

**THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY:
RACE, CLASS, GIVING, AND VOTING**

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ABSTRACT

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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. In this dissertation, I conduct a study of the Prosperity Gospel through logit analysis of data collected through telephone survey (N=1003) by SRBI for *Time* magazine. I report findings in four main areas: (1) there are multiple Gospels of Prosperity, and the Prosperity Gospel is transdenominational; (2) while income has no effect on adherence to the Prosperity Gospel, blacks, the “born-again” or “evangelical,” and those who are less educated are more likely to seek out Prosperity messages; (3) Prosperity adherence does not affect how much people give financially to either their churches and other religious causes or to nonreligious causes; (4) Prosperity adherents vote in about the same proportions as the rest of the population, and those with a Prosperity orientation tend to have voted for Bush in the year 2004 and identify as Republican. This project is an example of how future research in the sociology of religion should acknowledge and take seriously the two dominant theoretical perspectives (i.e. neo-Marxianism and Weberianism) on which the subfield stands. Overall, the Prosperity Gospel is a fairly 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.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

BACKGROUND

The Prosperity Gospel¹ is the seemingly-transdenominational 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 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 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 fairly costly itinerate ministry. As such, Prosperity adherents argue that we should model our lives after Jesus' by living lavishly, in stark contrast to orthodox interpretations of the Gospels that regard poverty as a Christian ideal modeled after a poor messiah. 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. Given these tenets, we

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.

would expect there to be some relationship between Prosperity adherence and class, race, and charitable giving.

A BRIEF HISTORY

McCloud (2007) identifies four recurring theologies of class in American religious history. He labels these “divine hierarchies,” “economic Arminianism,” “social harmony,” and “the class-conscious Christ.” McCloud defines them in the following way:

The first, which I call ‘divine hierarchies,’ is closely tied to Calvinist predestination and suggests that socioeconomic differences are divinely ordained. The second, ‘economic Arminianism,’ emerges amidst nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, Republicanism, and the development of industrial class relations. Asserting that all human beings have the free will to progress in both religious and financial endeavors, economic Arminianism is the most dominant class theology today and can be seen in movements as variant as the prosperity gospel and New Age channeling. The third recurring theology, ‘social harmony,’ was represented in many Protestant Social Gospel writings as well as a Roman Catholic statement on labor and capital, Pop Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. With roots in antebellum notions of the ideal society as a ‘harmony of interest’ among differentiated unequals, proponents of this class theology argued that laborers and capitalist owners in the emerging industrial economy shared mutual, rather than opposing, interests and goals. While some criticized the Gilded Age robber barons for their exploitative practices, adherents to this view consistently upheld capitalism, private property, and profits as biblically sanctioned. The fourth theology, ‘the class-conscious Christ,’ took a rather different view. Espoused by some Gilded Age supporters of the working class, this theology envisioned Jesus as champion of laborers and enemy of capitalism. Rather than a harmony of interests, proponents of the class-conscious Christ viewed labor and capital relations as inherently conflictual. At times, they even envisioned such conflict as a literal battle between good and evil (105-6).

The Gospel of Wealth falls under the first theology, divine hierarchies. This line of thinking was perhaps best summarized by Andrew Carnegie in his essay “Wealth” (1889):

...[T]he man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves....It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy (662).

The Gospel of Wealth offered a conservative Protestant argument against unmitigated charitable giving. To the industrialists of the Gilded Age, like Carnegie, the poor were incapable of managing wealth on their own and required the assistance of an elite class of administrators who could best help those of lower classes by eliciting functionalistic behavior through calculated social investment. This sentiment is perhaps best captured in the Chinese proverb, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Marsden (1972) argues that the Gospel of Wealth and Weber’s Spirit of Capitalism are, in fact, one in the same in that both espouse an economic individualism that requires a particular work ethic. The Gospel of Wealth is the first modern apology for the mass accumulation of capital, unsurprisingly coming out of the second wave of the Industrial Revolution and being espoused by the American robber-barons of the late-nineteenth century.

Through the Social Gospel, part of the social harmony theology, progressive Protestants argued that Christians had a moral obligation to improve the lot of the poor spiritually and materially. Three major successes of the movement included the mission of the Salvation Army (Davis and Robinson 1999), the election of Franklin Delano

Roosevelt, and the subsequent implementation of his New Deal, and the success of the YMCA, established as a place for immigrants to acclimate themselves to a new culture.

Unlike the Gospel of Wealth and the Social Gospel which were deterministic, top-down, and only marginally religious treatments of poverty, the contemporaneous origins of what would be called the Prosperity Gospel, economic Arminianism *par excellence*, offered a much more agential, bottom-up, and magico-religious solution for the poor. The roots of the Prosperity Gospel lie ultimately, as does all of Evangelical Protestantism, in the “Great Awakenings” of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Robbins 2004). Evangelical Protestantism refers to those denominations and independent congregations that have historically placed emphasis on proselytization, “born-again” experiences, and biblical authority. The Holiness movement emerged near the end of the third wave of these awakenings, around 1900. Holiness was largely an extension of Methodism and argued that there was more to the early-Christian message than salvation. Preachers like Charles Fox Parham taught that, in addition to forgiveness, individuals were in need of “entire sanctification” initiated by the Holy Spirit (Harrell 1975:12). William Seymour, the son of former slaves and a student of Parham’s, moved to Los Angeles in 1906, opening a ministry in an abandoned African Methodist Episcopal Church on Azusa Street. While there were several similar ministries in other parts of the U.S. at the time, many in academia (e.g. Cox 1993; Freston 1995; Robbins 2004) and in the movement itself mark the Azusa Street revival as the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement. Pentecostalism included those denominations and independent congregations that extended the Holiness claim to sanctification even further, arguing that individuals are in need of a “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” As evidence of this spiritual baptism,

adherents looked for signs, including the gifts of prophecy, healing, and, most notably, tongues. By the 1920s, numerous sects were congealing around the doctrine of baptism by the Holy Spirit and the resulting glossolalia into the more familiar Pentecostal denominations (e.g. Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, Church of God [Cleveland]).

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed a movement of itinerant Pentecostal preachers, most of whom emphasized the gift of healing. The relationship, however, between the Pentecostal denominations and these ministries was tenuous at best (Harrell 1975). Denominations like the Assemblies of God were struggling to gain acceptance among mainstream American society, having been largely ridiculed since their inception as being overly-emotional, low-brow, and even farcical. While the Pentecostal denominations did not necessarily disagree with the healing preachers on a theological-level, they felt the need to distance themselves from the controversy and scandal that followed all of the tent revivals. As many Americans sought increasing sophistication in their religious expression in the years following the Second World War (cf. Wuthnow 1988), these healing ministries began to falter, and all but a few disappeared.

By the 1960s, what came to be known as the Charismatic (or neo-Pentecostal) Movement emerged from these fledgling denominations (Harrell 1975). Charismatics, like Pentecostals, emphasized spiritual baptism and glossolalia. In 1960, the Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett announced to his congregation that he had been baptized in the Spirit. The following years saw similar infiltration into other Mainline and Evangelical denominations. In 1967, a group of students at Duquesne University received the gift of tongues, marking the spread of the movement into Roman Catholicism. By the early-

1970s, there were virtually no religious institutions untouched by the Charismatic Movement (Harrell 1975), and it was well on its way to becoming a global movement (Coleman 1993; 2000; Eves 2003; Jenkins 2002; Poewe 1994).

During this time of Charismatic revival, a new breed of semi-independent preachers with loose or recently-severed affiliation with the Pentecostal denominations gained popularity. Unlike their predecessors, who focused almost exclusively on the gift of healing, most moderated the extremism of the healing message and expanded their ministry to include new themes such as prosperity. The first formulation of divine prosperity came from Oral Roberts. As early as 1954, he was telling followers to expect a sevenfold return on their contributions to his ministry as a reward from God (Harrell 1975). It is out of this “new breed” of Charismatic preachers that the Faith Movement, with its gospel of prosperity, took form.

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. What I am terming the “Faith Movement” has gone by several names, including “Word,” “Word of Faith,” “Word-Faith,” “Name It and Claim It,” and “Health and Wealth.” I choose “Faith Movement” because, like the term Prosperity Gospel, it is both the most often used among those who are part of the movement and the least pejorative of the alternatives. The father of this movement was Kenneth Hagin, whose ministry was thriving by the 1970s. The early Faith Movement was comprised of several teachers who tended to agree on the central importance of three basic doctrines: positive confession, healing, and prosperity (Barron 1987; Bruce 1990b; Hollinger 1991). 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. 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 (Hunt 1998).

Positive confession can be used 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...” (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, his teachings, along with those of similar preachers such as Joyce Meyer, are often referred to as “Christianity Lite” since they avoid the tough but traditional teachings of orthodox Christianity and are closely associated with the secular self-help movement.²

The Faith Movement was the source and incubator for the Prosperity Gospel, which originated in the movement, and is at the core of its theology, serving as one of its three central doctrines. These three main teachings of the Faith Movement are divine healing, prosperity, and positive confession (Barron 1987). Physical healing and financial prosperity are seen as biblical promises from God to the faithful. In order for a believer to reap these benefits, one need only “positively confesses” his or her faith in that contract of health and wealth through the spoken word. Estimated to have over 16 million adherents in the U.S. alone, the Prosperity Gospel seems to have reached beyond its denominational boundaries, much as the Charismatic Movement did earlier. In fact, it is likely that the Prosperity Gospel owes its success to the broad, transdenominational appeal of the Charismatic Movement (Barron 1987; Coleman 2000; Harrell 1975). While Osteen and Copeland have direct ties to the independent Faith Movement, there are other somewhat surprising advocates. For example, Kirbyjon Caldwell preaches the Prosperity Gospel at Windsor Village United Methodist Church to the largest United Methodist congregation in the country, with 15,000 members (van Biema and Chu 2006). Even

² In fact, Prosperity proponents universally admit that the principles they set forth work for Christians and non-Christians alike (see Copeland 1974).

though the United Methodist Church has been called the “church of the large standard deviation” because it encompasses such a diversity of beliefs (Green and Guth 1998:78), it is surprising to find such heterodox teaching in a solidly Mainline Protestant denomination.

Such evidence of unbounded expansion could possibly be explained by Wuthnow’s (1988) declining denominationalism thesis which posits that, given the widespread institutional changes that followed WWII, religious denominations underwent similar changes as well. The cautious optimism of the post-War years, along with the accompanying economic upswing so unimaginable in the preceding twenty years, set the stage for broad changes in the religious landscape. These changes can be seen, according to Wuthnow, in two specific places. First, denominational divisions are no longer as significant as they were before the War. A convergence in the levels of education between denominations is the hypothesized driving force of this phenomenon. Second, while denominational differences are declining, transdenominational special-purpose groups, including those that tout the Prosperity Gospel, are proliferating. These groups are increasingly polarized along theo-political lines: highly-educated liberals vs. less well-educated evangelically-inclined conservatives. This discussion is situated in an ongoing debate about the culture war (see Ammerman 1990; Davis and Robinson 1996; Hunter 1991). This trend was motivated mostly by the federal government’s growing influence on what were previously local and private issues as well as the resultant emergence of a strong national identity. Contradictory evidence, suggesting that the Prosperity Gospel has been largely confined to Evangelical and Black Protestant circles,

would suggest a more rigid social structure in which both class and ideological differences parallel denominational divisions, as predicted by Niebuhr (1957).

Many scholars of religion (Cox 2001; Elinson 1965; Gifford 1990; Harrell 1975; Hollinger 1991) argue 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 1990b; 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).

These assumptions are speculative and, until now, have largely gone untested. 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). My dissertation research will test the conjectures about the class location, race, and giving habits of Prosperity adherents in the U.S.

THEORY

The Dialectics and Causality of Class

To understand the relationship between the Prosperity Gospel and social class, we must situate this question within the broader debate about religion and economy within sociology. Sociological investigation of the relationship between religion and class can generally be divided into two historical-theoretical camps: those treating religion primarily as a dependent variable and those treating it mainly as an independent variable. The roots of this theoretical divide can be traced back to two of the three founding parents of sociology itself: Marx treated religion as a dependent variable while Weber treated it primarily as an independent variable. The two schools of thought draw their causal arrows in opposite directions. At the risk of oversimplifying two complex perspectives, it can be said that Marxians tend to see economics as affecting religion, while Weberians tend to see religion as affecting economics.

Marx’s theory of class conflict is rooted in philosophical materialism. That is to say that Marx (1978 [1844]) believed that material existence, especially one’s economic situation, was the independent variable of utmost importance in predicting *any* dependent

variable. Religion was no exception. While Marx's theory was underdeveloped with regard to religion, largely because religion itself was ill-defined in his theory (Saxton 2006), he did leave us with some memorable words on the subject (Marx 1978 [1844]):

Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people (54).

Marx thought that religion was something that could be explained in terms of suffering and oppression, two attributes he linked to a specific social class: the proletariat (Marx and Engels 1992 [1888]). While Marx left religion rather undeveloped in his theory, others took up the study of religion in Marxian fashion. Writing about the sources of denominationalism or schism in religion, Niebuhr (1957) observed:

One phase of denominationalism is largely explicable by means of a modified economic interpretation of religious history; for the divisions of the church have been occasioned more frequently by the direct and indirect operation of economic factors than by the influence of any other major interest of man (26).

While Niebuhr was not dismissive of the divisive nature of theological differences, it is clear that he thought that it was primarily economic conditions that predisposed a religious community to these. For other examples of research that treats religion primarily as a dependent variable, see Bourdieu (1991), Boyer and Nissenbaum (1974), Engels (2000 [1870]), Schoenfeld (1992), and Wuthnow (1980; 1988).

Weber's thesis, unlike Marx's, is rooted in idealism. That is to say that Weber believed that ideas—not matter—were the *a priori* stuff on which all else depended. Weber (1946 [1915]) tells us, "...[V]ery frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest" (280). While Weber acknowledges that religion

can also be a dependent variable, he devotes most of his attention to religion as an independent variable. In short, the flux of ideas, especially theology, was the independent variable of utmost importance in predicting a given dependent variable. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (1992 [1920]) attempts to show that Calvinism led to the development of modern capitalism, or at least to its driving “spirit.” Calvinism tells us that only some are going to Heaven; God already knows who those people are; accumulating wealth is a sign that one is going to Heaven; by working hard, one has the chance of accumulating wealth; however, one should never carelessly spend this wealth since this would increase pride which is a sin against God; when one begins saving, one can begin to invest; and, finally, investment of capital is essentially capitalism. In short, Calvinism, particularly the teachings of predestination and worldly-asceticism, created capitalism as we know it, according to Weber. Weber clearly thought that religion was something that could explain the emergence of a specific social class of investors: the bourgeoisie. There are, of course, more contemporary examples of Weberian research within sociology. Gerhard Lenski (1961) analyzed his 1958 survey of Detroit-area residents by first asking whether religion affected their secular lives. He found Marxian claims “untenable” (132) and that, indeed, religion does affect the secular in terms of attitudes and practices economically, politically, in the family, and in education and science, supporting Weber. In doing so, he assumed that religion is best used as an independent variable. For other examples of sociological research that use religion as an independent variable, see Barro and McCleary (2003), Davis and Robinson (1996; 1999; 2006), Erikson (2005), Hart (1996), Marx (1967), Meyer and Rowan (1977), Nelson (1993), Noll (2002), Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink (1998), Sherkat and

Blocker (1994), Sherkat and Ellison (1997), Smith (1991), and Wuthnow (1994).

It is important not to exaggerate the polarization of these two schools of thought. Peter Berger (1990) attempts to draw a middle ground between Marxian materialism and Weberian idealism, namely, dialecticism. By describing the relationship between religion and class as dialectical, Berger attempts to replace the either/or relationship between these two camps with a both/and understanding:

The dialectical relationship between religion and society thus precludes the doctrinaire approaches of either “idealism” or “materialism.”...Only a dialectical understanding of these relationships avoids the distortions of the one-sidedly “idealist” and “materialist” interpretations (128).

The divergent arrows of causality are more accurately, according to Berger, two sides of a reciprocal relationship.

In my dissertation, I will conduct a study of the case of the Prosperity Gospel and how religion and class are related among its adherents. The Prosperity Gospel is well-suited to investigating linkages between religion and class/economics: the key tenets of this gospel include beliefs about wealth, poverty, God’s rewarding or punishing people with financial success or impoverishment, the obligations of believers to give financially to their church, and the responsibility (or lack thereof) of the broader society to ameliorate poverty. Scholars of religion have argued that the Prosperity Gospel may appeal to the poor because it offers hope for upward mobility (Cox 2001; Elinson 1965; Gifford 1990; Harrell 1975; Hollinger 1991) or to the rich because it provides divine justification for their elevated status (Bruce 1990b; Fee 1981; Gifford 1998) or cognitive resonance with the components of modernity (Heelas 1993; Walker 1997), thus treating adherence to the gospel as dependent on class. Alternatively, other scholars have argued that adherence to the Prosperity Gospel may foster changes in people’s lives (working

harder, investing more) that result in upward mobility (Annis 1987; Martin 1990; Woodberry 2006). Conversely, it is conceivable that the changes induced by adhering to the Prosperity Gospel (waiting for God to make them prosperous rather than working toward this themselves) make moving up less likely. Both treat adherence as an independent variable with respect to class. Sorting out the relationship between class and religion among adherents of the Prosperity Gospel can thus contribute to a debate within sociology that goes back to Marx and Weber.

There are several possible outcomes regarding religion and class that can be tested in this study. A negative association among Christians between class and adherence to the Prosperity Gospel is assumed in much of the literature regarding Pentecostals, Charismatics, the Faith Movement, and the Prosperity Gospel. However, virtually no definitive evidence of this relationship has been previously published.

H1A₁: The less income a Christian earns the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

This hypothesis is in line with the assumed, but untested, claims of much of the literature. A neo-Marxian interpretation of this hypothesis would say that Christians at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale are more likely than Christians who are better off to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel because it promises the opportunity for upward mobility. Harrison (2005) claims that the Prosperity message "...might be seen (at least in part) as a type of 'poor people's movement'" (148). Such understandings argue that religion is an opiate and a cathartic for the poor that helps to maintain the status quo for the advantaged/bourgeoisie by discouraging the disadvantaged/proletariat from rebelling against inherent structural inequalities. A Weberian interpretation of this hypothesis

would say that adherents to the Prosperity Gospel are more likely than other Christians to be at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale because the teachings of the Prosperity Gospel result in a decreased likelihood of upward mobility. Such understandings argue that since adherents expect God alone to give them a prosperous life, they are less likely to be motivated to take actions themselves that would increase their likelihood of becoming wealthy.

H1A₂: The more income a Christian earns the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

A neo-Marxian interpretation of this hypothesis would say that Christians at the upper end of the socioeconomic scale are more likely than Christians who are worse off to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel because it offers an apology for their wealth. A belief system that assures the rich that they do indeed deserve their affluent lifestyles would be more appealing to them than to less well-to-do people. A Weberian interpretation of this hypothesis would say that adherents to the Prosperity Gospel are more likely to be at the upper end of the socioeconomic scale because the teachings of the Prosperity Gospel result in an increased likelihood of upward mobility. Much like *The Protestant Ethic*, this particular Weberian interpretation, which differs from that above, would suggest that 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.

H1A₀: Among Christians, income is unrelated to adherence to the Prosperity Gospel.

