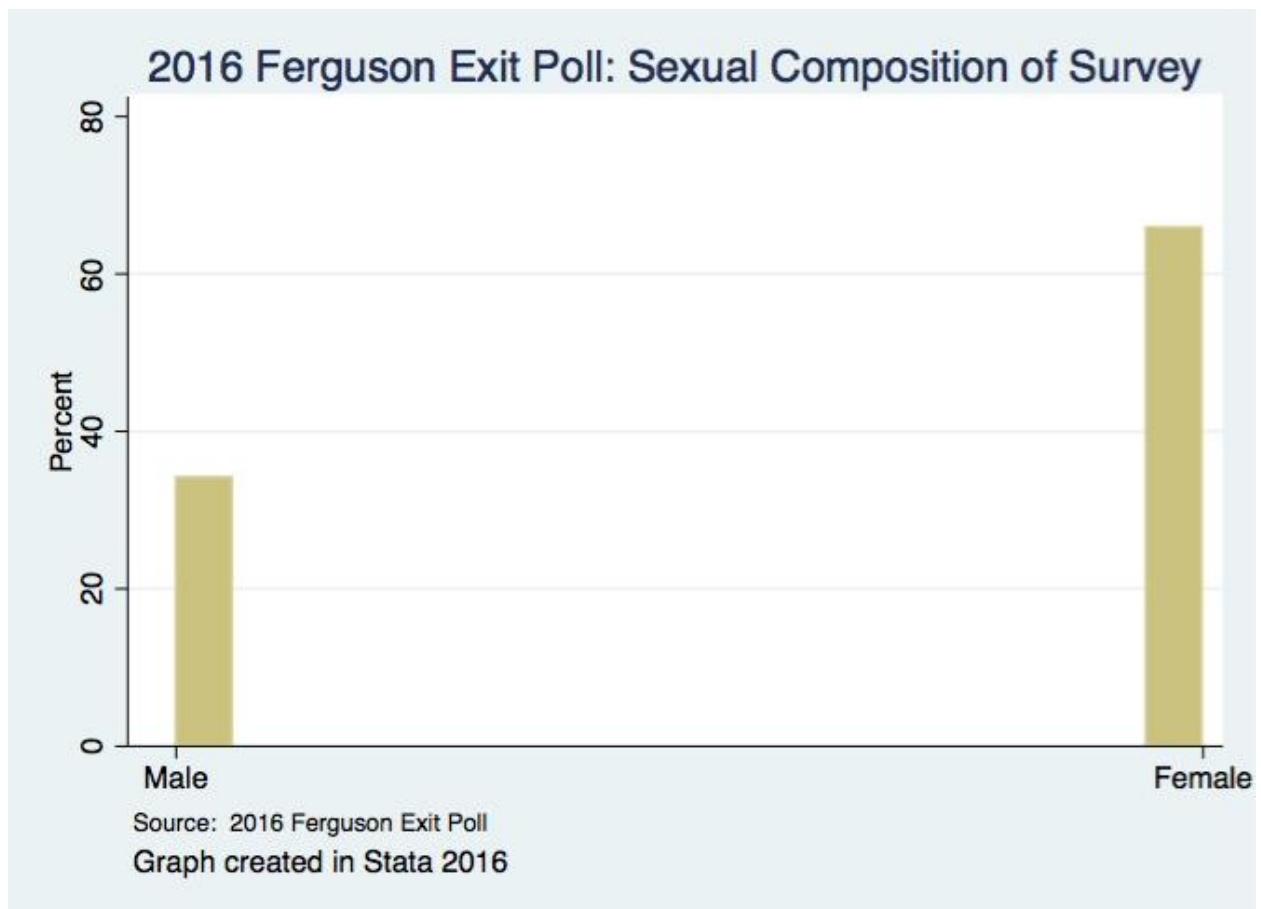
Figure 5.5 2

Figure 5.5 3

Our results again show that Ferguson is a fairly religious community. A plurality

of respondents said that they attend religious services at least once a week (44.5%)

which is much higher than the national response that Pew records which has hovered

around 37% for several years (Lipka 2013). The median response for frequency of

church attendance was "Once or Twice a Month". A plurality of both Black and White

respondents said that they attend church at least once a week. However, white

respondents were significantly more likely to say that they never attend religious

services than Black respondents (31.8% compared to 11.7%) [Chi2(4)=19.13; Pr=0.00]. A

majority of respondents said that they pray at least once a day (52.8%). Black

respondents were significantly more likely to say that they pray at least once a day

(63.8%) compared to White respondents (24.4%) [Chi2(6)=74.15; Pr=0.00]. A majority

of respondents (66.2%) said that religion is "Very Important" in their life, while 20.3%

said "Somewhat important" and 13.5% said "Not very important". Once again Black

respondents are more religious on this measurement than White respondents. 75.6% of

Black respondents said that religion is "Very Important" compared to 46.2% of white

respondents [chi2(2)=44.61; Pr=0.00].
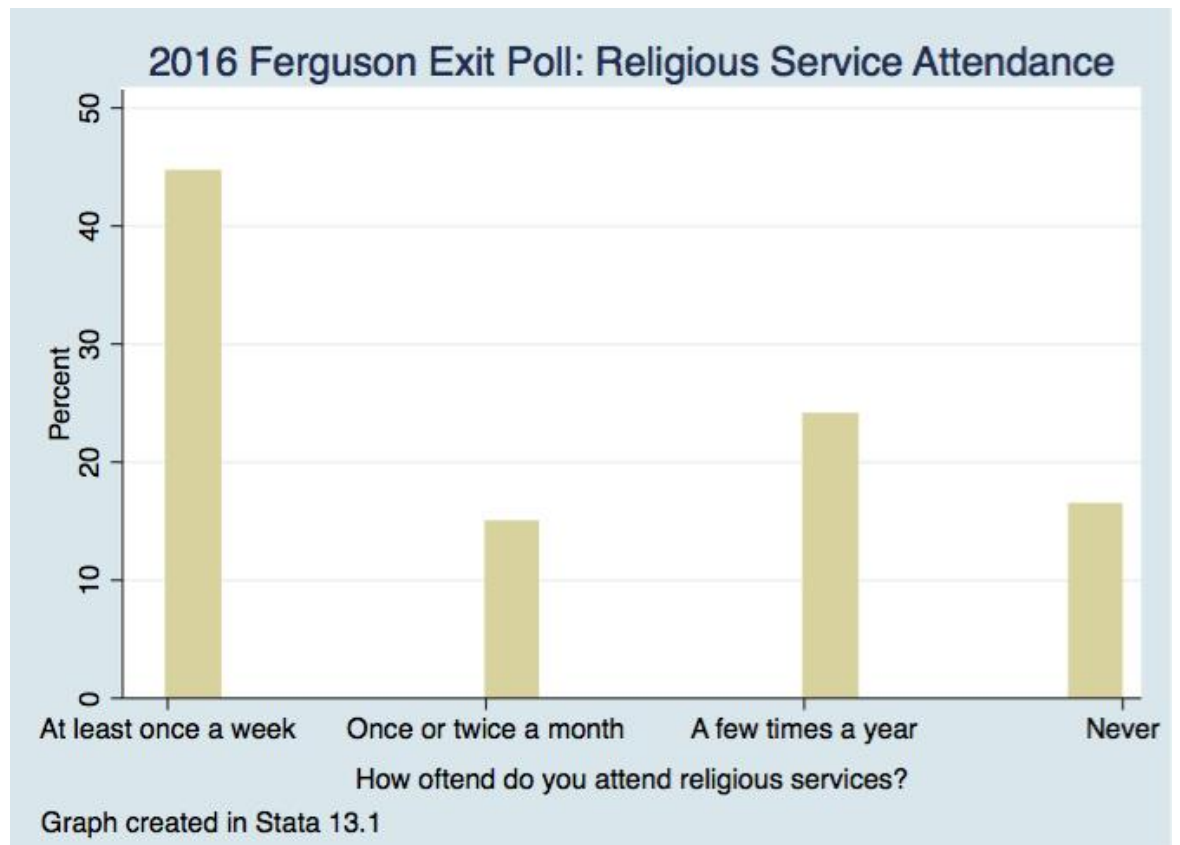
Figure 5.5 4

In regards to religious tradition, Ferguson is dominated by Christians. A plurality

of respondents identify as Non-Catholic Christians (46.00%), 21.7% identify as "Other",

17.4% as "None", 14% as Catholic, .57% as Jewish and .29% as Muslim (see the graph

below). Broken down by respondent race, White respondents in our sample were fairly

evenly split between identifying as Catholic (31.9%) or as Non-Catholic Christian (38.5%)

while Black respondents overwhelmingly identified as Non-Catholic Christians (49.8%)[7].

