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ABSTRACT
                Data supportive of the pattern that liberal
theological views are associated with liberal political and social
stands were presented in this report. The explanation of this pattern
was pursued both analytically and empirically. Data were collected by
interviews with 382 rural ministers from a random sample of Missouri
townships and 150 ministers in the city of Springfield, Missouri. The
dimensions analyzed were theological position, social-political
perspectives, patterns of professional involvement, perspectives on
ministerial activity, social origins of the minister, and
organization features (characteristics of congregations served).
Major findings were an association between theological liberalism and
liberal-permissive views on a wide range of issues; that theological
persuasions are linked to social origins, modes of professional
training and practice, perspectives toward the ministry, and
organizational settings; and that denominational affiliation is an
important delineator of organization sets. (PS)

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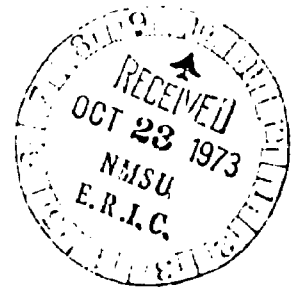
Theological Stance and the Positions of
Pastors on Public Issues:  Social and
Organizational Contexts

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Theological Stance and the Positions of
Pastors on Public Issues:  Social and
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A growing and reasonably consistent body of research evidence in-

dicates that theological orientations of ministers and laymen are re-

lated to political and social attitudes.  Generally, liberal theological

views are associated with liberal political and social stands.  (See

Johnson, 1966, 1967; Hadden, 1970).[1]  In the present study we report

additional data supportive of this previously observed pattern.  Further,

we have pursued both analytically and empirically the problem of ex-

plaining this pattern.


On the Connection between Theology and
Social - Political Orientations

The discovery of consistent relationships between theological stance

and attitudes on social and political views raises important analytical

questions.  Specifically, what is the causal linkage between these factors?

Is the connection to be explained historically, i.e., in terms of the

unique social histories of specific denominations?  Is the linkage psycho-

logical, e.g., involving a principle of cognitive consistency?  Is the

linkage structural, i.e., tied to the structural locations of ministers?

Probably a thoroughgoing explanation will require attention to all three

of these possibilities and to the connections between them.  It may be

found, for example, that theological and socio-political liberalism are

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[1]Other studies supportive of this view but using different approaches
to measurement include Moberg (1970), Winter (1970), and Scanzoni (1965).

grounded in certain structural features (of denominations and congregations) which are, in turn, historically rooted. These structural features may, in turn, define consistent and appropriate combinations of views.

In the present paper we will explore a number of potentially explanatory factors. These include the organizational features and locations of congregations, the professional orientation of ministers, the social backgrounds of ministers, and the characteristics of denominations. We examine the effects of each set of factors upon the theological and social-political positions of ministers. In addition, we consider the effects of controlling some of these factors upon the relationship between theological and social-political orientations. Generally, our results show that the relationship reported in previous studies persists even when other major variables are controlled. Nevertheless, the results suggest the entanglement of that relationship in a complex matrix of interlocking structural and biographical factors.

## Study Description

In 1967 we conducted an interview survey regarding religious organizations in Missouri. Included in the survey were 382 ministers of rural churches from a random sample of townships and 150 ministers of churches in the city of Springfield, Missouri, a city of more than 100,000 population at the time of the survey. The rural ministers are drawn from the same sample of townships included in a 1952 survey (Hepple, 1957). The 1967 study was conceived in part as a re-study of the 1952 sample. The Springfield data were intended to provide a basis for rural-urban comparisons. We intended to collect data on all Springfield churches,

not a sample; and we largely succeeded. Usable interviews were conducted for 162 churches, but 12 did not have ministers at the time of the survey and are not included in the present report. The study included two interview schedules, one regarding the church, the other concerning the minister. When a minister was available, he was the interviewee for both schedules. Thus, the data reported in the present report were provided entirely by ministers.

The dimensions analyzed here and their operational indicators are as follows:

1. Theological Position: Responses to a simple question asking the minister to assign himself to one of four theological designations: fundamentalist, conservative, neo-orthodox, liberal. In the data analysis the liberal and neo-orthodox positions were combined. Although our measure of this dimension is simplistic, it is quite similar to measures used in a number of other studies (Johnson, 1966, 1967; Hadden, 1970). Furthermore, a similar measure has been shown to correlate closely with scores from a more complex multi-item index (Stark and Foster, 1970).

2. Social-Political Perspectives: Questions regarding a number of distinct dimensions were employed.

   a) Moral Concerns: Expressions of support, opposition, or neutrality on a series of issues of individual morality which have been matters of concern to some religious groups. These include Sunday closing laws, sale of alcoholic beverages,

smoking, social dancing, mixed swimming, and social drinking. Respondents chose precoded positions of support, opposition. or neutrality on each issue.

b) <u>Social Concerns</u>: Expressions of support, opposition, or neutrality on a series of social issues which have been matters of concern for some religious groups, including: Federal aid to education, capital punishment, racial integration, the poverty program, the Vietnam War, and foreign aid. Again, respondents chose precoded positions of support, opposition, or neutrality on each issue.

The items included in the Moral Concerns and Social Concerns dimensions were part of a single checklist in the interview schedule. Subsequently, these items were separated into the above categories on an a priori conceptual basis. Then to resolve any doubts about the dimensions, factor analysis was employed. The results of that procedure indicated that the division of items listed above was the best two-factor grouping.[2] Thus, we are confident that the Moral Concerns/Social Concerns division is well founded empirically. We have employed each item as a separate indicator in the present report, rather than forming indexes.

