

Centralization of Authority in Protestant Denominations:
An Organizational Classification

Revised June 2, 2003
Word Count = 4,643

D. Paul Sullins

Department of Sociology
The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C. 20064
Email: Sullins@cua.edu

Abstract (165 words)

While Protestant religious groups are self-classifying with regard to centralization of authority (polity), this dimension has been largely ignored in research on Protestants, in part due to the lack of an easily accessible scale. An attempt is made in this paper to derive such a classification, working from the hypothesis, following Takayama and Cannon (1979), that polity and structural characteristics independently predict centralization of authority. Using organizational indicators reported by the World Christian Encyclopedia—age of denomination, number of members, and number of congregations—discriminant and latent class analyses are used to derive a trichotomous ordinal scale of 214 denominations by centralization of authority: from "Decentralized" to "Moderate" to "Most Centralized". Construct validation demonstrates that the religious centralization scale replicates and extends a previous narrower measure of polity (Wood 1970). A comparison of the effects of religious centralization and fundamentalism on 13 common religious indicators on the General Social Survey illustrates the importance of religious centralization for understanding the belief and behavior of American Protestants.

Centralization of Authority in Protestant Denominations: An Organizational Classification

INTRODUCTION

The revolution in Christianity that we know as the Reformation was not only a revolt against certain beliefs but also, perhaps even primarily, a revolt against certain ways of governing church life. In their rejection of papal primacy, Protestants in every case opted for more local autonomy and individual control over the operation of church institutions. While all were less centralized than Roman Catholicism, the new types of church government took three general forms, or polities, which persist as significant differences in Protestant groups to this day.

Congregational polity places ultimate authority in the local congregation; larger affiliations of congregations resemble voluntary associations or loose coalitions of the basic congregational unit. In **presbyterian** polity (from the Greek word “presbyteros” meaning "priest"), ultimate authority in the denomination resides in regional councils of clergy, while in **episcopal** denominations authority resides in councils of heads of individual regions known as bishops (in Greek “episkopos”). As the names of the denominations themselves often imply, congregational polity serves today as the organizing principle for Baptist and Congregationalist groups; Presbyterians best represent presbyterian polity; and Lutherans and Episcopalians are characterized by episcopal polity.

While these three forms of governance all serve as a check to the establishment of a coercive centralized authority, they do not each diffuse power to the same extent. As one moves from congregational to presbyterian to episcopal polity, power is located progressively further from the individual worshipper. Such a progression also locates power successively in each of the three "orders" of Christian life--laity, clergy, and bishops--which may be thought of as three successively smaller status groups within Christianity, resulting in the progressive centralization of power in fewer hands.

Surprisingly, this self-classification of Protestant denominations with regard to formal centralization of authority has seldom been taken seriously by sociologists of religion in

attempting to understand their activity. Despite the development of a fairly comprehensive scholarly interest in modern organizational dynamics, studies involving the organizational characteristics of denominations have been notably sparse (Wood 1970; Takayama and Cannon 1979; Scherer 1980; Zald 1981; Chaves 1993; McMullen 1994). Attempts to deal with the classification of religious groups according to objective, that is, not specifically religious, organizational or group characteristics have been only two in number and limited in scope (Wood 1970; Takayama and Cannon 1979). Only Takayama and Cannon have attempted to relate formal polity to other organizational characteristics of denominations.

In this comparatively small body of literature, however, analysis of the allocation of institutional power has figured prominently. While formal polity has been complicated by Weberian processes of institutional change, the overall *centralization of authority* has been repeatedly found to be a key variable for understanding these groups and their members. Some argue that, with the rise of modern denominational bureaucracies, stated formal authority has become less variable and more effectively centralized in Protestant denominations since World War II (Burkart 1980; Bartholomew 1981). Harrison's classic study of the American Baptist Convention concluded that, while their formal polity is intensely congregational, the rise of bureaucratic structures that have accompanied increasing denominational size have led to a de facto centralization of authority in the national denominational staff (Harrison 1959). Gustafson (1963) reported similar dynamics in his study of the Congregational Christian Church. On the other hand, Ammerman's study (1990) of recent changes in the power structure of the Southern Baptists, a group that has undergone similar if not greater bureaucratization, has underscored the persistence of local autonomy as a check on the centralization of authority in congregational denominations. While the exercise of local option may have been diminished by the rise of a centralized hierarchy, the possession of local authority de jure appears not to have been eliminated, but only to have lain dormant, allowing an effective takeover of power by those not at the center who were able to garner sufficient local support. So Wood (1970) argues that centralized initiative in congregational denominations is made possible only by local apathy; when policy is

controversial, denominational leaders are constrained by formal authority. Likewise, Zald (1981) finds that congregational religious groups are fruitful ground for "internal" social movements. In more centralized groups the opposite occurs, though there are limits to the coercive authority of denominational executives. Chaves proposes more strongly that "the appropriate object for secularization is not religion at all, but religious *authority*" (1993:8, emphasis his), making a general case that the centralization of religious authority in Protestant denominations has declined due to secularization. Studying the acceptance of women pastors in female-ordaining denominations, for example, he finds (1997) that "loosely coupled" congregations can oppose unwelcome innovations from denominational leaders.