White respondents were significantly more likely to be Catholic than Black respondents

[chi2(5)=49.06; Pr=0.00].

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[7] When I discuss racial demographics throughout the evaluation of the survey I mostly
discusses differences between respondents who identify as either Black or white,
without much discussion on respondents who identify as Hispanic, Asian, or Other. I do
this for two reasons. First, the number of responses that we received from respondents
who identified with categories outside of Black/African-American or White is very small.
Our sample only has two respondents that identify as Asian, four who identify as
Hispanic, and nineteen who identify as other. Second, most of the tension within
Ferguson that has received international media attention has revolved around
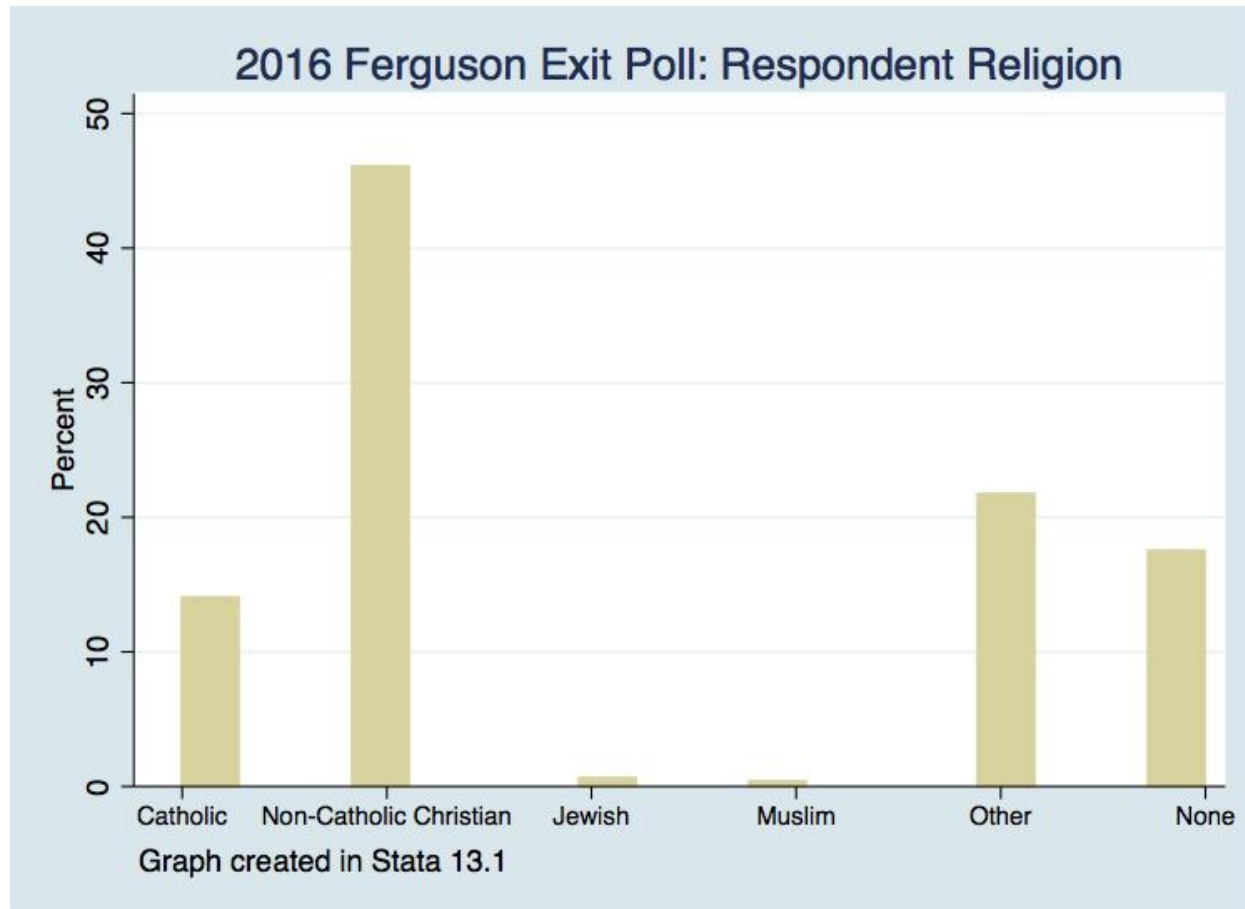differences between Black people and white people.

2016 Ferguson Exit Poll: Respondent Religion

Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 5.5 5

However, one variable from the survey might indicate that Ferguson residents

do not let faith influence their politics. Over half of respondents strongly disagreed with

the statement that a candidate's religion is a factor that they consider when voting. On

the other hand, about twenty percent either strongly or moderately agreed with the

statement. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the 2016 primary was one in which

religion has not played as central a role as it has in previous elections when Mitt

Romney's membership in the Latter Day Saints church and controversies surrounding

the content of President Obama's preacher's sermons (or for that matter unfounded

rumors that President Obama practices Islam) were part of the national conversation.

Another possibility is that perhaps the wall of separation between church and state is not so high for some Ferguson voters. This should not dissuade us from continuing to look for a religious connection to social and political issues in Ferguson as one's faith can prime values while not necessarily translating to a need to consider the religion of a candidate when voting.
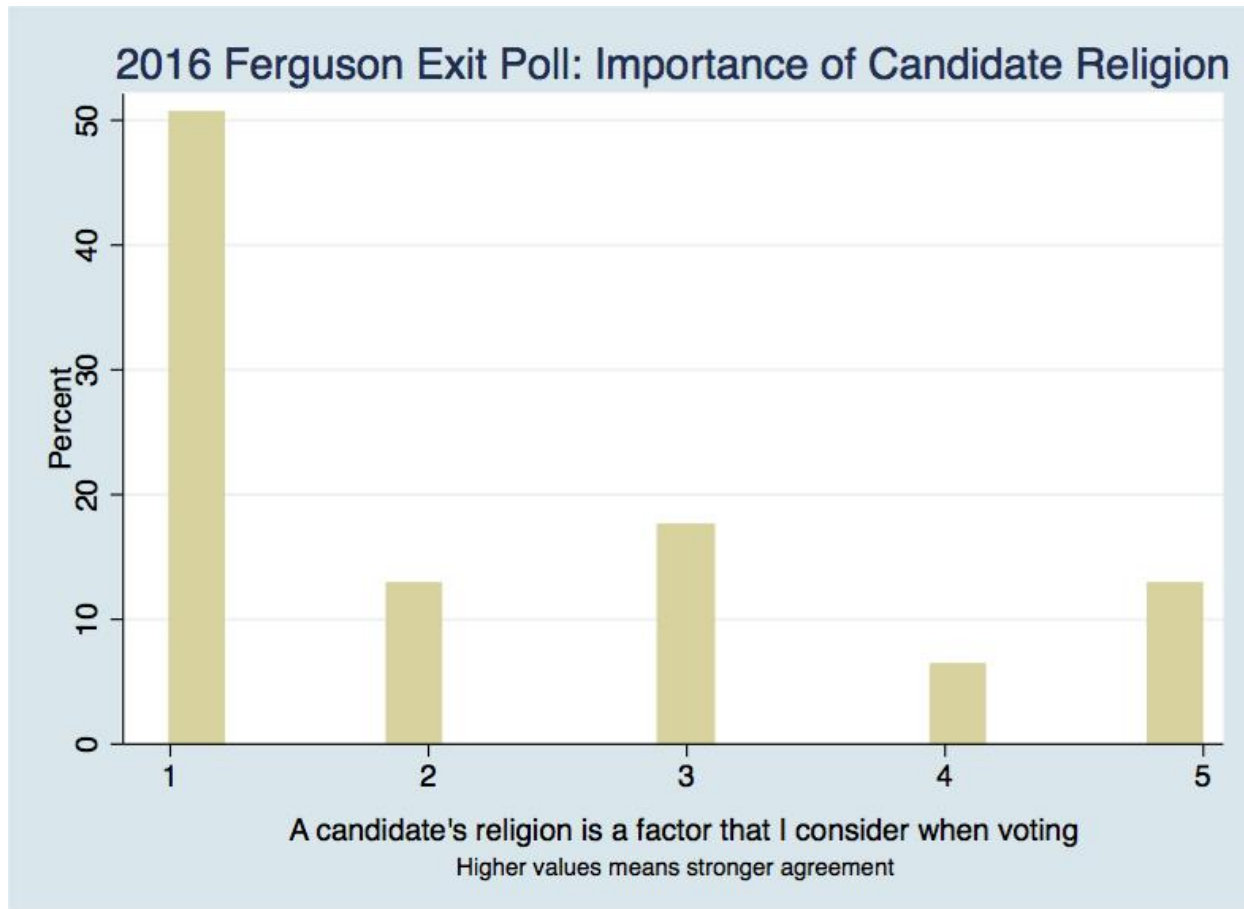

Figure 5.5 6

In the 2016 survey, I asked some of the same questions that were featured in the 2014 survey. Importantly for my research question, I asked whether respondents believed their congregations were fighting for social justice in regards to race and whether or not respondents felt that their congregations encouraged civil disobedience

or protesting. For these questions, I found similar responses to that of the pilot survey.