The inclusion of the Moral Concerns dimension provides a useful reference point for analyzing Social Concerns. This will be useful in evaluating some of the inferences of Johnson

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[2]The only problem with the two-factor grouping is that "racial integration" tends to fall out as a separate item, not clearly aligned with either set.

(1967) whose data did not include Moral Concerns.

c) <u>Political Position</u>: The minister's self-designation as liberal

or conservative within pre-coded categories.

e) <u>Voting Preference</u>: Self-reported vote in the 1964 presiden-

tial election.

3. <u>Patterns of Professional Involvement and Practice</u>:

a) Education: The minister's years of formal education.

b) Part-time vs. full-time involvement in the ministry, by

self-designation.

c) Career orientation as indicated by continuous service in

the ministry since the first pastorate.

d) Average annual income: These data were used to indicate

the degree of commitment on the part of the minister and

his congregation to the maintenance of a professional, fully

engaged ministerial role.

4. <u>Perspectives on Ministerial Activity</u>: The minister's attitudes

and expectations regarding the ministerial role, including:

a) His perception of his denomination's expectations for the

minister with respect to education and full-time engagement

in the ministry;

b) His satisfaction with his present charge and aspirations for

mobility to larger communities and congregations;

c) His attitudes toward the ministry as indicated by responses

to a multi-item professionalization index (specific items

reported in appendix).

5. Social Origins of the Minister:

   a) Rearing in Missouri or adjacent states versus rearing out-
      side these states;

   b) Rearing in rural areas versus rearing in urban areas;

   c) Father's occupation, blue-collar versus white-collar.

6. Organization Features:  The characteristics of the congregation(s)
   served by the minister:

   a) Organization Set:  Church-sect identification of the denomina-
      tion employed here as an indication of the organization set
      toward which the congregation is oriented.  The assignment
      of denominations was based on the work of Clark (1949).
      Some empirical justification for the treatment of church-
      sect as an indication of organization set may be found in
      a previously published paper from this study (Benson and
      Hassinger, 1972).

   b) Organization Size:  The number of members in a minister's
      charge, which often includes more than one congregation.

   c) Organization Units:  The number of congregations included
      in the minister's charge.

## Research Findings

### Theology and Socio-Political Orientations:

In the presentation of findings, we begin with the basic relation-
ship between theological position and socio-political perspectives.  We
present this relationship with a rural-urban control.  The data in Tables
1 and 2 generally confirm expectations based on previous studies.  That is,

liberal theological persuasion is associated with liberal responses to social-political issues. This pattern prevails both in the rural sample and in the urban population.

The data in Table 1 show that on political position (voting preference and political persuasion), those of liberal theological orientation (which includes liberal and neo-orthodox self-designations) are clearly differentiated from the conservatives and fundamentalists. The theological liberals were far more likely to be political liberals and to report voting for

(Table 1 here)

Johnson in 1964. The theological conservatives and fundamentalists appear reasonably similar in their political conservatism, i.e., clearly differentiated from the theological liberals but not from each other. For example, the percentages voting for Johnson in 1964 were rural fundamentalists - 48%, rural conservatives - 51%, and rural liberals - 78%.

A similar pattern prevails for urban ministers. Thus, the effects of theological persuasion hold both for urban and for rural ministers.

There are some weak but interesting rural-urban differences within theological categories. Generally, the rural ministers are slightly more liberal politically than their urban counterparts. For example, within the theological conservative category 51% of the rural ministers voted for Johnson while only 38% of the urban ministers did. We suspect this pattern is related to denominational differences since sect-groups are much more common in the urban sample than in the rural sample.

The data on specific social issues fit the pattern developed above for political preference and voting (Table 2). Again, theological liberals

are more likely than theological conservatives and fundamentalists to
adopt a liberal stance on social issues. The theological conservatives
and fundamentalists are quite similar in their views. Rural-urban loca-
tion does not alter the basic relationship between theological position

(Table 2 here)

and stance on social issues. In fact, on these issues no consistent pattern
of rural-urban differences may be discerned. This basic pattern of findings
may be illustrated by considering one representative issue, support for
the poverty program. In the rural sample the percentages supporting the
program are as follows: Fundamentalist--46%; conservative--42%; and liberals--
78%. Comparable figures for the urban ministers are: Fundamentalist--38%;
conservative--47%; liberal--71%. This basic pattern prevails for federal
aid to education, capital punishment, the Vietnam War, and foreign aid.

A somewhat different pattern characterizes the data on racial inte-
gration. Here, a clear-cut gradation of opinion appears. The theological
conservatives, in both the rural sample and the urban population, fall
between the fundamentalists and the liberals. The percentages supporting
racial integration are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural fundamentalists | 62% | Urban fundamentalists | 56% |
| Rural conservatives | 78% | Urban conservatives · | 82% |
| Rural liberals | 93% | Urban liberals | 89% |

It should be noted in passing that a majority of every sub-group expressed
support for racial integration, and only the fundamentalists failed to
record a substantial majority in support. This finding is consistent with
Hadden's argument that the clergy is generally supportive of racial inte-

gration (Hadden, 1970). Although we have no data on laymen, we suspect

that their support for racial integration would be considerably lower

than recorded by the ministers, as Hadden reported in his study.

