

Journal of Ideology

A Critique of Conventional Wisdom

An electronic journal at:

www.lsus.edu/journalofideology

Who Are the Prosperity Gospel Adherents?

Bradley A Koch*

ABSTRACT

The Prosperity Gospel is the doctrine that God wants people to be prosperous, especially financially. Adherents to the Prosperity Gospel believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing and the poor are poor because of a lack of faith. I conduct a study of the Prosperity Gospel through logit analysis of secondary data collected through telephone survey by SRBI for Time magazine. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I find that income has no effect on adherence to the Prosperity Gospel; blacks, the "born-again" or "evangelical," and those who are less educated, however, are more likely to seek out Prosperity messages. Overall, the Prosperity Gospel is a flexible theology that is well suited to be adapted to varying social locations, particularly in a society like the United States that is radically individualistic.

INTRODUCTION

The Prosperity Gospel is the doctrine that God wants people to be prosperous, especially financially.¹ Adherents to the Prosperity Gospel believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing and is compensation for prayer and for giving beyond the minimum tithe to one's church, televangelists, or other religious causes. The logical extension of the Prosperity Gospel—sometimes explicit, sometimes not, depending on the preacher—is that the poor are poor because of a lack of faith, that is, that poverty is the fault of the poor themselves (Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose 1996; Fee 1985; Gifford 1990; McConnell 1988). Adherents also tend to interpret the New Testament as portraying Jesus as a relatively rich figure who used his wealth to feed the masses on several occasions and to finance what they argue to have been a costly itinerate ministry. As such, Prosperity adherents argue that they should model their lives after Jesus' by living lavishly, in stark contrast to orthodox interpretations of the Gospels. In this sense, adherents believe God to be very interested in their financial status. Poverty, far from being a blessing, is a sign of God's disfavor; thus, Christians have a duty to deal only with the apparent lack of faith among the poor and not their poverty itself. From the data to be discussed below, I

estimate that in 2006 there were over 16 million people in the U.S. who were members of

¹ What I am terming the "Prosperity Gospel" has gone by several names, including "The Health and Wealth Gospel," "Prosperity Theology," and the "Law of Reciprocity."

Detractors have called it "Prosperity Lite" and "The Gospel of Greed" (van Biema and Chu 2006). I use the label "Prosperity Gospel" because it is the most often used among those who are part of the movement.

a Prosperity movement—roughly three times the number of Jews in the U.S. There remains, however, a striking lack of sociological research on the Prosperity Gospel. (See Harrison 2005 and Coleman 1993 and 2000 for notable exceptions.) This paper aims to fill a yawning gap in the literature.

As this is largely an exploratory study, I set out to answer one overarching question: Who are the Prosperity Gospel adherents? Specifically, I will answer what, if any, is the relationship between adherence to the Prosperity Gospel and income, level of education, the Evangelical/born-again identity, and race.

PREVIOUS LITERATURE

The roots of the Prosperity Gospel can be traced from the Great Awakenings to Evangelical Protestantism, through the Holiness Movement, on to Pentecostalism, through the itinerant Pentecostal preachers to the Charismatic (or neo-Pentecostal) Movement, and finally to the Faith Movement. (For more detailed histories see Coleman 1993, 2000; Cox 1993; Eves 2003; Freston 1995; Harrell 1975; Jenkins 2002; Poewe 1994; Robbins 2004.) The Faith Movement is comprised of the largely independent ministries of those who teach the centrality of positive confession and the doctrines of healing and prosperity (Barron 1987; Bruce 1990; Hollinger 1991). The father of this movement was Kenneth Hagin, whose ministry was thriving by the 1970s. Positive confession requires that adherents not merely hope that they receive the gifts that God promises but have absolute confidence that they have already received them. According to Hunt (1998), much of this doctrine relies on specific “magic” formulations that include

“loosing” things like wealth or healing or “binding” evil that would block such blessings. Adherents use positive confession to invoke the second and third doctrines—healing and prosperity.

The Faith Movement, and its Prosperity Gospel, is alive and well today. Kenneth Hagin, Jr. has taken over his father’s ministry and has proclaimed Kenneth Copeland and John Osteen (late father to the best-selling prosperity author, megachurch pastor, and televangelist Joel Osteen) as students of his father (Barron 1987). Copeland’s message is unapologetically prosperity-centered, and his publications are almost all devoted to this topic (e.g. Copeland 1974). While Joel Osteen claims, “I’m not a prosperity preacher” (King 2006), and “I don’t think I’ve ever preached a sermon about money” (van Biema and Chu 2006:53), he writes in his book Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential, “God wants to increase you financially...” (Osteen 2004:5) and “the only place in the Bible [Malachi 3:10-12] where God tells us to prove him—which means to test Him, or check Him out—is in the area of our finances” (his emphasis) (257). He also writes:

If you will dare to take a step of faith and start honoring God in your finances [by tithing], He’ll start increasing your supply in supernatural ways. God will take that 90 percent you have left over, and He’ll cause it to go further than the 100 percent with which you started. The Scripture says that when we tithe, God not only opens up the windows of heaven, but He will rebuke the devourer for your sake. That means He’ll keep the enemy off your money, off your crop, off your children, and away from your home. He’ll make sure you get promoted. He’ll cause you to get the best deals in life. Sometimes, He’ll keep you from sickness, accidents, and harm that might cause other unnecessary expenses. All kinds of blessings come your way when you honor God in the area of your finances (256).

Joel Osteen is, however, the most mainstream and moderate voice in the movement today, even to the extent of being listed as one of “The 10 Most Fascinating People of 2006” by ABC News (Walters 2006). He rarely, if ever, speaks about sin and death and chooses not to address such contentious issues as homosexuality and abortion. In fact, critics often refer to his teachings, along with those of similar preachers such as Joyce Meyer, as “Christianity Lite” since they avoid the tough but traditional teachings of orthodox Christianity and are closely associated with the secular self-help movement.