I found that almost a majority of respondents said that their congregation fights for

social justice (49.9%) and no statistically significant difference on the question by race

[N=293: chi2(8)=13.90, Pr=0.08]. On the question of whether or not respondents felt

that their congregation encourages civil disobedience or protest only a quarter (25.4%)

of respondents said that their congregation does encourage civil disobedience or

protest while 49.2% responded "No" and 25.4% said that they were unsure. This is

lower than what was found in the first study (31.8%) which was conducted before the

grand jury decision not to indict Darren Wilson that incited an uprising that caused

considerable property damage.

When we look at responses by race, white respondents were significantly more

likely than Black respondents to say that their congregation does not encourage civil

disobedience or protest [N=266; Chi2(2)=11.61; Pr=0.00]. This cross-tabulation also

shows us that Black respondents are fairly evenly split as to whether or not they feel

that their congregation encourages civil disobedience. As in the pilot study, there is also

a statistically significant difference between Republicans and Democrats in how they

answer this question. While 46% of Democrats said that their congregation does not

encourage civil disobedience or protesting, a strong majority of Republicans (72.4%) said

the same [N=255; Chi(2)=7.17; Pr=0.03].

Respondents were also asked about their evaluations of local clergy.

Respondents were asked to provide whether they had favorable or unfavorable

opinions of various political institutions. Included on the list were municipal courts,

President Obama, and "Religious leaders in your Community". Respondents were given

three response options: "Favorable", "Unfavorable", and "Don't Know". Gauging

attitudes toward religious leaders is important given the literature describing clergy as

"opinion leaders". A thin majority (50.6%) of respondents responded "Favorable" while

20% responded "Unfavorable" and 29.4% respondent "Don't know". There is no

statistically significant difference to responses of religious leader favorability by

respondent race, party identification, or by whether or not one's congregation

encourages civil disobedience. This could be an indicator that clergy play it safe within

the confines of the community and that religious efforts to shake the status quo in

Ferguson have come from outside the community itself; see the distance variables from

the clergy study for more on this idea.

As in the 2014 survey perceptions on whether congregations emphasized

social/racial justice and whether or not congregations encouraged civil disobedience or

protest varied by race and tradition. Following the 2014 survey, Black respondents were

less likely to say that their congregation does not encourage civil disobedience than

respondents who do not identify as Black (Chi^2=9.9697; Pr=0.007). Furthermore, as the

graph below shows, Black respondents were much more likely than non-Black

respondents to say that their congregation is "very active" in fighting for social justice in

regards to race (Chi^2(2)=6.5468; Pr=0.038). These findings are statistically significant.

Figure 5.5 7

How Active is your congregation in fighting for social justice in regards to race? By Respondent Race

Source: 2016 Ferguson Exit Poll

Graph created in Stata 13.1
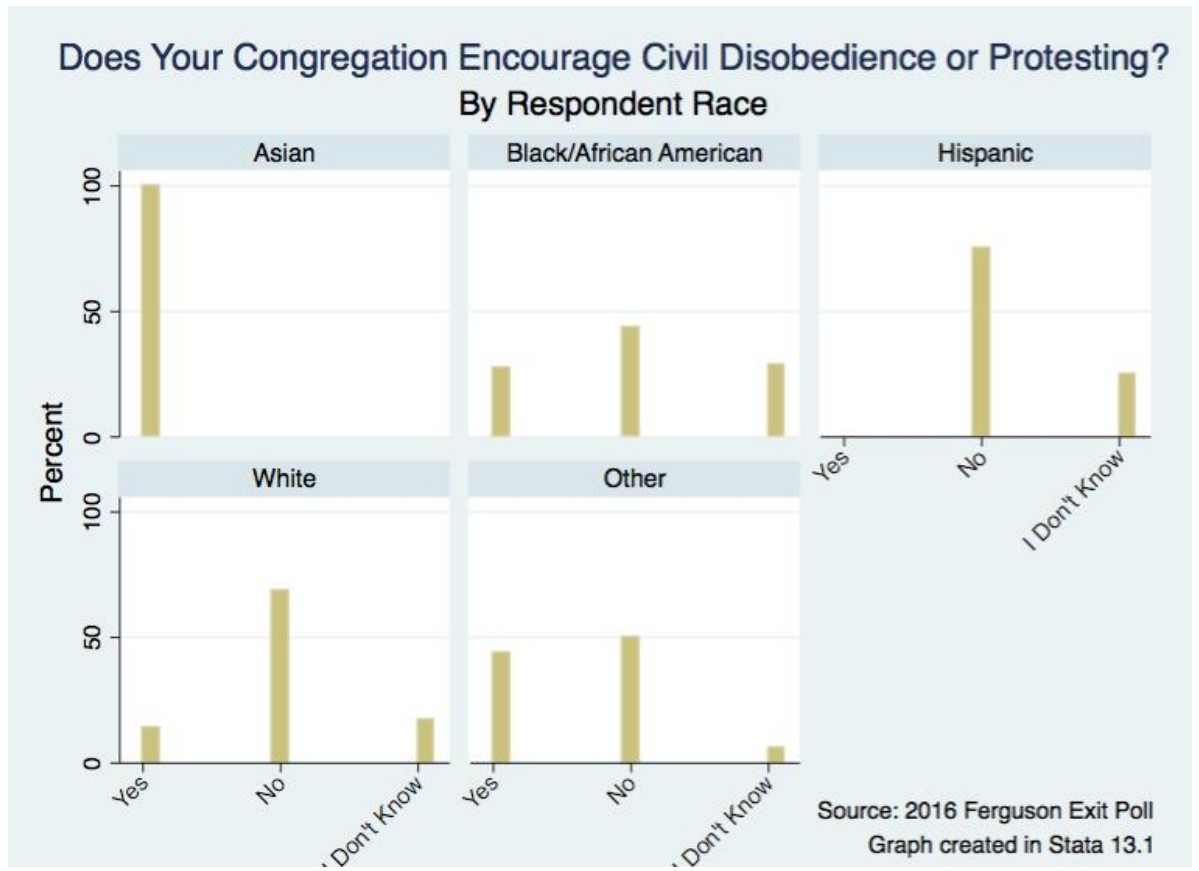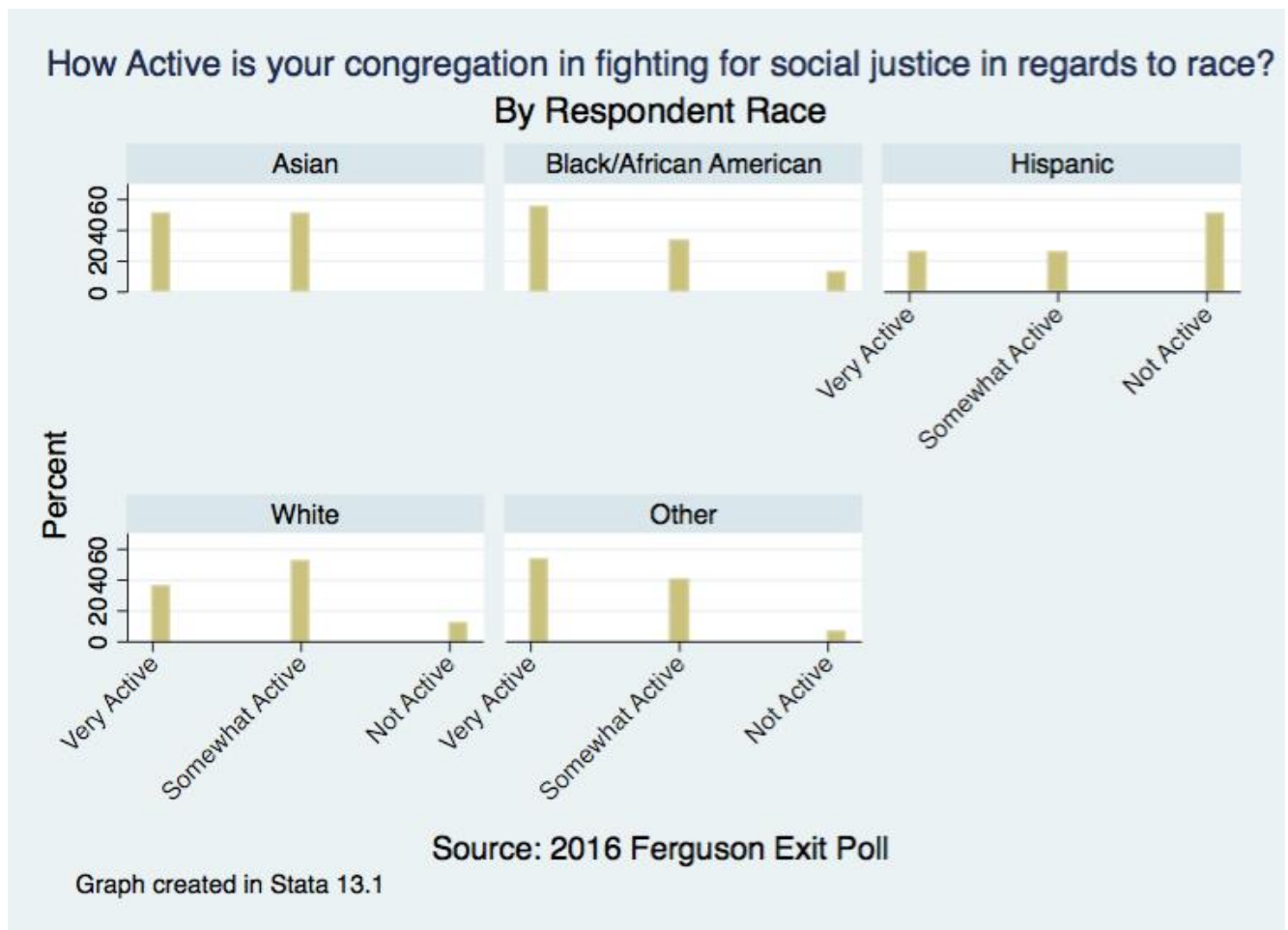
Figure 5.5 8