Our data on moral issues show marked differences between theological

categories. On every issue the theological liberals adopt a more liberal

permissive stance than the other two theological groups. The fundamental-

ists are the most conservative, least permissive on these issues. The

theological conservatives are consistently between the other two groups,

on some issues nearer the fundamentalists, on others nearer the liberals.

As an example, consider the data on dancing. The percentages opposing

dancing in the rural sample are: fundamentalists--86%, conservatives--

64%, liberals--34%. Comparable figures for the urban ministers are:

fundamentalist--92%, conservative--69%, and liberal--17%. Similar pat-

terns prevail for the other moral issues--Sunday closing laws, sale of

alcoholic beverages, smoking, mixed swimming, and social drinking. Although

rural-urban differences within theological categories sometimes occur,

we have been unable to discern any consistent patterns in these differences.

Comparing the social issues to the moral issues, we find one patterned

difference worthy of emphasis. The theological conservatives are not clearly

differentiated from the fundamentalists on social issues (or on political

preferences); but they are differentiated on the moral issues. Thus, on

moral issues the three theological positions are arranged on a graduated

conservative-moderate-liberal continuum, while on social issues a conserva-

tive-liberal dichotomy more nearly fits the data. This suggests that moral

concerns may be more closely and intrinsically linked to theological per-

suasion than social issues. The latter are crucial only for the theological

liberals. Johnson (1967) has argued that social issues have been crucial to the development of theological liberalism and to the self-definitions of liberals. Our data seem to support and amplify that contention.

To this point, we have extablished that a consistent and substantial relationship between theological position and social-political perspectives is present on our data. Specifically, theological liberalism is associated with liberal political views, social concerns, and moral orientations. This pattern prevails both for the rural sample and for the urban population. On social issues and political persuasion a sharp break was observed between theological liberals, on the one hand, and theological conservatives and fundamentalists, on the other hand. On moral issues, a more graduated pattern of differences was obs_rved.

The Social Contexts of Theological Positions

We turn next to an examination of the relationships of theological position to several categories of contextual variables. Our intent here is to discover the types of social settings within which certain theological orientations are rooted. Knowledge of these social contexts will assist us in the interpretation of the relationship between theology and socio-political perspectives.

The Social Characteristics of Ministers. First, we consider the relationship of the minister's theological position to several aspects of his social background, specifically, his father's occupation, his geographical origins, and the size of place in which he was reared. We consider each of these with a rural-urban control.

As shown in Table 3, there is a relationship between theological position and father's occupation. Theological liberals are more likely than conservatives, and conservatives are more likely than fundamentalists, to have had fathers in white-collar occupations. This relationship prevails both for urban and for rural ministers, even though at every theological position, the urban ministers are more likely than the rural to have had fathers in white-collar occupations.

(Table 3 here)

Place of birth is slightly related to theological position. Both for the urban and for the rural ministers, the theological liberals are somewhat more likely than conservatives and fundamentalists to have been born outside of Missouri. (see Table 4) For example, for the urban ministers the percentages born in Missouri are: liberals--34%, conservatives--47%, and fundamentalists--49%. At every theological position, the urban ministera are slightly less likely than the rural to have been born in Missouri, and slightly more likely to have been born outside of Missouri and contiguous states.

(Table 4 here)

The data on size of place in which the minister was reared are shown in Table 5. Generally, the theological liberals are most likely and the fundamentalists least likely to have come from urban places (2500+ population).

(Table 5 here)

This pattern is clear-cut for the urban ministers and only slightly modified in the rural sample (where conservatives are as likely as liberals to have urban origins). For the urban ministers, the percentages coming from urban

places are: liberals--66%, conservatives--51%, and fundamentalists--43%. Not surprisingly, the urban ministers are much more likely than their rural counterparts to have had urban origins.

Another interesting feature of these data should be mentioned. The fundamentalists display higher rates of mobility fr     ural to urban locations and lower rates of mobility from urban to rural locations than do the conservatives and liberals. Specifically, 44% of the urban fundamentalists came from rural areas (less than 200 population), while the corresponding figures for conservatives and liberals are 37% and 31% respectively. In addition, only 17% of the rural fundamentalists came from urban areas, but 33% of the rural conservatives and rural liberals did so. These data suggest the effects of denominational organization upon geographical mobility. The mobility of fundamentalists from rural to urban areas is likely tied to normal rural-to-urban migration character- istic of the entire population of the state. Hence, their low rate of reverse movement from urban to rural locations is also explicable. The conservatives and liberals, by contrast, display a more complex geographic mobility pattern with substantial number moving in each direction. Their pattern, we suspect, results in part from the mediation of a more complex denominational organization in which occupational mobility from church to church affects geographical mobility from urban to rural and from rural to urban. Thus, for the liberals and conservatives career mobility may often involve starting in small rural churches and moving to larger ones in urban settings. For fundamentalists this pattern may be much less common. This reasoning is compatible with other data on minister's ages at the time of the survey. Among liberals and conservatives, the urban ministers

are generally older than rural ones; but for fundamentalists no such age break is observed. The percentages of ministers less than 35 years old are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural liberals | 30% | Urban liberals | 11% |
| Rural conservatives | 30% | Urban conservatives | 10% |
| Rural fundamentalists | 19% | Urban fundamentalists | 19% |

Summing up then, differences in the social origins of ministers appear to be systematically related to their theological positions. Generally theological liberals are more likely than others to come from higher social ranks, from urban areas, and from locations outside of Missouri. Theological fundamentalists are least likely to have these origins and conservatives generally are between the other t..o groups except on Missouri versus other origins where their position approximates that of the fundamentalists. In addition, the conservatives and liberals display more complex mobility patterns between rural and urban areas.