These findings suggest that a denomination's authority structures have a wide range of effects not only its congregations but also on its members. If congregational polity constrains controversy from above and encourages innovation from below, for example, it may follow that congregants also feel freer to dispute church teachings, producing a wider range of opinion on related matters. They may feel less constrained to vote for political candidates who do not represent the position of their church on social or moral issues. Indeed, as McMullen (1994) theorizes, they may be less aware of those policies, and feel less need for formal membership at all. Since congregational decisions are more salient, we might predict greater intra-congregational conflict in congregational groups, leading to greater switching by congregants and shorter tenure for pastors.

Of course, it may be that none of these are true. I offer these predictions, not to examine them here, but simply to illustrate the *kind* of hypotheses that may be illumined by considering denominational authority structures. In truth, these hypotheses cannot be examined at the present time without prohibitive cost and effort, because there are no available data that link individual religious behavior and opinion to denominational authority structures.

Takayama and Cannon claim the neglect of organizational factors by religious scholars is due to "the fact that some students of religion still disdain viewing religious organizations as organizational phenomena even for the purpose of sociological analysis." (1979: 330) A more

likely reason, in my view, is the lack of data just noted. Almost all studies in this area have had to gather primary data at great labor and expense, thus limiting their power and comparability.

There is a possible solution to this dearth of data. An abundance of opinion survey data exists that includes respondents' church affiliation. These surveys, however, have no information on denominational authority structures, nor is there any comprehensive measure of the centralization of authority of respondents' denominations that could be applied to such surveys as a secondary classification (as is routinely done, for example, with theological conservatism). If such a measure could be developed, it would make the wealth of survey data available to examine hypotheses, such as the examples given above, involving this key dimension of church organizations.

The burden and plan of this paper is to develop such a measure, at least as a first draft. First, I replicate Takayama and Cannon's classification of a small set of denominations by their centrality of authority using more readily available indicators: formal polity, denomination size and average congregational size. Using reference data, I then extend this function to the majority of Protestant denominations to classify them ordinally from Decentralized to Moderately Centralized to Most Centralized with regard to authority. Then I test this new religious centralization scale to see if it replicates Wood's (1970) results regarding the effect of polity on policy diffusion. Finally, I examine some selected items from the General Social Survey (some related to the example hypotheses above) to illustrate the use and effectiveness of the religious centralization scale.

A CENTRALIZATION SCALE

Takayama and Cannon (1979) examine 28 Protestant religious groups to determine the relationship between formal polity--congregational, presbyterian, or episcopal--and the actual structural centralization of power in the denomination, operationalized as the control of information necessary for clergy placement decisions. Using discriminant analysis, they examine to what extent a discriminant function based upon polity will correctly classify denominations according

to their measured vertical authority structure. Vertical authority is measured by whether the pastoral placement bureau is national, regional or local. Polity is operationalized as the ability, or lack thereof, for congregations to hire and fire their ministers. Other variables in their analysis include number of congregations in the denomination, number of departments at the lowest organizational level, and the presence or absence of an organizational chart, a paid highest official, and a written salary schedule. They discover a significant but fairly weak contribution of polity (a standardized coefficient of .377), but also find that "organizational structural constraints such as size, administrative differentiation (or specialization) and bureaucratic formalization remain important independent variables largely capable of explaining why power differentials in denominations occur as they do" (1979: p. 329). When 5 organizational variables are included with formal polity, a single discriminant function is obtained which, with a canonical correlation of .706, correctly classifies 73% of the 28 cases according to vertical authority. (p. 328).

These two findings of Takayama and Cannon's study suggest that **both polity and structural characteristics independently predict centralization of authority in religious denominations**. If this premise is true, then it follows that (A) polity and some structural characteristics predict each other, and (B) those structural characteristics, in conjunction with polity, would most likely be the best predictors of centralization. Thus it may be possible to improve substantially upon the weak relationship discovered by Takayama and Cannon, and such improved predictors could form the basis of an adequate scale of Protestant denominations along the dimension of centralization of authority.