Whether or not one's congregation encourages civil disobedience also seems to touch racialized issues in Ferguson less in 2016 than they did in 2014. Whereas in the pilot study I found relationships between whether or not one's congregation encourages civil disobedience and attitudes on racialized issues such as police favorability, I did not find that to be the case in the 2016 survey. There was no statistically significant difference between those whose congregations encourage civil disobedience and those whose congregations do not encourage civil disobedience on police favorability, whether or not one considers race an important issue facing the community, or whether

or not a respondent believes that Darren Wilson was severely injured by Michael Brown.

Map 5.6.2 graphically depicts responses on whether one's congregation favors civil

disobedience across precincts, also noting predominantly Black/African American

precincts while Map 5.6.3 displays attitudes towards the police.

Religion and Contentious Politics By Polling Place
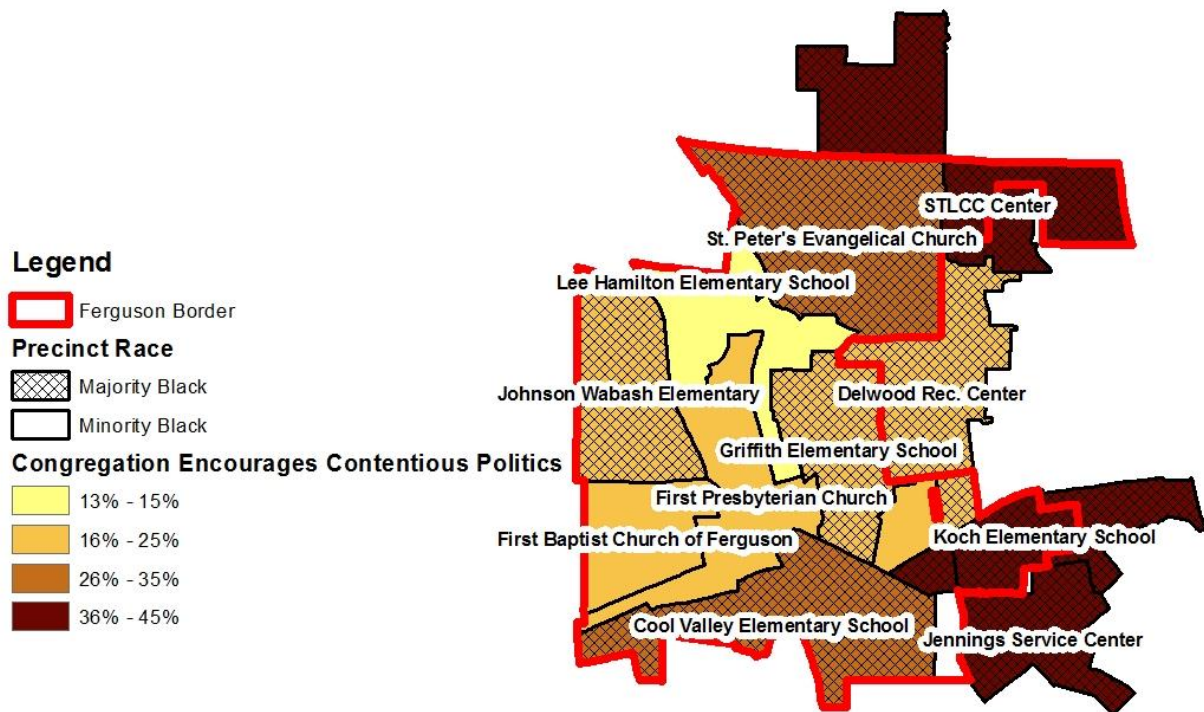
Map 5.5 2