The Professional Characteristics of Ministers. We next consider variations in patterns of involvement and participation in the ministry. Here we examine the possibility that theological positions are associated with patterns of professional practice.

A fairly close relationship between theological position and education is shown in Table 5. Theological liberals are more likely than conservatives and conservatives are more likely than fundamentalists to report some education beyond college. This pattern holds both for the urban and for the rural ministers, even though at every theological position urban ministers are more likely than rural to have had post-college training.

Percentages reporting such training are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural liberals | 51% | Urban liberals | 74% |
| Rural conservatives | 39% | Urban conservatives | 55% |
| Rural fundamentalists | 8% | Urban fundamentalists | 11% |

As shown in Table 6, the main break between conservatives and liberals occurs between "some college" and post college." The fundamentalists are distinguished from others by particularly large numbers reporting less than a college education (62% in rural churches, 38% in urban churches).

There are intriguing patterns of rural-urban stratification within theological categories. Generally, urban ministers report higher education levels than rural ministers. But, the rural-urban break-point varies. For liberals the break between "some college" and "post college" is crucial to rural-urban differences. For conservatives each of the education levels has a substantial effect on rural-urban differences. For fundamen- talists the break between "less than college" and "some college" is critical to rural-urban differences. (See Table 6)

(Table 6 here)

The minister's career orientation is indicated by two items-- his continuous service in the ministry since his first pastorate and his part-time or full-time status in the ministry at the time of the survey. The data on continuous service (Table 7) do not show strong differences between theological persuasions. Liberals are only slightly more likely than others to report continuous service. Among the rural ministers almost no difference between conservatives and liberals was observed. For the urban ministers the percentages reporting continuous service were: liberals--71%, conservatives--69%, and fundamentalists--64%.

15

(Table 7 here)

There are substantial differences between theological positions with respect to full-time or part-time involvement. In rural areas the percentages reporting full-time involvement are: liberal--62%, conservative--54%, and fundamentalist--40%. In urban areas the conservatives have a higher rate than liberals, with percentages as follows: liberal--74%, conservative--84%, and fundamentalists--64%. Generally, urban ministers are more likely to be full-time than are rural ministers. (See Table 8)

(Table 8 here)

The income of ministers is also related to theological position, at least in urban areas. As shown in Table 9, annual family income is unrelated to theology in rural areas, but it is closely related in urban areas. In the urban setting, the percentages reporting a family income in excess of $7800 are: liberals--66%, conservative--51%, and fundamentalists--43%. Those income figures include both ministerial salaries, income from secular occupations, and earnings of other family members. Because fundamentalists are less likely to be full-time ministers and more likely to have secular occupations, these figures probably understate the salary discrepancy between churches.

(Table 9 here)

The lack of clear income separation in rural areas is probably a reflection of several conditions. The rural ministers of conservative and liberal persuasion are younger than the fundamentalists and less likely to have part-time secular occupations. As suggested earlier, the rural conservatives and liberals are more likely than fundamentalists to be in

denominations within which career mobility from small rural to large urban congregations can be expected.

Perspectives on Ministerial Activity. We consider here several kinds of information regarding the minister's subjective view of his work. These include his perception of the employment expectations of his denomination, his aspirations regarding moving to larger churches and communities, and his responses to a professionalization index.

Theological position is related to perceived expectations of the denomination. Liberals and conservatives are much more likely than fundamentalists to report that the denomination expects full-time commitment to the ministry (Table 10). Especially in the urban area, there is little difference between conservatives and liberals on this issue. Generally, at all theological positions, urban ministers are more likely to report this expectation. Similar results are obtained for the denomination's educational expectations. For example, the percentages of urban ministers reporting a high school education or less is: liberals--14%, conservatives--26%, and fundamentalists--43%.

(Table 10 here)

Three items indicate the minister's aspirations--his feeling that his present charge is insufficiently demanding of his professional skills, his desire to serve a larger congregation, and his desire to serve in a larger town. Responses to these items fall into a similar pattern which is highly suggestive of the differences in social contexts between theological persuasions. (See Table 11). The data show a consistent pattern of rural-urban differences. Generally, at all theological positions, the rural

ministers are less likely than their urban counterparts to be satisfied
with their present charge. Specifically, the rural ministers are less
likely to feel that their present charge is sufficiently demanding and are

(Table 11 here)

more likely to desire larger churches in larger towns (with one exception
to be noted below).

At first glance, theological position appears to have little relation-
ship to these aspirations. Yet, there is an interesting, although not
particularly strong, pattern of theological differences. Generally, the
difference between rural and urban preferences is greatest for theological
liberals and least for theological fundamentalists. Otherwise stated,
satisfaction level disparities between rural and urban ministers are larger
for liberals than for conservatives and larger for conservatives than for
fundamentalists. These differences are summarized below:

Percentage differences between rural and urban ministers of each
theological persuasion

|  | Liberal | Conservative | Fundamentalist |
|---|---|---|---|
| Demand of present charge | 24.5 | 24.1 | 12.3 |
| Desire for larger town | 35.4 | 27.0 | 16.5 |
| Desire for larger congregation | 17.7 | 2.5 | -4.5 |

These data support our argument that the theological persuasions are
linked to differing institutional contexts and career lines. The liberal
and conservative ministers appear to be oriented more strongly than the
fundamentalists toward career mobility within size-and location-differen-
tiated organization sets.