In order to test this reasoning and possibly develop a scale, it was necessary to discover comprehensive information regarding formal polity of Protestant denominations and sufficient structural characteristics as to allow adequate prediction of degree of centralization. Fortunately, information corresponding to both of these requirements was found in the little-known World Christian Encyclopedia (Barrett, 1982; hereafter referenced as WCE). This British work, the result of 15 years of co-operative international scholarship, attempts to enumerate and organizationally classify all the Christian adherents in the world. While a number of

comprehensive enumerations of U.S religious organizations can be found (Jacquet, 1990; Melton, 1977), the WCE has several advantages for the purpose of this study. Although it reconciles its results when possible with the findings of other classification works, its enumeration is based upon a direct analysis of primary organizational data. Only in the minority of cases where statistics could not be obtained from the religious institutions themselves were they estimated from other sources. While such a technique may not be as helpful when the individual is the unit of analysis, since there is doubtless variation in the way denominations derive their statistics, in a study such as this, which attempts to scale organizations, direct organizationally-derived data is of greater value than secondary indicators, even when those indicators may be more homogeneous. Even apart from the issues of accuracy and access, any variation in techniques of defining members or deriving summary statistics may contribute to the significant variation among groups. Finally, the WCE is unique in taking the simple step of gathering comparative statistics into one table. In addition to size (number of adult members), the number of congregations, year of founding and involvement in ecumenical councils are coded for each religious organization in the United States.

Assertion A above proposes that certain structural characteristics and polity are mutually predictive. To examine this I used discriminant analysis to determine to what extent the structural variables correctly discriminated among the classes of polity. First, I replicated the discriminant function among the 28 groups of Takayama and Cannon's study, using only the measures available on the WCE (listed 4 sentences above). I found that the variables size, age, and average congregational size produced a discriminant function virtually identical in power to Takayama and Cannon's, with a combined canonical correlation of .75 (compared to Takayama and Cannon's .72) and correctly classifying 72% of the cases (compared to 73% for Takayama and Cannon's study).

Takayama and Cannon examined only relatively large denominations—the smallest was the Baptist General Conference, with 104,000 members. Since organizational centralization has little meaning below a certain threshold of size of denomination, I experimented with including

successively smaller denominations in the analysis until this threshold was reached, as indicated by the degradation of the discriminant function. I found that this occurred at 4,000 members. Among denominations that had more than 4,000 members, 62% of the cases are still correctly classified. This is much smaller than I had initially supposed.

Since size, mean congregation size and age predicted polity equally as well as Takayama and Cannon's function that included direct measures of centralization, it follows from the assertions above that together with polity they will also predict centralization. Lacking a direct measure of polity, I assigned the discriminant polity classification to the denominations, excluding those with 4,000 or fewer members. Since I also did not have a direct measure of centralization, I next tested the logic stemming from the premise above by employing an analysis that allows the predicted variable to remain unmeasured--latent class analysis.

Latent class (or latent structure) analysis is a cognate of factor analysis for categorical data that uses probabilistic rather than linear relationships to determine the combined relationship of the variables in the analysis to one or more unobservable, or latent, classes. If the set of assertions following on the stated premise is correct, then the variables in the analysis will correspond in clearly interpretable ways to the categories of the latent variable. Furthermore, the relations between the correspondences will be ordered across the categories of the latent classes (accounting for possible rearrangements), since we know that there is a set of linear relations between the structural variables and polity, and between both and centralization.

The continuous variables—denomination size and congregation size—had to be categorized for purposes of the class analysis. This incidentally addressed a nagging measurement problem. Because the definition of “member” is not standard for religious denominations, there is the strong likelihood of measurement error in these institutionally reported statistics. By reducing the measures to broad categories, any such error variation is reduced to only a small fraction of its original size. The selection of categories involved applied theoretical reflection.

Size of denomination was divided into two categories: Small--50,000 or fewer members;

Large--greater than 50,000. (In line with the discriminant results, groups below the threshold of 4,000 members were excluded.) Although I preferred only two categories in order to reduce measurement error to a minimum and due to the heavy skew in the distribution, the following theoretical reflections largely influenced this choice. Weber predicted that bureaucratic institutions tend toward growth and centralization of power; as noted, previous research has found both predictions to be generally true for denominations. In this process of growth and concentration, a primary threshold for religious denominations would be attaining a national presence. Since many aspects of certification, legitimation, communication and social policy occur at the national level, denominations that fail to become national actors incur real and opportunity costs in loss of efficiency. To maintain a national presence a religious denomination needs a certain level of geographic dissemination (though its members may be concentrated in certain regions) and enough members to ensure continuing resources to maintain a national structure. All other things being equal, it seemed plausible that a denomination with fewer than 50,000 members would be unlikely to have crossed that threshold. Making a cut somewhere in this vicinity was an important choice, although the exact number is not crucial. In a later stage of the analysis I varied the cutoff point from 46,000 to 57,000 without changing the classification of any denominations.