Recent research (Schieman and Jung 2012) has demonstrated that lower levels of education and income are negatively associated with belief in the Prosperity Gospel. Many scholars of religion (Cox 2001; Elinson 1965; Gifford 1990; Harrell 1975; Hollinger 1991) argue, or at least would suggest, that the Prosperity Gospel resonates only with those of the lower class by offering them the “opiate” of upward mobility. Others make the reverse argument that the Prosperity Gospel actually rationalizes the wealth of those who have been upwardly mobile by saying that this is spiritually derived and deserved (Bruce 1990; Fee 1981; Gifford 1998). Heelas (1993) argues that New Age conceptions of prosperity (see Brown 1999), which many (Barron 1987; Crenshaw 1994; Fee 1985; Hollinger 1991; McConnell 1988) see as having influenced the Prosperity Gospel, are an accommodation to modernity in that they equate “success in the marketplace” with “spiritual progress” (Heelas 1993:107) and are “aligned with the mainstream goals and values” of modernity (108). Hunt, Hamilton, and Walter (1997) note “a tendency for neo-Pentecostalism to endorse certain modern trends,” with the

Faith Movement in particular being motivated by “instrumental rationalism” (9). Walker (1997) writes:

At the very least Pentecostalism throughout the world has not only provided meaning and succor to its adherents but it has also equipped many of them with the values of ascetic Protestantism so useful to the modern enterprise, and so essential for social mobility in a capitalist economy (36). Others have gone still further, suggesting that Pentecostal beliefs, including those in prosperity, could even facilitate upward mobility. Martin (1990) argues that the sense of individualism imparted by Pentecostalism equips both individuals and cultures for capitalistic development. Annis (1987) argues that Guatemalan Protestant missionaries, particularly Pentecostals, attack an indigenous culture that they see as reinforcing structural inequalities by equipping converts with a new set of values and behaviors more conducive to upward mobility (e.g. investing in service-oriented business over agricultural). Similarly, Woodberry (2006) suggests that “Pentecostalism may facilitate movement of poor people into the middle class” (35).

While the literature regarding Pentecostals, Charismatics, the Faith Movement, and the Prosperity Gospel makes many claims about the class location of Prosperity adherents, this relationship has yet to be empirically tested. It may be that the poor are more likely to be Prosperity adherents. If so, it could be because either the Prosperity Gospel promises the opportunity for upward mobility and acts as an opiate for the poor (neo-Marxian) or that the teachings of the Prosperity Gospel result in a decreased likelihood of upward mobility since adherents expect God alone to give them a prosperous life and are less likely to be motivated to take actions themselves that would increase their likelihood of becoming wealthy (Weberian).

Alternatively, while going against conventional wisdom, it might be that the relatively wealthy are more likely to be Prosperity adherents. If so, either the Prosperity Gospel offers an apology for wealth, assuring the rich that they do indeed deserve their affluent lifestyles (neo-Marxian), or the teachings of the Prosperity Gospel result in an actual increase in the likelihood of upward mobility because those who are poor will feel this is a sign of God's displeasure and will work hard, save, etc. to put themselves in God's good graces (Weberian).

Regardless of how or whether income is related to adherence to the Prosperity Gospel, I expect Prosperity adherents to be less likely to have higher levels of education given their historic ties to Pentecostalism and its propensity toward anti-intellectualism (Woodberry 2006). The decline of denominational divisions since the Second World War and the proliferation of transdenominational special-purpose groups would also presuppose such an outcome (Wuthnow 1988). Thus, controlling for other variables, differences in adherence to the Prosperity Gospel should remain between levels of education, with Prosperity adherents being less educated.

Because the Prosperity Gospel emerged historically (in part) from the Evangelical tradition, I expect that Evangelical Protestantism, including Black Protestantism which is primarily in the Evangelical tradition (Steensland, Park, Regnerus, Robinson, Wilcox, and Woodberry 2000) will still be the primary "home" of adherents of the Prosperity Gospel. Put another way, Prosperity ideas and adherence should be less common among Catholics and those who are not Evangelical, the former being the most unlikely of locations given Catholic social teaching and the historic mission of the Catholic Church

among the impoverished. To find Prosperity ideas among Catholics especially would indicate a surprising proliferation and appeal for this movement.

African Americans have experienced a unique history in the United States. First, as a non-immigrant ethnic community, blacks have been treated as outsiders. America was historically exceptional in that religious expression was seen as simultaneously capable of defining both a newer American identity while doing so in an ethnically distinct manner (Herberg 1983 [1955]). While this kind of religious expression eventually meant that immigrant groups like Italians and Irish were granted full, non-ethnic inclusion into the mainstream culture, blacks have failed to achieve this level of integration, a unique experience Du Bois (1989 [1903]) called “double-consciousness.” Inasmuch as blacks have not become fully enfranchised economically and otherwise, the Black Church has fulfilled the functions of the political and financial institutions whose services were not available to its congregants (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). While the Prosperity Gospel is not historically part of this Black Protestant tradition, contemporary churches that emphasize Prosperity teachings fill a similar role and thus may be popular with African Americans for the same reasons.

With the exception of work by Harrison (2005), Koch (2009), Schieman and Jung (2012), there has been a dearth of specifically sociological research on the Prosperity Gospel. Moreover, only Koch, Schieman and Jung, to this author’s knowledge, have engaged in quantitative studies of the Prosperity Gospel. This paper is an attempt to expand quantitative sociological work in this area. Moreover, the Prosperity Gospel, a

relatively recent and overtly material religious innovation, offers a timely opportunity to reopen study into the connections between the economic and the religious.

DATA AND METHODS

I use secondary data collected by telephone interviews between June 27th and 29th 2006 with a national random sample of 1003 U.S. adults, age 18 and older, 770 of whom self-reported as Christians. This study is limited to Christians in the U.S. by the data since the questions that make up the dependent variables were only asked of those who self-identified as Christians. These data were collected by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI) (2006) for a Time magazine cover story “Does God Want You to Be Rich?” (van Biema and Chu 2006) in which only basic descriptive statistics were reported.² The full national cross-section sample data had been weighted by SRBI to reflect the demographic composition of adult Americans by targeting U.S. Census numbers. The response rate was 13%. The margin of error for the entire sample is approximately +/- 4 percentage points. I attach a list of the original wording of the questions in the Appendix.

There are several ways to operationalize Prosperity adherence from the existing data. The dependent variables of interest are membership in the Prosperity Movement, agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, agreeing that wealth is a sign of God’s blessing, agreeing that poverty is a sign God is unhappy, and a constructed index of Prosperity Orientation from the following questions:

² For other examples of research using data gathered by SRBI in the sociology of religion, see Ecklund and Scheitle (2007) and Wuthnow (2002).

1. Material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (+)
2. If you give away your money to God, God will bless you with more money (+)
3. Poverty is a sign that God is unhappy with something in your life (+)
4. God is not interested in how rich or poor you are (-)
5. Jesus was not rich and we should follow his example (-)
6. If you earn a lot of money you should give most of it away and live modestly (-)
7. If you pray enough, God will give you what money you ask for (+)
8. Giving away 10% of your income is the minimum God expects (+)
9. Christians in America don't do enough for the poor (-)
10. Poverty can be a blessing from God (-)

Factor analysis supports these questions as together point to an underlying, latent variable that we might call Prosperity adherence.³ As noted with a + or -, half of these questions are positively correlated with adherence while half are negatively correlated. The equal numbers of positively and negatively worded items reduces the likelihood of acquiescence bias. I transform these questions into an index ranging from 1 to 10, ten being the most Prosperity-oriented, one the least.