Finally, we report the minister's scores on a multi-item profession-
alization index. The index has little value as a scale because on some
items there was virtual unanimity in accepting or in rejecting the opinions
expressed. For present purposes we have simply computed a total score
following Likert procedures and used these scores to distinguish a particu-
larly low professionalization sub-group. The percentages low on this index
display little rural-urban variation and little difference between liberals
and conservatives. However, the fundamentalists, both urban and rural,
are clearly less professionalized than the liberals and conservatives.
In the urban setting, the percentages low in the professionalization index
are liberal--20%, conservative--28%, and fundamentalist--52%. For the
rural sample the comparable percentages are: liberal--22%, conservative--
27%, and fundamentalist--44%.

In summary, ministers of different theological positions display
quite varied perspectives toward ministerial work. Theological liberals
are most likely and fundamentalists least likely to perceive profession-
like expectations on the part of their denominations. Similarly, liberals
are most likely to show evidence of an orientation toward career mobility
toward larger congregations and communities. In addition, liberals and
conservatives generally score higher than fundamentalists on a profession-
alization of attitudes index. These findings are generally consistent
with our emerging argument that each theological position is linked to
a different institutional context.

Organization Features. The final set of variables to be considered
relates to characteristics of the congregation served by the minister.

We consider the denominational affiliation of the congregation (here
divided into two broad categories of church and sect), the number of mem-
bers in the minister's charge (including all congregations in the case of
"yoked parishes"), and the number of congregations in each charge. These
data support and elaborate the argument that theological positions are
linked inexorably to institutional contexts.

As shown in Table 12, there is a relationship between theological
position and church-sect affiliation. Generally, theological liberals and
conservatives are much more likely than fundamentalists to have a church-
type affiliation. These differences are somewhat stronger in the urban
setting than in the rural areas. These data cut two ways. On the one hand,
they clearly show a linkage between theology and denomination, certainly
not a surprising discovery. On the other hand, the data show the inade-
quacy of a simple church-sect classification to capture the differences.
In the latter connection the urban-rural differences take on greater signifi-
cance. In the rural sample conservatives and liberals are equally likely
to have church-type affiliations, and fully 42 percent of the fundamentalists
have such affiliations as well. By contrast, in the urban setting there is
a clear separation of liberals and conservatives, and only a small minority
of the fundamentalists (14%) have church-type affiliations. These data
suggest that in the urban setting, with its finer social rank distinctions
and more abundant resources (both numerical and financial), a closer fit
between theological views and congregation characteristics is achieved. The
relatively large number of church-type fundamentalists in rural areas is
an intriguing finding. These individuals may well be trapped career-wise
and unable to move toward larger, urban congregations.

The data on church membership show that conservatives and liberals are

more likely than fundamentalists to serve large churches (Table 13). This

is true both for urban and for rural ministers. Also, at every theological

position the urban ministers are more likely than the rural to serve large

congregations. There is no clear separation between conservatives and lib-

erals in either setting. The percentages serving congregations with memberships

(Table 13 here)

in excess of 180 members are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural liberals | 41% | Urban liberals | 71% |
| Rural conservatives | 42% | Urban conservatives | 67% |
| Rural fundamentalists | 18% | Urban fundamentalists | 37% |

It should be noted that the membership figures represent total numbers

served by the minister in his present charge and that many of the rural

charges consist of multiple congregations. Thus, the figures reported

here understate the difference in size between rural and urban congrega-

tions. The dimensions of this complication become more apparent in suc-

ceeding paragraphs.

The urban ministers are rarely involved in multi-congregation charges.

Many of the rural ministers, however, do serve such charges. As shown in

Table 14, there are systematic differences between theological positions.

Fifty-five percent of the rural liberals, 33 percent of the rural conserva-

tives, and only 24 percent of the rural fundamentalists serve such multi-

(Table 14 here)

congregation units. These data suggest that liberals and, to a lesser

degree, conservatives are encased in denominations possessing a degree of

centralization (to construct or to facilitate yoked parishes) and a com-
mitment to the maintenance of a professional ministerial role. Otherwise
stated, some denominations are more committed to and capable of maintaining
a professionalized ministry in rural areas even where doing so requires
grouping congregations into combined charges. Theological liberals are
apparently affiliated to a considerable degree with denominations of this
type.

Summing up, there are substantial differences between theological cate-
gories in types of organizational settings. The liberals and conservatives
are generally separated from the fundamentalists on these matters. The con-
servatives and liberals are much more likely than the fundamentalists to
be affiliated with church-type denominations, to serve larger charges, and
to hold multi-congregation charges. On this basis, it seems reasonable to
infer that theological positions are linked to the structural commitments
of denominations.

## Discussion

Our findings regarding the relationship between theological position
and social-moral-political perspectives of ministers confirm and extend
arguments advanced in previous studies by Johnson (1966, 1967) and Hadden
(1970). We found an association between theological liberalism and liberal-
permissive views on a wide range of issues. Our findings extend those in
previous studies by including a concern with issues of personal morality and
by reporting separate responses for fundamentalists. Generally, the data
show that theological conservatives and fundamentalists hold similarly
conservative views on social issues and political persuasion. Theological
liberals proved to be much more liberal than the other two groups on those

issues. By contrast, on traditional moral issues (such as dancing, drinking, etc.) a clear gradation of opinion was observed, with theological liberals adopting a more permissive stance, conservatives holding a moderate position, and fundamentalists defending a restrictive position.