Views Toward Police
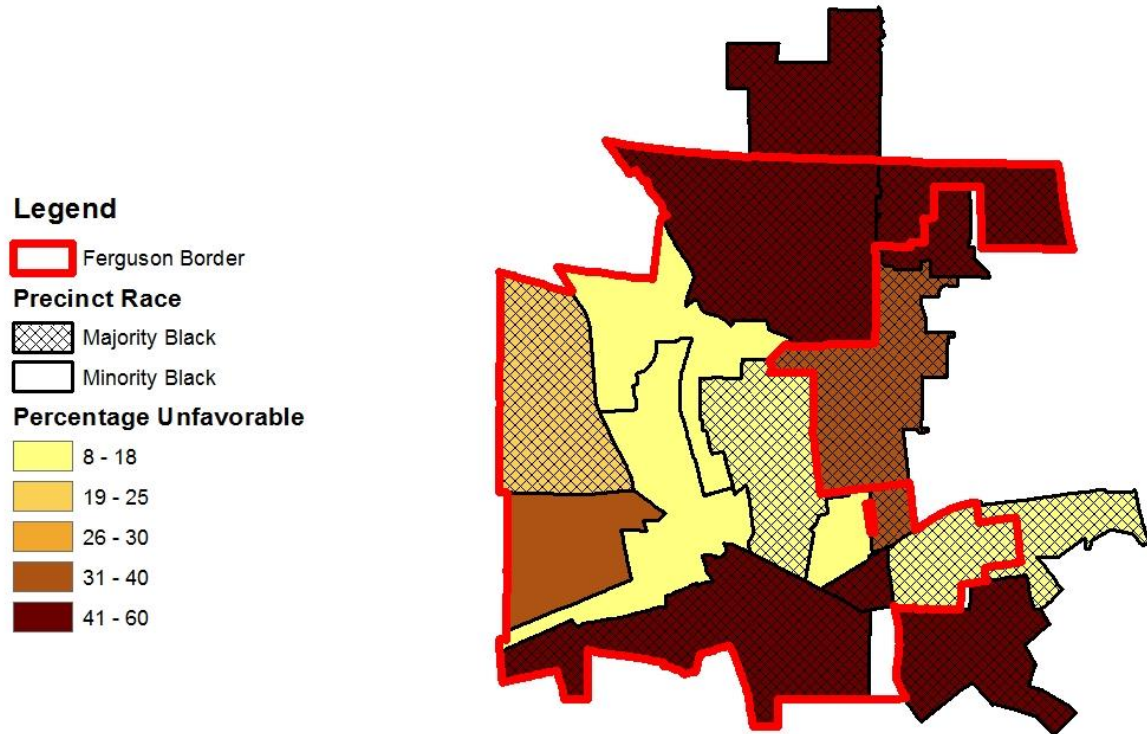
Map 5.5 3

In our sample, Catholics were about twice as likely to think that Darren Wilson was severely injured by Michael Brown (59.6%) than non-Catholic Christians (24.3%). This is statistically significant (chi2(5)=37.69; Pr=0.000). This could be because Black respondents are significantly less likely to be Catholic. However, when we control for race by examining just white respondents we see that Catholics are still more likely to believe that Darren Wilson was severely injured (75.9%) than Christian-Non-Catholics (62.1%)[chi2(4)=13.11; Pr=0.01. Conversely, 24.1% of white Catholics in our sample said that Wilson was not severely injured compared to 37.9% of white Christians who do not

identify as Catholic.   Religion is not a significant indicator of whether or not a

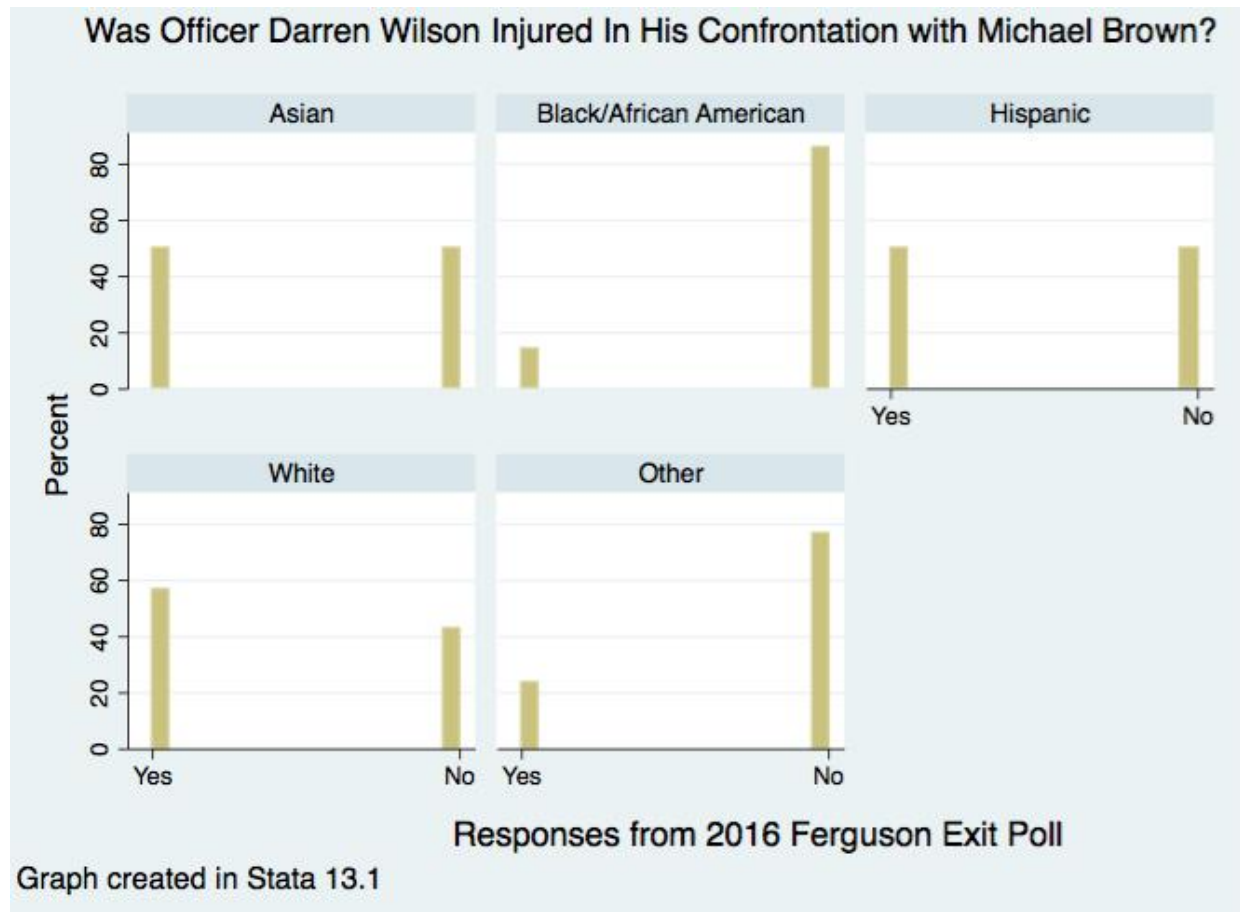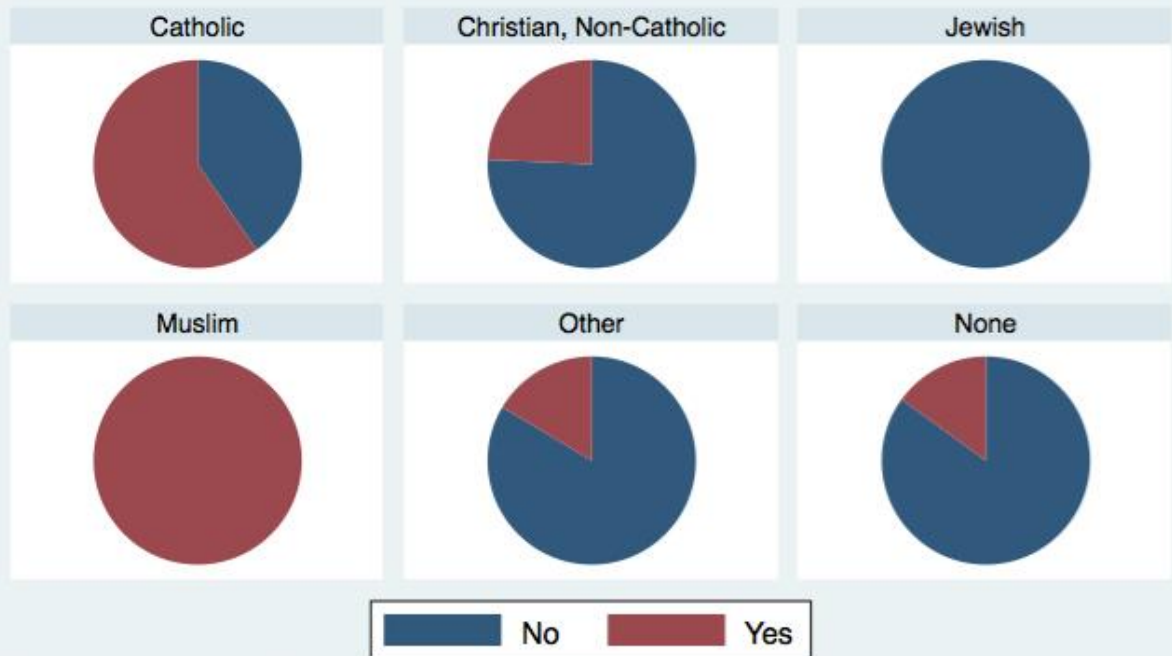respondent thinks Wilson was injured among Black respondents.

Figure 5.5 9

Was Darren Wilson Seriously Injured During His Confrontation with Michael Brown? Graphs by Religious Tradition

Data from 2016 Ferguson Exit Poll
Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 5.5 10

I ran a binary logit model in order to test whether or not religion was still a significant indicator of believing that Darren Wilson was severely injured when controlling for other variables. I used a dummy variable indicating whether or not a respondent is Catholic and a dummy variable indicating whether or not a respondent is Black as my main predictor variables. I also used income, education, party identification, and year born in my model as controls. The model, Model 1, had 280 observations, an AIC of 245.52 and a BIC of 270.96. I found that religion, race, education, and year born were all significant indicators at the .05 criterion of significance. Factors such as race, education, and year of birth have a negative

relationship with believing that Wilson was severely injured, as might be expected.