I include several independent variables. Race is included as a dichotomous variable, black (=1) or non-black. While respondents could volunteer the answers Hispanic or Asian, these dummy variables when not significant in any models so these categories are collapsed into non-black. Born-again or evangelical, which was a single question in which people were asked, "Do you consider yourself an evangelical or born-again Christian?" is included. Years of education is included as a continuous variable,

³ Eigenvalue = 1.29; average loading value = .33 (SD = .15); Cronbach's α = 0.74

transformed to approximate the number of years needed for each level of education, originally included in the data a categorical variable.⁴ Age, too, is included as a continuous variable, having been transformed from a categorical variable using the median age of the original cohorts. Place of residence as urban, rural (reference), or suburban are included as separate categorical variables. Church attendance is dichotomized to those who attend a religious service once a week or more (=1) or less than once a week. Like with the race variables, there was a general lack of significance among the frequency of attendance dummy variables in all models. The dichotomized variable is included for ease of interpretation and to maximize significance. Income is included as a continuous variable,⁵ transformed from a categorical variable using the median dollar amounts divided by 1000.⁶ Gender is included (females=1). Religious

⁴ 8th grade or less=8; some high school=10; high school graduate=12; some college=14; college graduate=16; postgraduate study, law, or medical school=18

⁵ The secondary data do not include a measure of wealth. Thus, to be clear, this research is incapable of determining a correlation between wealth and Prosperity measures.

Income is, however, a measure widely acknowledged to be closely correlated to wealth.

⁶ In models not presented here, the dummy variables for income that match the wording of the questions are not significant predictors of membership in the Prosperity Movement, agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, or the index of Prosperity Orientation. The dummy variable for earning less than \$20,000 is significant in some models for agreeing that poverty is a sign God is unhappy, and the dummy variable for earning \$50,000 to just under \$75,000 is significant in some models for

affiliation as Protestant (reference), Catholic, or other Christian is included as dummy variables. Unfortunately, the data did not include a measure of denominational affiliation. Region of the country is also included as dummy variables. I deleted listwise all cases for which any information was missing. The resulting N for all of the models is 655. The descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (N=665)

Variable	Actual	Estimated	Standard	Minimum	Maximum
	Mean	Mean	Deviation		
<i>Dependant Variables:</i>					
member of a Prosperity movement	0.07	0.08	0.25	0	1
believes God wants people to be financially prosperous	0.60	0.62	0.49	0	1
agrees that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing	0.21	0.22	0.40	0	1
agrees that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy	0.06	0.07	0.23	0	1
Prosperity Index	4.43	4.46	1.45	1	10
Do you agree or disagree with each of the following:					
Material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (+)	0.21	0.22	0.40	0	1
If you give away your money to God, God will bless you with more money (+)	0.29	0.31	0.45	0	1
Poverty is a sign that God is unhappy with something in your life (+)	0.06	0.07	0.23	0	1
God is not interested in how rich or poor you are (-)	0.86	0.87	0.35	0	1
Jesus was not rich and we should follow his example (-)	0.48	0.49	0.50	0	1
If you earn a lot of money you should give most of it away and live modestly (-)	0.31	0.32	0.46	0	1
If you pray enough, God will give you what money you ask for (+)	0.12	0.13	0.32	0	1
Giving away 10% of your income is the minimum God expects (+)	0.38	0.40	0.49	0	1
Christians in America don't do enough for the poor (-)	0.53	0.52	0.50	0	1
Poverty can be a blessing from God (-)	0.44	0.46	0.50	0	1
<i>Independent Variables:</i>					
race (black=1)	0.08	0.12	0.28	0	1
born-again	0.50	0.52	0.50	0	1
years of education	14.26	14.20	2.22	8	18
years old	52.99	48.23	15.59	21	73
urban	0.28	0.28	0.45	0	1
rural	0.52	0.51	0.50	0	1
suburban	0.20	0.21	0.40	0	1
attend (1+/-wk=1)	0.46	0.44	0.50	0	1
income/1000	65.46	65.10	50.16	12	200
gender (female=1)	0.53	0.53	0.50	0	1
Protestant (reference)	0.70	0.69	0.46	0	1
Catholic	0.26	0.26	0.44	0	1
other Christian	0.04	0.04	0.20	0	1
Northeast	0.17	0.18	0.38	0	1
Midwest	0.24	0.23	0.43	0	1
West	0.22	0.21	0.41	0	1
South (reference)	0.37	0.38	0.48	0	1

agreeing that wealth is a sign of God's blessing; however, these models are not preferred over the models presented in this paper according to Bayesian information criterion (BIC').

I use binary logit models (BLM) for the dependent variables membership in the Prosperity Movement, agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, agreeing that wealth is a sign of God's blessing, and agreeing that poverty is a sign God is unhappy since all of the outcomes for these variables are yes/no or agree/disagree. I use ordered logit models (OLM) index of Prosperity Orientation.⁷

RESULTS

For each of these dependent variables, model 1 is the full model that includes all the independent variables. Income is not significant for any of the dependent variables. Race has the largest effect of all of the independent variables for each of the dependent variables. Model 2 omits the race variable, and with few exceptions, offers no change in the effects and significance of the remaining variables for any of the dependent variables. Model 3 reduces the independent variables to just those independent variables that were significant in the full models. Finally, where necessary, model 4 is reduced to include only those independent variables that were significant in model 3. Several other models

⁷ Since not all the independent variables can be retained in all binary logits for the OLM, I cannot directly test whether I am violating the parallel regression assumption. Multinomial logit models are impractical due to conformability errors in predicting probabilities. Ordinary least squares (OLS) is undesirable given the level of measurement of the dependent variable. Regardless, the levels of significance as well as the effects are consistent across all three regression types. Overall, it is entirely reasonable to present the OLM.

were run for each dependent variable, the results of which are not presented here.

Bayesian information criterion (BIC') provides very strong support for the final models over all other conceivable models.⁸ The exceptions are for the dependent variable members of a Prosperity movement, for which BIC' provides positive support for model 4 over model 3, and for the dependent variable “agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God’s blessing,” for which BIC' provides strong support for model 4 over model 3.