Johnson (1967) explained his findings partly by reference to the distinctive concerns giving rise historically to specific theological positions. He argued that the high level of concern of liberals with social issues reflected the distinctive, historically rooted thrust of the liberal theological movement toward addressing this-wordly social problems. This idea obviously has merit as one part of an explanation.

In the present paper, however, we have explored a different set of explanatory possibilities. Specifically, we explored the social and organizational sources of differing theological positions. In this analysis, theological position forms a connecting link between social-moral-political perspectives, on the one hand, and social structural contexts on the other hand. Our intent is not to "explain away" the connection between theology and social-moral-political orientations. Indeed, our data show that connection to survive statistical controls for other factors such as urban-rural location, minister's education, part-time vs. full-time involvement, and church-sect affiliation (the latter three controls not reported in this paper). Rather, our intent is to understand the social contexts associated with different theological positions. Thus, we focus attention on the social origins, work orientations, and organizational settings of ministers. This research problem is similar analytically to one posed by Hadden (1970), Hadden and Rymph (1966), and Demerath and Hammond (1969: 197-232). They were

concerned with explaining the involvement of ministers in civil rights activism, and they argued that certain structural locations permitted or facilitated such involvement. Similarly, our problem is to understand the social contexts and structural locations within which specific theological positions are grounded.

Our data suggest that theological persuasions are linked to social origins, modes of professional training and practice, perspectives toward the ministry (i.e., professionalization, career orientation), and organizational settings (i.e., characteristics of the charge). Theological liberalism appears to be associated with higher status, more cosmopolitan, more urban origins; with higher levels of education and professional modes of involvement in the ministry; with profession-like perspectives toward the ministry, and orientations toward career mobility; and with larger, more established forms of congregational and denominational organization. Most of these characteristics apply with somewhat less force to theological conservatives, leading us to conclude that the conservatives are closer organizationally to the liberals than to the fundamentalists. Generally, the fundamentalists are quite far removed from the liberals in all of the above characteristics.[3]

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[3]These data indirectly support but also suggest specification of an argument by two of the present authors (Benson and Dorsett, 1971:143) that professionalization of the ministerial role is associated with secularization of congregations (i.e., their involvement in social and political issues). The present data suggest that the connection between professionalization and secularization may be mediated by theological stance. Also, the possibility must now be considered that the content of professional training (i.e., inculcating a theological orientation) varies enough to generate a more complex relationship between professionalization and secularization.

It appears, then, that liberals, and, to a lesser extent, conservatives are involved in organization sets (denominations or sub-units of denominations) characterized by size and location differentiated charges and at least a minimal degree of centralization of decision-making (based either on authority or on the control of incentives). They are drawn into these interorganizational networks from higher status, more cosmopolitan, more urban origins. They enter the networks at least partly on the basis of educational achievement. Once in the network·, they anticipate and construct career lines within the stratified, rural-urban differentiated set of congregations. Thus, for example, an ideal-typical career pattern for a theological liberal might be as follows: origins in an urban, middle class family (possibly outside the state of Missouri); completion of college and seminary education; service in a small, rural charge composed of several yoked congregations; movement to progressively larger, single-congregation charges in urban areas. This career pattern is somewhat less probable for conservatives than for liberals. It is highly improbable for fundamentalists.

Denominational affiliation is obviously an important delineator of organization sets. However, we suspect that there are divergent organization sets within some denominations. Thus, theological differences within denominations may be integrally related to divergent career lines. Within some such sets theological position and the associated package of social-moral-political views may be prerequisites to success and may constitute "codes" for social class position, educational background, and professional orientation. Informal norms and social linkages then may guide the minister into the career channels deemed "appropriate" for him. Some denominations

may have multiple "sets", each with its own differentiated charges and in-
formal linkages. Data indirectly supportive of such an argument have been
reported by Wimberly (1971), Moberg (1970), and Balswick and Faulkner (1970).
Thus, there may be alternative but minimally intersecting career lines.
Other denominations may have only one dominant or normative set, exclusion
from which is tantamount to career blockage. For example, the fundamen-
talist minister in a liberal-leaning denomination may be forever consigned
to small, rural congregations. Similarly, the liberal minister in a
denomination dominated by a conservative set may have little chance of
upward career mobility unless he changes denominations.

Our findings suggest, then, that there are important differences in
the social contexts and structural locations associated with theological
and social-moral-political perspectives. The social contexts and struc-
tural locations are probably important in generating and sustaining
coherent "packages" of perspectives. Explanations of such perspectives
in terms of historical origins or in terms of the presumed internal con-
sistency of idea systems need not be set aside. Rather such explanations
must be supplemented by reference to the immediate social linkages and
structural locations through which such perspectives are constructed and
sustained.

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Table 1: Relationship between theological position and two indicators of political orientation of ministers, by rural-urban location.

| Political Orientation | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| | f % | f % | f % | f % | f % | f % |
| I. Self-designated political position | | | | | | |
| liberal | 92(82.1) | 26(74.3) | 81(22.3) | 5(10.0) | 37(31.9) | 13(21.7) |
| conservative | 20(17.9) | 9(25.7) | 108(77.7) | 45(90.0) | 79(68.1) | 47(78.3) |
| N | 112 | 35 | 139 | 50 | 116 | 60 |
| II. Vote for President in 1964 | | | | | | |
| Johnson | 71(78.0) | 24(77.4) | 60(51.3) | 17(37.8) | 39(48.1) | 17(37.8) |
| Goldwater | 20(22.0) | 7(22.6) | 57(48.7) | 28(62.2) | 42(51.9) | 28(62.2) |
| N* | 91 | 31 | 117 | 45 | 81 | 45 |

*Totals in this column are low because some voted for candidates other than Johnson or Goldwater or did not vote at all.