Being Black, having more education, and being younger all seem to make one more

likely to reject the self-defense narrative and show distrust of the police. However,

being Catholic is positively related to thinking that Wilson was severely injured. In fact,

going from being non-Catholic to being Catholic increases a respondent's odds of

thinking that Wilson was injured by a factor of 3.4, while going from being non-Black to

Black decreases one's odds by a factor of .18. See the table below for a graphic

breakdown of predicted probabilities of religion and race. Map 5.6.4 displays responses

to this question across Ferguson polling places.

Predicted Probability that Respondent Believes Darren Wilson was Injured		
	Black	**Not-Black**
Catholic	.27	.68
Non-Catholic	.099	.38
N=280; Pseudo R^2=.27; AIC =245.52; BIC= 270.96		

Table 5.5 2

Percentage That Believes Darren Wilson Was Not Injured by Michael Brown
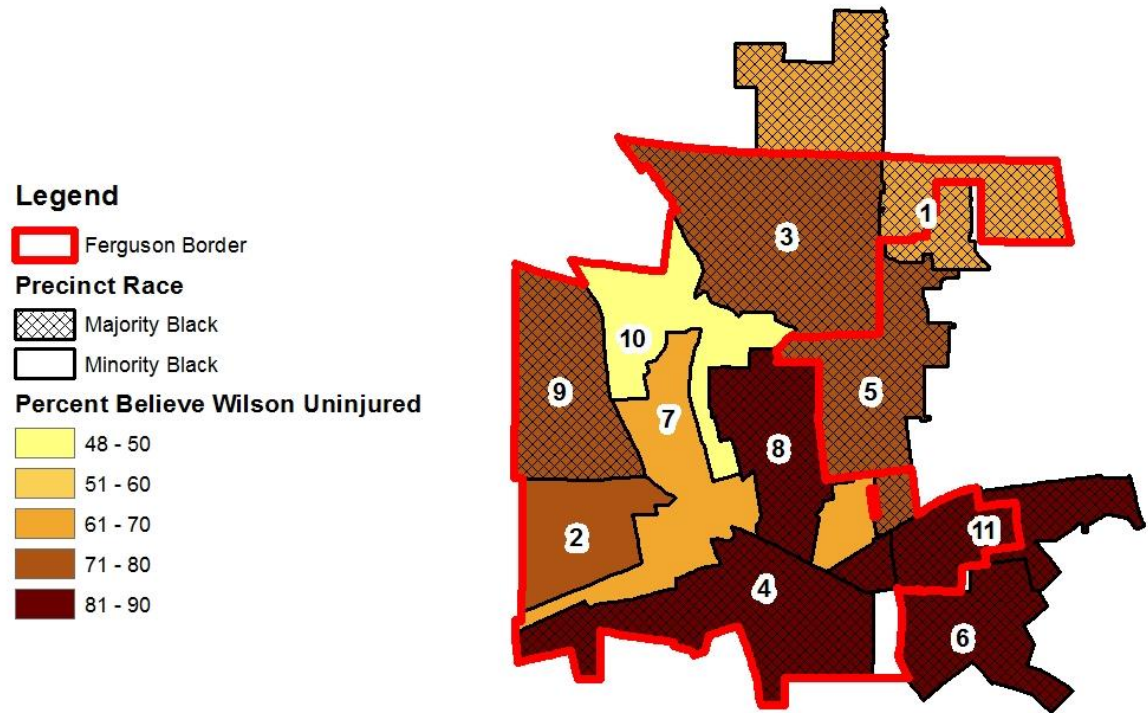
Map 5.5 4

I refit the model, adding in a predictor variable for whether one's church encourages civil disobedience. This is a binary variable with 1 indicating that a respondent's church does encourage civil disobedience and 0 indicating that their church does not encourage civil disobedience, or they are unsure. This was the only change in the model. This model (Model 2) fits the data better than Model 1 with an AIC of 188.40 and a BIC of 215.94. The outcomes are similar as well. Race, year of birth and education are all negatively related to saying that Wilson was injured in his confrontation with Michael Brown (the first two are statistically significant at the .05 criterion). Therefore, since this poll was conducted in 2016 these indicators are

negatively related to believing a debunked police narrative around the death of Michael

Brown. Whether one's congregation supported civil disobedience was also negatively

related the dependent variable, although not statistically significant. Although they are

not statistically significant at the .05 criterion of significance, I thought it would be

useful to demonstrate the direction of the predicted probabilities for race and

congregational support of civil disobedience in the table below. The direction of the

predicted probabilities is consistent with the hypothesis that congregational

encouragement of contentious politics may dismantle the acceptance of pro-police

narratives.

Predicted Probability that Respondent Believes Darren Wilson was Injured		
	Black	**Not-Black**
Congregation supports civil disobedience	.089	.37
Congregation does not support civil disobedience	.12	.45
N=231; Pseudo R^2=.33; AIC =188.40; BIC= 215.94		

Table 5.5 3

5.6 Discussion

There are several important findings in the 2016 survey. First, the survey

provides evidence that while most congregants feel that their church fights for social

justice, racial and political rifts still exist as to whether or not one's congregation

encourages civil disobedience or protest. Additionally, among Black respondents the

answer to the latter question is still a mix.

Second, the survey seems to show that whether or not congregational behavior

is related to attitudes on policing and racialized issues seems to diminish over time. That

might be too bold a statement to make based on exit-poll data, but the statistically significant relationship found in the pilot study does not exist in the 2016 survey. This may be due to several reasons. It might coincide with Emerson and Smith's argument that religion is unable to make a great lasting impact on racialized society. Religion can help make some progress with surface level issues but ultimately cannot be the sole reconciliatory defeater of the racial divide in America. It could also be due to the fact that these issues were not as "hot" in 2016 as they were in 2014. Media coverage had shifted away from police brutality and Black Lives Matter and towards the presidential election. Perhaps, the congregations' interests have also shifted. It is likely that in 2014 religion "provided the moral force for people to determine that something about their world so excessively violates their moral standards that they must act to correct it" (Emerson and Smith 2000; 18). However, in 2016 the division may have shifted from a protest against a clear entity, the Ferguson Police Department and local government, to a more broad one: racialized society and racist government systems. This would demonstrate the idea that "The structure of religion in America is conducive to freeing groups from the direct control of other groups, but not to addressing the fundamental divisions that exist in our current racialized society" (Emerson and Smith 2000; 18). Finally, the larger sample size of the survey could be showing us that there was no relationship to begin with. However, it is important to note that racialized differences do not entirely go away.

Third, the survey indicates that how religious groups process information on the racialized society and police killings of Black men may be subject to confirmation bias.

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Specifically, that Catholics within Ferguson are more likely to believe that Darren Wilson was severely injured by Michael Brown, and therefore acted in self-defense.

This study finds evidence to support both inspiration theory and opiate theory within Ferguson. While among survey respondents social justice seems to be perceived almost universally as a positive goal for the church to work toward, Black respondents were fairly split as to whether or not their congregation encourages contentious politics in the form of civil disobedience or protest. This shows that some congregations, even within the Black community, choose not to go to such radical steps to work for Black political advancement.

Additionally, this study shows a cleavage in opinion on whether or not Darren Wilson acted in self-defense during his confrontation with Michael Brown based on religious tradition. Catholics have a higher predicted probability than non-Catholics in thinking that Wilson was severely injured. This may be due to the fact that, according Wald and Brown (2014), the Catholic Church has "developed and occupied a distinctive centrist position in American political life" (Wald and Brown 2014; 243). There is a wealth of articles within the *St. Louis Review*, the St. Louis Arch-Diocese publication that shows that the local Catholic church was working in response to the death of Michael Brown including creating a Peace and Justice Commission and holding special masses (St. Louis Review). While representatives from the Catholic Church participated in marches organized by Black Lives Matter protesters, they also focused on ministering and providing chaplaincy services to the local police (St. Louis Review). Another Catholic news source, *The National Catholic Reporter*, documents demands from Black Catholic

leaders that the church be less ambiguous in its response to police shootings of Black

citizens during the annual Archbishop Lyke Conference in which Black Catholics from

across the nation gather to worship and discuss pressing issues (Feuerherd 2016). These

anecdotal data alongside the local nature of this study indicate that the local attitudes

unearthed in this study cannot be projected onto the entire Catholic tradition.