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 show the BLM for the dependent variables “believes that God wants people to be financially prosperous,” “membership in a Prosperity movement,” “agrees material wealth is a sign of God’s blessing,” and “agrees poverty is a sign God is unhappy with something in your life” respectively. Table 6 shows the OLM for the Prosperity Index dependent variable.

⁸ For more on the use of Bayesian information criterion (BIC') see Long 1997.

Table 2: Binary Logit Coefficients for Member of a Prosperity Movement

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4 [†]
race (black=1)	1.60 *** (0.46)		1.53 *** (0.38)	1.43 *** (0.38)
income/1000	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)		
years of education	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.08)		
gender (female=1)	-0.53 (0.34)	-0.44 (0.33)		
years old	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 * (0.01)		
Northeast	-0.09 (0.56)	-0.24 (0.55)		
Midwest	0.14 (0.43)	-0.12 (0.41)		
West (ref: South)	0.24 (0.48)	-0.08 (0.46)		
suburban	-0.17 (0.42)	-0.27 (0.42)		
urban (ref: rural)	-0.70 (0.44)	-0.26 (0.40)		
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.76 * (0.35)	0.70 * (0.34)	0.63 (0.34)	
born-again	1.08 * (0.46)	1.16 * (0.46)	1.33 *** (0.41)	1.45 *** (0.40)
Catholic	-0.15 (0.52)	-0.29 (0.51)		
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	-0.70 (1.11)	-0.52 (1.09)		
constant	-1.21	-0.19	-4.08	-3.81
BIC'	41.90	47.19	-18.13	-20.98

standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

† preferred model

**Table 3: Binary Logit Coefficients for Believes God Wants
People to Be Financially Prosperous**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3 [†]
race (black=1)	1.44 *** (0.41)		1.30 *** (0.40)
income/1000	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	
years of education	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	
gender (female=1)	0.02 (0.17)	0.03 (0.17)	
years old	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	
Northeast	-0.19 (0.25)	-0.21 (0.25)	
Midwest	-0.06 (0.22)	-0.14 (0.22)	
West (ref: South)	-0.10 (0.23)	-0.23 (0.23)	
suburban	0.40 (0.23)	0.36 (0.23)	
urban (ref: rural)	-0.17 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.19)	
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.09 (0.17)	0.07 (0.17)	
born-again	0.62 *** (0.19)	0.66 *** (0.19)	0.70 *** (0.16)
Catholic	-0.12 (0.21)	-0.20 (0.20)	
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	0.39 (0.46)	0.46 (0.45)	
constant	-0.39	0.08	-0.03
BIC'	43.94	52.50	-24.20

standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

† preferred model

**Table 4: Binary Logit Coefficients for Agrees
Material Wealth Is a Sign of God's Blessing**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4 [†]
race (black=1)	0.96 ** (0.35)		0.88 ** (0.34)	0.87 ** (0.34)
income/1000	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)		
years of education	-0.13 (0.05)	-0.14 ** (0.05)	-0.10 * (0.05)	-0.10 * (0.05)
gender (female=1)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.29 (0.20)		
years old	0.02 ** (0.01)	0.02 * (0.01)	0.02 ** (0.01)	0.02 ** (0.01)
Northeast	-0.24 (0.31)	-0.27 (0.31)		
Midwest	0.00 (0.26)	-0.08 (0.26)		
West (ref: South)	-0.33 (0.30)	-0.44 (0.30)		
suburban	0.11 (0.26)	0.07 (0.25)	0.13 (0.25)	
urban (ref: rural)	-0.53 * (0.27)	-0.36 (0.25)	-0.54 * (0.26)	-0.58 * (0.25)
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.33 (0.21)	0.31 (0.21)		
born-again	0.68 ** (0.25)	0.71 ** (0.24)	0.64 ** (0.21)	0.65 ** (0.21)
Catholic	0.29 (0.27)	0.23 (0.27)		
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	0.70 (0.51)	0.75 (0.51)		
constant	-1.08	-0.61	-1.17	-1.13
BIC'	41.32	41.92	0.07	-6.16

standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

† preferred model

**Table 5: Binary Logit Coefficients for Agrees
Poverty Is a Sign God Is Unhappy**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3 [†]
race (black=1)	2.48 *** (0.52)		2.18 *** (0.43)
income/1000	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	
years of education	-0.31 ** (0.10)	-0.31 *** (0.10)	-0.40 *** (0.09)
gender (female=1)	-0.50 (0.39)	-0.47 (0.36)	
years old	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	
Northeast	-1.73 (1.09)	-1.82 (1.07)	-1.55 (1.06)
Midwest	1.30 ** (0.46)	0.82 * (0.41)	1.25 ** (0.44)
West (ref: South)	0.45 (0.60)	-0.07 (0.55)	0.47 (0.56)
suburban	0.06 (0.48)	-0.11 (0.46)	
urban (ref: rural)	-0.84 (0.50)	-0.17 (0.43)	
attend (1+/wk=1)	-0.04 (0.39)	-0.12 (0.37)	
born-again	0.46 (0.46)	0.64 (0.43)	
Catholic	0.86 (0.51)	0.59 (0.48)	
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	0.68 (0.87)	1.06 (0.76)	
constant	0.63	1.80	1.70
BIC'	13.13	29.81	-33.30

standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

† preferred model

Table 6: Ordinal Logit Coefficients for Prosperity Index

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3 [†]
race (black=1)	2.09 *** (0.28)		1.94 *** (0.27)
income/1000	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	
years of education	0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	
gender (female=1)	0.08 (0.14)	0.10 (0.14)	
years old	0.02 *** (0.00)	0.01 ** (0.00)	0.02 *** (0.00)
Northeast	0.15 (0.21)	0.15 (0.21)	
Midwest	0.01 (0.19)	-0.12 (0.19)	
West (ref: South)	0.21 (0.20)	0.01 (0.20)	
suburban	0.16 (0.19)	0.08 (0.19)	
urban (ref: rural)	-0.28 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.17)	
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.22 (0.15)	0.15 (0.15)	
born-again	0.19 (0.16)	0.28 (0.16)	
Catholic	-0.22 (0.18)	-0.34 (0.18)	
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	0.53 (0.36)	0.66 (0.35)	
BIC'	8.57	56.84	-48.98

standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

† preferred model

I present the results here as predicted probabilities from the preferred models, as predicted probabilities are a quick and simple way to present the otherwise complicated outcomes of nonlinear models (Long 1997). Predicted probabilities are the chances that a given outcome will happen based on certain independent variations. These chances are presented here as percentages. Unless otherwise noted, it should be assumed that all predicted probabilities hold all other variables at their means.