Table 2: Relationship between theological position and positions on social issues and moral issues, by rual-urban location

| | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| **I. Social Issues** | | | | | | |
| % supporting federal aid to education | 80.2 | 71.4 | 62.9 | 62.7 | 63.9 | 63.5 |
| % opposing capital punishment | 62.9 | 68.6 | 35.2 | 27.5 | 32.8 | 22.2 |
| % supporting racial integration | 93.1 | 88.6 | 78.3 | 82.4 | 62.2 | 55.6 |
| % supporting poverty program | 77.6 | 71.4 | 41.9 | 47.1 | 46.2 | 38.1 |
| % opposing war in Vietnam | 40.9 | 48.6 | 23.1 | 13.7 | 21.0 | 22.2 |
| % supporting foreign aid | 75.0 | 65.7 | 54.5 | 49.0 | 50.0 | 50.8 |
| **II. Moral Issues** | | | | | | |
| % supporting Sunday closing laws | 56.9 | 31.4 | 69.9 | 70.6 | 75.6 | 79.4 |
| % opposing sale of alcoholic beverages | 65.5 | 57.1 | 81.1 | 80.4 | 93.3 | 92.1 |
| % opposing smoking | 44.0 | 57.1 | 68.5 | 80.4 | 82.2 | 90.5 |
| % opposing social dancing | 33.9 | 17.1 | 63.6 | 68.6 | 85.7 | 92.1 |
| % opposing mixed swimming | 7.8 | 11.4 | 23.9 | 29.4 | 43.7 | 63.5 |
| % opposing social drinking | 70.4 | 68.6 | 84.6 | 82.4 | 96.6 | 95.2 |

Table 3: The relationship between father's occupation and minister's theological position by rural-urban location

| Father's Occupation | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
| white collar occupation | 33(28.4) | 18(51.4) | 31(21.7) | 17(33.3) | 9(7.6) | 10(15.9) |
| blue collar occupation | 82(70.7) | 17(48.6) | 110(76.9) | 33(64.7) | 109(91.6) | 52(82.5) |
| N | 115 | 35 | 141 | 50 | 118 | 62 |

Table 4: The relationship between place of birth (by states) and minister's theological position, by rural-urban location

| | Theological Position | | | | | |
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| Place of Birth | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Missouri | 55(47.4) | 12(34.3) | 83(58.0) | 24(47.1) | 76(63.9) | 31(49.2) |
| Contiguous states | 37(31.9) | 10(28.6) | 34(23.8) | 17(33.3) | 33(27.7) | 19(30.2) |
| Other | 24(20.7) | 13(37.1) | 26(18.2) | 10(19.6) | 10(8.4) | 13(20.6) |
| N | 116 | 13 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 5: The relationship between rural-urban origins and minister's theological position, by rural-urban location (of congregation)

| Rural-Urban Origins | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
| Rural (200-) | 61(52.6) | 11(31.4) | 73(51.0) | 19(37.3) | 82(68.9) | 28(44.4) |
| Small town (200-2500) | 17(14.6) | 1(2.9) | 23(16.1) | 6(11.8) | 17(14.3) | 8(12.7) |
| Urban (2500+) | 38(32.8) | 23(65.7) | 47(32.9) | 26(51.0) | 20(16.8) | 27(42.9) |
| N | 116 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 6: The relationship between minister's education and minister's theological position, by rural-urban location (of congregation).

| Minister's Education | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
| less than college | 34(29.3) | 6(17.1) | 44(30.8) | 10(19.6) | 74(62.2) | 24(38.1) |
| some college | 23(19.8) | 3(8.6) | 43(30.1) | 13(25.5) | 36(30.2) | 32(50.8) |
| post-college | 59(50.9) | 26(74.3) | 56(39.2) | 28(54.9) | 9(7.6) | 7(11.1) |
| N | 116 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 7:  The relationship between theological position and continuous service in the ministry since the first pastorate, by rural-urban location

| | Theological | | | Position | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| Continuous Service in the Ministry | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
| yes | 92(79.3) | 25(71.4) | 105(73.4) | 35(68.6) | 87(73.1) | 40(63.5) |
| no | 24(20.7) | 10(28.6) | 38(26.6) | 16(31.4) | 32(26.9) | 23(36.5) |
| N | 116 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 8: The relationship between theological position and full-time involvement in the ministry, by rural-urban location

| | Theological Position | | | | | |
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| Full-Time Involvement | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Part-time | 45(38.8) | 9(25.7) | 65(46.1) | 8(15.7) | 71(59.7) | 23(36.5) |
| Full-time | 71(62.2) | 26(74.3) | 76(53.9) | 43(84.3) | 48(40.3) | 40(63.5) |
| N | 116 | 35 | 141 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 9: The relationship between theological position and annual family income, by rural-urban location

| Annual Family Income | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural(%) | Liberal(%) | Rural(%) | Liberal(%) | Rural(%) | Liberal(%) |
| $1,000-3,999 | 36(32.4) | 4(11.4) | 34(23.9) | 3(5.9) | 37(32.7) | 7(11.5) |
| $4,000-5,799 | 30(27.0) | 4(11.4) | 37(26.1) | 8(15.7) | 33(29.2) | 8(13.1) |
| $5,800-7,799 | 31(27.9) | 4(11.4) | 44(31.0) | 14(27.5) | 25(22.1) | 20(32.8) |
| $7,800+ | 14(12.6) | 23(65.7) | 27(19.0) | 26(51.0) | 18(15.9) | 26(42.6) |
| N | 111 | 35 | 142 | 51 | 113 | 61 |