Average congregation size was grouped into three categories: Small—125 or fewer; Medium—125 - 500; and Large—More than 500. My categorization of congregations involved considerations of survival and excess resources. In general, larger congregations are more efficient organizational units, resulting in both greater excess resources and more complex internal organization than smaller ones. Since centralized denominations make more demands on congregational resources and staff, they would tend, other things being equal, to foster larger congregations. As a rule of thumb, a congregation above 500 persons is likely to have multiple staff, an internally differentiated committee structure, and greater net excess resources; below 125 persons it is unlikely to have any of these things. It may be that congregations in the middle also have characteristics of those in the large and small categories, but for purposes of

classification I set these thresholds toward the extremes so as to ensure greater homogeneity in the extreme categories. “Medium” thus functions as a residual category. Again, the precise value of the thresholds is not crucial, and could vary by up to 5% without altering the results of the classification.

Model comparisons for the latent class analysis are presented in Table 1. In support of our hypothetical assertions, a model that predicts three unrestricted latent classes, Model 4 in the table, fits the data well, having a likelihood ratio chi-square of only 3.55, with 2 degrees of freedom.¹ An examination of the conditional probabilities of this model (Table 2) reveals evidence that the latent classes correspond to the dimensions of a single variable. Both polity and congregation size are clearly ordered positively on the latent classes.² In addition, the conditional probabilities for polity, being ordered from least to most hierarchical across the three latent classes, exhibit just the kind of variation we would expect if the latent classes were strongly associated with organizational centralization.

The denominational variables in the preferred model also exhibit association that lends itself to ready interpretation in terms of organizational centralization. For example, more centralized formal polity is clearly associated with a larger average size of congregation. This can be interpreted to represent an effect of polity upon congregation size by way of selection among the most centralized groups. Larger congregations are more able on average to sustain the additional overhead costs of a centralized bureaucracy; at the same time, centralized rational planning would tend to deselect the creation and maintenance of smaller congregations in favor of a more efficient allocation of total resources. The effect of denominational size is also clearly ordered, although across different classes. While there is a clear tendency for denominations with congregational polity and small congregations to be small, large denominations tend to be moderate in polity and size of congregation. The most hierarchical groups, with the largest individual congregations, tend to have no relationship to size of denomination.

Such relationships, while substantively suggestive, should not be taken to account for the latent classification in any direct sense. The latent categories, while exhibiting general relation-

ships with size, congregational size, and polity that facilitate their interpretation, cannot be accounted for simply by intercorrelations among the denominational variables. In this type of analysis, such a manifest variable that does account for all of the variation in the latent structure is said to "exactly indicate" the latent classes. Models 2 and 3 of Table 1 represent the hypotheses that polity and congregational size respectively exactly indicate the latent variable extracted. Having each 6 degrees of freedom, with respective likelihood-ratio chi square values of 17 and 16, both models fail to fit the data acceptably; thus we conclude that the latent centralization variable cannot be attributed simply to correlation with polity or congregational size. Since they do not vary monotonically with size of denomination, and since they do not singly account for the latent classification, we can infer that no combination of simple correlations among the manifest variables is sufficient to account for the latent classes.³

Model 4, then, can be reasonably interpreted to express classes of progressive centralization on a latent variable, and its associated allocation rule used to produce a reasonably accurate ($\lambda = .74$, with 88% correctly classified) classification of cases into categories of progressive centralization of organization. Its fit provides strong corroboration (although not proof) for the premise that both polity and structural aspects of religious organizations are related to centralization of authority, and the classification it provides taken as having face validity as a scaling⁴ of Protestant denominations on the dimension of centralization of organizational authority. For convenience I refer to the resulting scale of religious centralization as RELCENT; with categories from "Decentralized" to "Moderately Centralized" to "Most Centralized". A list of the categorized groups is presented in Appendix A. Including 214 denominations⁵ in its classification (compared, for example, to Takayama and Cannon's 25 and Wood's 28), this classification has the potential to greatly extend the reach of organizational research of denominations.

AN INITIAL VALIDATION

As an initial construct validation test in religious organizational theory of the centraliza-

tion scale here developed, the results from a pre-existing classification along similar lines were re-analyzed using RELCENT.

Wood (1970), in the only extant classification (other than Takayama's) of religious groups by organizational form, dichotomized 28 denominations into Congregational and Hierarchical categories in order to examine differences in civil rights policy. Using a Guttman-scaled policy-strength score ranging from 0 (weak or none) to 10 (very strong policy), he discovered that Hierarchical denominations tend to develop stronger policy regarding civil rights than Congregational denominations, with median scores for the two groups of 7.5 and 2.5 respectively (1970; p. 1061 and Master Table, p. 1067).

A comparison with Wood's analysis provides a simple and direct test, by construct validation, of the classification developed here. The CENT classification contains missing data on 4 of Wood's 28 groups, largely due to mergers. Of the 24 remaining groups, all but one of the groups that CENT classifies "Least Centralized" are in Wood's Congregational category, while the two groups CENT classifies as "Most Centralized" are both in Wood's Hierarchical category. As expected when comparing two categories with three along a dimension, the groups I classified "Moderate" by CENT are split between Wood's two categories. Coding CENT on a scale of 1 to 3, the distinction between Wood's categories is preserved, with a mean score on CENT in Wood's Congregational and Hierarchical categories of 1.46 and 2.09 respectively.

More significantly, Wood's substantive conclusions are still supported--indeed, intensified--if the CENT categories rather than his are used to analyze his data. Substituting RELCENT's three classes for his two, the mean policy strength scores, from least to most centralized, are now 1.6, 6.3, and 9.5 respectively, compared to his findings, stated earlier, of 2.5 and 7.5 respectively. The range of variation across categories of organizational centralization is actually increased, while Wood's hypothesis ("hierarchical denominations will have higher policy-strength scores than congregational ones"; 1970, p. 1061) is clearly upheld. These similar results provide construct validation that CENT is accurately measuring the same dimension as Wood's earlier analysis, while also incidentally confirming Wood's earlier finding regarding

denominational policy strength.

INITIAL FINDINGS ILLUSTRATED

Most social scientists of religion, however, are interested in persons, not organizations. Does organizational variation have much effect on personal religiosity? To examine this question I used RELCENT to analyze a set of commonly used indicators of religious characteristics on the General Social Survey. These analyses are offered to demonstrate the power and illustrate the use of RELCENT, not to pursue any substantive theoretical agenda. The results are in Table 3. The table reports only Protestants who reported a specific denominational affiliation. Of these, RELCENT classified 85%.⁶

As the column labeled “RELCENT Correlation” reports, the religious centralization scale was significantly correlated with all the variables examined except for the 2000 Presidential vote.

But is this variation useful? Since the GSS already contains a widely used classification of religious groups by theological conservatism (the 3-category variable FUND: Fundamentalist, Moderate, Liberal), this question resolves into whether RELCENT captures variation that FUND does not, and in ways that are interpretable.

The correlation of RELCENT and FUND is .37. This association is not due to an association of fundamentalism with decentralized denominations—only 30% of fundamentalists are affiliated with decentralized groups—but to a striking association in the opposite direction. As a glance at the appendix of this article will attest, no liberal Protestant denominations are decentralized. Since the groups on RELCENT were categorized with no knowledge of their theological orientation, this finding is noteworthy, and is in line with supply-side theories that find liberal denominations to be large, culturally assimilated groups.

On individual items in the table, most of the RELCENT variation is independent of FUND. The columns under “Correlation with FUND” compare the correlation of each item with FUND both zero order and after controlling for RELCENT. For all of the items, the effect of

fundamentalism is still significant after controlling for religious centralization. At the same time it is reduced for all items except religious switching, indicating that RELCENT “explains” part of the variation in FUND. That is, the effect of fundamentalism on responses to these items is smaller within, and larger between, categories of religious centralization.

To illustrate what this means, the four rightmost columns of the table, labeled “Percent Response among Fundamentalists”, report the typical fundamentalist response for each item both overall and across the three categories of religious centralization. The response category is shown in parentheses following the item name. For all of the items, centralization strongly specifies the responses of fundamentalists. The top three items—belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible, having a born-again experience, and opposition to abortion in extreme circumstances—are all definitive of fundamentalism or evangelicalism. Fundamentalists in decentralized denominations report higher agreement with the fundamentalist response on these items. For example, 64% of those in fundamentalist churches report that they have had a born-again experience; but among decentralized fundamentalists 75% have been born again, while among the most centralized fundamentalists only 42% report being born again. Concentration of denominational authority appears to inhibit these characteristic fundamentalist opinions and experience in fundamentalist denominations.

For the next five items in the table this pattern is reversed; centralization increases the percentage giving the selected response on these items. Church membership, a measure of direct organizational participation, does not correlate with FUND, but is correlated with RELCENT. As theory would predict, those in the most centralized denominations are more likely to be members than those in decentralized groups. Fundamentalists in centralized denominations are more likely to support the death penalty, to identify with the Republican Party, and to have voted for Bush in 2000. Perhaps centralized denominations are more effective at organizing their members to support these civil and political issues. Figure 1 illustrates the effect of RELCENT for understanding the 2000 Presidential election among fundamentalists. Without considering centralization, fundamentalists were no more likely to vote for George W. Bush than religious

moderates or liberals. However, denominational centralization greatly increased the proportion of fundamentalists, but not moderates or liberals, voting for Bush. Since most fundamentalist denominations and religious leaders favored Bush, this probably reflects more effective mobilization and dissemination of policy in the more centralized groups.

Opposition to women clergy does not vary by centralization, but centralization serves to increase its strong correlation with fundamentalism. Confirming Chaves' (1997) thesis, fundamentalists in decentralized denominations are only half as likely to oppose women clergy as those in decentralized ones. For other items in Table 3 the effect of RELCENT is not linear but still clearly specifies the effect of fundamentalism.

This brief examination of GSS items is intended only to illustrate the use and power of RELCENT. Doubtless better analysis with appropriate controls and a more informed application of theory would improve my brief discussion of these items. However, the importance of considering religious centralization to understand personal religiosity has been demonstrated.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that the centralization of authority is an important dimension for understanding Protestant religion in America. An initial scale computed from secondary data, validated by construct, reveals robust variation in the opinion and behavior of Protestants. Primary research could doubtless develop a more precise measure. Future research should consider centralization in addition to conservatism to better understand American Protestants.

1. Goodness-of-fit tests in this class of models are evaluated with an opposite logic to that of more common null hypothesis tests. The L^2 value indicates departure from a perfect fit of model to data, thus a *nonsignificant* result, *below* the critical value, indicates an acceptable fit of model to data.
2. That is, the lowest category of congregation size has the highest probability in the first latent class, the middle category of congregation size has the highest probability in the second latent class, and the highest category of congregation size has the highest probability in the third latent class.
3. As another way of examining this issue, a model was tested that restricted three latent classes to the correlation of polity and congregational size, with a fourth class included to account for variation that did not fit this pattern, using a strategy similar to Goodman's "demi-scale" models (Clogg and Goodman, 1985). The combined probabilities on the three restricted classes is .46; thus, slightly less than half of the proportional variation in the data can be accounted for by the combination of polity and congregational size. This figure is large enough to argue that these two variables are good predictors of the latent classes, but small enough to demonstrate that the latent categorization does improve upon them substantially.
4. The scalable character, or ordinality, of the latent classification is inferred from the actual (in the case of SIZE and CONGSIZE) or theoretical (in the case of POLITY) ordinality of the variables from which it is derived. As a little thought would lead one to expect, tests of models having greater than three latent classes did not show the same pattern of ordered variation across all of the $n > 3$ latent classes. With only three latent classes, sufficient restrictions to formally test the ordinality (or scalability) of the latent classes lead to models with no degrees of freedom, and thus whose goodness of fit cannot be assessed.
5. This number includes approximately 20 ethnic Orthodox groups that are not generally considered Protestant, and other groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, whose Protestantism is often contended. My goal was to be as inclusive as possible; those using the classification are free to ignore or exclude any group they wish.
6. SPSS syntax code to categorize denominations on the GSS by RELCENT can be downloaded from [deleted to preserve anonymity for review].

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TABLE 1

Fit of Latent Structure Models
for centralization indicators of Protestant denominations.

Model	Hypothesis	Goodness-of-fit chi-square	Likelihood ratio chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	P-value
1	Independence	131.2	106.5	8	<.001
2	Polity exactly indicates centralization	16.3	17.5	6	< .01
3	Cong. size exactly indicates centralization	14.9	16.3	6	< .02
4	3 unrestricted latent classes	2.9	3.6	2	> .15

Note: In these classes of models, as opposed to regression-type models, a p-value **higher** than the alpha level reflects a chi-square which is not significant relative to random error, and thus indicates an acceptable fit of model to data. P-values given are for the likelihood ratio chi-square.

Table 2

Parameter Estimates for the preferred model (Model 4)

LATENT CLASS PROPORTIONS
(Proportion of respondents in each latent class)

1 = .543
2 = .283
3 = .174

CONDITIONAL PROBABILITIES:
(Probability of observed variable response given latent class membership)

Variable: Class	Latent Class 1	Latent Class 2	Latent Class 3
SIZE: Small	.8377	.1651	.5226
SIZE: Large	.1623	.8349	.4774
CONG. SIZE: Small	.7569	.1499	.0179
CONG. SIZE: Medium	.2431	.7870	.2095
CONG. SIZE: Large	.0000	.0631	.7726
POLITY: Congregational	.6178	.0769	.1961
POLITY: Presbyterian	.3392	.8848	.0000
POLITY: Episcopal	.0430	.0383	.8039

Interpretation of Variables:

POLITY - Stated or estimated denominational polity:
Congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopal

SIZE - Total membership of denomination

CONG - Average congregation size of denomination

Large probabilities (greater than .6) are in bold type.

Source: World Christian Encyclopedia

TABLE 3

Effects of Centralization (RELCENT) on Fundamentalist-Moderate-Liberal Scale (FUND)

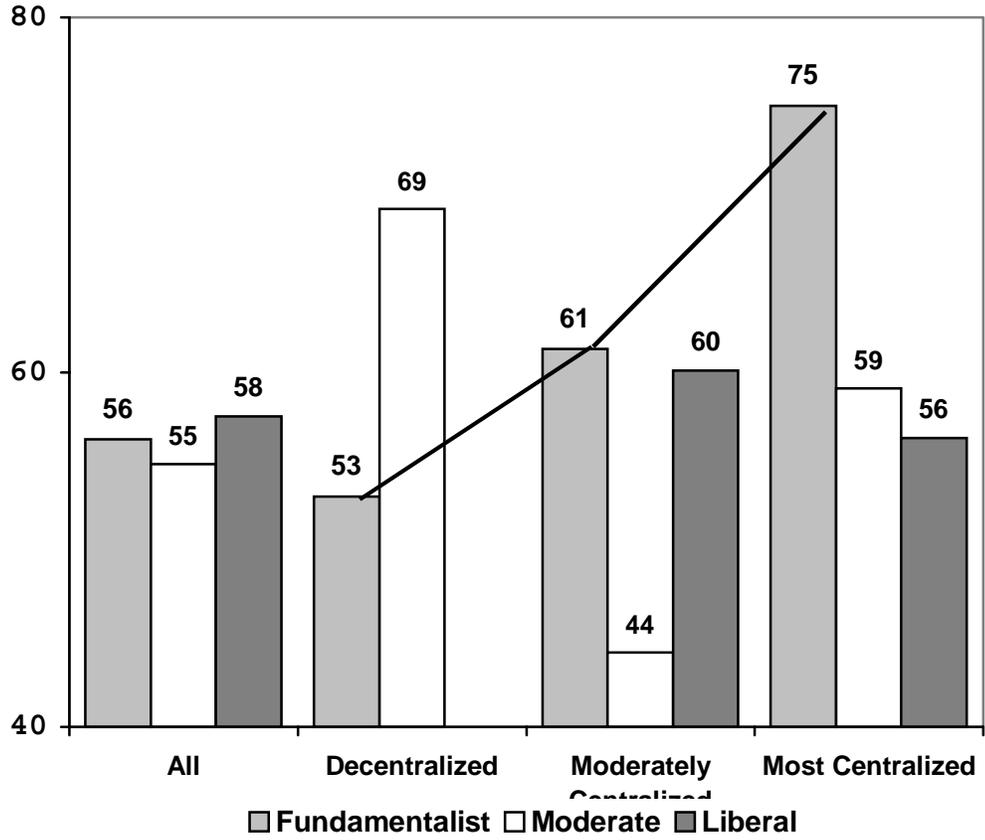
Selected GSS Items	Correlation with RELCENT	Correlation with FUND		Percent Response among Fundamentalists			
		Zero Order	Controlling for Centralization	All	Decentralized	Moderately Centralized	Most Centralized
View of the Bible (<i>% literal word of God</i>)	.20	.27	.22	57	65	56	32
Born Again (<i>% born again experience</i>)	.24	.27	.21	64	75	66	42
Abortion if health endangered (<i>% oppose</i>)	-.13	-.13	-.09	13	18	12	8
Church Member (<i>% who are members</i>)	-.11	--	--	70	60	73	85
Female Clergy (<i>% oppose</i>)	--	-.30	-.34	53	40	55	86
Death Penalty (<i>% approve</i>)	-.07	-.06	-.03	72	70	77	89
Political Party (<i>% Republican</i>)	.10	.13	.10	30	27	29	48
2000 Presidential Vote (<i>% for Bush</i>)	--	--	--	56	53	61	75
Church Attendance (<i>% weekly or more</i>)	-.09	-.15	-.11	28	48	35	54
Switcher (<i>% who have switched</i>)	-.04	.09	.11	28	41	26	30
Prayer in Schools (<i>% "Yes, definitely"</i>)	.26	.24	.16	58	71	84	26
Premarital Sex (<i>% "Always wrong"</i>)	.14	.18	.13	44	53	43	55

All correlations shown are significant at .01.

Source: GSS 1972-2002, only Protestants reporting a specific denomination (n=12,108)

Figure 1

Percent voting for Bush in 2000
by religious fundamentalism and centralization of authority



Source: GSS 2002, Protestants reporting a specific denomination only

APPENDIX A

A classification of religious groups on the dimension of centralization of organizational authority (RELCENT). The categories are: Decentralized, Moderately Centralized, and Most Centralized. The classification frame is from the World Christian Encyclopedia (1982), excluding groups with 4,000 or fewer members.

Decentralized

Church of God in Christ
Greek Orthodox AD of N & S America
Orthodox Church in America
Assemblies of God
Church of the Nazarene
Church of God (Cleveland)
United Pentecostal Church
Armenian Church of North America
Polish National Catholic Ch of America
National Assoc of Free Will Baptists
Church of God (Anderson)
Independent Fundamental Chs of America
Armenian Apostolic Church of America
Mennonite Church of North America
Christian & Missionary Alliance
American Baptist Association
Antiochan Orth Christian AD New York
Church of God (Queen's Village)
Salvation Army
American Carpatho-Russian OGC Ch
International Pentecostal Holiness Ch
Primitive Baptists
Wesleyan Church
Serbian Orth Ch in the USA & Canada
General Assoc of General Baptists
United Baptist Church
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Church of God of Prophecy
Christian Growth Ministries
United Holy Church of America

Ch of Our Lord JC of Apostolic Faith
Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
Triumph the Church & Kingdom of God in Christ
Christian Brethren (Open)
Presbyterian Church in America
Churches of God in North America, GE
General Conference Mennonite Church
Friends General Conference
Apostolic Overcoming Holy Ch of God
Bible Way Churches of Our Lord JC WW
United House of Prayer for All People
Assemblies of God (Spanish)
United Fundamentalist Church
Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ
Open Bible Standard Churches
United Brethren in Christ
Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in JC
Evangelical Friends Alliance
Old Order Amish Mennonite Church
Free Christian Zion Church of Christ
Missionary Church
Original Church of God
Spiritual Science Church
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches
Spanish Christian Churches
Union American Methodist Episcopal Ch
Congregational Methodist Church
Mennonite Brethren Ch of N America
Reformed Presbyterian Ch, Evangelical Synod
Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church
American Evangelical Christian Churches
Evangelical Christian Churches
International Pentecostal Ch of Christ
Evangelical Methodist Ch in America
Calvary Grace Church of Faith
Zion Evangelistic Fellowship
Southern Methodist Church
Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Church of Christ (Holiness) USA
Evangelical Church of North America
Brethren in Christ Church
Churches of Christ in Christian Union
Christian Church of North America

Church of the Living God
Calvary Pentecostal Church
Separate Baptists in Christ
Independent Assemblies of God
Old Order & Wisler Mennonite
Christian Brethren (Exclusive)
Church of God in Christ, Mennonite
First Congregational Methodist Church
Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Hutterian Brethren
Christian Union of America
National Spiritualist Assoc of Chs
Friends Yearly Meetings (Unaffiliated)
Church of God (Seventh-Day) (Denver)
American Rescue Workers
Seventh Day Baptist General Conference
Church of God by Faith
Pillar of Fire
Reformed Baptists
Congregational Holiness Church
Bible Presbyterian Church
Elim Assemblies
Independent Spiritualist Association
International Evangelism
Apostolic Faith Mission
Mennonites (unaffiliated)
Reformed Presbyterian Ch of North A
Old German Baptist Brethren
Latin American Council of Chr Chs
Assembly of Christian Churches

Moderately Centralized

Southern Baptist Convention
United Methodist Church
National Baptist Convention, USA
United Presbyterian Church in the USA
National Baptist Convention of America
Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental)
Lutheran Church in America
United Church of Christ
Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

American Baptist Ch in the USA
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
African Methodist Episcopal Ch
Christian Churches & Chs of Christ
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Ch
Presbyterian Church in the US
Baptist Bible Fellowship International
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Conservative Baptist Assoc of America
Church of God in Christ International
Reformed Church in America
General Assoc of Regular Baptist Chs
Baptist Missionary Assoc of America
Church of the Brethren
Unitarian Universalist Association
Christian Reformed Church
Free Methodist Church of North America
Pentecostal Church of God in America
Baptist General Conference
United Free Will Baptist Church
International Ch of the Foursquare Gospel
Congregational Christian Churches
Evangelical Free Church of America
Friends United Meeting
Evangelical Covenant Church of America
National Baptist Ev LSS Assembly USA
Christian Congregation
North American Baptist General Conf
National Fellowship of Brethren Chs
Evangelical Congregational Church
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
Conservative Congr Christian Conf
Brethren Church (Ashland, Ohio)
Primitive Methodist Church, USA
Armenian Ev Union of Churches
Apostolic Christian Church of America
Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church
Hungarian Reformed Church in America
Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal Ch
Midwest Congr Christian Fellowship
Bethel Baptist Assembly

Most Centralized

Episcopal Church in the USA
Church of Jesus C of Latter-day Saints
American Lutheran Church
Reorganized Ch of JC of L-d Saints
International Gen Assembly of Spiritualists
Albanian Orth Archdiocese in America
Nat David Spiritual Temple of Christ
Russian Orth Ch Outside of Russia
North American Old Roman Catholic Ch
Old Roman Catholic Ch (English Rite)
Romanian Orth Episcopate of America
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America
Russian Orth Ch in the Americas, PE
Churches of God (Holiness)
Antiochan Orth Archdiocese of Toledo
The Way International
Progressive Spiritual Church
Turkish Orthodox Church in America
Byelorussian Autocephalic Orthodox Ch
United States (USA) Episcopal Church
Cathedral of Tomorrow
African Orthodox Ch