Blacks have the highest predicted probabilities of being members of a Prosperity movement (16%), believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous (83%), agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (34%), and having a Prosperity Index score above 5 (58%) and the second highest chances of agreeing that poverty is a sign of that God is unhappy (16%) as seen in table 7. Born-again/evangelicals have the second highest chances of being members of a Prosperity movement (10%) and believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous (69%) and among the highest chances of agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (24%); being born-again/evangelical, however, is not significant to the chances for agreeing that poverty is a sign of that God is unhappy or of one's Prosperity Index score. Increasing levels of education have an inverse effect on the chances of agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing and agreeing that poverty is a sign of that God is unhappy but are insignificant to the chances of the other dependent variables.

Table 7: Combined Predicted Probabilities

ideal type	member of a Prosperity movement	God wants people to be financially prosperous	material wealth is a sign of God's blessing	poverty is a sign that God is unhappy	upper half of Prosperity Index
average person	0.05	0.61	0.19	0.02	0.19
black	0.16	0.83	0.34	0.16	0.58
non-black	0.04	0.58	0.18	0.02	0.17
born-again	0.10	0.69	0.24		
not born-again	0.02	0.52	0.14		
urban			0.13		
rural & suburban			0.22		
8th grade or less			0.31	0.24	
Some high school			0.27	0.12	
High school graduate			0.23	0.06	
Some college			0.19	0.03	
College graduate			0.16	0.01	
Postgraduate study			0.14	0.01	
18-24			0.12		0.12
25-29			0.13		0.13
30-34			0.14		0.14
35-39			0.15		0.15
40-44			0.16		0.16
45-54			0.18		0.18
55-54			0.21		0.21
65 or older			0.25		0.25
South				0.02	
Northeast				0.00	
Midwest				0.07	
West				0.03	

The chances of the average American being a Prosperity adherent are largely dependent on how one operationalizes Prosperity adherence. For the average person, the chances of being a member of a Prosperity movement (5%), agreeing material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (19%), and agreeing poverty is a sign that God is unhappy (2%) are all small. The chances of having a score on the Prosperity Index higher than 5 (19%) are also small. The chances of believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, however, is high (61%) for the average person. While all of these questions are conceptually related, individuals approach them differently. How we think about the Prosperity Gospel matters.

Two-thirds (66%) of American Christians answer affirmatively to at least one of the four Prosperity related questions, but these people are inconsistent in their answers to these questions. Take those who say they are formal members of a Prosperity movement:

about 14% do not believe that God wants people to be financially prosperous, nearly 60% do not believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing, and nearly 75% do not believe that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy. These beliefs directly contradict the teachings of the Prosperity Gospel. This kind of inconsistency is not, however, unprecedented. Take American Catholics for example. It has long been known that most lay Roman Catholics in the U.S. do not agree with Vatican teachings on many central tenets, including birth control, abortion, and homosexuality, and yet still maintain a solidly Catholic identity (Dillon 1999).

While somewhat less surprising than those of formal Prosperity movement members, these kinds of inconsistencies also exist among the more casual Prosperity adherents: 70% of those who agree that God wants people to be financially prosperous do not believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing, and nearly 40% of those who believe that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy do not believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing. We tend to think of the Prosperity movement as being homogenous, internally consistent, and having a systematic theology; however, most people's understandings of the Prosperity Gospel are not so rigorous. The fact that 90% of those who believe that God wants people to be financially prosperous are not formal members of a Prosperity movement alone points to there being at least two strands of Prosperity that have been diverging over the last several decades. The first is the formal, strict, institutionalized Prosperity Movement that may encompass Word of Faith members, Rhema affiliates, and preachers like Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland. The second is informal and may

include more casual readers and viewers of Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, TD Jakes, and the like. Future research will be necessary to disentangle these groups.

Expecting consistency might, however, make one a victim of what Chaves (2010) calls the “religious congruence fallacy,” the tendency for academics, who are institutionalized to pursue rationalized congruence professionally, to look for rationality within a non-rational⁹ institution. Indeed, most people utilize their “everyday theologies” (Moon 2004) that do not necessarily jibe with their church’s official theology. Initially, I would argue, this fallacy is a result of the seminal place of the Weberian Thesis in the sociology of religion, which argues for a correlation of religious belief and belonging to economic behavior. Unlike Calvinistic Protestants, for whom the work ethic and predisposition to accumulation and reinvestment were several cognitive steps removed from the central theological tenets that make their identity unique, Prosperity Gospel adherents have made their very endonym reflective of an expected outcome. This alone should meet the heavier burden of proof in that congruence is at least plausible through conscious cognitive and social effort and through automatic responses from religious schemas.

Income

Income is not a significant predictor of any of the measures of Prosperity adherence. This finding holds in the zero-order as well; even without controls, income is

⁹ I use this term in the sense of Collins (1992), for whom neither reasoning nor rational agreement is the basis of religion, not in the pejorative sense.

unrelated to any of the measures of Prosperity adherence. This also holds in models not present here that included income as a series of dummy variables instead of as a continuous variable. To be sure, the Prosperity Gospel is not a type of poor people's movement, as Harrison (2005), in part, claims. Those with lower levels of income are no more or less likely than those with higher levels of income to be members of the movement or to adhere to the movement's specific teachings.

It is possible that the poor could use the Prosperity Gospel as a supernatural promise of upward mobility while the rich could use the same Gospel as an explanation for their preexisting wealth. The Prosperity message is specific enough to allow for both grounded understandings. Harrison (2005), in fact, observed in a Word of Faith congregation in Sacramento, California,:

For those who have not yet been upwardly mobile, the doctrine supplies explanations (such as their being "between blessings"). But for those who have become more prosperous or are in the process of being so, this belief system is an important conceptual vehicle supporting their efforts (159-60).

People at the bottom and the top of the class hierarchy may be able to use the Prosperity Gospel to explain their locations, but it is unlikely that they are appreciably changing their financial behavior. In other words, it is extremely unlikely that believing that God wants you to be wealthy encourages some to work toward higher pay and others to dismiss such efforts and ambition. The Prosperity message is too specific to have such ambiguous outcomes.

Education

I find that the less education a Christian has the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel. Those with less education are more likely to agree that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing, and those with less education are more likely to agree that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy (although the effect of education diminishes as the level of education increases). Education, however, is not a significant predictor of being a member of a Prosperity movement, of agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, or of one's Prosperity Index score. Thus, while education does affect acceptance of the core teachings of the Prosperity Gospel, it does not affect membership itself, either formally or informally. For those who are not well educated, the Prosperity Gospel offers a supplementary and supernatural promise of those benefits that are otherwise lacking.

Inasmuch as the Prosperity movements—or at least Prosperity ideas—are a transdenominational special-purpose group, according to Wuthnow (1988), we would expect the line between adherence and non-adherence to be drawn along theo-political lines: highly-educated liberals vs. evangelically-inclined conservatives, and indeed, we see that education and evangelicalism (discussed below) are predictive of adherence to the Prosperity Gospel. It seems likely that rising levels of education in the U.S. will counteract any growth in the movement. In fact, it is likely the movement may shrink domestically as the average level of education continues to rise.

Evangelical/Born-again Identity

The Evangelical/born-again are more likely to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel, but adherence is not limited to Evangelicals as we might expect given the movements' history. While those who are born-again/evangelical¹⁰ are disproportionately likely to be members of Prosperity movements (10%), to agree that God wants people to be financially prosperous (69%), and to agree that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (24%), there is no difference between Protestants, Catholics, and other Christians in their likelihood of Prosperity adherence. This means that there are significant numbers of Prosperity adherents (no matter how this is measured) within Catholicism, which is the last place we would expect to find such beliefs given the historic and contemporary teachings of the Vatican. This alone suggests a transdenominational creep of the Prosperity Gospel that, while unexpected, could be explained given its close ties to the transdenominational Charismatic/neo-Pentecostal movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As the erstwhile Pentecostal practices made their way into Catholic and Mainline services, they likely brought with them other related concepts, or at least paved the way for the integration of such ideas. Future research will be needed to investigate how widespread Prosperity ideas are among those religious traditions outside of Evangelical Protestantism.

¹⁰ This is a single question that asks, "Do you consider yourself an evangelical or born-again Christian?" and is distinct from the question about religious preference.

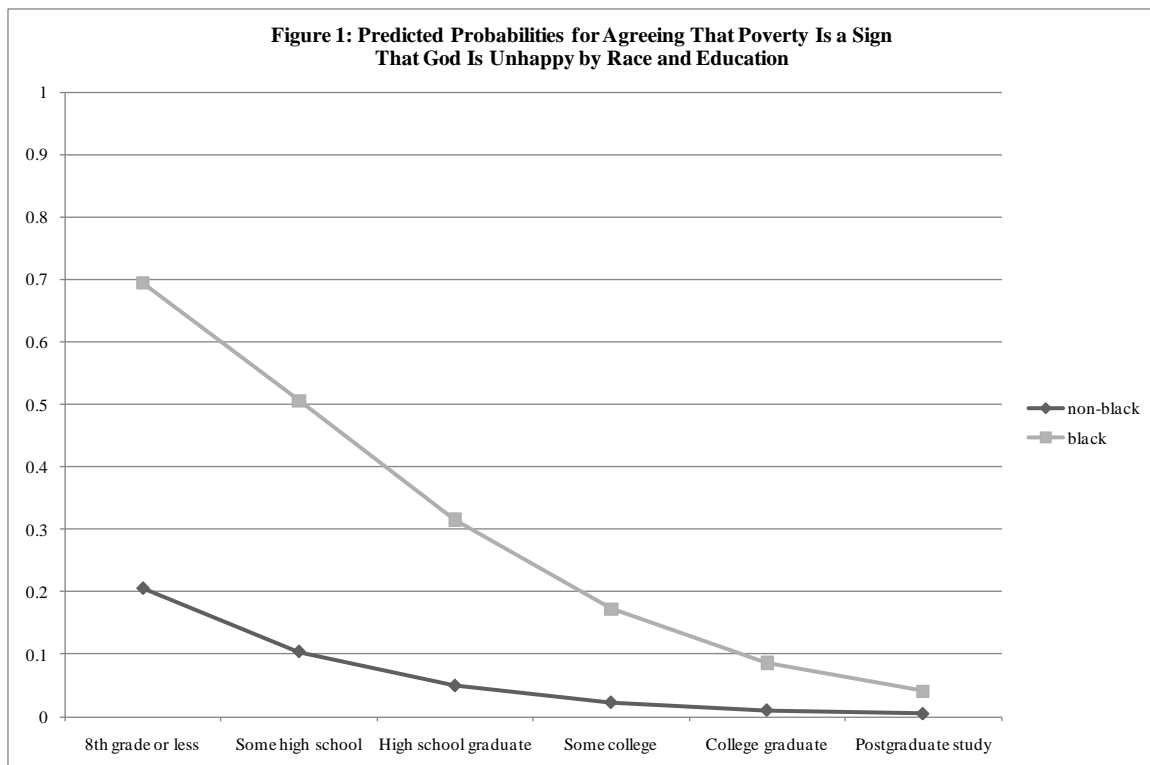
Race

A surprising finding involves the critical importance of race in all models explaining adherence to the Prosperity Gospel. Blacks are far more likely to adhere to Prosperity messages.¹¹ This is not due to the greater likelihood of blacks having less education and lower incomes than other racial categories because these variables are controlled. For every measure of Prosperity adherence, race is the single-most important factor. Blacks are disproportionately likely to be Prosperity adherents no matter how adherence is measured. Blacks may be more likely to seek out Prosperity messages because of the social structural limitations on their access to traditional trajectories of upward mobility. I do not argue here that the lack of upward mobility per se affects the likelihood of adherence, as this would likely be captured by the measure of income. I argue, instead, that the availability of the usual means to mobility, and specifically its variation between groups, affects adherence. These limitations have primarily existed concerning access to social, cultural, and human capitals and have historically been overcome within the Black Church and today within Prosperity-oriented black churches.

As noted above, those with more education are exponentially less likely to agree that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy, but using predicted probabilities that include both race and education, as shown in figure 1, we see that blacks are exceptionally less

¹¹ Models run for whites alone, which are not presented here, yielded very similar results to those models that include blacks and non-blacks. Because of this and the lack of change in each Model 2, I can be sure that the universally high effect and significance of the race variable is not obfuscating other effects.

likely to agree that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy as their education increases, to the point that highly-educated blacks are virtually indistinguishable from their highly-educated counterparts of other races. In other words, education has a greater effect in suppressing support for the Prosperity Gospel among blacks than it does among other racial groups.



CONCLUSION

The answer to who the Prosperity folks are depends somewhat on how one conceptualizes being part of the Prosperity Gospel. If we think of it as membership in a specific movement or simply believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, the answer is that they tend to be black and to attend church at least once a

week. If we think of it as agreeing with a set of central beliefs, the answer is slightly more complicated, but in general, they tend to be older, less educated, and black. In whole, there are multiple Gospels of Prosperity. Overall, Blacks may be more likely to seek out Prosperity messages because of the social structural limitations on their access to traditional trajectories of upward mobility and with increasing levels of education, are exceedingly less likely to agree that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy to the point that they are virtually indistinguishable from their highly educated counterparts. Income, surprisingly, is not a significant predictor of any of the measures of Prosperity adherence.