Table 10: The relationship between theological position and denominational expectations for full-time employment, by rural-urban location

| Denomination's Employment Expectation | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) | Rural(%) | Urban(%) |
| does not expect other employment | 62(53.4) | 23(65.7) | 62(43.4) | 33(64.7) | 23(19.3) | 26(41.3) |
| expects other employment | 54(46.6) | 12(34.3) | 81(56.6) | 18(35.3) | 96(80.7) | 37(58.7) |
| N | 116 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 11: The relationship between theological position and professional aspirations, by rural-urban location.

|  | Theological | | | Position | | |
|  | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| Professional Aspirations | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % reporting present charge is sufficiently demanding on professional skills | 69.8 | 94.3 | 72.0 | 96.1 | 79.8 | 92.1 |
| % desiring larger congregation | 57.1 | 39.4 | 49.6 | 47.1 | 44.7 | 49.2 |
| % desiring larger community | 53.6 | 18.2 | 42.7 | 15.7 | 34.5 | 18.0 |

Table 12: Relationship between theological position of minister and church-sect affiliation of congregation, by rural-urban location.

| | Theological Position | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Church-Sect Affiliation | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| church | 85(73.3) | 28(80.0) | 103(72.0) | 30(58.8) | 50(42.0) | 9(14.3) |
| sect | 31(26.7) | 7(20.0) | 40(28.0) | 21(41.2) | 69(58.0) | 54(85.7) |
| totals | 116 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 13: The relationship between theological position and membership size of congregations, by rural-urban location

Theological Position

| Total Membership of Charge | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| 0-70 | 33(28.5) | 6(17.1) | 39(27.3) | 6(11.8) | 56(47.1) | 25(39.7) |
| 71-180 | 36(31.0) | 4(11.4) | 44(30.8) | 11(21.6) | 42(35.3) | 14(22.2) |
| 181+ | 47(40.5) | 25(71.4) | 60(41.7) | 34(66.6) | 21(17.6) | 24(37.1) |
| N | 116 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Table 14: The relationship between theological position and number of congregations, by rural-urban location

Theological Position

| Number of Congregations in Charge | Liberal | | Conservative | | Fundamentalist | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| 1 | 52(45.2) | 34(97.1) | 96(67.1) | 50(98.0) | 91(76.5) | 62(98.4) |
| 2 - ⌐ | 63(54.8) | 1(2.9) | 47(32.9) | 1(2.0) | 28(23.5) | 1(1.6) |
| N | 115 | 35 | 143 | 51 | 119 | 63 |

Appendix table A:   Responses by Rural and Urban Ministers to Statements on Professional Activities.

| | | Percent in Each Category | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement* | | SA | A | U | D | SD** |
| A young man aspiring to the ministry should finish college and seminary | Rural | 27 | 56 | 1 | 14 | 2 |
| | Urban | 26 | 55 | – | 19 | – |
| Ministers' associations needed to protect ministers from congregations | Rural | 4 | 31 | 3 | 58 | 5 |
| | Urban | 5 | 25 | 2 | 63 | 5 |
| Ministry should be regarded as a profession comparable to law or medicine | Rural | 14 | 58 | 2 | 24 | 3 |
| | Urban | 13 | 49 | 1 | 32 | 4 |
| Ministers' associations to define proper ministerial conduct | Rural | 5 | 51 | 2 | 40 | 2 |
| | Urban | 11 | 41 | – | 42 | 7 |
| A seminary-educated man should be given preference over others for vacant pastorate | Rural | 6 | 40 | 2 | 46 | 5 |
| | Urban | 6 | 51 | 2 | 39 | 3 |
| Because of knowledge of congregation's need a minister should be permitted to develop programs without approval of denominational officers | Rural | 9 | 41 | 5 | 41 | 4 |
| | Urban | 3 | 20 | 4 | 68 | 5 |
| Ministers' associations are needed to protect minister from denominational officials | Rural | 1 | 26 | 6 | 63 | 4 |
| | Urban | 9 | 52 | 3 | 33 | 3 |
| Ministry should be regarded as a full-time not a part-time job | Rural | 34 | 65 | – | 1 | – |
| | Urban | 28 | 70 | – | 1 | 1 |

Appendix Table A (con't):

| Statement* | | Percent in Each Category | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA | A | U | D | SD** |
| Ministry should be regarded as a life-time career | Rural | 35 | 63 | 1 | 2 | — |
| | Urban | 32 | 66 | — | 1 | 1 |
| Should be free to say from pulpit what he thinks regardless of wishes of parishioners | Rural | 35 | 60 | 1 | 5 | — |
| | Urban | 21 | 65 | 1 | 12 | — |
| Unfair for parishioners to make comparisons between new ministers and his predecessors | Rural | 16 | 72 | 1 | 11 | — |
| | Urban | 13 | 73 | 2 | 11 | — |

* Abbreviated in some cases.

** SA=strongly agree, A=agree, U=undecided or neutral, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree