**Falling Through the Cracks: Dealing with the Problem of the Unclassifieds in RELTRAD**

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**Abstract**

American religion can be characterized in countless ways. There are 350,000+ congregations and hundreds of millions of adherents, identifiers, and believers in the US. One of the primary tasks of science is to make sense of the chaos by proposing orderly taxonomies, combining and labeling like things so we can describe how much there is and whether and how they are changing. Because there is tremendous value in classification systems due to the research questions they enable, it is continually worth our while to examine their assumptions, fit, and coverage. One popular scheme for classifying “religious traditions” as laid out in the Steensland et al. (2000) appendix simply drops some respondents who are hard to classify. However, the proportion “Unclassified” has been growing from 2% in 1970 to 6.5% in 2018. In this paper, we document the problem and pose several solutions.

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All data used in this analysis is freely available on the General Social Survey’s website (<https://gss.norc.org/>).

The full coding syntax will be made available on GitHub after publication.

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