However, there is a clear relationship between being Catholic in Ferguson and

accepting a police narrative on the Death of Michael Brown. At the time of the 2016

survey, being Catholic made one significantly more likely to be supportive of then

Mayor, James Knowles III, 57.14% compared to just 27.68% of non-Catholics

[$Chi^2(2)$=14.7147; Pr=0.001]. Just two years prior to the death of Michael Brown, the

city of Ferguson under the leadership of Knowles purchased the Good Shepherd Catholic

Church from the St. Louis Archdiocese in a $1.5 million deal (Gillerman 2012). Another

potential explanation for the Catholic gap narrative acceptance may be location. As the

map below shows, Catholics in Ferguson are more likely to live in predominantly white

precincts, and therefore may have fewer interactions with Black people. The evidence

in this survey shows that the Catholic church in Ferguson may function as an institution

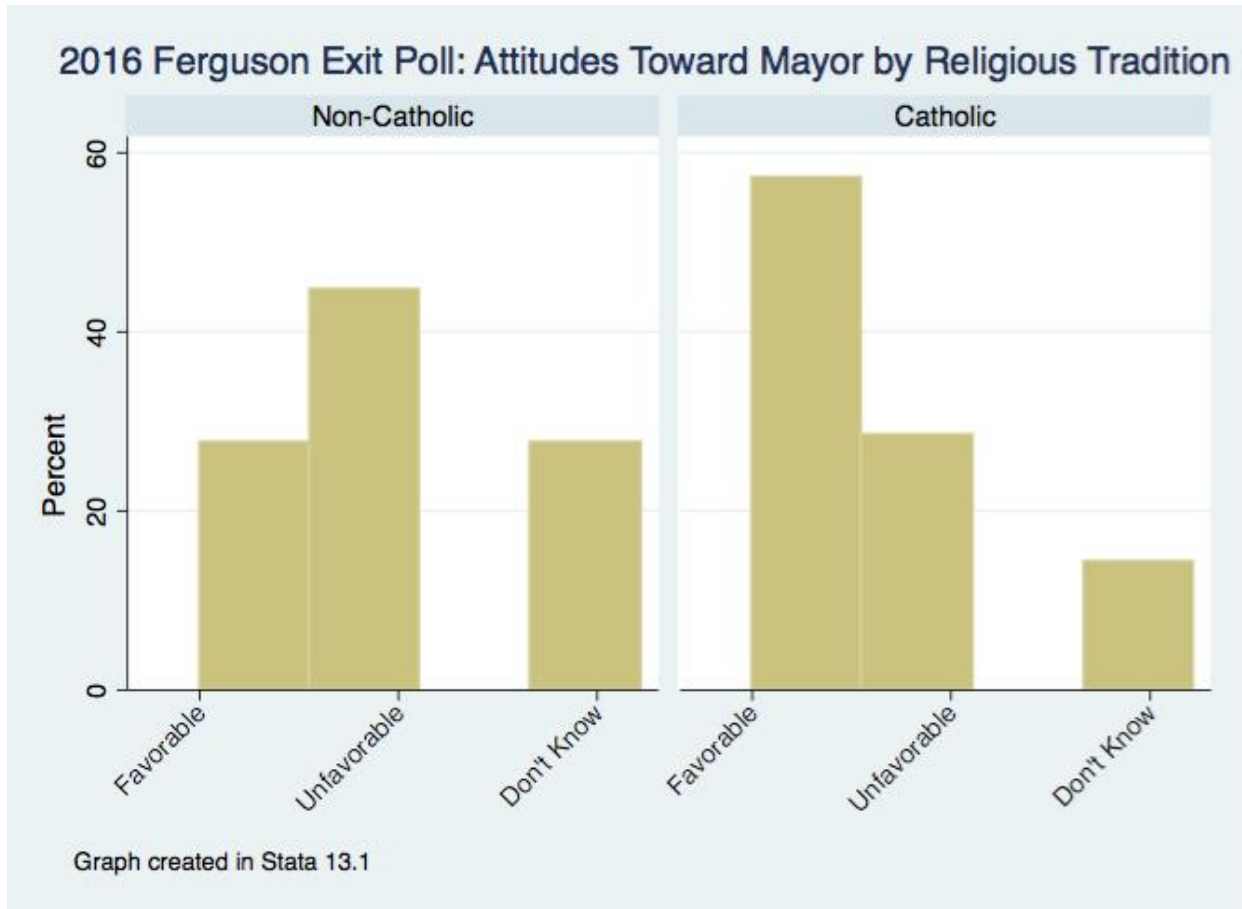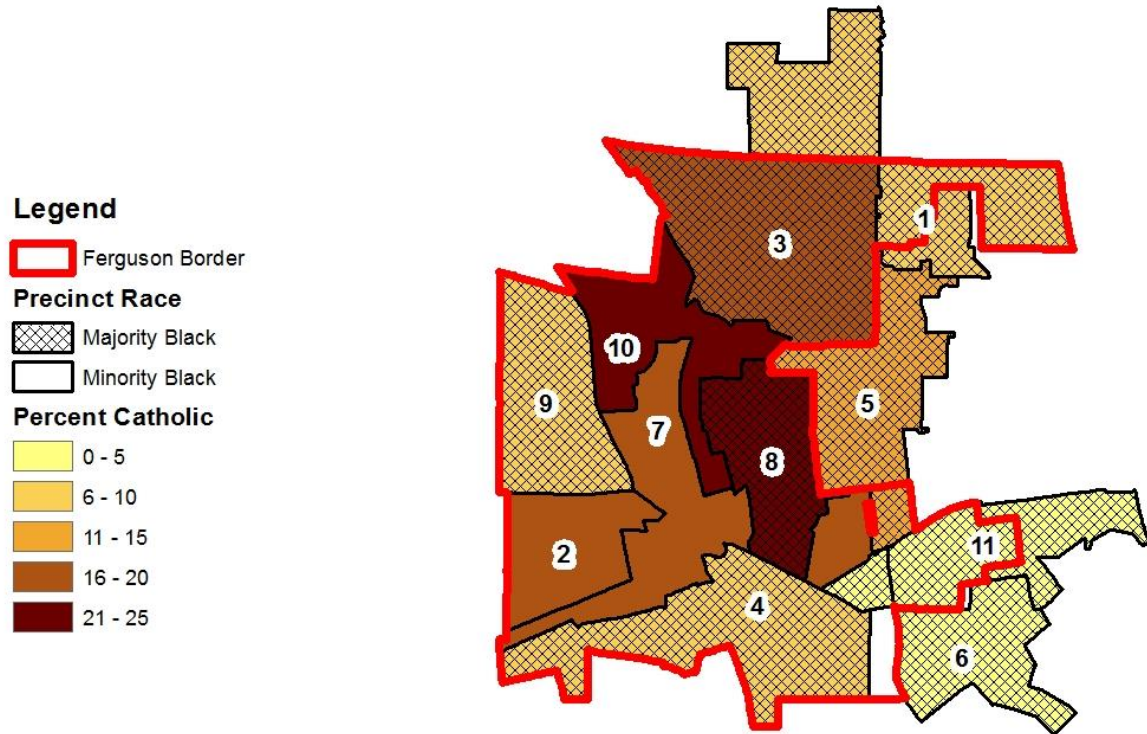that facilitates the centering of whiteness within Ferguson politics.

2016 Ferguson Exit Poll: Attitudes Toward Mayor by Religious Tradition

Graph created in Stata 13.1

Figure 5.6 1

Percentage of Catholic Respondents by Precinct

Legend

Ferguson Border

Precinct Race

Majority Black

Minority Black

Percent Catholic

0 - 5

6 - 10

11 - 15

16 - 20

21 - 25

Map 5.6.1

Finally, one aspect that stood out from both surveys, that certainly will not be shocking, is that there is a clear racial divide in responses to the shooting of Michael Brown among Ferguson residents. We see this divide in perceptions of congregational response to the shooting, attitudes on policies and institutions, and acceptance of narratives about what happened, even in the 2016 survey when the narrative that Wilson was severely injured had been disproven.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This work started with an exploration of literature on the different classifications of how the religious sphere interacts with the political sphere. Ultimately, the study finds evidence for both inspiration theory and opiate theory. The Ferguson Moment clearly awakened both religious leaders in the St. Louis region as well as the people of Ferguson to the idea of persistent racial injustice in St. Louis and the United States today. However, the response to this focusing event has divided the community as well as the rest of the nation into two camps: one which seeks racial justice and one that has not only accepted the status quo but has doubled-down on support for the current systems of criminal justice under which Michael Brown was slain.

This study utilized interviews with clergy from throughout the St. Louis region. All of the subjects displayed a mindfulness of racial inequities in the city. However, not all of them identified race or injustice in policing as a major issue facing St. Louis. Furthermore, the language and evidence that these leaders use to discuss the Ferguson Moment sometimes reflected an anti-racist perspective and at other times clearly showed an acceptance of the status quo or support for police. They were also varied as to the reactions they took to crisis in their community or in neighboring communities. Some insulated themselves and are playing a game of catch up when it comes to racial justice. Others took care of tangible needs through providing resources like food or meeting spaces. Others utilized public speech to prime values within their congregation. Very few participated actively in protest or tried to directly influence the political

sphere. Many clergy felt mixed pressures from their congregations and some took those pressures as cues informing them of the parameters of their role.

All of the clergy demonstrated a clear passion for their faith and their role as faith leaders. The teachings of Jesus and the Bible were important in informing them of how to respond to the racialized crisis around them. However, each read their Bibles with different presuppositions, different personal characteristics, and different social-work environments. Each held different ideas on the mission of Jesus, which informs their worldview and, therefore, their political attitudes. A complex mix of theological beliefs, religious practices, congregational community, tradition and denomination, personal characteristics, and even location all seem to play into the responses that the clergy chose.

While the clergy response to the Ferguson moment seems to indicate that Christianity acted as an opiate in Ferguson, the high religiosity coupled with a widespread belief by voters in the community that their church favors social justice may show that the Church at least has the potential to be a force for racial justice in St. Louis. Indeed, many of the voters in our sample feel encouraged to participate in contentious politics because of their faith.

However, at the same time, the study provides evidence that religious congregations can be centers of power that reinforce whiteness within their own communities. In Ferguson, Catholic respondents were more likely to believe police narratives about the death of Michael Brown in 2014 when misinformation was rampant and then again in 2016 when more information had been released to the

public. High levels of Catholic support for Ferguson's former white mayor, James

Knowles III, provides more evidence for how the church operated in this way.

The work conducted in this study has only become more relevant in the year

2020 when several acts of violence against Black people have made national news and

inspired widespread protests and counter-protests throughout the United States. Since

the death of Michael Brown Black Lives Matter has gone from a small organization or

controversial slogan to an idea supported by a majority of all Americans (Thomas and

Horowitz 2020). The Church is still divided in its response with many reinforcing support

for law and order while others advocate for anti-racism and racial justice. Many

Christian media outlets have dedicated much of their articles to responding to the

deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others with jeremiads. Many sermons have

done the same. However, others have overemphasized the violence that has rarely, but

sensationally, accompanied protests. In the year 2020, the author of this text has

observed at different churches both sermon series on racial justice as well as "Hero

Days" supporting law enforcement during this contentious time. The question that

social science must evaluate and the church must answer is will it be an inspiring force

for racial progress or an opiate to the masses reinforcing the status quo.

Racialized state-violence continues to haunt St. Louis. In 2017, when a judge

declared former St. Louis police officer, Jason Stockley, not-guilty after his 2011

shooting of a 24 year old Black man, Anthony Lamar Smith, protests erupted across the

city leading to tense confrontations with police. During one such confrontation, video

footage show police coopting a Black Lives Matter chant, "Whose streets? Our Streets?"

demonstrating the divisive relationship between the police in St. Louis and the

communities that they are charged with protecting (Edwards 2017). In 2020, protests in

reaction to George Floyd's death led to violent uprisings which caused property damage

as well as the shooting death of four police officers. Further research is thus needed as

understanding the factors that have led to the continued division between law

enforcement and their communities might help lead to peace and progress.

6.1 Areas for Further Research

This project creates several avenues for future academic work. I believe the

findings from this paper to be useful across disciplines including in the fields of political

science and sociology, as well as for those outside of the academy working as faith

leaders or activists. However, there are still many questions that remain around this

topic that this paper was unable to address. Here, I will discuss some areas of further

research that I may pursue or that may be picked up by other researchers.

One question that may be pursued following this work is how nationally

recognized faith elites respond to racialized focusing events. This study looked locally at

individuals and leaders of congregations. However, this study was not able to look at

Christian leaders on a national scale. I would hypothesize that there is a gap between

how nationally recognized faith elites respond to racialized crises compared to the

response of local faith leaders and rank-and-file practitioners. There are a few different

ways that this can be approached. One option is to analyze the output of the flagship

news publications representing the major Christian traditions in the United States. One

could then examine the publications of powerful denominations within traditions.

Comparing differences and similarities between the two can help determine the comparative influence of tradition and denomination. For example, *Christianity Today* is an online and in-print news and lifestyle magazine that caters broadly to an evangelical readership. While the *Baptist Press* is the denominational news source for the Southern Baptist Convention, one of America's largest evangelical denominations. This work has been initiated by Nancy Wadsworth who examines the racial politics of evangelicals through examining *Christianity Today* (Wadsworth 2014). However, this work can be broadened to see how the four major Christian traditions (and beyond) have interacted with the modern push for racial justice.

Another option for studying the reaction of nationally recognized Christian faith leaders is to use data-mining of social media. Network analysis using twitter is an emerging source of sociological and political science data that can be utilized to examine both the content and influence of political speech made by Christian elites. The really powerful aspect about this type of research is that it allows us to see how political messages are being dispensed and accepted across a vast amount of people. Its strength lies in its ability to tell us who accepts or rejects specific political messages. Using sentiment analysis alongside a database of twitter networks one could effectively measure whether Christian leaders have a pacifying or inspiring effect on social justice issues. However, this form of analysis does not do a good job at telling us whether or how those messages translate into political action beyond generating additional political speech.

This study was local in nature addressing a tragic moment in St. Louis history and how St. Louisans responded to it. However, racialized tragedies are not merely a local problem, rather there is a wealth of evidence of systemic racial injustice in the United States. Additionally, while the Ferguson Moment was a local tragedy, it became a national focusing event. This project does not necessarily speak to how religion might influence responses to racialized violence in other places and in other contexts. For instance, in the exit poll portion of this study, it was found that being Catholic made a respondent more likely to accept the police narrative around Michael Brown's death. In Ferguson, the Catholic Church and the Catholic School are prominent institutions within the community that could be said to have real civic influence. Therefore, the Catholic church may operate very differently in other communities, and perhaps other traditions would act as centers of whiteness in communities instead. Additionally, the interplay of region with religion may be important in analyzing how faith influences reactions to racialized violence. For instance, the response of faith leaders may be much more influential in the Bible Belt than on the East Coast. The urban and rural context may also make a difference. Indeed, in the future, I wish to explore the rural response of churches to national discussions on racialized state violence.

Mentioned in this study was Djupe and Calfano's study of "God Talk" or the use of religiously coded messages by political figures. These messages work as cues to the faithful that the politician identifies with religious individuals within their audience, but they are not likely to be picked up by those who are not religious. While this study examines how faith elites respond to incidents of racialized crisis, it does not examine

how political actors might use religion in order to communicate in such incidents. How local and national political leaders use religiously coded messages during and after racial crises would be a great avenue for further research. This can be done following Djupe and Calfano's work through experiments to see how influential these cues may be in communicating messages around racialized politics. Additionally, a researcher could examine speeches, news articles, and other sources for instances of god talk in order to understand what politicians are using this tool, how the use it, and to what ends they employ it.

Finally, this study focuses specifically on how faith in the predominant Christian traditions interplays with reactions to racialized violence. Because this work was focused on how Christian beliefs and practices interplay with racialized politics, it was not able to focus on how non-Christian faith systems may influence individual reaction to racial tragedies and controversies. Additionally, it was not able to look at how marginalized groups within the broader Christian tradition responded, but rather focused on the four major traditions within American Christianity. Further research should focus on how faith leaders and individuals from marginalized Christian traditions and non-Christian traditions respond to such events. While today the Christian religion is dominant in the American social and political sphere, America is diverse in its faiths and worldviews and understanding how groups outside of these powerful traditions may give us more insight into the power of religious belief, belonging, and behavior in the realm of politics.

There is much more work to be done and the work is more important than ever. It cannot be ignored that faith, politics, and race are three powerful forces in American life. While there is a considerable body of work in the social sciences examining these forces, their interaction is still under-studied. Continued research into these not-so-separate spheres is necessary for advancing our understanding of American politics.

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