While Schieman and Jung's (2012) recent paper is an important contribution to the quantitative study of the Prosperity Gospel, their paper differs from this paper in several important ways and has several shortcomings that limit its influence. First, Schieman and Jung use a different theoretical framing than this paper. Second, Schieman and Jung use Pew data, while this paper uses SRBI data. While the SRBI data are limiting in several ways, most notably in its response rate, the Pew data are limited to just two variables that measure the Prosperity Gospel and both are questions about belief. The SRBI data, on the other hand, include multiple measures of belief as well as a measure of belonging. Third, Schieman and Jung use ordinary least squares regression for a categorical outcome, which may affect their conclusions quite significantly. Fourth, the authors miss that income in their own model, while significant, is not as predictive of Prosperity beliefs as some have assumed. Along these lines, the authors also fail to report that race is the strongest and most highly significant predictor of Prosperity belief in their models. Contrary to the authors' claims—but according to their own data—Prosperity

belief is more about race and education than income and education, a point illustrated in the analysis in this paper.

The constraints on the current project imposed by the data point toward a number of directions for future research. Specifically, those surveyed were not asked about their denominational affiliation, which has meant that I was unable to generate sufficiently sophisticated measures of religious tradition, which would have been helpful. Those surveyed were also not asked questions about their wealth, occupation, or social mobility, all of which would have been helpful in thinking about class in a way beyond that of income and education alone. Further, this study is limited to Christians in the U.S. by the data. Had the questions about Prosperity beliefs been asked of those who were Jewish, Muslim, secular, etc., I would have been better able to understand Prosperity adherents in their larger context. While anthropologists have gathered rich data on Prosperity adherents in the global South, the SRBI and Pew surveys (to my knowledge) represent the only quantitative data on this group within the U.S. Given the increasing popularity of the Prosperity Gospel in Latin America and Africa, it would be helpful to have data that is more current than 2006 and that would allow for cross-national comparison. It would also be beneficial to have data gathered after the so-called Great Recession of 2007-2009 to gauge changes in adherence influenced by the economic downturn.

Overall, the Prosperity Gospel is a flexible and multivocal theology that is well suited to be adapted to varying social locations, particularly in a society like the United States that is radically individualistic. The Prosperity Gospel offers psychic comfort and rationalization to those from a number of different situations, backgrounds, and

experiences. Virtually all religions offer otherworldly rewards for those lacking in this-worldly comfort. What makes the Prosperity Gospel unique among religions is its overt promise of temporal, material rewards. In the absence of “natural” opportunity, the Prosperity Gospel offers a supernatural means to material advancement.

APPENDIX

Selections from SRBI Questionnaire

member of prosperity movement

Are you aware of Christian movements that emphasize God's gift of personal prosperity to his followers?

- 1 Yes, aware
- 2 No, not aware (SKIP TO Q.F1)
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know (SKIP TO Q.F1)

Do you consider yourself to be a member of such a movement?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

believes God wants people to be financially prosperous

Do you believe that God wants people to be financially prosperous?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know
- 9 (VOL) No religious preference, not a believer, atheist, agnostic (Skip to Q.F1)

agrees that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following: (RANDOMIZE LIST)

- 1) Material wealth is a sign of God's blessing
- 1 Agree
- 2 Disagree
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

agrees that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following: (RANDOMIZE LIST)

- 3) Poverty is a sign that god is unhappy with something in your life
- 1 Agree
- 2 Disagree
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

Prosperity Index

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following: (RANDOMIZE LIST)

- 1) Material wealth is a sign of God's blessing
 - 2) If you give away your money to God, God will bless you with more money
 - 3) Poverty is a sign that god is unhappy with something in your life
 - 4) God is not interested in how rich or poor you are
 - 5) Jesus was not rich and we should follow his example
 - 6) If you earn a lot of money you should give most of it away and live modestly
 - 7) If you pray enough, God will give you what money you ask for.
 - 8) Giving away 10% of your income is the minimum God expects
 - 9) Christians in America don't do enough for the poor
 - 10) Poverty can be a blessing from God
- 1 Agree
- 2 Disagree
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

race

What is your race? Are you White, Black, Asian, or something else?

- 1 White
- 2 Black
- 3 Asian
- 4 (VOL) Hispanic
- 5 (VOL) Other
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

(Evangelical)/born-again

Do you consider yourself an evangelical or born-again Christian?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

years of education

What is the highest grade of schooling that you've completed? (READ LIST ONLY IF NECESSARY)

- 1 8th grade or less
- 2 Some high school
- 3 High school graduate
- 4 Some college
- 5 College graduate
- 6 Postgraduate study/law or medical school
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

years old

What is your age? (READ LIST ONLY IF NECESSARY)

- 1 18-24
- 2 25-29
- 3 30-34
- 4 35-39
- 5 40-44
- 6 45-54
- 7 55-64
- 8 65 or older
- 9 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

urban/rural/suburban

Urban Codes [imputed from phone number, not asked]

- 1) Urban
- 2) Rural
- 3) Suburban

attend

About how often do you attend religious services – more than once a week, once a week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?

- 1 More than once a week
- 2 Once a week
- 3 Almost every week
- 4 Once or twice a month
- 5 A few times a year
- 6 Never
- 8 (VOL) No answer/Don't know

income

Finally, just for classification purposes, was your total family income before taxes last year: (READ LIST, PROBE: Your best estimate is fine.)

- 1 Less than \$20,000
- 2 \$20,000 to just under \$35,000
- 3 \$35,000 to just under \$50,000
- 4 \$50,000 to just under \$75,000
- 5 \$75,000 to just under \$100,000
- 6 \$100,000 to just under \$200,000
- 7 \$200,000 or more
- 8 (VOL) No Answer/Don't know

gender

Gender (DO NOT ASK)

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

Protestant/Catholic/other Christian

On another topic, and just for classification purposes, which of the following best describes your religious preference - Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, an orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church, or don't you have a religious preference?

- 1 Protestant (include Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, etc.)
- 2 Roman Catholic
- 3 Jewish (SKIP TO Q.F1)
- 4 Mormon (include Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
- 5 Jehovah's Witness
- 6 Orthodox Church (Greek or Russian)
- 7 Muslim/Islam (SKIP TO F1)
- 8 Other religion (SKIP TO Q.F1)
- 9 No religious preference, not a believer, atheist, agnostic (SKIP TO Q.F1)
- 10 (VOL) No answer/Don't know (SKIP TO Q.F1)

Northeast/Midwest/West/South

Region Codes [imputed from phone number, not asked]

- 1) Northeast
- 2) Midwest
- 3) South

4) West

REFERENCES

- Annis, Sheldon. 1987. *God and production in a Guatemalan town*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Barron, Bruce. 1987. *The Health and Wealth Gospel: What's going on today in a movement that has shaped the faith of millions?* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- Brouwer, Steve, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose. 1996. *Exporting the American gospel: Global Christian fundamentalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Brown, Michael. 1999. *The channeling zone: American spirituality in an anxious age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruce, Steve. 1990. *Pray TV: Televangelism in America*. London: Routledge.
- Chaves, Mark. 2010. "Rain dances in the dry season: Overcoming the religious congruence fallacy." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(1):1-14.
- Coleman, Simon. 1993. "Conservative Protestantism and the world order: The Faith Movement in the United States and Sweden." *Sociology of Religion* 54(4):353-373.
- . 2000. *The Globalisation [sic] of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 1992. *Sociological insight: An introduction to non-obvious sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Copeland, Kenneth. 1974. *The laws of prosperity*. Ft. Worth: Kenneth Copeland Publications.

- Cox, Harvey. 1993. "Jazz and Pentecostalism." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 84(October-December):181-187.
- . 2001. *Fire from Heaven: The rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the 21st century*. Jackson, TN: Da Capo Press.
- Crenshaw, Curtis. 1994. *Man as God: The Word of Faith Movement A Reformed analysis of the beliefs with the Christian alternative also presented*. Spring, TX: Footstool Publications.
- Dillon, Michele. 1999. *Catholic identity: Balancing reason, faith, and power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1989 [1903]. *The souls of black folk*. New York: Bantam.
- Ecklund, Elaine Howard and Christopher P. Scheitle. 2007. "Religion among academic scientists: Distinctions, disciplines, and demographics." *Social Problems* 54(2):289-307.
- Elinson, H. 1965. "The implications of Pentecostal religion for intellectualism, politics, and race-relations." *American Journal of Sociology* 70(4):403-415.
- Eves, R. 2003. "Money, mayhem and the beast: Narratives of the world's end from New Ireland (Papua New Guinea)." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9(3):527-547.
- Fee, Gordon. 1981. "The New Testament view of wealth and possessions." *New Oxford Review* 48(May):8-11.
- . 1985. *The disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*. Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing.

- Freston, P. 1995. "Pentecostalism in Brazil: A brief history." *Religion* 25(2):119-133.
- Gifford, Paul. 1990. "Prosperity: A new and foreign element in African Christianity." *Religion* 20(4):373-388.
- . 1998. *African Christianity: Its public role*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Harrell, David Edwin. 1975. *All things are possible: The Healing & Charismatic revivals in modern America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Harrison, Milmon. 2005. *Righteous riches: The Word of Faith Movement in contemporary African American religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Heelas, Paul. 1993. "The New Age in cultural context: The premodern, the modern, and the postmodern." *Religion* 23(2):103-116.
- Herberg, Will. 1983 [1955]. *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An essay in American religious sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hollinger, Dennis. 1991. "Enjoying God forever: An historical/sociological profile of the Health and Wealth Gospel in the U.S.A." Pp. 53-66 in *Religion and power, decline and growth: sociological analyses of religion in Britain, Poland, and the Americas*, edited by P. Gee and J. Fulton. London: British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group.
- Hunt, Stephen. 1998. "Magical moments: An intellectualist approach to the Neo-Pentecostal Faith ministries." *Religion* 28(3):271-280.
- Hunt, Stephen, Malcolm Hamilton, and Tony Walter. 1997. *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological perspectives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The next Christendom: The coming of global Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- King, Larry. 2006. "Larry King live." CNN, December 22.
- Koch, Bradley. 2009. "The Prosperity Gospel and Economic Prosperity: Race, Class, Giving, and Voting." PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Lincoln, C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya. 1990. *The black church in the African-American experience*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression models for categorical dependent variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Martin, David. 1990. *Tongues of fire: The explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Cambridge, Mass.: B. Blackwell.
- McConnell, D. R. 1988. *A different gospel: A historical and biblical analysis of the modern Faith Movement*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Moon, Dawne. 2004. *God, sex, and politics: Homosexuality and everyday theologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Osteen, Joel. 2004. *Your best life now: 7 steps to living at your full potential*. New York: Warner Books.
- Poewe, Karla. 1994. *Charismatic Christianity as a global culture*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Robbins, J. 2004. "The globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33:117-143.

- Schieman, Scott and Jong Hyun Jung. 2012. "'Practical Divine Influence': Socioeconomic Status and Belief in the Prosperity Gospel." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5(4):738-756.
- Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc. 2006. SRBI/Time magazine poll # 2006-3868: Congress/siblings/religion ussrbi2006-3868 version 2. Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
- Steensland, Brian, Jerry Z. Park, Mark D. Regnerus, Lynn D. Robinson, W. Bradford Wilcox, and Robert D. Woodberry. 2000. "The measure of American religion: Toward improving the state of the art." *Social Forces* 79(1):291-318.
- van Biema, David and Jeff Chu 2006. "Does god want you to be rich?" *Time*, September 18, 2006, pp. 48-56.
- Walker, Andrew. 1997. "Thoroughly modern: Sociological reflections on the Charismatic Movement from the end of the twentieth century." Pp. 17-42 in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological perspectives*, edited by S. Hunt, M. Hamilton, and T. Walter. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walters, Barbara 2006. "The 10 most fascinating people of 2006." *ABC News*, December 12.
- Woodberry, Robert D. 2006. "The economic consequences of Pentecostal belief." *Society* 44(1):29-35.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1988. *The restructuring of American religion: Society and faith since World War II*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

*I presented an early version of this paper at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Louisville, Kentucky. Thanks to Robert Robinson, Brian Steensland, William Corsaro, Constance Furey, Rich Klopp, Kyle Dodson, and William Enright for their support and advice. Thanks as well to the anonymous reviewers at the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Sociology of Religion*, and the *Journal of Ideology* for their thoughtful critiques. This work was supported by the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. Direct correspondence to Bradley Koch, Department of Government and Sociology, Georgia College & State University.

Bradley A. Koch
Georgia College & State University
CBX 018
231 W Hancock St
Milledgeville, GA 31061
478.445.0937
E-mail: bradley.koch@gcsu.edu.