This is the null hypothesis and would challenge a Weberian interpretation of the results. However, a null outcome cannot fully negate a neo-Marxian interpretation since

Christians at the lower end of the income scale could adhere to the Prosperity Gospel because it promises the opportunity for upward mobility while Christians at the upper end of the income scale simultaneously adhere to the Prosperity Gospel because it offers an apology for their wealth; both could potentially be happening at the same time.

Beyond a measure of income, I would expect this religion/class relationship to be reflected in a measure of education.

H1B1: The less education a Christian has the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

Prosperity preachers generally don't receive formal training, either from seminaries or colleges. In the Holiness and Pentecostal tradition, a preacher's "calling" is seen as divine and his charisma as inspired and sufficient. As their leaders don't emphasize education, it shouldn't be surprising that their laity are less educated. Adherents to the Prosperity Gospel, given their historic ties to Pentecostalism and its propensity toward anti-intellectualism (Woodberry 2006), should be less likely to have higher levels of education. Wuthnow (1988) acknowledges a demographic cause of cultural-religious realignment. He claims that the significance of denominational divisions has been declining since the Second World War and that transdenominational special-purpose groups have been proliferating and largely taking the place of denominationalism. While Wuthnow (1988) agrees with Hunter that race, region, and class are increasingly less significant in predicting attitudinal beliefs, he differs with Hunter in that he finds that a convergence in the levels of education between denominations has meant for an increase in the socio-cultural homogeneity between denominations. Instead, transdenominational groups are increasingly polarized along theo-political lines: highly-educated liberals vs.

evangelically-inclined conservatives. Both a study of the battle for control of the Southern Baptist convention that cites education as a major factor in moderate/fundamentalist alignment (Ammerman 1990) and recent data that show that Evangelicals have largely caught up to Mainline, Liberal, and Catholic adherents in terms of education (Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, and Sikkink 1998) seem to largely agree with Wuthnow. Thus, regardless of race, region, and income, religious differences should remain between levels of education, with Prosperity adherents being less educated.

Race and Mobility Opportunities

As noted above, the Prosperity Gospel is rooted in the Evangelical tradition. To be sure, this is not to say that all Evangelicals are Prosperity adherents. While Prosperity ideas have permeated many—if not the majority of—Evangelical camps, some of the most vocal opponents of the Prosperity message are themselves Evangelicals. The Prosperity Gospel does not appear to be an Evangelical Protestant movement.³ Neither is it a Black Protestant movement. Black Protestant churches do resemble white Evangelical denominations in their social organization and “religious-meaning system” (Steenland, Park, Regnerus, Robinson, Wilcox, and Woodberry 2000:294) but differ in their specific social histories. Nonetheless, we will test the hypothesis that PG has been unable to break free.

³ To be sure, the Prosperity Gospel is an evangelical belief system. I differentiate between evangelical Christians (with a miniscule e) and Evangelical Protestants (with a majuscule E). The former are a nebulous group with the common goal of universal proselytization that is independent of denominational or congregational membership. The latter, a subset of the former, is a religious tradition comprised of a history and tradition that includes but goes significantly beyond proselytization. While many Catholics and Mainline Protestants are *evangelicals*, by definition none are *Evangelical Protestants*. My data include a measure of being evangelical but not Evangelical.

H2A₁: Evangelical and Black Protestants are more likely than all other Christians to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

This hypothesis assumes that the Prosperity Gospel has been unable to break away from its Evangelical roots and is thus tied to such denominations. A closer association of Mainline Protestants and Catholics with the Prosperity Gospel is highly unlikely given the orthodox teachings of both traditions, but this does not preclude the possibility that there are significant numbers of Mainline Protestant or Catholic adherents of the Prosperity Gospel.

American religion can be viewed as unique because of America's unique makeup. Americans are exceptional in terms of their immigrant composition; moreover, according to Herberg (1983 [1955]), religion is an expression of one's ethnic identity. One way in which to "be American" was to be religious, so immigrant populations were able to simultaneously act out a new American identity while acting out an older ethnic identity. African Americans have not been an immigrant community in this traditional sense, but given their simultaneous status as both insider and outsider, blacks in the U.S. have experienced what Du Bois (1989 [1903]) called "double-consciousness":

...[T]he negro is...born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (2)

Niebuhr (1957) called this racial division within the Church nothing short of a "caste" system (259). Even as "...beliefs and practices...unite into one single moral community

called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1995 [1912]:44), “11:00 on Sunday morning when we stand and sing and Christ has no east or west,” as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation” (2005 [1963]).

Compared to virtually all other religions in the U.S., the Prosperity movement is amazingly multicultural and ethnically diverse; however, it is not a black religious movement (Harrison 2005). Even though Prosperity-oriented churches cannot be conceptualized as Black churches per se or as being part of the Black Protestant tradition historically, the predominance of black members in this movement can likely be explained in part through an understanding of the historic social functions of the Black Church. The Black Church, first, afforded a milieu for the organization of the Civil Rights Movement (Morris 1984). Unlike any other institution, black churches were places that were outside of the control and supervision of mainstream, white America and were ideal incubators for communal change. Moreover, the idiosyncrasies of black religious practice predispose its adherents to socio-political activism (Secret, Johnson, & Forrest 1990; Pattillo-McCoy 1998). The Black Church, however, also served more individualistic ambitions. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) write:

...[I]t is clearly evident that black churches had a major role in establishing the black self-help tradition during a time when there were no social welfare agencies and private philanthropy was reserved for other groups. The Black Church assumed the task of helping black people internalize the ethic of economic rationality that would lead to economic mobility. Black church leaders were well aware of the role of racism in retarding this mobility, and they knew from experience that they and their children would have to put forth maximum efforts for minimal achievements. To reduce the trauma of these realities as much as possible, the black churches took on economic roles and functions and created institutional vehicles they might otherwise have left to other entities. (244)

H2B₁: Blacks are more likely than other racial/ethnic categories to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

If, in fact, blacks are overrepresented among Prosperity adherents and are more likely to espouse Prosperity-oriented ideas, it may be because of the social structural limitations on their access to traditional trajectories of upward mobility.⁴ In particular, the church offers a location for African Americans to seek alternative social networks and financial opportunity as well as a supernatural roadmap to affluence absent the “natural” means to such wealth.

Penny-Pinching for Prosperity

Americans as a whole are not very generous in terms of charitable giving, and American Christians are only marginally more generous than the average American (Smith, Emerson, & Snell 2008; Stark 2008; Wuthnow 1994). Even though, as Smith et al. claim, contemporary Americans have an unprecedented capacity to give to their churches, they are not doing so very liberally, and very few Christians tithe in the literal sense. There are very good reasons to why this is the case. Smith, Emerson, & Snell (2008) tell us that:

...[E]very Christian impulse to generously give money away inevitably runs up against potent counter-impulses driven by mass consumerism to instead perpetually spend, borrow, acquire, consume, discard, and then spend more on oneself and family. Such forces are not merely matters of personal “values” but are structured into deep-rooted institutions....[T]he dominance of mass consumerism works powerfully and in many ways against American Christians freely and liberally giving away significant proportions of their income... (176).

⁴ I do not argue that the lack of upward mobility itself affects the likelihood of adherence but that the availability of the traditional means to mobility does.

Wuthnow (1994) comes to a very similar conclusion:

...[R]eligious giving is part of a much larger cluster of beliefs and cultural assumptions and, for this reason, cannot be separated from how people think about their work, money, and materialism, any more than it can be cut off from beliefs about God, spirituality, and stewardship. This is because religious giving has important symbolic qualities. It dramatizes commitment and withdrawal, expenditure and sacrifice, what it means to be a spiritual person, and what a good religious organization should be (249).

Thus the altruistic intentions of Christians today may be thwarted by overarching social structure and cultural mandates.

One way in which to envisage the competition between cultural mandates is in what I will term “cosmological theories,” about which there are several conceptions in the sociology of religion. James Davidson Hunter (1991), who first introduced the idea of the culture war, positions the conflict between what he terms the culturally “orthodox” and the culturally “progressive.” The former share a commitment to “an external, definable, and transcendent authority” (44) while the latter share a belief in the rational, subjective, process-oriented realization of truth. It is the open hostility—both political and social—between these opposing understanding of “moral authorities” that best characterizes what Hunter means by the culture war. Most importantly, Hunter writes, “The divisions of political consequence today are not theological and ecclesiastical in character but the result of differing worldviews” (42).⁵ Previously salient social divisions, most notably religious denominations, are made irrelevant. The culture war, in

⁵ Hunter warns that his use of the terms “orthodox” and “progressive” differ from that of the mainstream. First, these are not theological terms per se. One, for instance, can be theologically orthodox in the Roman Catholic sense but still “progressive” in the culture war sense. Second, these are not political terms per se. Political labels such as conservative and liberal, while often analogous to “orthodox” and “progressive,” respectively, are dependent on preexisting moral commitments. One does not begin with a political alignment and create a worldview that corresponds to it. For this reason, it is imperative to avoid such political labels.

fact, cuts across traditional denominational lines, pitting Protestant against Protestant, Catholic against Catholic, and Jew against Jew. Moreover, many of these historical antagonists are made into strange bedfellows in the more pressing battle over the moral direction of the United States. Neither are the roots of the culture war, according to Hunter, in education, class, race, or gender differences. Instead, they are solely in ideologies and moralities disconnected from other demographic disparities.

Davis and Robinson (1996), while agreeing with Wuthnow and Hunter that the orthodox are particularly invested in specific defenses of traditional gender roles and family types, disagree with their claim that the same relationship exists between the orthodox and conservative defenses of racial and economic inequality. They, in fact, find “...that the orthodox are no more conservative than moral progressives on issues concerning racial inequality and are more liberal on issues of economic inequality” (780-1). Because of this, Davis and Robinson (1999) propose replacing the orthodox/progressive dichotomy with an orthodox/modernist continuum. Instead of drawing the line between those who recognize an objective authority and those who recognize a subjective authority, Davis and Robinson suggest that a continuum be recognized with those who hold traditionally communitarian moralities—whom they similarly term “orthodox”— at one pole and those with modern individualist moralities—whom they term “modernists” at the other (1996; 1999; 2006). They argue that since modernists are theological individualists they will likely be economic individualists as well. In fact, they find support for this theory in Europe (1999), the Middle East (2006), and the United States (1996, Starks and Robinson 2005). Davis and Robinson (1996) also show that Hunter exaggerates the extent to which Americans are polarized into a

culture war: "...[W]e found that most Americans occupy a middle ground between the extremes of religious orthodoxy and moral progressivism" (780).

Hunter (1991) and Davis and Robinson (1996; 1999; 2006) explain location on the battlefield one-dimensionally. Hart (1996) presents a much more complex, five-dimensional scheme of Christian teaching. These five "building blocks" with which Christians "construct" (43) their worldview are voluntarism, universalism, love, thisworldliness, and otherworldliness. Respectively, these tendencies involve individual autonomy, the social limitlessness of salvation, the un-conditionality of love, (the downplaying of) a responsibility to God's material creation, and a rejection of earthly standards. Because of the complexity of this scheme:

...[T]he values undergirding liberal or conservative economic views are not constant; even if people are at the same place on the liberal/conservative dimension, they may not have the same reasons for being there, and may have values that differ in fundamental ways....[W]ays of connecting faith to economic issues exhibit great variety. (84)

Hart claims that one's location on the five dimensions of theology does not necessarily link up with a simple politically liberal/conservative location or with related economic attitudes. While the utility of such a scale might be questionable, it does inform our understanding of the complexity of contemporary worldviews that are sometimes reductionistic.

These cosmological theories point toward different expectations for Prosperity adherents in terms of their beliefs about charitable and religious giving. Hunter (1991) would seem to suggest that Prosperity adherents are more religiously orthodox (i.e. absolutist) than progressive (i.e. relativistic) and, thus, would give generously to their churches but give little to charities. Davis and Robinson (1996; 1999; 2006) would seem

to suggest that, as biblical literalists, Prosperity adherents are more religiously orthodox (i.e. communitarian) than modernist (i.e. individualistic) and, thus, would give more generously than modernists to both their churches and charities. Hart (1996) suggests that Prosperity adherents heavily emphasize the voluntaristic dimension (i.e. self-deterministic) of Christian teaching and, thus, would give generously to their churches but give little to charities.

Because of the idiosyncrasies of the Prosperity movement, I would make the following prediction.

H3A₁: Prosperity adherents are more likely to give generously to their churches and other religious causes.

The Prosperity Gospel makes tithing a rigid, base requirement in a way that most other Christian traditions do not. Moreover, the Prosperity Gospel promises material rewards for religious giving (Harrison 2005). Because of this, Prosperity adherents have much stronger motivations and incentives to give to their churches and pastors than the average American Christian. Given this alone, we would expect that their religious giving would eclipse that of all others. Prosperity adherents are unlike other Christians in that their theology is much more in line with—and, as argued above, perhaps even a creation of—contemporary consumer-driven capitalism. According to Smith et al. (2008), “...[I]t is money and individual autonomy that are sacred, perhaps even more sacred than even God, church, the gospel, and the Bible, for some American Christians. By virtue of being sacred in American culture, it is nearly impossible to question, to infringe upon money and individual autonomy” (194) so, whereas the typical Christian’s impulse to give is thwarted by more secular concerns, the Prosperity Gospel uniquely reconciles these

conflicting values by subsuming the would-be secular beliefs into a religious framework. In other words, avarice is sacralized. Religious giving for Prosperity adherents, then, is not something that is done in spite of larger cultural expectations but, instead, is done *because* of them.

H3B₁: Prosperity adherents are less likely to give to nonreligious charitable causes.

Since the Prosperity Gospel ultimately blames the poor for their own plight, ignoring social constraints, nonreligious charitable giving is largely discouraged as, at best, wasteful. Kenneth Copeland (1974) writes:

You can feed a thief all day long, but all you will have is a thief full of food. The food won't change him, but the Word of God will transform him on the inside. If you give to the poor in the proper way, then you can witness to them and introduce them to the power of God. I never give to the poor without telling them about Jesus. If they are to get my material goods, they will first have to listen to what I have to say about Jesus (83).

Giving to the poor is something that the Prosperity Gospel encourages but only in a specific manner and for a particular purpose. A moment of giving can be a moment to witness. Altruism, however, is ultimately not other-centered but self-centered. Giving to the poor is a financial investment with a guaranteed return. "When you give to the poor, you can expect back what you gave" (81). This is largely in line with Wuthnow's (1991) understanding of American individualism in which altruism, when enacted at all, is re-conceptualized in self-serving terms that reward the volunteer (and arguably the giver) as the primary purpose. For Prosperity adherents, the rewards are material and not just the sentimental feelings of self-satisfaction. This all, however, must be contextualized in the fact that all kinds of giving are done through the church for Prosperity adherents so that

even if giving is done with motives that may be interpreted as nonreligious to outsiders, adherents will likely funnel it through their churches.

Voting for Prosperity

While religion has largely been ignored or interpreted away by voting scholars (Leege and Kellstedt 1993b), it has been found to be one of the best predictors of voting behavior, second only to race in magnitude (Brooks and Manza 1997). In the United States, voting is strongly influenced by socio-religious cleavages based on denominational affiliation, the frequency of religious service attendance, doctrinal belief, denominational group membership, and congregational membership (Manza and Wright 1997). Party alignments are also related to religious tradition, with Catholics and Mainline Protestants as centrists, Black Protestants as Democrats, and Evangelical Protestants as Republicans. Denominational preference matters politically in that it is the most common form of voluntary association in the U.S. (Kellstedt and Green 1993). These cleavages, however, should not be overestimated, as has often been the case in the past (Davis and Robinson 1996). Doctrinal beliefs, particularly beliefs about the nature of the Bible, are better predictors of a host of political beliefs and behaviors (Kellstedt and Smidt 1993).

In his book *Religion at the Polls*, Menendez (1977) recounts cases in which religion has affected American Presidential elections. He reaches several conclusions relevant to this study. First, people who are affiliated with religious groups that perceive themselves as insecure or politically excluded—such as Evangelicals—are more likely to vote for those who belong to their same religious group. Second, religious conservatives,

because of their insistence on the individualistic accountability to God, reject the role of social influences on behavior and, thus, the responsibility of the state to intervene, aligning them strongly with political conservatives. Third, the “New Evangelicals,” however, are too heterogeneous and savvy to be as politically dogmatic as many fear, and finally, it is unlikely that religious affiliation will directly determine the outcome of a Presidential election in the future.

In *God's Warriors*, Wilcox (1992) shows that evangelicals tend to be conservative on economic issues, even though they also tend to have lower levels of education, income, and occupational prestige. He argues that this is in large part the result of Christian Right supporters feeling that their lifestyle is threatened by a hostile mainstream culture. In particular, they see this threat as being directed at their children via the education system. In this sense, according to Wilcox, “support for the Christian Right can be understood from a rational-choice perspective” (40) in that “citizens are supporting groups that espouse their values and beliefs” (224). The Christian Right, even though drawing most of its support from white evangelicals, has seen would-be large-scale success thwarted by the religious particularism that separates evangelical, fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and charismatic Christians who are often seen by outsiders as being much more doctrinally homogenous than is the case.

Evangelical Protestants have always been less likely to be politically active (Kellstedt and Noll 1990). This is partly explained by the particularly low interest of Pentecostals. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, evangelicals slowly realigned from overwhelming Democratic support to Republican. According to Kellstedt and Noll, this shift is partially explained by the improving socioeconomic status (SES) of evangelicals

and the emergence of social issues in the 1970s. (It is unclear whether the Evangelical realignment will still hold when controlling for SES.) In specific regard to voter turnout, Conservative Protestants have the worst voter record⁶ (Manza and Brooks 1997). When they do vote, however, conservative/Evangelical Christians are likely to vote for Republicans, having at times looked to the Christian Right for voting information perhaps because they are structurally threatened, culturally embattled, and religiously tooled (Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, and Sikkink 1998; Regnerus, Sikkink, and Smith 1999).

The 2004 elections, in particular, were defined by moral issues to which the Republican victors are indebted; moreover, Bush, in large part, owes his reelection to religious conservatives, the core of which were evangelicals (Rozell and Gupta 2006). As its first new issue since the early 1990s, the same-sex marriage debate galvanized the Christian Right and evangelicals for the 2004 elections (Wilcox, Merolla, and Beer 2006; Campbell and Monson 2007). In fact, same-sex marriage is just the latest in a series of hot-button issues flamed by social change that has largely defined religious conservative movements since the 1970s (Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2006):

From its inception the Christian Right has been motivated by a desire to restore traditional morality to public policy. In this regard, many of the movement's activities have been reactions to policy changes....the level and intensity of Christian Right activities are explained in large measure by policy shifts away from traditional morality...This change provided a powerful motivation for movement activities (4).

Thus, the Christian Right and similar religio-political movements are the result of the perceived loss of social status.

⁶ BLM coefficient = .19; standard error = .14

In 2004, traditionalist evangelicals served as the “backbone of a coalition” (Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2007:33) for both the Republican Party and President Bush, while black Protestants and seculars bolstered the Democratic Party and Senator Kerry. Contrary to the predictions of many a pundit, blacks remained firmly in support of the Democrats (McDaniel 2007). There is no evidence, however, that evangelicals increased their voter turnout any more than other groups in 2004 (Keeter 2007). What did change was an increase in political solidarity among evangelicals to the Republican Party to the extent that they have approached the level of monolithic support of blacks enjoyed by the Democratic Party. The 2004 successes of Bush and Republicans in general had more to do with the public policy concerns—including economic policy—of less committed evangelicals than with moral issues that concerned more committed evangelicals (Lyman and Hussey 2007).

In *Religion in American Public Life*, Reichly (1985) elaborates a scheme of value systems that affects political behavior in the United States and can help to frame the current project. These systems are based on a combination of influences (or the lack thereof) from three sources: the individual self, the social group, and a greater sense of transcendent purpose. These sources result in seven possible value systems:

- egoism*, based on the individual self alone.
- authoritarianism*, based on society alone.
- monism*, based on transcendence alone.
- idealism*, based on transcendence and society in combination.
- personalism*, based on transcendence and society in combination.
- civil humanism*, based on the self and society in combination.
- theist-humanism*, based on all three sources: transcendence, the self, and society (10-11).

Personalism, as the pursuit of transcendence (read God) through individual experience (read being born-again), is of particular interest as it contains evangelicalism. Reichly writes that “In its purest form personalism would seem to require no necessary political or even social content. If all that really matters in human life is the individual’s experience of personal salvation...the concerns of civil government...may be regarded as essentially irrelevant (39). Because of this, evangelicals in the U.S. were largely apolitical through the 1960s. By the 1970s, however, a prevailing sense of moral decay among evangelicals (spurred in no small part by Supreme Court rulings for abortion rights and against prayer in public schools) was motivating increasing numbers within the movement to become politically engaged. This reengagement among evangelicals led directly to the elections of both Carter and Regan (the former of which evangelicals almost immediately regretted after his taking office). Overall, evangelicals’ rejuvenated political interest is best explained, according to Reichly, as part of “‘status politics,’ the struggle of a declining social group to recapture some of its lost prestige and power” (329).

Prosperity Gospel adherents, while clearly religious personalists, are unique among evangelicals in that otherworldly salvation, while important, is subordinated to the perceived promises of this-worldly material rewards. How does this play out politically? Do the temporal concerns of Prosperity adherents motivate them to increased political activity? While research into the relationship between religion and political behavior has been progressing, this particular area—namely the Prosperity Gospel—has been neglected. This research proposes to fill that gap and answer the question, What, if any, are the politics of Prosperity adherents?

The Prosperity Gospel is an evangelically-minded, conservative movement. It stresses financially conservative or economically individualistic goals, and it argues against social consciousness. Like other conservative Christians, Prosperity adherents should not be as politically active as adherents of other faith traditions. I test this assumption by looking at voting in the 2004 presidential election:

H4A₁: Prosperity adherents were less likely to vote in 2004 presidential election.

Given their individualistic worldview and his evangelical rhetoric and identity, those Prosperity adherents who did vote should have supported George W. Bush in 2004.

H4B₁: Prosperity adherents were more likely to have voted for Bush than Kerry in the 2004 presidential election.

Moreover, they should be likely to support the GOP consistently.

H4C₁: Prosperity adherents are more likely to identify as Republican.

I expect all of these hypotheses to hold even as I control for being born-again/evangelical and for affiliation as Protestant, Catholic, or other Christian, among other variables.

One major problem with much of the previous research is that it deals indiscriminately with “Conservative Protestants,” “conservative Christians,” “evangelicals,” the “new religious right,” the “Moral Majority,” etc. The preferred operationalization of religious affiliation within the sociology of religion is to differentiate between religious traditions, including Evangelical Protestants (Steensland, Park, Regnerus, Robinson, Wilcox, and Woodberry 2000). While Evangelical Protestants are not precisely the same as the groups listed above, they do tend to be highly correlated, and I am forced to treat them as analogs here, albeit reluctantly, since these data only have a measure for “born-again/evangelical.” Being “born-again,” however, is not so simple a matter. First, it is

unclear how respondents interpret such questions, as a statement of identity or of an experience; second, there are differences between religious traditions on its interpretation as well, particularly between Catholics and Evangelicals (Jelen, Smidt, and Wilcox 1993). By itself and without clarification, born-again has not been a great predictor of political beliefs. Since the question in this data specifically links born-again to evangelical, some of this confusion is possibly eliminated. These data also do not contain a specific question on denominational affiliation. While this is unfortunate, it is not damning as political partisanship is today less about denominational belonging and more about devotional behavior (Campbell 2007b).

CHAPTER 2

Race and Class and Prosperity Gospel Adherence

INTRODUCTION

As I noted in the previous chapter, prior research on the relationship between religion and class can generally be divided between that which treats religion primarily as a dependent variable and that which treats it mainly as an independent variable. The roots of this theoretical divide can be traced back to Marx and Weber. Marxians tend to see economics as affecting religion, while Weberians tend to see religion as affecting economics. While much of the literature regarding Pentecostals, Charismatics, the Faith Movement, and the Prosperity Gospel has assumed that Prosperity adherents are poor, 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).

H1A₁: The less income a Christian earns the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

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).

H1A₂: The more income a Christian earns the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

There is also the possibility that there is no difference between the wealthy and the poor. This would challenge a Weberian interpretation of the results. However, a null outcome cannot fully contradict a neo-Marxian interpretation since Christians at the lower end of the income scale could adhere to the Prosperity Gospel because it promises the opportunity for upward mobility while Christians at the upper end of the income scale simultaneously adhere to the Prosperity Gospel because it offers an apology for their wealth; both could potentially be happening at the same time, cancelling each other out, and causing no relationship between income and adherence to PG. Thus, the null hypothesis:

H1A₀: One's income is unrelated to adherence to the Prosperity Gospel.

Regardless of how 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.

H1B₁: The less education a Christian has the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

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 et al. 2000) will still be the primary “home” of adherents of the Prosperity Gospel. Put another way, Prosperity ideas and adherence should be less common in the Catholic or Mainline Protestant traditions, 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.

H2A₁: Evangelical and Black Protestants are more likely than all other Christians to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

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, acceptance of blacks has 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.

H2B₁: Blacks are more likely than other racial groups to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel.

DATA AND METHODS

I test the hypotheses with 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. These data were collected by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc. (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. The full national cross-section sample data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of adult Americans by targeting U.S. Census numbers. The margin of error for the entire sample is approximately +/- 4 percentage points. These data will be used in testing all of the hypotheses.

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 an index of Prosperity Orientation,⁷ constructed from the following questions:

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 getting at an underlying, latent variable that we might call Prosperity adherence.⁸ 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 control for several independent variables. Race is included as a dichotomous variable, black (=1) or non-black. While respondents could volunteer the answers Hispanic or Asian, very few did so. Hispanic or Asian variables when included were

⁷ 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. I discuss this further in chapter 5.

⁸ Eigenvalue = 1.29; average loading value = .33 (SD = .15); Cronbach's α = 0.74

automatically dropped from regressions because of their small numbers. 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, transformed to approximate the number of years needed for each level of education, originally included in the data as a categorical variable. 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. Income is included as a continuous variable, transformed from a categorical variable using the median dollar amounts divided by 1000. Gender is included, with females coded 1 and males 0. Religious affiliation as Protestant (reference), Catholic, or other Christian is included. Unfortunately, the data did not include a measure of denominational affiliation. Region of the country is also included. All cases with missing data are dropped from the sample. The descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in table 2.1.

[insert Table 2.1 about here]

RESULTS

For each of these dependent variables, model 1 is the full model which 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 were run for each dependent variable, the results of which are not presented here. BIC' provides very strong support for most⁹ of the final models over all other conceivable models. This same approach is repeated in the following chapters as well.

Tables 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 show the BLM models 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 2.6 shows the OLM models for the Prosperity Index dependent variable, and table 2.7 shows the preferred models for each of the dependent variables.

[insert Table 2.2 about here]

[insert Table 2.3 about here]

[insert Table 2.4 about here]

[insert Table 2.5 about here]

[insert Table 2.6 about here]

[insert Table 2.7 about here]

I present the results here as predicted probabilities for ideal types, as they 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

⁹ These are the exceptions: for the DV being members of a Prosperity movement, BIC' provides only positive support for model 4 over model 3, and for the DV “agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God’s blessing,” BIC' provides only strong support for model 4 over model 3.

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 chances 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 agreeing that poverty is a sign of that God is unhappy (16%) as seen in table 2.8. Born-again/evangelicals have the second highest chances of being members of a Prosperity movement (10%), believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous (69%), and agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing (24%); being born-again/evangelical, however, is not significant for agreeing that poverty is a sign of that God is unhappy. Increasing levels of education have an indirect relationship with agreeing that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing and agreeing that poverty is a sign of that God is unhappy. The average person has a 19% chance of having a Prosperity Index scores above 5. Blacks have a 58% chance of having Prosperity Index scores above 5, compared to just a 17% chance for non-blacks. Those in the 65 or older age cohort have a 25% chance of having a Prosperity Index scores above 5, compared to just a 12% chance for the 18-24 cohort.

[insert Table 2.8 about here]

Population

The chances of the average American being a Prosperity adherent are largely dependent on how we operationalize Prosperity adherence, as shown in figure 2.1. Holding all variables at their mean, 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 fairly small. As shown in figure 2.2, the chances of having a score on the Prosperity Index higher than 5 (19%) are also fairly 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.

[insert Figure 2.1 about here]

[insert Figure 2.2 about here]

Within-Movement Diversity

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.

Class

I hypothesized three possible relationships between income and Prosperity adherence. First, the less income a Christian earns the more likely he or she might be to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel (H1A₁); second, the more income a Christian earns the more likely he or she might be to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel (H1A₂); or third, income might be unrelated to adherence to the Prosperity Gospel (H1A₀). In fact, as we can see in table 2.7, income is not a significant predictor of any of the measures of

Prosperity adherence. This is support for the null hypothesis ($H1A_0$). This finding holds in the zero-order as well; even without controls, income is unrelated to any of the measures of Prosperity adherence. The lack of a relationship between income and adherence to the Prosperity Gospel means that I can dismiss a Weberian interpretation of the results. It is unthinkable that Prosperity ideas would simultaneously motivate individuals to both take actions that would increase their income and reduce their income. 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.

To be sure, though, the Prosperity Gospel is not a type of poor people's movement, as Harrison (2005), in part, claims. The poor (i.e. those with lower levels of income) are no more or less likely than the relatively wealthy (i.e. those with higher levels of income) to be members of the movement or to adhere to the movement's specific teachings.

A neo-Marxian understanding of simultaneous and divergent justifications, however, cannot be dismissed. That is, 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. Were it not for qualitative evidence suggesting that both such understandings are occurring among adherents of the Prosperity Gospel, the logical conclusion would be that income has no effect on adherence. However, my quantitative findings here are supported by the ethnographic work of Harrison (2005) in a Word of Faith congregation in Sacramento, California, who writes:

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).

Qualitative research, like Harrison’s, is methodologically unable to determine whether Prosperity ideas are motivating adherents to behave differently in their financial lives. My research, being quantitative, can call this motivational aspect into question while being informed by the grounded, dual-interpretation of Prosperity ideas. People at the bottom and the top of the class hierarchy may be able to use the Prosperity Gospel to explain their locations, but they are not appreciably changing their financial behavior.

Education

Consistent with H1B₁, I find that the less education a Christian has the more likely he or she is to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel. As shown in figure 2.3, those with less education are more likely to agree that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing, and as shown in figure 2.4, 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 it increases). Education, however, is not a significant predictor of either being a member of a Prosperity movement or of agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous. Thus, while education does affect acceptance of the core teachings of the Prosperity Gospel, it does not affect membership itself, either formally or informally. 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.

[insert Figure 2.3 about here]

[insert Figure 2.4 about here]

Income, perhaps the most widely-used proxy for class in sociological studies, does not predict adherence to the Prosperity Gospel. However, education, which also can serve as a proxy for class, *does* predict adherence. Specifically, those with more education are less likely to agree with Prosperity tenets. The relationship between education and class has been well-documented. Education is a very strong source of social mobility. For those who, for whatever reason, have not had access to the structural mobility afforded by education, the Prosperity Gospel offers a supplementary and supernatural promise of the mobility that is otherwise lacking. In other words, those who are highly educated have the human, social, and cultural capital to more or less ensure their upward mobility while those with little education and the resulting capital must seek out other means to that mobility.

Transdenominationalism

Prosperity adherence is not limited to Evangelical and Black Protestantism as we might expect given the movements' history and as predicted by H2A₁. While those who are born-again/evangelical¹⁰ are disproportionately likely to be members of Prosperity movements, to agree that God wants people to be financially prosperous, and to agree that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing, as shown in figure 2.5, there is no

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

difference between Protestants, Catholics, and other Christians in their likelihood of Prosperity adherence, as shown above in table 2.7. 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 that the Prosperity Gospel is transdenominational, which, 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.

[insert Figure 2.5 about here]

Race

A surprising finding involves the critical importance of race in *all* models explaining adherence to the Prosperity Gospel. As shown in figures 2.6 and 2.7, blacks are far more likely to adhere to Prosperity messages ($H2B_1$).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

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.

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 in regard to access to social, cultural, and human capitals and have historically been overcome within the Black Church and today within Prosperity-oriented black churches.

[insert Figure 2.6 about here]

[insert Figure 2.7 about here]

As noted above, those with more education are exponentially less likely to agree that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy, but education and race have an interactive effect, as shown in figure 2.8, in which blacks are exceptionally less 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 lessening support for the Prosperity Gospel among blacks than it does among other racial groups.

[insert Figure 2.8 about here]

Gender

Given previous research, I would expect women to be more likely to adhere to the Prosperity Gospel. Miller and Hoffman (1995) have argued that women are more religious than men on a number of different measures because men are more likely to engage in risky behavior while women are more likely to avoid risk. Because of differential socialization, boys are encouraged to take risk, and girls are encouraged to be

more genteel. According to Pascal's wager, as discussed by Miller and Hoffman, the potential risks of disbelief far outweigh the potential gains of belief. In other words, behaving as if there were a heaven makes a lot more sense than behaving as if there were no hell. In this way, religiosity becomes feminine: belief is safe and, thus, for women while disbelief is dangerous and, thus, for men.

If this same risk-aversion argument were to be used to understand Prosperity adherence, one would expect women to be more likely to adhere. Those who follow the specific teachings of the Prosperity Gospel at least have the chance to prosper; those who don't, won't. In this way, it's like Lotto: you have to be in it to win it! However, men and women are equally likely to be Prosperity adherents. If Prosperity adherence can be conceptualized as a form of financial risk aversion, why aren't women more likely to believe it? Ironically, the otherwise conservative Prosperity movement is a relatively progressive force in terms of gender roles. Indeed, several prominent Prosperity preachers are women (e.g. Joyce Meyer). Because the Prosperity Gospel is a reflection of a radicalized individualism that demands personal accountability, the movement unintentionally empowers women and rejects traditional gender roles. In this way, perhaps women and men are symmetrically socialized and end up behaving similarly.

Other Variables

While Harrison (2005) claims that Faith ministries are overwhelmingly located in the South, Prosperity participation at the individual level is much more evenly spread regionally. Those who live in the Midwest are slightly (7%) more likely to agree than those in other regions of the country that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy while

those in the Northeast have almost no chance (0%) of agreeing, as shown in figure 2.9. Overall, however, the Prosperity Gospel has similar support across the country. Those who live outside of urban areas (22%) are more likely than those who live in urban areas (13%) to agree that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing, as shown in figure 2.10. Overall, though, the Prosperity Gospel seems to be equally appealing in urban, rural, and suburban settings. While those who are older are more likely to agree that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing, as shown in figure 2.11, and to have higher Prosperity Index scores, as shown in figure 2.12, they are no more likely to be members of a Prosperity movement or to agree with the other related teachings.

[insert Figure 2.9 about here]

[insert Figure 2.10 about here]

[insert Figure 2.11 about here]

[insert Figure 2.12 about here]

CONCLUSIONS

There are multiple Gospels of Prosperity, and the Prosperity Gospel is transdenominational. Income, surprisingly, is not a significant predictor of any of the measures of Prosperity adherence, suggesting that Prosperity adherents are not appreciably changing their financial behaviors. 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. Men

and women may be equally likely to be Prosperity adherents because the Prosperity Gospel is a reflection of a radicalized individualism that demands personal accountability, regardless of gender. The Prosperity Gospel has similar levels of adherence in all kinds of urban and regional settings.

Overall, the Prosperity Gospel is a fairly 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. It is similarly appealing across income levels, between men and women, among those who attend church frequently and infrequently, and (with a couple exceptions) across the country and in varying urban settings. It is more popular among blacks, the less educated, those who are older, and those who are born-again or evangelical. Given anecdotal evidence that the movement has grown considerably in the last twenty years, one might expect that, given its multivocality, it will become even more popular. I estimate from these data that in 2006 there were over 16 million people in the U.S. who were members of a Prosperity movement—three times the number of Jews in the U.S.¹² It seems that, in part, rising levels of education are counteracting this growth. Since the U.S. has a relatively well-educated population, and perhaps increasingly so, it is unlikely that the movement will be able to sustain its recent growth. In fact, it is likely the movement may shrink domestically as the average level of education continues to rise.

¹² Calculated from Pew (2008).

CHAPTER 3

Penny-Pinching for Prosperity?

INTRODUCTION

Americans as a whole are not very generous in terms of charitable giving, and American Christians are only marginally more generous than the average American (Smith, Emerson, & Snell 2008; Stark 2008; Wuthnow 1994). Contemporary Americans are not giving to their churches very liberally, and very few Christians tithe in the literal sense. Perhaps the altruistic intentions of Christians today are thwarted by a hostile overarching social structure and culture, which includes such values as individualism, materialism, and mass consumerism (Wuthnow 1991; 1994; Smith, Emerson, & Snell 2008).

Competing cosmological theories point toward competing expectations for charitable and religious giving. Using Hunter's (1991) scheme, one would expect the orthodox to give generously to religious causes and progressives to give generously to nonreligious causes. Using Davis and Robinson's (1996; 1999; 2006) scheme and assuming that Prosperity Gospel adherents are orthodox, one would expect the orthodox to give generously to both religious and nonreligious causes and modernists to give little to either. Using Hart's (1996) scheme, one would expect those who prioritize voluntarism and otherworldliness to give generously to religious causes while those who stress universalism, love, and "thisworldliness" to give generously to nonreligious causes.

These cosmological theories point toward different expectations for Prosperity adherents in terms of their beliefs about charitable and religious giving. Hunter (1991)

would seem to suggest that Prosperity adherents are more religiously orthodox (i.e. absolutist) than progressive (i.e. relativistic) and, thus, should give generously to their churches but give little to charities. Davis and Robinson (1996; 1999; 2006), however, would seem to suggest that, as biblical literalists, Prosperity adherents are more religiously orthodox (i.e. communitarian) than modernist (i.e. individualistic) and, thus, should give generously to both their churches and charities. Hart's (1996) analysis would seem to suggest that since Prosperity adherents heavily emphasize the voluntaristic dimension (i.e. self-deterministic) of Christian teaching, they should give generously to their churches but give little to charities.

Because of the idiosyncrasies of the Prosperity movement, I expect that since the Prosperity Gospel makes tithing a rigid, base requirement in a way that other Christian traditions do not and promises material rewards for religious giving, Prosperity adherents have much stronger motivations and incentives to give to their churches and pastors than the average American Christian. I expect that their religious giving should eclipse that of all others. Avarice is sacralized for Prosperity adherents. Religious giving, then, is not something that is done in spite of larger cultural expectations but, instead, is done *because* of them.

H3A₁: Prosperity adherents are more likely to give generously to their churches and other religious causes.

Previous research has pointed to the importance of religion for nonreligious giving. Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink (1998) found that those who are religious and those who attend religious services frequently tend to give more to charitable

organizations. Surprisingly, though, they also found that conservative Christians report “pro-poor” giving habits, that others (i.e. Mormons) are the most “pro-poor,” and that liberal Protestants and practicing Catholics aren’t nearly as “pro-poor” in their giving as conventional wisdom might suggest.

Since the Prosperity Gospel ultimately blames the poor for their own plight, ignoring social constraints, nonreligious charitable giving is largely discouraged as, at best, wasteful. Giving to the poor, when it is encouraged, is only done so because it can be used as an opportunity to proselytize. Altruism, when it is rarely enacted, is ultimately not other-centered but self-centered. Giving to the poor is a financial investment with a guaranteed monetary return. This kind of giving is almost always funneled through one’s church, further limiting nonreligious giving.

H3B₁: Prosperity adherents are less likely to give to nonreligious charitable causes.

DATA AND METHODS

I use the same SRBI data as described in chapter 2. I use two dependent variables in my analyses of giving. First, I use the question that asks, “What percentage of your after-tax income would you say you gave away in the past 12 months to other nonreligious charitable causes?” This is a six-category variable, ranging from “none” to “more than 20% of your after-tax income.” Second, I use the question that asks, “What percentage...would you say you gave away...to your church or any other religious causes?” This, too, is a six-category variable. For the analysis of both dependent variables, I use multinomial logit (MNL) models. The independent variables of primary

interest for both dependent variables are the three measures of Prosperity adherence, which are formal membership in a Prosperity movement, belief that God wants people to be financially prosperous, and the Prosperity Index score. Along with those variables listed above, I also control for the reciprocal measure of giving for both dependent variables (e.g. nonreligious giving for religious giving). I use the same iterative process to reduce the models to the most significant and parsimonious number of independent variables for both dependent variables as used in chapter 2. The descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in table 3.1.

[insert Table 3.1 about here]

RESULTS

Nonreligious Giving

According to estimates from these data weighted to U.S. Census figures, 77% of those in the U.S. who self-identify as Christian gave to nonreligious charitable causes in the past 12 months. There appear to be modest differences in nonreligious giving based on Prosperity adherence. Of the 8% of those in the U.S. who are members of a Christian movement that emphasizes God's gift of personal prosperity to his followers, 74% gave to nonreligious charitable causes. Of the 62% of those in the U.S. who believe that God wants people to be financially prosperous, 79% gave to nonreligious charitable causes. The median Prosperity Index score for those in the U.S. who self-identify as Christian is approximately 4.5 out of 10. Of the 1% of those in the U.S. with a Prosperity Index score of 10, the most Prosperity oriented, an estimated 59% gave to nonreligious charitable causes. Of the 1% of those in the U.S. with a Prosperity Index score of 1, the least Prosperity oriented, 68% gave to nonreligious charitable causes.

The MNL coefficients are presented in table 3.2. BIC' provides very strong support for model 2 over both models 1, 3, and 4. The Wald test results for model 2 are shown in table 3.3. Unexpectedly, none of the three measures of Prosperity adherence are significant predictors of nonreligious charitable giving. Unlike in previous chapters, race is also an insignificant predictor. Gender, too, is not a significant predictor of nonreligious giving. As might be expected, neither the frequency of church attendance nor being evangelical/born-again is a significant predictor of charitable giving unrelated to religious organizations; however, religion itself (i.e. Protestant/Catholic/other) is a significant predictor of nonreligious charitable giving.

[insert Table 3.2 about here]

[insert Table 3.3 about here]

In general, there is virtually no chance for anyone to give more than 20% of his or her income to nonreligious charitable causes. Of his or her income, shown in table 3.4, the average Christian has an 18% chance of giving nothing, a 22% chance of giving less than 1%, a 49% chance of giving 1% to 5%, a 10% chance of giving more than 5% but less than 10%, and a 1% chance of giving 10% to 20%.

[insert Table 3.4 about here]

The predicted probabilities for giving nothing to nonreligious charitable causes decrease as income increases. That is, the more money one makes, the more likely he or she is to give something to nonreligious charitable causes. The more money one makes, the more likely he or she is to give 1% to 5% of one's income to nonreligious charitable causes. The chances of giving less than 1% and more than 5% change little with

variations in income. Overall, those who make more money do tend to give slightly more to nonreligious causes.

The predicted probabilities for giving nothing to nonreligious charitable causes decrease as one's level of education increases. That is, the more education one has, the more likely he or she is to give something to nonreligious charitable causes. The chances of giving less than 1% or 10% to 20% of one's income to nonreligious charitable causes decreases as one's level of education increases. The chances of giving 1% to 5% or 5% but less than 10%, however, increases as one's level of education increases. Overall, those who are more highly educated tend to give more moderately to nonreligious causes.

The predicted probability for giving nothing to nonreligious charitable causes decreases as one's age increases. In other words, those who are older are more likely to give something to nonreligious charitable causes. The chances of giving 1% to 5% or more than 5% but less than 10% of one's income to nonreligious charitable causes increases as one's age increases. Overall, those who are older tend to give more moderately to nonreligious causes.

There is very little difference between the nonreligious giving habits of Protestants and Catholics. The predicted probability for giving nothing to nonreligious charitable causes is much higher for other Christians (36%) than for Protestants (16%) and Catholics (16%). The predicted probabilities for each category of giving to nonreligious charitable causes is lower for other Christians than for Protestants and Catholics, except for the "none" category. Overall, other Christians are much less likely to give to nonreligious causes. Other Christians (i.e. Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, and Orthodox), however, only make up an estimated 4% of U.S. Christians.

Holding all variables at their mean, the chances of giving to a nonreligious cause are actually fairly high, as seen in figure 3.1. The average Christian has more than an 80%¹³ chance of giving something, and a near majority (x percent) of Christians give 1% to 5% of their income to nonreligious causes.

[insert Figure 3.1 about here]

Contrary to Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink (1998), I find that those who attend religious services infrequently give no less to charitable organizations than those who attend more frequently.

It makes sense that those who are able to give more do so, and in fact, those who make more money tend to give more to nonreligious causes, as shown in figure 3.2.

[insert Figure 3.2 about here]

While one might expect those who are more highly educated to be motivated to give more generously because of their cultural knowledge of charitable need, they in fact give less to nonreligious causes, as shown in figure 3.3.

[insert Figure 3.3 about here]

I would expect that those who are older are less able to give generously, and indeed, those who are older do tend to give less to nonreligious causes, as shown in figure 3.4. Older American Christians seem to feel less social responsibility than their younger counterparts.

[insert Figure 3.4 about here]

¹³ All of the figures presented here should be interpreted with some skepticism as it is well-established that socially desirable behaviors, such as voting, giving, and church attendance, are regularly overreported.

In direct opposition to the claims of Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink (1998), I find that other Christians (who are mostly Mormons in my data) tend to give less—not more—to nonreligious causes than Protestants and Catholics, who tend to give very similarly, as shown in figure 3.5. Other Christians, however, represent a very small portion of the population and, thus, account for very little charitable giving in absolute terms. As with Regnerus et al.’s data, it is very difficult to draw conclusions about this group given their small numbers.

[insert Figure 3.5 about here]

Religious Giving

According to estimates from these data weighted to U.S. Census figures, 80% of those in the U.S. who self-identify as Christian gave to their church or other religious causes in the past 12 months. 23% gave 10% or more of their after-tax income to their church or other religious causes, the traditional tithe. There appear to be differences in religious giving based on Prosperity adherence. Of the 8% of those in the U.S. who are members of a Christian movement that emphasizes God’s gift of personal prosperity to his followers, 90% gave to their church or other religious causes and 40% tithed. Of the 62% of those in the U.S. who believe that God wants people to be financially prosperous, 82% gave to their church or other religious causes and 27% tithed. As noted above, the median Prosperity Index score for those in the U.S. who self-identify as Christian is approximately 4.5 out of 10. Of the 1% of those in the U.S. with a Prosperity Index score of 10, 100% gave to their church or other religious causes and 59% tithed. Of the 1% of those in the U.S. with a Prosperity Index score of 1, 51% gave to religious causes but none tithed.

The MNL coefficients are presented in table 3.5. BIC' provides very strong support for Model 2 over both Models 1 and 3. The Wald test results for model 2 are shown in table 3.6. Again unexpectedly, none of the three measures of Prosperity adherence are significant predictors of religious giving. As with nonreligious giving, neither race nor gender are significant predictors of religious giving. Unlike with nonreligious giving, both the frequency of church attendance and being evangelical/born-again are significant while income is not a significant predictor of religious giving.

[insert Table 3.5 about here]

[insert Table 3.6 about here]

In general, there is virtually no chance for anyone to give more than 20% of his or her income to his or her church or other religious causes. Of his or her income, the average Christian has a 10% chance of giving nothing, a 14% chance of giving less than 1%, a 39% chance of giving 1% to 5%, a 17% chance of giving more than 5% but less than 10%, and a 21% chance of giving 10% to 20% as seen in table 3.7.

[insert Table 3.7 about here]

The predicted probability for giving nothing to one's church or other religious causes decreases as one's level of education increases. That is, the more education one has, the more likely he or she is to give something to one's church or other religious causes. The chances of giving less than 1% or 10% to 20% of one's income to one's church or other religious causes decreases as one's level of education increases. The chances of giving 1% to 5% or more than 5% but less than 10% increases as one's level of education increases. Overall, those who are more highly educated tend to give moderately to religious causes.

The predicted probability for giving nothing to one's church or other religious causes decreases as one's age increases. That is, the older one is, the more likely he or she is to give something to one's church or other religious causes. The chances of giving less than 1% of one's income to one's church or other religious causes decreases as one's age increases. The chances of giving more than 5% but less than 10% or 10% to 20% increases as one's age increases. Overall, those who are older tend to give relatively generously to religious causes.

The predicted probabilities for giving nothing to one's church or other religious causes is drastically lower for those who attend church at least once a week (1%) than for those who attend less frequently (33%). The predicted probabilities for each category of giving to one's church or other religious causes is higher for those who attend church at least once a week compared to those who attend less frequently, except for the "none" and "less than 1%" categories. Overall, while there is good reason to believe that the rates of attendance in these data are significantly inflated (Hadaway, Marler, & Chaves 1993; 1998; Hadaway & Marler 2005; Hout & Greeley 1998; Woodberry 1998), those who attend more often are more generous to religious causes.

The predicted probabilities for giving nothing to one's church or other religious causes is lower for those who are evangelical/born-again (7%) than for those who are not (13%). The chances of giving less than 1% or 1% to 5% of one's income to one's church or other religious causes are higher for those who are not evangelical/born-again. However, the chances of giving more than 5% but less than 10% or 10% to 20% are higher for those who are evangelical/born-again. Overall, those who are evangelical/born-again give more generously to their churches and other religious causes.

There is little difference between the religious giving habits of Protestants and Catholics. The predicted probabilities for giving anything less than 10% of one's income to one's church or other religious causes is lower for other Christians than for Protestants and Catholics, except for the "none" category. However, other Christians have an exceedingly higher chance (59%) at giving 10% to 20% of their income to their churches or other religious causes than Protestants (21%) and Catholics (18%). Overall, while Protestants and Catholics are more likely to give moderately, other Christians are exceedingly more likely to give generously to religious causes.

As we can see in tables 3.2 and 3.5, Prosperity adherents do not give any differently than other Americans, either to religious ($H3A_1$) or nonreligious causes ($H3B_1$).¹⁴ The Prosperity Gospel explicitly demands that adherents tithe to their churches as the absolute, bare minimum; moreover, it promises exponential returns to those who give beyond this. I expected that this emphasis on religious giving would result in increased religious giving from adherents ($H3A_1$), but my findings refute that hypothesis. (This finding holds at the zero-order.) Even though the Prosperity Gospel places unique demands on its adherents, its adherents do not necessarily meet them. Also, since the Prosperity Gospel ultimately blames the poor for their own plight, ignoring social constraints, nonreligious charitable giving is largely discouraged as, at best, wasteful. I expected that this dissuasion would result in decreased nonreligious giving ($H3B_1$) of Prosperity adherents versus other Americans, but my findings refute this hypothesis as well. Prosperity adherence, no matter how it is conceived, does not affect giving.

¹⁴ The following discussion of giving ignores the potential impact of tax incentives. The finding of no difference for religious giving in particular may indicate that the poor are willing to give to their churches even without a tax incentive but that it works against non-religious giving. For a more complete discussion of such implications, see Ott (2001).

Holding all variables at their mean, the chances of giving to one's church or other religious cause are actually fairly high, as seen in figure 3.6. The average Christian has a 90% chance of giving something. Unlike Smith et al. (2008) who claim that fully 20% of American Christians give nothing at all to their church or other religious causes, the average Christian in this sample only has a 10% chance of giving nothing. There is only a 21% chance, however, of the average Christian tithing. A majority of Christians give less than 5% of their income to religious causes.

[insert Figure 3.6 about here]

Contrary to the claims of Smith et al. (2008) and Stark (2008), I find no evidence that those with lower levels of income give any differently to their churches than do those with higher levels of income. Income is, simply stated, not a significant predictor of religious giving, although, as we saw above, it is a significant factor in non-religious giving.

Contrary, again, to the claims of Stark (2008), I find circumstantial evidence to suggest that Black Protestants do not give a higher percentage of their income to their churches or other religious causes. While I am unable to construct a Black Protestant ideal type since respondents were not asked about their denominational affiliation, black Christians give no more or less than those of other races. Since most black Christians are members of the Black Protestant tradition, it is exceedingly unlikely that Black Protestants give any differently than Mainline or Evangelical Protestants. Race does not matter in terms of religious giving.

While I expected that those who are more highly educated would be more inclined to give generously in view of their cultural knowledge of ecclesiastical need,

they actually tend to give less to their church or another religious cause, as shown in figure 3.7.

[insert Figure 3.7 about here]

In line with the claims of Stark (2008), those who are older tend to give relatively generously to religious causes, as shown in figure 3.8. Older people tend to give less to nonreligious causes, as we saw above.

[insert Figure 3.8 about here]

Those who attend church once a week or more tend to give relatively generously to religious causes as shown in figure 3.9. While Stark (2008) claims that “Those who attend church several times a week come very close to contributing an average of 10 percent [of their income]” (98), I find that only a third of those who attend church once a week or more tithe.

[insert Figure 3.9 about here]

In line with the claims of Stark (2008) that “conservative Protestants” are more generous to religious causes, those who are born-again/evangelical tend to give relatively generously, as shown in figure 3.10. Admittedly, conservative Protestant and born-again/evangelical are not entirely equivalent categories, but those with evangelically-inclined beliefs tend to comprise the largest block of conservative Protestants.

[insert Figure 3.10 about here]

Given that the different Christian denominational families have different teachings about the importance of regular religious contribution, I would expect that there would be differences between these groups. Protestants and Catholics do tend to give less while other Christians are exceedingly more likely to give generously to religious

causes, as shown in figure 3.11. Again, however, other Christians (who are mostly Mormons) represent a very small portion of the population and, thus, account for very little religious giving in absolute terms; although, unlike with nonreligious giving, giving to one's church necessarily means that their money is being accumulated in the same respective organizations which could help to explain the relative financial wellbeing of other Christian churches. In the case of the LDS Church, which has similar teachings about tithing to Evangelical Protestants, *all* donations are funneled directly back to their denominational headquarters (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2008).

[insert Figure 3.11 about here]

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, American Christians do not give very generously (although, they do give more generously than others have claimed), and Prosperity adherence does not affect how much they give. This outcome has particular implications for the competing cosmological theories discussed above. Hunter's (1991) orthodox/progressive dichotomy simply cannot explain why Prosperity adherents, who are inarguably orthodox by his reckoning, do not give any differently. While Davis and Robinson's (1996; 1999; 2006) orthodox/modernist continuum might not seem to explain the Prosperity adherents' lack of differential giving, the Prosperity Gospel might be more complex than initially appreciated. That the Prosperity Gospel is rigorously literalist in its approach to the Bible¹⁵ is undeniable; however, the movement is also radically individualistic in that it

¹⁵ One major criticism of the Prosperity Gospel is that relies on "proof-texting," the use of biblical passages removed from context—both historical and textual—to come to universal, absolutist conclusions (Barron 1987). Many would argue theologically that this kind of approach to the Bible is incorrect; however, it

insists that each believer is responsible for his/her own status as either in-blessing or between-blessings based on his/her mental state or attitude. In this way, any communitarian impulses to give that Davis and Robinson's analyses assume may be counteracted by the individualistic insistence on others' personal accountability. In effect, Prosperity Gospel adherents' unique dual status as both orthodox and modernist renders them altruistically inert. Similarly, my initial expectation that the self-deterministic impulses of the voluntaristic dimension of Hart's (1996) scheme would be overwhelming failed to consider the radical "thisworldliness" of the Prosperity Gospel that stresses the importance of material reward in this life.

The possibly contradictory location of Prosperity adherents as simultaneously modernist *and* orthodox, voluntaristic *and* this-worldly is unique among religious groups. While this status might seem like it could be fatal for such a movement, two factors make it otherwise. The Prosperity Gospel is primarily a practical and not a contemplative religious system (Harrison 2005). In line with its Pentecostal roots, the Prosperity Gospel is experiential and anti-intellectual. It has more in common with self-help movements than do most religious traditions. Adherents have sought out a message that, even with some internal inconsistencies, is adept at sense-making in a postmodern world that seems to make little sense. The Prosperity Gospel offers the security that comes from a simple but profound spiritualization of the mainstream individualistic, materialistic and consumption-oriented values of late-capitalistic culture.

Generally, almost no Americans give more than 20% of their income to any cause, religious or nonreligious. While the pattern of giving for the average person in

remains an absolutist approach to the interpretation of the Bible which makes it biblically literalist in the sociological sense.

terms of both religious and nonreligious giving is otherwise parallel, an American Christian is far more likely to give 10% to 20% of his or her income to a religious cause (21%) than to a nonreligious cause (1%). Those who are more highly educated tend to give less to both religious and nonreligious causes. While those who are older tend to give relatively generously to religious causes, they give less to nonreligious causes. Protestants and Catholics tend to give less to nonreligious causes than to religious causes. While one might assume that religious affiliation would affect religious giving, the fact that it affects nonreligious giving as well is somewhat unexpected, especially since other measures of religion, namely being born-again/evangelical and frequency of church attendance, do not affect nonreligious giving. Other Christians are exceedingly more likely to give generously to religious causes. Since we know that this group is dominated by Mormons, we can assume that it is they who are driving this trend, and this is in line with the findings of previous research (Stark 2008). Religious belonging, but not religious behavior or beliefs, affects nonreligious giving.

While those with more money tend to give more to nonreligious causes, they are only just as likely as those who make less to give to religious causes. Notably, this contradicts previous research (Smith et al. 2008; Stark 2008) that claimed the poor give larger portions of their income to religious causes. Instead, it may be that religious concerns trump economic concerns for the poor when giving to their churches; nonreligious causes perhaps do not elicit the same kind of overriding compulsion.

CHAPTER 4

Voting for Prosperity

INTRODUCTION

As I noted in the previous chapter, religion is one of the best predictors of voting behavior, second only to race in magnitude (Brooks and Manza 1997). In the United States, voting is strongly influenced by socio-religious cleavages based on denominational affiliation, the frequency of religious service attendance, doctrinal belief, denominational group membership, and congregational membership (Manza and Wright 1997). Party alignments are also related to religious tradition, with Catholics and Mainline Protestants as centrists, Black Protestants as Democrats, and Evangelical Protestants as Republicans. While these cleavages should not be overestimated (Davis and Robinson 1996), denominational preference matters politically in that it is the most common form of voluntary association in the U.S., but doctrinal beliefs are better predictors of a host of political beliefs and behaviors (Kellstedt and Smidt 1993).

People who are affiliated with religious groups that perceive themselves as insecure or politically excluded—such as Evangelicals—are more likely to vote for those who belong to their same religious group and to reject the responsibility of the state to intervene socially, aligning them strongly with political conservatives; however, they are not so heterogeneous and savvy to be as politically dogmatic as many have feared (Menendez 1977). The Christian Right, most of whom are white evangelicals, have not, however, enjoyed large-scale success so far. Evangelical Protestants and Conservative Protestants have always been less likely to be politically active but have been slowly

realigning from the Democratic column to Republican (Kellstedt and Noll 1990; Manza and Brooks 1997), feeling threatened and embattled (Wilcox 1992; Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, and Sikkink 1998; Regnerus, Sikkink, and Smith 1999; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2006). President Bush, in large part, owed his reelection to religious conservatives, the core of whom were evangelicals (Rozell and Gupta 2006), especially those traditionalist evangelicals who served as the “backbone of a coalition” (Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2007:33) for both the Republican Party and President Bush.

Prosperity Gospel adherents, while clearly religious personalists pursuing transcendence through individual experience (Reichly 1985), are unique among evangelicals in that otherworldly salvation, while important, is subordinated to the perceived promises of this-worldly material rewards. How does this play out politically? Do the temporal concerns of Prosperity adherents motivate them to increased political activity? While research into the relationship between religion and political behavior has been progressing, this particular area—namely the Prosperity Gospel—has been neglected. This research proposes to fill that gap and answer the question, What, if any, are the politics of Prosperity adherents?

The Prosperity Gospel is an evangelically-minded, conservative movement. It stresses financially conservative or economically individualistic goals, and it argues against social consciousness. Like other conservative Christians, Prosperity adherents should not be as politically active as adherents of other faith traditions. I test this assumption by looking at voting in the 2004 presidential election:

H4A₁: Prosperity adherents were less likely to vote in 2004 presidential election.

Given their individualistic worldview and his evangelical rhetoric and identity, those Prosperity adherents who did vote should have supported George W. Bush in 2004.

H4B₁: Prosperity adherents were more likely to have voted for Bush than Kerry in the 2004 presidential election.

Moreover, they should be likely to support the GOP consistently.

H4C₁: Prosperity adherents are more likely to identify as Republican.

I expect all of these hypotheses to hold even as I control for being born-again/evangelical and for affiliation as Protestant, Catholic, or other Christian, among other variables.

DATA AND METHODS

I use the SRBI data as described in chapter 2. I use three dependent variables in my analyses of political behavior. First, I use the question that asks, “Do you recall voting in the 2004 Presidential election, between George W. Bush and John Kerry?” I drop those cases did not answer or know the answer to that question as well as those who were too young to have voted or were not registered at that time. Second, I use the question that asks, “Did you vote for George Bush or John Kerry?” For the analysis of these two dependent variables, I use binary logit (BNL) models. Finally, I use the question that asks, “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?” For the analysis of this dependent variable, I use multinomial logit (MNL) models. The independent variables of primary interest for all dependent variables are the three measures of Prosperity adherence: membership in the Prosperity Movement, agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous, and the Prosperity Index. I use the same iterative process to

reduce the models to the most significant and parsimonious number of independent variables for both dependent variables as in chapter 2. The descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in table 4.1.

[insert Table 4.1 about here]

RESULTS

Table 4.2 shows the BLM models for the dependent variable “voting in the 2004 presidential election.” None of the Prosperity measures is significant. Years of education has the largest effect of all of the independent variables, followed by age. Race, income, region, urban/rural/suburban, church attendance, born-again/evangelical, and Protestant/Catholic/other Christian are all also insignificant. The BIC' provides very strong support for model 5 over models 1, 3 and 4 and positive support for model 4 over model 2.¹⁶

[insert Table 4.2 about here]

The predicted probabilities for several ideal types can be seen in table 4.3. While the average person from this sample had a 95% chance of claiming to have voted in the 2004 presidential election, only 60.7% of the voting age public voted (Jones and Carroll 2005). This suggests that, due to social desirability, the number of people who claim to have voted in these data is vastly exaggerated. Those who are highly educated (99% for those with postgraduate experience) and those who are older (98% for those 65 or older) have the highest chances of reporting that they voted while those with an 8th grade education or less (50%) have the lowest.

¹⁶ Several other models were run, the results of which are not presented here. Model 5 was supported over all other conceivable models.

[insert Table 4.3 about here]

Table 4.4 shows the BLM models for the dependent variable “voted for Bush” over Kerry.¹⁷ Membership in a Prosperity movement and agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous are not significant. Race has the largest effect of all of the independent variables, followed by Protestant/Catholic/other Christian, born-again/evangelical, church attendance, Prosperity Index, and income. Education, gender, region, and urban/rural/suburban are all insignificant. The BIC provides very strong support for model 2 over model 1.¹⁸

[insert Table 4.4 about here]

The predicted probabilities for several ideal types can be seen in table 4.5. Other Christians (91%) and those with high Prosperity Index scores (84% for those with a score of 10) had the highest chances of voting for Bush while blacks (5%) had the lowest chances.

[insert Table 4.5 about here]

Table 4.6 shows the MNL models for the dependent variable political party identification. Membership in a Prosperity movement and agreeing that God wants people to be financially prosperous are not significant. Church attendance, race, and the Prosperity Index are all significant predictors. Income, education, gender, age, region, urban/rural/suburban, born-again/evangelical, and Protestant/Catholic/other Christian are

¹⁷ In terms of absolute numbers, 332 (58%) respondents reported voting for Bush, and 236 (42%) reported voting for Gore. I drop those respondents who voted for other candidates from the analysis.

¹⁸ Several other models were run, including ones that did not include race as an independent variable, the results of which are not presented here. Model 2 was supported over all other conceivable models. Models run without the race variable did result in the loss of significance for the Prosperity Index variable and gained significance of the Prosperity membership variable, likely attributable to the close correlation between being black and being a member of this movement. These results are not presented here.

all insignificant. The Wald test results for model 3 in table 4.7. The BIC' provides very strong support for model 3 over models 1 and 2.¹⁹

[insert Table 4.6 about here]

[insert Table 4.7 about here]

The predicted probabilities for several ideal types can be seen in table 4.8. Those with high Prosperity Index scores (71% for a score of 10) have a higher chance of being Republican while blacks (74%) have a greater chance of being Democratic.

[insert Table 4.8 about here]

Voter Turnout

Unexpectedly, Prosperity adherents, no matter how defined, were as likely to turn out to vote in the 2004 presidential election as other Christians who eschew the Prosperity Gospel. This refutes H4A₁. Something about the Prosperity teachings is trumping the impetus for civic disengagement that otherwise characterizes conservative Christian groups. It may be that the radical individualism endemic to the Prosperity Gospel provides motivation for its adherents to become politically active in defense of individual freedoms. The specific teachings about the accumulation of material wealth and the conspicuous consumption of that wealth should encourage Prosperity adherents to head to the polls to support issues such as lowered taxes, decreased governmental regulation of the market, and decreased government economic intervention in general. This motivation, however, is only enough to overcome the lack of motivation that comes with conservative Christianity, thus making Prosperity adherents resemble non-adherents

¹⁹ Several other models were run, the results of which are not presented here. Model 4 was supported over all other conceivable models. Models run without the race variable did not result in gained significance for the other Prosperity measures.

statistically. In short, while Prosperity adherents are not motivated toward political participation any more than non-adherents, as conservative Christians, something is counteracting what otherwise would be a lack of motivation.

Christians with more education were more likely than those with less education to turn out to vote as shown in figure 4.1. While those with an 8th grade education or less had only a 50% of showing up to vote, those with graduate degrees were virtually guaranteed to vote (99%). This increase in the chances of voting diminishes with increases in education. Inasmuch as education can be seen as a form of civic engagement, it is not surprising that those who are more engaged in education, especially noncompulsory higher education, would be more engaged in other kinds of civic engagement, like political participation. The connection between education and political participation has been established (Putnam 2000), and these data offer further support for that relationship.

[insert Figure 4.1 about here]

Older Christians were also more likely than younger ones to turn out to vote, as shown in figure 4.2, which is not at all surprising. Those who are older, as part of a previous generation, are generally more civically engaged because of particular subcultural values that place a premium on such behavior, specifically what Putnam (2000) calls the “civic generation,” those born between 1910 and 1940 who are unlike those who came before and after in terms of their high levels of civic engagement, including political participation. In 2006 when the SRBI data were collected, the youngest of the civic generation would be 66 years old, putting them in the 65 and older cohort, and in fact, this group has the highest chance (98%) of having voted in 2004.

While I am unable to distinguish between age, period, and cohort effects in my analyses due to limitations of the data, it is probable that these kinds of generational differences explain this variation in voting.

[insert Figure 4.2 about here]

Interestingly, born-again/evangelicals in this survey were equally as likely as those who are not born-again/evangelical to have voted in 2004. This seems to contradict the claims of others (Menendez 1977; Kellstedt and Noll 1990; Manza and Brooks 1997) who have argued that evangelical and conservative Protestants have been less likely to be politically active. If evangelicalism, as a Personalistic worldview, discourages socio-political involvement (Reichly 1985), other factors, such as those listed above, seem to be overriding this predisposition.

Bush vs. Kerry

Neither being a member of a Prosperity movement nor believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous made a difference in choosing to vote for Bush or Kerry in 2004. Christians with higher Prosperity Index scores, however, had a higher chance of voting for Bush as shown in figure 4.3, which offers modest support for H4B₁. The underlying tenets of the Prosperity Gospel, which include believing that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing and that poverty is a sign that God is unhappy with something in your life, point toward an individualistic worldview, one that was shared by President George W. Bush. While Prosperity membership itself does not affect for whom one votes, the ideas that spring from the Prosperity Gospel do.

[insert Figure 4.3 about here]

Black Christians had an exceedingly small chance of voting for Bush (5%) compared to Christians who are not black (65%) as shown in figure 4.4. This is fully in line with the previous findings of Brooks and Manza (1997) and reflects the historically robust alignment of blacks with Democratic candidates since the New Deal policies of the 1930s. Interestingly, however, the effects of Prosperity Index scores on voting choice vary by race as shown in figure 4.5.²⁰ While the relationships between Prosperity Index score for the average person and for non-blacks are more or less linear, the relationship for blacks is curvilinear, with increases in scores offering increased chances of having voted for Bush; the absolute chances for having done so, however, are still very low. Nonetheless, there is an interaction effect between race and Prosperity Index score.

[insert Figure 4.4 about here]

[insert Figure 4.5 about here]

Christians with higher levels of income had a slightly higher chance of voting for Bush as shown in figure 4.6. Again, this is likely explained by Bush's fiscally conservative policies that have arguably favored those with higher incomes.

[insert Figure 4.6 about here]

Unlike with voter turnout, neither education nor age affects voting choice. Christians who attend church once a week or more (65%) had a higher chance of voting for Bush over those who attend church less frequent (53%) as shown in figure 4.4. Other Christians (91%) had a much higher chance of voting for Bush than did Protestants (59%) and Catholics (53%).

Christians who are born-again/evangelical (67%) had a higher chance of voting for Bush over non-evangelicals (50%). This is support for those (Rozell and Gupta 2006;

²⁰ A Wald test indicates joint significance for these two variables ($\chi^2 = 40.78$; $df = 2$; $p < 0.001$).

Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2007) who have argued that Bush, in large part, owes his reelection to religious conservatives, the core of who were evangelicals. It flies in the face, however of the Menendez (1977) who wrongly predicted that it was unlikely that religious affiliation would determine the outcome of a Presidential election in the future. Menendez was right, though, that because evangelicals are a group that perceives themselves as insecure and politically excluded, they are more likely to vote for other evangelicals.

Party Identification

As with voting choice, neither being a member of a Prosperity movement nor believing that God wants people to be financially prosperous made a difference in party affiliation. Christians with higher Prosperity Index scores, however, had a much higher chance than those with lower scores of identifying as Republican as shown in figure 4.7, which again offers only modest support for H4C₁. As with having voted for Bush, supporting the Republican Party is likely a function of the GOP's individualist platforms, notions it shares with Prosperity teachings.

[insert Figure 4.7 about here]

Black Christians had a much higher chance of identifying as Democratic (74%) than Republican (5%) as shown in figure 4.8. However, the effect of Prosperity Index scores on identifying as a Republican, as shown in figure 4.9, and on identifying as a Democrat, as shown in figure 4.10, differs between blacks and non-blacks, with blacks being far more likely to identify as a Democrat.²¹ Similar to the race/Prosperity Index interaction for having voted for Bush, even though the absolute chances are still very low,

²¹ A Wald test indicates joint significance for these variables ($\chi^2 = 66.25$; $df = 6$; $p < 0.001$).

the relationship between the Prosperity Index score on one's chances for identifying as Republican for blacks is curvilinear, while the same relationships for the average person and for non-blacks are more or less linear. Surprisingly, while one might expect blacks with low Prosperity Index scores to have the highest chances of identifying as Democrats, blacks with moderate scores (5=75%) have the highest chances while those at the extremes (1=67%; 10=69%) had the lowest chances. The effects of the Prosperity Index are not the same for blacks and non-blacks on predicting voting outcomes and party affiliation.

[insert Figure 4.8 about here]

[insert Figure 4.9 about here]

[insert Figure 4.10 about here]

Christians who attend church once a week or more (45%) had a better chance of identifying as Republican than those who attend less frequently (31%) as shown in figure 4.11. This is in line with previous research as noted above.

[insert Figure 4.11 about here]

As with voter turnout, born-again/evangelicals in this survey were no more or less likely as those who are not born-again/evangelical to have identified with any political party in 2004. While the same religious conservative rejection of the responsibility of the state to intervene that arguably kept evangelicals from political activity has strongly aligned them with political conservatives in the past (Menendez 1977) and while Christian Right supporters feel that their lifestyle is threatened by a hostile mainstream culture (Wilcox 1992; Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, and Sikkink 1998; Regnerus, Sikkink, and Smith 1999), I do not find evidence for this having affected party

identification in 2004. Where others (Reichly 1985; Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2007) had found that evangelicals supported the Republican Party, I do not.²²

CONCLUSIONS

Prosperity adherents, no matter how they are defined, behave just like non-adherents politically in that they vote in about the same proportions. For a group with such a unique and inflexible set of beliefs, this is very surprising. The Prosperity Gospel is a conservative Christian movement so I expected that, as previous research had found that conservative Christians were less likely to vote and that I am unable to control specifically for this effect, Prosperity adherents would be less likely to vote as well, but this is not the case. The Prosperity Gospel teaches radical individual spiritual accountability for one's financial circumstances so I expected that those who are members of a Prosperity movement and that those who agree that God wants people to be financially prosperous²³ would have voted overwhelmingly for Bush in 2004 and would have self-identified as Republican since both Bush's and the Republican platforms stress individual accountability and fiscally conservative positions that would benefit those who, like Prosperity adherents, are expecting financial windfalls, but again, this is not the case.

If we consider Prosperity adherence in a more nuanced way, which the Prosperity Index reflects in that it places respondents on a continuum of Prosperity-orientation, Prosperity folks still do not turn out to vote in any different proportions than the rest of

²² It is also worth noting that while Kellstedt and Noll (1990) claim that evangelicals support Republicans because of their improving socioeconomic status, my data contradicts this as neither income nor born-again/evangelical are significant.

²³ I argued on pages 37 and 38 that these groups represent formal/institutionalized and informal/casual Prosperity Gospel members, respectively.

the population, but they do tend to report supporting Bush in 2004 and to identify as Republican. In fact, higher Prosperity Index scores consistently predict conservatism. This is further evidence that the Prosperity Gospel is more socially diffuse than has previously been assumed. While the specific tenets of the Prosperity Gospel are indeed influencing political behavior, considering oneself to be a member of this movement is not. In the case of Prosperity adherents, it seems that doctrinal beliefs indeed are better predictors of a host of political beliefs and behaviors than formal affiliation.²⁴

²⁴ Cf. Kellstedt and Smidt (1993)

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

Pragmatically, the Prosperity Gospel does not live up to its claims: that by avowing the biblical promise of wealth, one will be wealthy. If it did, we would expect that those who are members of a Prosperity movement and those who believe Prosperity teaching would be overrepresented among those with higher incomes. According to these data, one's level of income has no bearing on Prosperity adherence. While one could make the argument that many of those questioned for this survey are simply "between blessings," an outside observer would still have to question the efficacy of this new religious movement since its overt claims are not met. Of course, this study was not intended to be a direct theological test of the Prosperity Gospel's supernatural claims.

The overarching question that this project has sought to answer is, Who are these Prosperity Gospel folks? Are they rich or poor? more or less educated? black or white? young or old? mostly men or women? Protestant, Catholic, or other? frequent or infrequent church goers? Where are they from? Where do they live? Do they consider themselves born-again or evangelical? Do they have higher or lower incomes and educations? How do they give? Do they vote? If so, how do they vote? The answers, which until now could not be definitively given, depend somewhat on how we conceptualize 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. Of particular interest, in view of theory linking income and religion, they are generally representative of the larger population in terms of income. That is, people are equally likely to be Prosperity adherents, irrespective of how much money they make. Because the Prosperity Gospel makes unambiguous, explicit claims about financial concerns, this final finding is surprising. Prosperity adherents also tend to give no differently than non-adherents, either to their churches or to nonreligious causes. This is perhaps due to a unique worldview that simultaneously stresses communal values and individualistic, this-worldly rewards. Prosperity adherents are just as likely to vote as non-adherents; however, those with higher Prosperity Index scores are more likely than those with lower scores to self-identify as Republican and to have voted for Bush in 2004. In this way, they show little difference between themselves and other evangelicals.

Theoretically, this project has highlighted the often overlooked perspectives that researchers bring to their projects in the form of the questions that they pose. How are religious beliefs influenced—or even directly caused—by economic conditions at the macro level and by class location at the micro level? What effects do religious beliefs have on financial or economic outcomes? Are both of these happening at the same time, and if so, how? This dissertation took seriously the possibility, as the third question above implies, that causality is not a one-way street. In the case of the Prosperity Gospel, however, I have found strong evidence that this belief system has not affected individuals' financial circumstances, at least as measured by their level of income. Here, neo-Marxian explanations of behavior win out over Weberian explanations because I have been able to show that while adherents are able to use the Prosperity Gospel to

justify their SES, Prosperity ideas are not motivating them to change their financial behavior.

To be sure, this study hardly can sound the death knell for Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis and similar approaches to the study of religion. In fairness to Weber, it would have been helpful had there been attitudinal questions in the survey regarding work ethic and saving/investing habits since the Protestant Ethic thesis does not directly predict upward mobility outcomes, only the attitudes that predispose individuals to such outcomes. Moreover, Weber does at times in his work conceptualize religion as an outcome and not only an independent variable. (The same, however, cannot be said for Marx.) It was never the intention of this project to adjudicate between the Marxian and Weberian metanarratives. Such intent would have been fundamentally misguided, as simplistic, reductionistic renderings of such a "discussion" would largely be a fabrication. The role of religion specifically and the understanding of causality broadly are far too complex to be misconstrued as unidirectional. What this study can be, though, is an example of how future research in the sociology of religion should acknowledge and take seriously the two dominant theoretical perspectives on which our subfield stands without necessarily assaying either's larger legitimacy. Berger (1990) was right to call their relationship dialectical. In this one, particular case, however, a Marxian understanding simply works better.

The current project has several limitations. First, I am limited to quantitative data and statistical analysis due to difficulties with recruitment for a planned qualitative segment of this project. Coincidentally, one of my quantitative findings, that Prosperity adherents tend to be less educated, places them at odds with researchers like myself and

perhaps explains their reluctance to be interviewed by a person whom they necessarily know comes from a suspicious social institution. Moreover, the timing of my project, coming in the wake of a congressional investigation into several prominent Prosperity preachers' financial practices (Lohr 2007), certainly did not help. While the lack of qualitative data has significantly limited the extent to which I can investigate causality, it has not fully restricted such investigation. Harrison's (2005) qualitative research—while unable to determine whether Prosperity ideas are motivating adherents to behave differently in their financial lives—suggests that poor Prosperity adherents are able use the Prosperity Gospel as a supernatural promise of upward mobility while rich adherents are able use the same Gospel as an explanation for their preexisting wealth. My research, being quantitative, can call this motivational aspect into question while being informed by the grounded, dual-interpretation of Prosperity ideas. People at the bottom and the top of the class hierarchy may be able to use the Prosperity Gospel to explain their locations, but they are not appreciably changing their financial behavior.

Second, while the secondary data are currently the only survey that specifically has asked respondents about Prosperity ideas, the survey did not ask other important questions. Specifically, those surveyed were not asked about their denominational affiliation, which has meant that I was unable to generate proper measures of religious tradition which would have been helpful. Those surveyed were also not asked questions about their net worth, occupation, or social mobility, all of which would have been helpful in thinking about class in a way beyond that of income alone.

Third, 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, this survey (to my knowledge) represents 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 would allow for cross-national comparison.

Finally, this study has relied on a relatively small N (as low as 568 for one dependent variable). Larger samples in future surveys or the inclusion of Prosperity questions in existing surveys (e.g. GSS religion module) would be beneficial.

While Harrison's (2005) ethnographic research is an invaluable exploratory work on a group of people whom sociology has thus far ignored, there is still a need for more qualitative data. As a continuation of this project, I intend to gather between 20 and 30 in-depth interviews with lay Prosperity adherents in the future, which will allow me to resolve some questions in my quantitative results. These include how people are finding or being recruited into the Prosperity Gospel, why people are not altering their work and financial behaviors, and what specifically it is about the Prosperity message that is more attractive to black Christians.

In sum, the Prosperity Gospel offers its adherence a sense of belonging and a set of beliefs that largely do not affect behavior. Instead, 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.

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Table 2.1: Descriptive Statistics Chapter 2 (N=665)

Variable	Actual Mean	Estimated Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<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+/ <i>wk</i> =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

Table 2.2: 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 2.3: 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 2.4: 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 2.5: 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 2.6: Binary 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

Table 2.7: Combined Binary Logit Coefficients for Preferred Models

	Dependent Variables			
	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
race (black=1)	1.43 *** (0.38)	1.30 *** (0.40)	0.87 ** (0.34)	2.18 *** (0.43)
income/1000				
years of education			-0.10 * (0.05)	-0.40 *** (0.09)
gender (female=1)				
years old			0.02 ** (0.01)	
Northeast				
Midwest				
West (ref: South)				
suburban				
urban (ref: rural)				
attend (1+/wk=1)				
born-again	1.45 *** (0.40)	0.70 *** (0.16)	0.65 ** (0.21)	
Catholic				
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)				
constant	-3.81	-0.03	-1.13	1.70
BIC'	-20.98	-24.20	-6.16	-33.30
Prosperity Index				1.94 *** (0.27)

standard errors in parentheses
 *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 2.8: Combined Predicted Probabilities

ideal type	Prosperity movement	member of a	God wants people to	material wealth is a	poverty is a sign
	Prosperity movement	be financially prosperous	sign of God's blessing	that God is unhappy	
average person	0.05	0.61	0.19	0.02	
black	0.16	0.83	0.34	0.16	
non-black	0.04	0.58	0.18	0.02	
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		
25-29			0.13		
30-34			0.14		
35-39			0.15		
40-44			0.16		
45-54			0.18		
55-54			0.21		
65 or older			0.25		
South					0.02
Northeast					0.00
Midwest					0.07
West					0.03

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics for Chapter 3 (N=615)

Variable	Actual Mean	Estimated Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Dependent Variables:</i>					
percentage of income given to church or other religious causes	655.00	3.08	1.42	1	6
percentage of income given to other nonreligious charitable causes	2.64	2.57	1.15	1	6
<i>Independent Variables:</i>					
member of a Prosperity movement	0.07	0.08	0.26	0	1
believes God wants people to be financially prosperous	0.60	0.62	0.49	0	1
Prosperity Index	4.44	4.46	1.46	1	10
percentage of income given to church or other religious causes:					
none (reference)	0.19	0.20	0.39	0	1
<1%	0.12	0.14	0.33	0	1
1% to 5%	0.29	0.28	0.45	0	1
>5%, <10%	0.16	0.15	0.37	0	1
10% to 20%	0.22	0.22	0.42	0	1
>20%	0.01	0.01	0.11	0	1
percentage of income given to other nonreligious charitable causes:					
none (reference)	0.21	0.23	0.41	0	1
<1%	0.19	0.20	0.39	0	1
1% to 5%	0.44	0.42	0.50	0	1
>5%, <10%	0.10	0.08	0.29	0	1
10% to 20%	0.06	0.05	0.23	0	1
>20%	0.01	0.01	0.11	0	1
race (black=1)	0.08	0.12	0.27	0	1
born-again	0.50	0.51	0.50	0	1
years of education	14.35	14.29	2.20	8	18
years old	52.35	47.74	15.31	21	73
urban	0.28	0.28	0.45	0	1
rural (reference)	0.52	0.51	0.50	0	1
suburban	0.20	0.21	0.40	0	1
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.45	0.43	0.50	0	1
income/1000	67.07	66.58	50.17	12	200
gender (female=1)	0.52	0.53	0.50	0	1
Protestant (reference)	0.70	0.69	0.46	0	1
Catholic	0.26	0.27	0.44	0	1
other Christian	0.04	0.04	0.20	0	1
Northeast	0.17	0.17	0.38	0	1
Midwest	0.25	0.24	0.43	0	1
West	0.22	0.21	0.41	0	1
South (reference)	0.36	0.38	0.48	0	1

Table 32: Multinomial Logit Coefficients for Percentage of Income Given to Other Nonreligious Charitable Causes

	Model 1					Model 2					Model 3					Model 4								
	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% <10%	10% to 20%	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% <10%	10% to 20%	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% <10%	10% to 20%	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% <10%	10% to 20%				
percentage of income given to church or other religious causes																								
>20%																								
Prosperity movement	-1.59	-1.58	-1.10	-1.70	-0.51																			
financially prosperous	-0.06	0.26	0.50	0.00	0.44																			
Prosperity Index	0.31	0.24	0.31	0.52	0.13																			
race (black=1)	-0.38	-0.08	-0.44	-1.83	1.05																			
income/1000	-0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.00																			
years of education	0.01	0.10	0.27	0.33	-0.03																			
gender (female=1)	-0.36	-0.34	-0.25	-0.48	0.31																			
years old	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01																			
Married	0.39	0.36	0.36	0.31	0.27																			
Midwest	-0.42	-0.06	-0.06	0.31	-0.52																			
West (ref: South)	0.45	0.69	0.42	0.92	-0.15																			
suburban	21.33	20.62	20.88	21.05	20.47																			
urban (ref: rural)	-0.02	-0.57	-0.28	0.03	0.49																			
attend (1+=wk=1)	0.81	0.68	1.14	0.94	0.46																			
born-again	0.49	0.09	0.21	-0.10	-0.17																			
Catholic	20.44	20.29	20.42	20.00	20.95																			
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	22.73	21.45	21.55	20.91	-10.08																			
constant	3.69	1.29	-1.62	-4.17	0.69																			
BIC	338.30					91.35					148.81					126.59								

Base Category: >20%
* = preferred model

Table 3.3: MNL Wald Tests for Nonreligious Giving

	χ^2
income/1000	21.69 *** (5)
education	29.46 *** (5)
age	13.15 * (5)
suburban	1073.42 *** (4)
urban	8.21 (5)
suburban, urban (i.e. rural)	1228.65 *** (9)
Catholic	2874.89 *** (4)
other Christian	747.52 *** (3)
Catholic, other Christian (i.e. Protestant)	3625.76 *** (7)

degrees-of-freedom in parentheses

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

Table 3.4: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Nonreligious Giving

ideal type	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5%, <10%	10% to 20%	>20%
average person	0.18	0.22	0.49	0.10	0.01	0.00
Less than \$20,000	0.32	0.18	0.39	0.10	0.01	0.00
\$20,000 to just under \$35,000	0.28	0.20	0.42	0.10	0.01	0.00
\$35,000 to just under \$50,000	0.23	0.21	0.45	0.10	0.01	0.00
\$50,000 to just under \$75,000	0.19	0.22	0.49	0.10	0.01	0.00
\$75,000 to just under \$100,000	0.14	0.23	0.53	0.10	0.01	0.00
\$100,000 to just under \$200,000	0.06	0.24	0.60	0.09	0.01	0.00
\$200,000 or more	0.03	0.24	0.64	0.08	0.02	0.00
8th grade or less	0.43	0.27	0.24	0.03	0.03	0.00
Some high school	0.34	0.27	0.32	0.05	0.02	0.00
High school graduate	0.26	0.25	0.40	0.07	0.01	0.00
Some college	0.19	0.22	0.48	0.10	0.01	0.00
College graduate	0.13	0.19	0.55	0.13	0.01	0.00
Postgraduate study	0.08	0.15	0.59	0.17	0.00	0.00
18-24	0.30	0.24	0.39	0.07	0.01	0.00
25-29	0.27	0.24	0.41	0.08	0.01	0.00
30-34	0.25	0.23	0.43	0.08	0.01	0.00
35-39	0.23	0.23	0.44	0.09	0.01	0.00
40-44	0.21	0.23	0.46	0.09	0.01	0.00
45-54	0.18	0.22	0.49	0.10	0.01	0.00
55-54	0.15	0.21	0.52	0.11	0.01	0.00
65 or older	0.12	0.20	0.55	0.13	0.01	0.00
rural	0.15	0.25	0.50	0.09	0.01	0.00
suburban	0.22	0.18	0.49	0.11	0.00	0.00
urban	0.19	0.19	0.47	0.12	0.02	0.00
Protestant	0.16	0.21	0.48	0.10	0.05	0.00
Catholic	0.16	0.22	0.47	0.09	0.07	0.00
other Christian	0.36	0.16	0.41	0.07	0.00	0.00

Table 3.5: Multinomial Logit Coefficients for Percentage of Income Given to Church or Other Religious Causes

	Model 1			Model 2*			Model 3					
	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% to 20%	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% to 20%	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% to 20%			
percentage of income given to other nonreligious charitable causes	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% to 20%	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% to 20%	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5% to 20%
Prosperity movement	-1.09	-0.47	-0.14	-0.88	-0.57							
financially prosperous	-1.54	-1.27	-1.55	-1.20	-1.13							
Prosperity Index	0.46	0.38	0.31	0.42	0.45							
race (black=1)	-2.99	-2.33	-2.05	-2.34	-1.45							
income/1000	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.00							
years of education	-0.09	0.04	0.06	0.23	0.00							
gender (female=1)	-0.70	-0.25	-0.45	0.18	0.06							
years old	-0.03	-0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00							
Northwest	18.51	18.98	18.53	18.12	17.91							
Midwest	0.06	-0.17	-0.13	-0.13	-0.33							
West (ref. South)	0.69	0.65	0.29	0.04	-0.10							
suburban	-0.05	0.07	-0.33	-0.78	-0.25							
urban (ref. rural)	1.32	0.92	1.00	0.62	0.82							
attend (1+=wk=1)	-3.44	-1.31	-0.19	1.01	1.01							
born-again	0.02	0.29	0.29	1.22	1.64							
Catholic	18.68	18.74	18.87	19.28	18.89							
other Christian (Ref. Prot.)	20.27	19.08	19.74	19.98	21.43							
constant	6.04	3.40	2.46	-2.94	0.16							
BIC	172.15			-32.70								

Base Category: >20%
* = preferred model

Table 3.6: MNL Wald Tests for Religious Giving

	χ^2
education	24.61 ***
	(5)
age	15.35 **
	(5)
Northeast	2792.46 ***
	(4)
Midwest	2.01
	(5)
West	6.93
	(5)
Northeast Midwest West (i.e. South)	3702.66 ***
	(14)
attend	95.94 ***
	(5)
born-again	28.65 ***
	(5)
Catholic	3659.02 ***
	(4)
other Christian	408.13 ***
	(4)
Catholic other Christian (i.e. Protestant)	4530.92 ***
	(8)

degrees-of-freedom in parentheses

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

Table 3.7: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving

ideal type	none	<1%	1% to 5%	>5%, <10%	10% to 20%	>20%
average person	0.10	0.14	0.39	0.17	0.21	0.00
8th grade or less	0.26	0.17	0.26	0.05	0.26	0.00
Some high school	0.20	0.17	0.31	0.08	0.25	0.00
High school graduate	0.15	0.16	0.35	0.11	0.24	0.00
Some college	0.10	0.14	0.38	0.16	0.21	0.00
College graduate	0.07	0.12	0.40	0.22	0.19	0.00
Postgraduate study	0.05	0.10	0.41	0.29	0.16	0.00
18-24	0.16	0.24	0.36	0.10	0.14	0.00
25-29	0.15	0.22	0.37	0.11	0.16	0.00
30-34	0.14	0.20	0.37	0.12	0.17	0.00
35-39	0.13	0.18	0.38	0.13	0.18	0.00
40-44	0.12	0.17	0.38	0.14	0.19	0.00
45-54	0.10	0.15	0.39	0.16	0.20	0.00
55-54	0.09	0.12	0.38	0.19	0.22	0.00
65 or older	0.06	0.09	0.37	0.23	0.25	0.00
South	0.08	0.11	0.37	0.18	0.26	0.00
Northeast	0.09	0.19	0.41	0.15	0.16	0.00
Midwest	0.11	0.12	0.38	0.18	0.21	0.00
West	0.13	0.17	0.38	0.14	0.17	0.00
attends 1/wk+	0.01	0.07	0.32	0.27	0.33	0.00
attends <1/wk	0.33	0.18	0.31	0.08	0.10	0.00
born-again	0.07	0.11	0.30	0.20	0.33	0.00
not born-again	0.13	0.16	0.46	0.13	0.12	0.00
Protestant	0.10	0.15	0.39	0.16	0.21	0.00
Catholic	0.09	0.12	0.40	0.21	0.18	0.00
other Christian	0.09	0.04	0.18	0.09	0.59	0.00

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics Chapters 3

Variable	N	Actual	Estimated	Standard	Minimum	Maximum
		Mean	Mean	Deviation		
<i>Dependant Variables:</i>						
voted in the 2004 Presidential election	655	0.91	0.89	0.28	0	1
voted for George Bush (over John Kerry)	568	0.58	0.55	0.49	0	1
political party affiliation*	650	2.00	2.01	0.96	1	4
<i>Independent Variables:</i>						
member of a Prosperity movement	665	0.07	0.08	0.25	0	1
believes God wants people to be financially prosperous	665	0.60	0.62	0.49	0	1
Prosperity Index	665	4.43	4.46	1.45	1	10
race (black=1)	665	0.08	0.12	0.28	0	1
born-again	665	0.50	0.52	0.50	0	1
years of education	665	14.26	14.20	2.22	8	18
years old	665	52.99	48.23	15.59	21	73
urban	665	0.28	0.28	0.45	0	1
rural	665	0.52	0.51	0.50	0	1
suburban	665	0.20	0.21	0.40	0	1
attend (1+/wk=1)	665	0.46	0.44	0.50	0	1
income/1000	665	65.46	65.10	50.16	12	200
gender (female=1)	665	0.53	0.53	0.50	0	1
Protestant (reference)	665	0.70	0.69	0.46	0	1
Catholic	665	0.26	0.26	0.44	0	1
other Christian	665	0.04	0.04	0.20	0	1
Northeast	665	0.17	0.18	0.38	0	1
Midwest	665	0.24	0.23	0.43	0	1
West	665	0.22	0.21	0.41	0	1
South (reference)	665	0.37	0.48	0.41	0	1

* - 1 = Republican; 2 = Democrat; 3 = Independent; 4 = something else

Table 4.2: Binary Logit Coefficients for Voting in 2004 Presidential Election

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Prosperity movement	0.49 (0.69)	0.88 (0.65)			
financially prosperous	0.03 (0.34)		0.18 (0.31)		
Prosperity Index	-0.04 (0.11)			0.05 (0.10)	
race (black=1)	0.97 (0.62)				
income/1000	0.01 (0.00)				
years of education	0.49 *** (0.09)	0.49 *** (0.08)	0.48 *** (0.08)	0.48 *** (0.08)	0.48 *** (0.08)
gender (female=1)	-0.30 (0.33)				
years old	0.06 *** (0.01)	0.05 *** (0.01)	0.05 *** (0.01)	0.05 *** (0.01)	0.05 *** (0.01)
Northeast	0.01 (0.45)				
Midwest	0.62 (0.42)				
West (ref: South)	0.56 (0.49)				
suburban	0.43 (0.44)				
urban (ref: rural)	-0.08 (0.38)				
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.35 (0.33)				
born-again	0.26 (0.37)				
Catholic	-0.17 (0.41)				
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	-1.20 (0.69)				
constant	-7.54	-6.87	-6.75	-6.83	-6.58
BIC'	24.22	-52.70	-50.85	-50.81	-57.01

N = 655

standard errors in parentheses

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

**Table 4.3: Predicted Probabilities
for Voting in 2004**

average person	0.95
years of education:	
8th grade or less	0.50
Some high school	0.72
High school graduate	0.87
Some college	0.95
College graduate	0.98
Postgraduate study	0.99

age:	
18-24	0.79
25-29	0.84
30-34	0.87
35-39	0.90
40-44	0.92
45-54	0.94
55-54	0.96
65 or older	0.98

**Table 4.4: Binary Logit Coefficients
for Voting for Bush (over Kerry) in 2004**

	Model 1	Model 2
Prosperity movement	-0.37 (0.44)	
financially prosperous	0.37 (0.20)	
Prosperity Index	0.22 ** (0.07)	0.24 *** (0.07)
race (black=1)	-3.56 *** (0.60)	-3.55 *** (0.58)
income/1000	0.00 * (0.00)	0.00 ** (0.00)
years of education	-0.03 (0.05)	
gender (female=1)	-0.24 (0.19)	
years old	0.00 (0.01)	
Northeast	-0.12 (0.29)	
Midwest	-0.26 (0.25)	
West (ref: South)	-0.06 (0.27)	
suburban	-0.25 (0.25)	
urban (ref: rural)	-0.07 (0.23)	
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.54 ** (0.20)	0.51 ** (0.19)
born-again	0.66 ** (0.23)	0.71 *** (0.21)
Catholic	-0.26 (0.23)	-0.23 (0.22)
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	1.92 * (0.84)	1.98 ** (0.82)
constant	-0.91	-1.38
BIC'	-10.393	-66.037

N = 568

standard errors in parentheses

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

**Table 4.5: Predicted Probabilities
for Voting for Bush (over Kerry) in 2004**

	average person	0.59
	1	0.38
	2	0.44
	3	0.50
Prosperity	4	0.56
Index	5	0.62
Score	6	0.67
	7	0.72
	8	0.77
	9	0.81
	10	0.84
	black	0.05
	non-black	0.65
	Less than \$20,000	0.52
	\$20,000 to just under \$35,000	0.54
	\$35,000 to just under \$50,000	0.56
	\$50,000 to just under \$75,000	0.58
	\$75,000 to just under \$100,000	0.61
	\$100,000 to just under \$200,000	0.68
	\$200,000 or more	0.73
	attends 1/wk+	0.65
	attends <1/wk	0.53
	born-again	0.67
	not born-again	0.50
	Protestant	0.59
	Catholic	0.53
	other Christian	0.91

Table 4.6: Multinomial Logit Coefficients for Political Party Affiliation

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3*		
	Democrat	Independent	other	Democrat	Independent	other	Democrat	Independent	other
Prosperity movement	1.19	0.86	0.35						
financially prosperous	0.36	0.37	-1.03						
Prosperity Index	-0.19	-0.29	-0.37	0.94	1.52	-1.15	0.85	1.55	-1.06
race (black=1)	-0.25	-0.39	-0.03	-0.24	-0.41	-0.08	-0.24	-0.42	-0.07
income/1000	3.17	1.75	1.02						
years of education	0.00	0.00	0.00						
gender (female=1)	-0.04	0.02	-0.13						
years old	0.50	0.03	-0.18						
Northeast	0.01	0.01	0.00						
Midwest	-0.52	0.34	0.37						
West (ref: South)	-0.48	0.12	-0.22						
suburban	-0.59	-0.12	0.06						
urban (ref: rural)	0.14	-0.44	0.06						
attend (1+/wk=1)	0.22	-0.16	0.02	3.26	1.85	1.07	3.17	1.86	1.13
born-again	-0.50	-0.71	-0.79	-0.45	-0.61	-0.77			
Catholic	-0.38	0.40	0.58						
other Christian (Ref: Prot.)	0.46	0.67	0.75						
constant	-1.70	0.53	0.86	-0.28	0.04	0.25	-0.50	-0.60	-0.73
BIC'	166.88			-24.37			-40.32		

Base Category: Republican

* = preferred model

N = 650

**Table 4.7: MNL Wald Tests
for Political Party Affiliation**

	χ^2	
Prosperity Index	28.08	***
race (black=1)	40.22	***
attend (1+/wk=1)	11.81	**

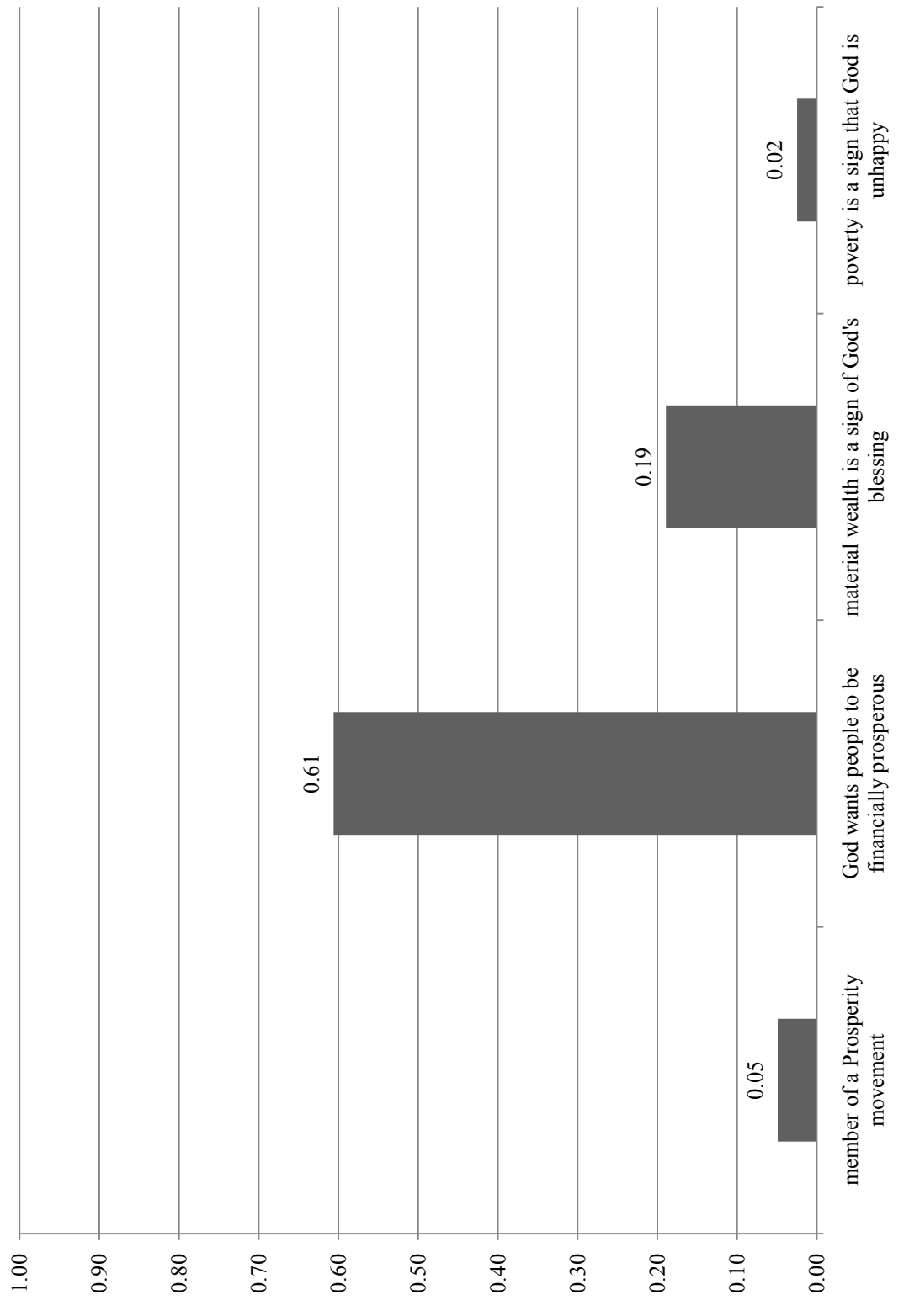
df = 3

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

Table 4.8: Predicted Probabilities for Political Party Affiliation

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	other	
average person	0.37	0.31	0.25	0.07	
Prosperity Index Score	1	0.17	0.32	0.47	0.04
	2	0.22	0.33	0.40	0.05
	3	0.28	0.33	0.33	0.06
	4	0.34	0.31	0.27	0.07
	5	0.41	0.29	0.22	0.08
	6	0.48	0.27	0.17	0.09
	7	0.55	0.24	0.12	0.09
	8	0.61	0.21	0.09	0.09
	9	0.66	0.18	0.07	0.09
	10	0.71	0.15	0.05	0.09
black	0.05	0.74	0.18	0.03	
non-black	0.42	0.27	0.24	0.08	
attends 1/wk+	0.45	0.28	0.21	0.06	
attends <1/wk	0.31	0.33	0.27	0.09	

Figure 2.1: Predicted Probabilities for the Average Person by Dependent Variable



**Figure 2.2: Predicted Probabilities for Prosperity Index Scores
for the Average Person**

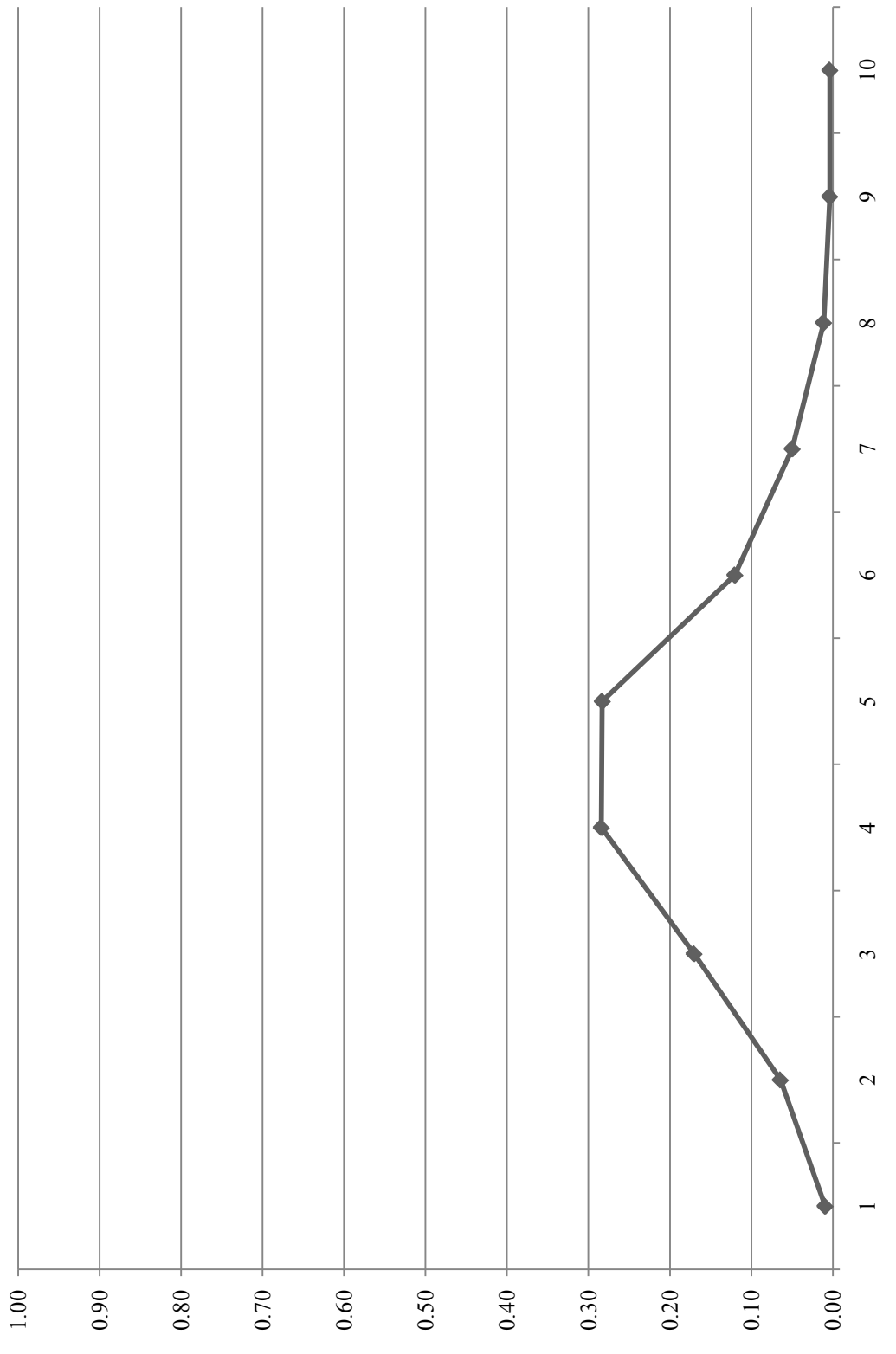


Figure 2.3: Predicted Probabilities for Agreeing That Material Wealth Is a Sign of God's Blessing by Education

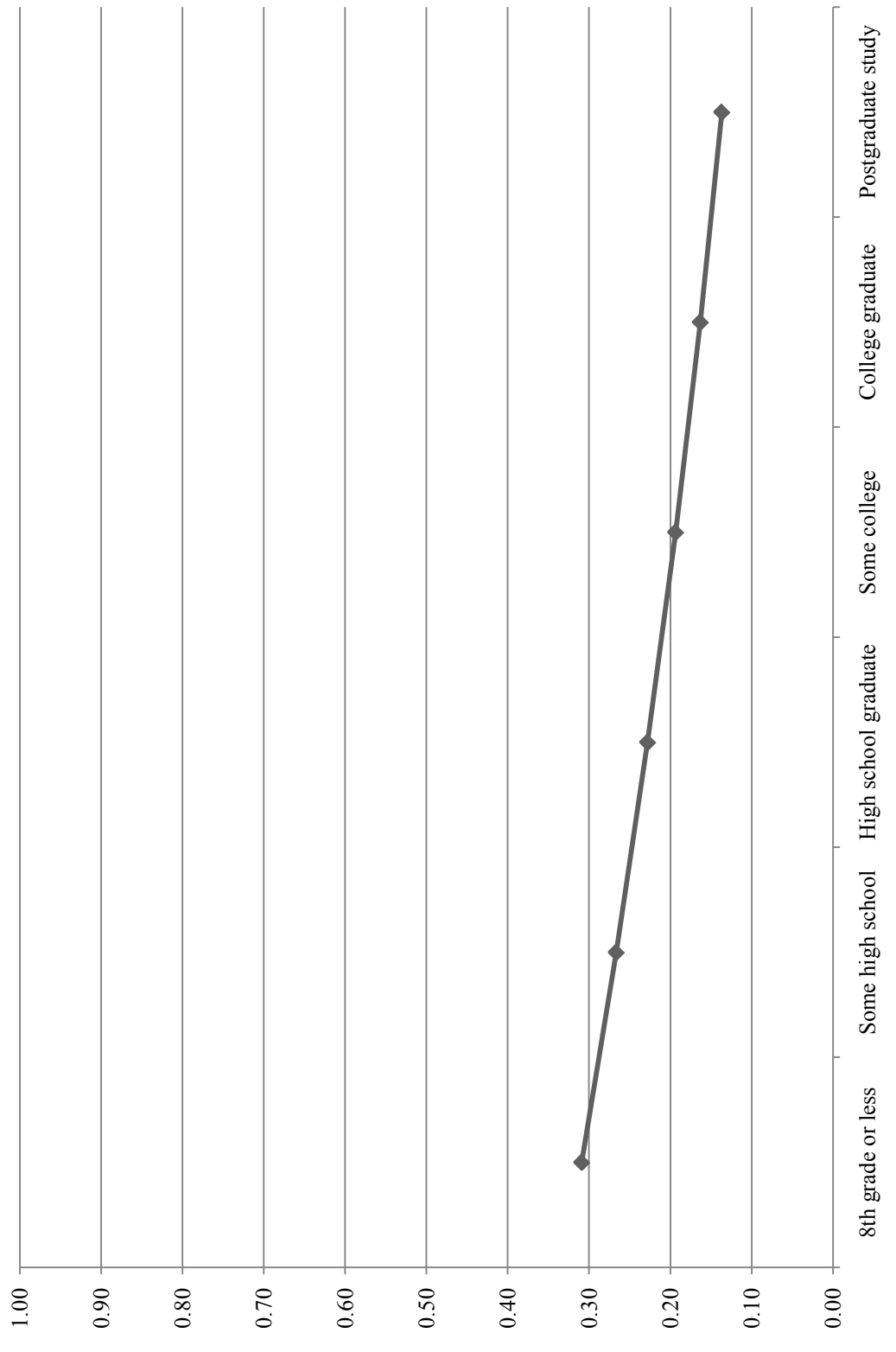
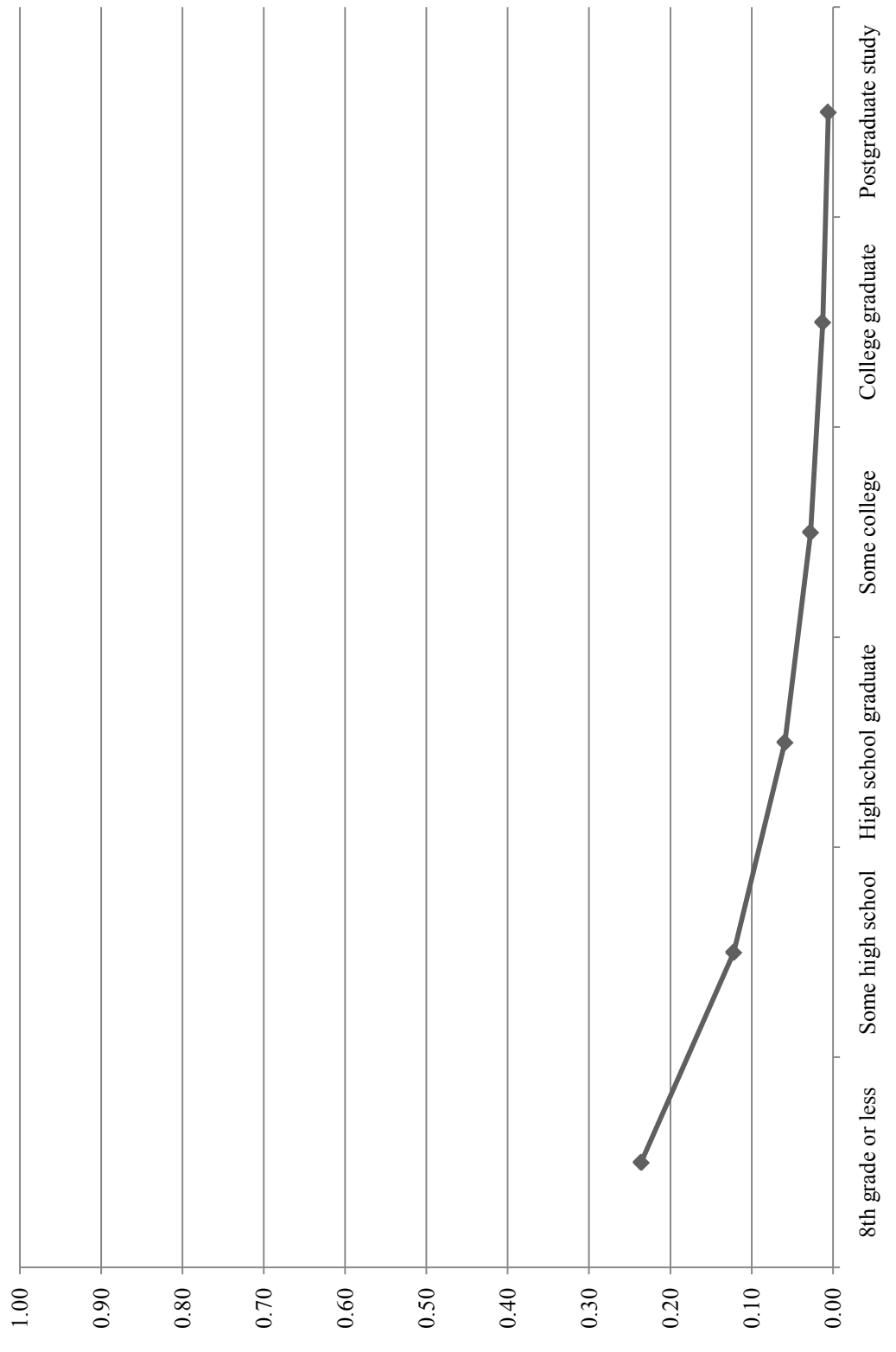


Figure 2.4: Predicted Probabilities for Agreeing That Poverty Is a Sign That God Is Unhappy by Education



**Figure 2.5: Predicted Probabilities for Born-Again/Evangelical Ideal Types
by Dependent Variable**

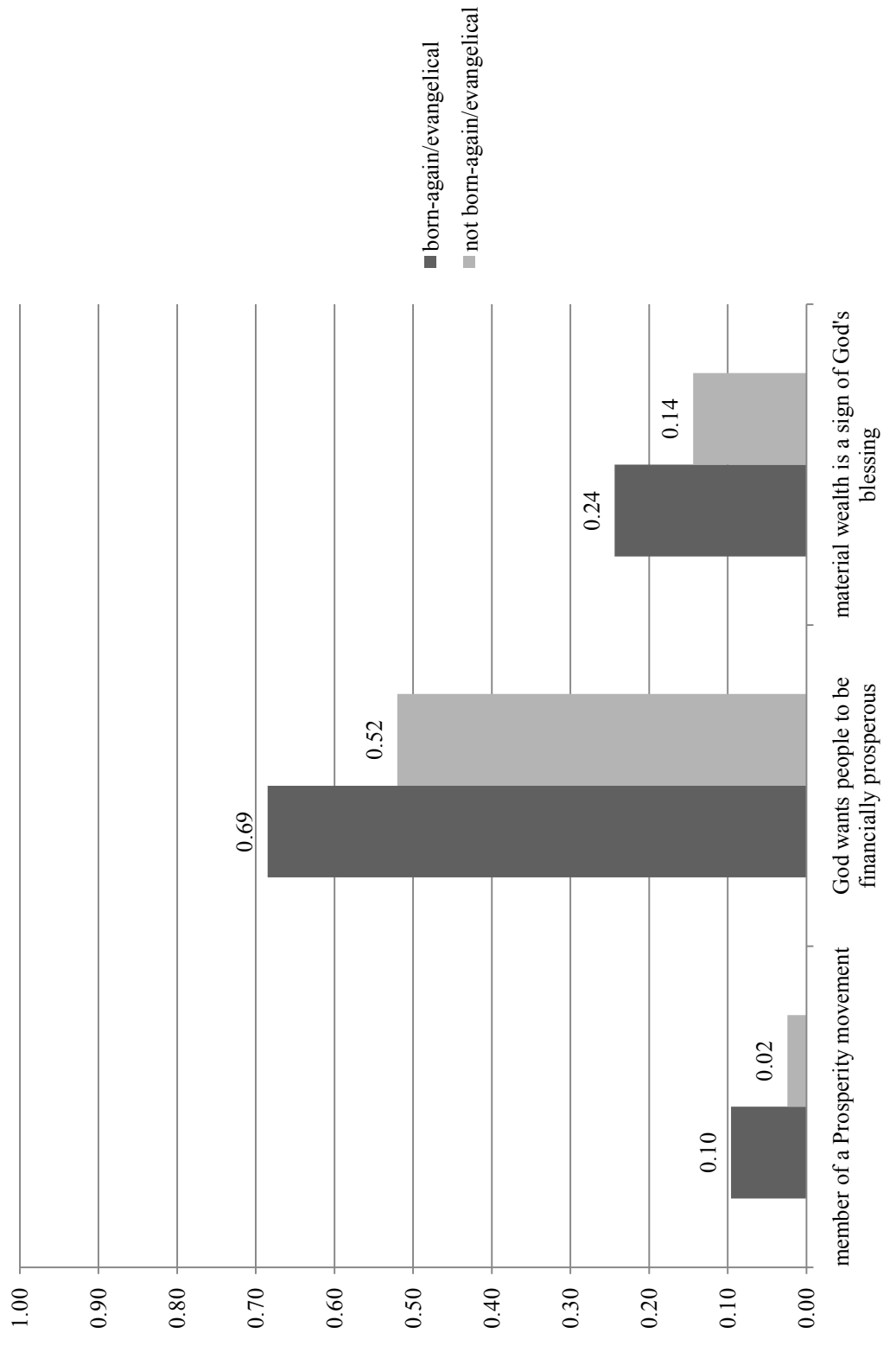
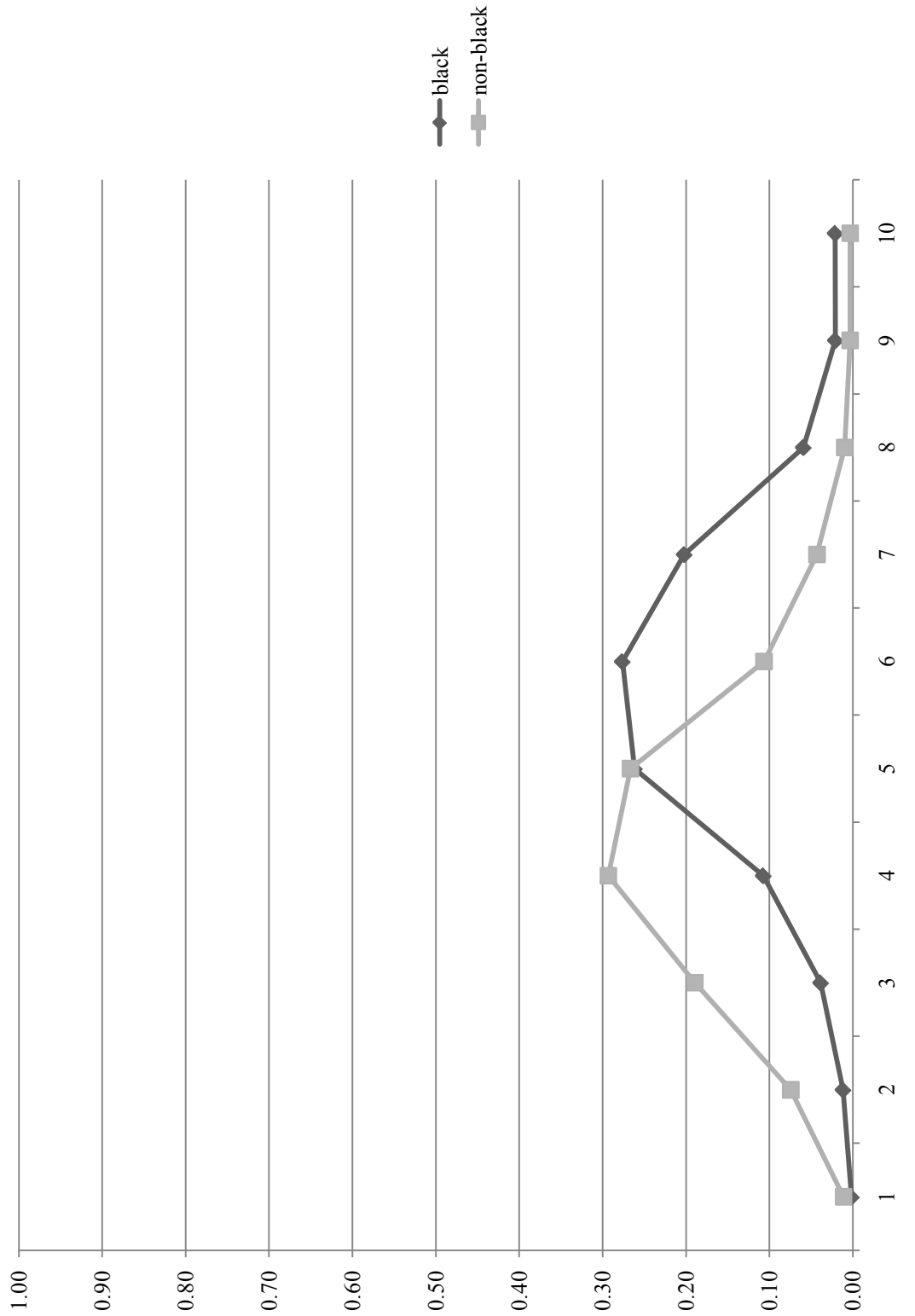


Figure 2.6: Predicted Probabilities for Prosperity Index Scores by Race



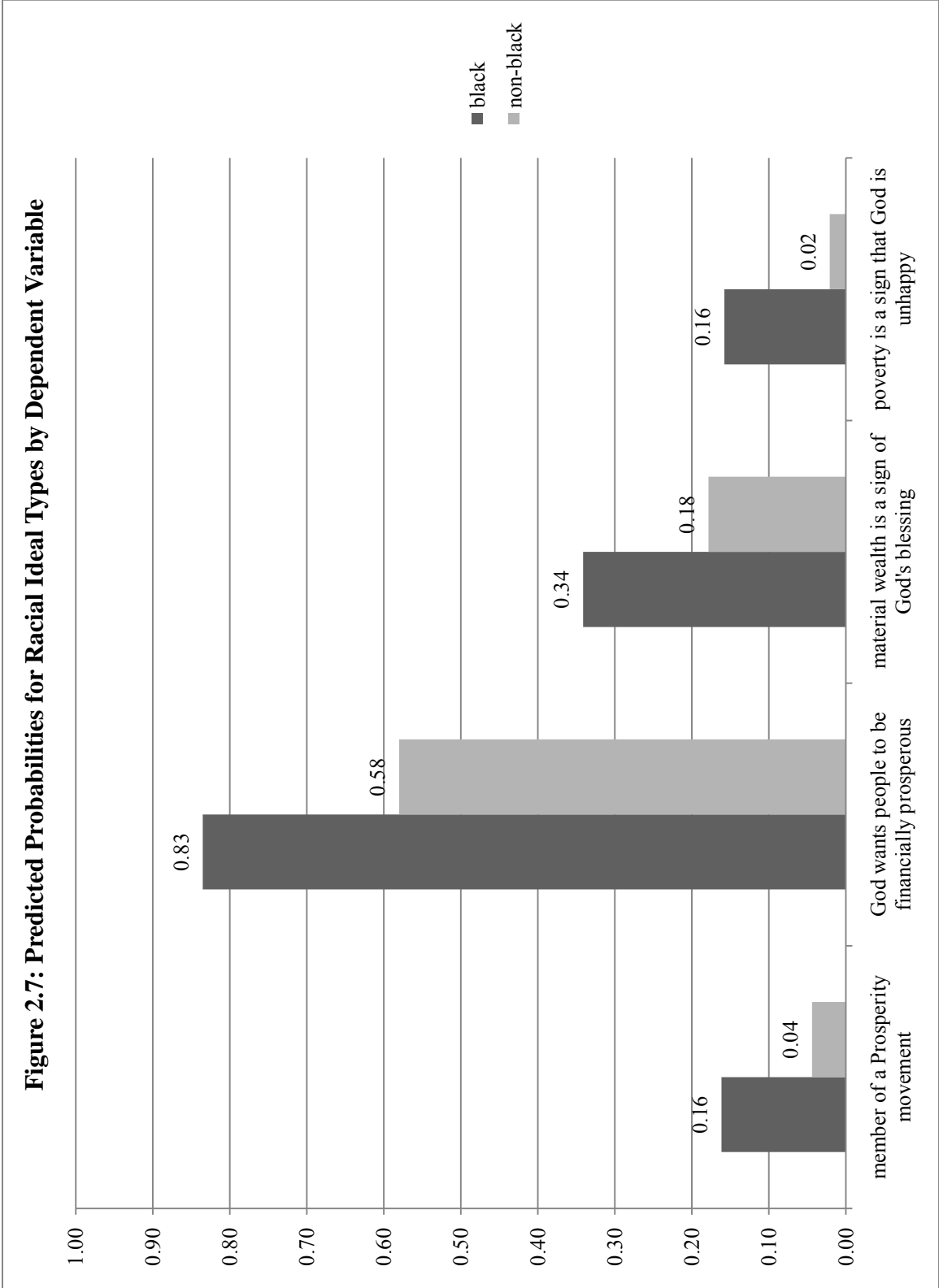


Figure 2.8: Predicted Probabilities for Agreeing That Poverty Is a Sign That God Is Unhappy by Race and Education

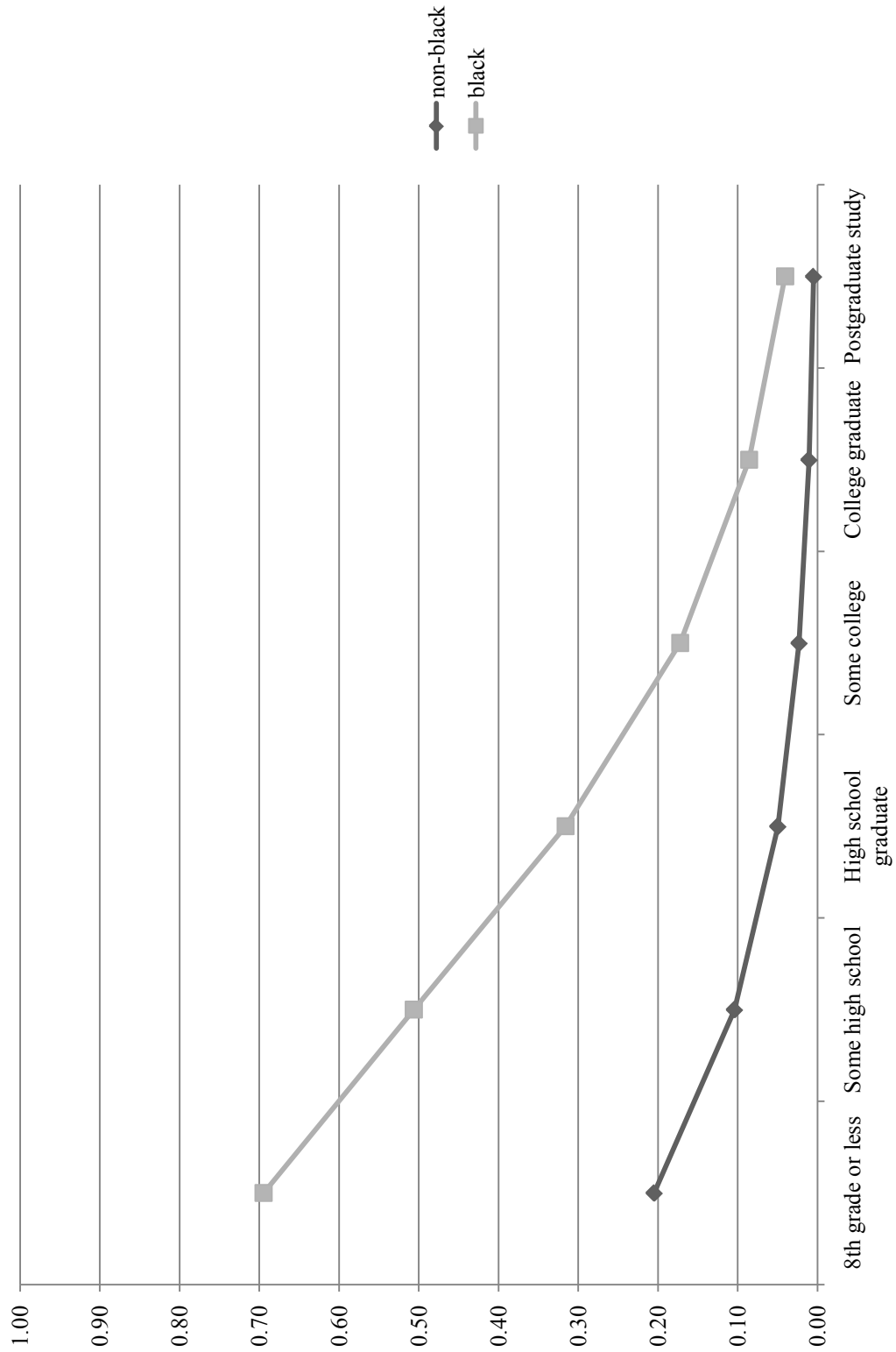


Figure 2.9: Predicted Probabilities for Agreeing That Poverty Is a Sign That God Is Unhappy

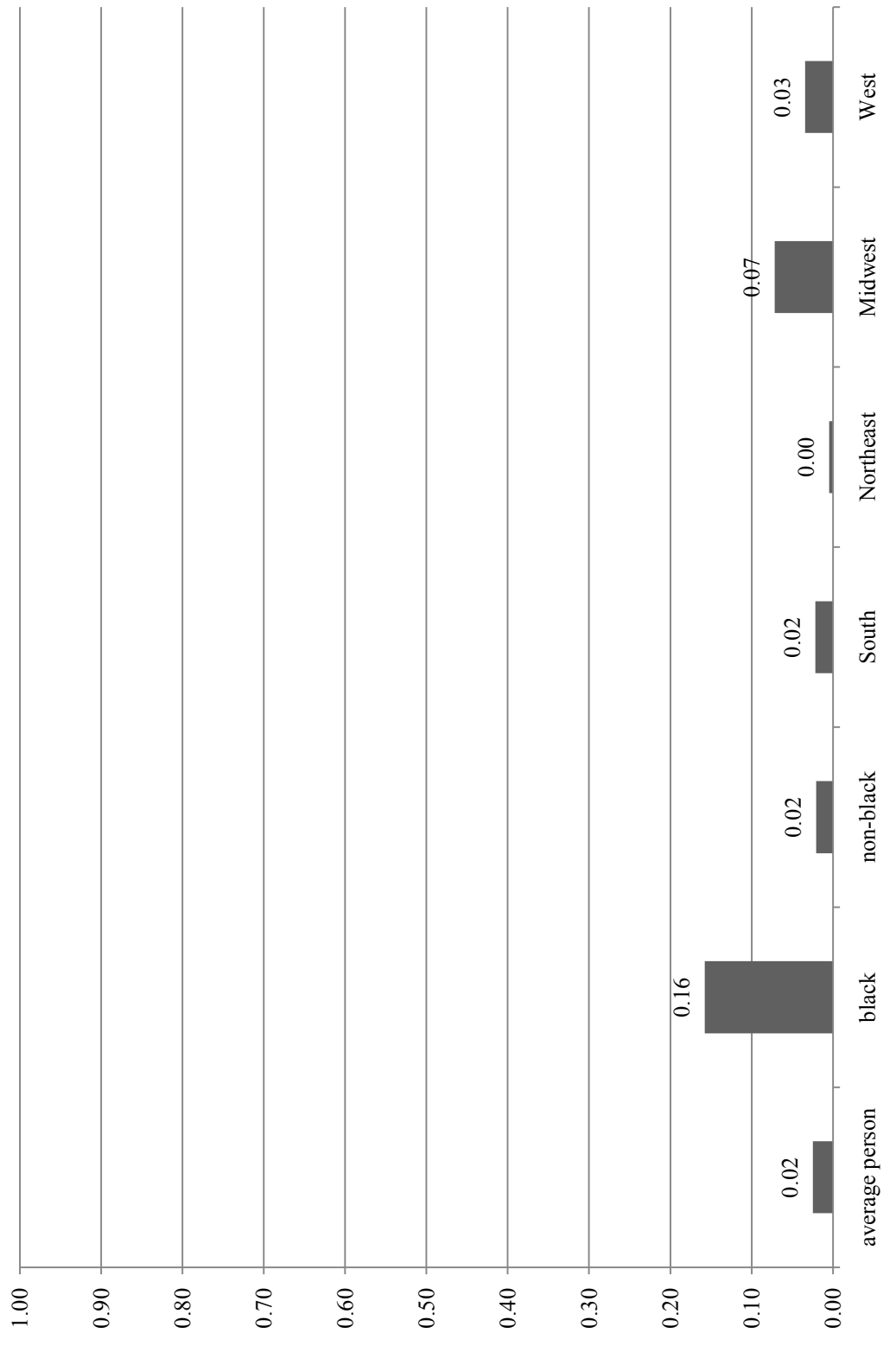


Figure 2.10: Predicted Probabilities for Agreeing That Material Wealth Is a Sign of God's Blessing

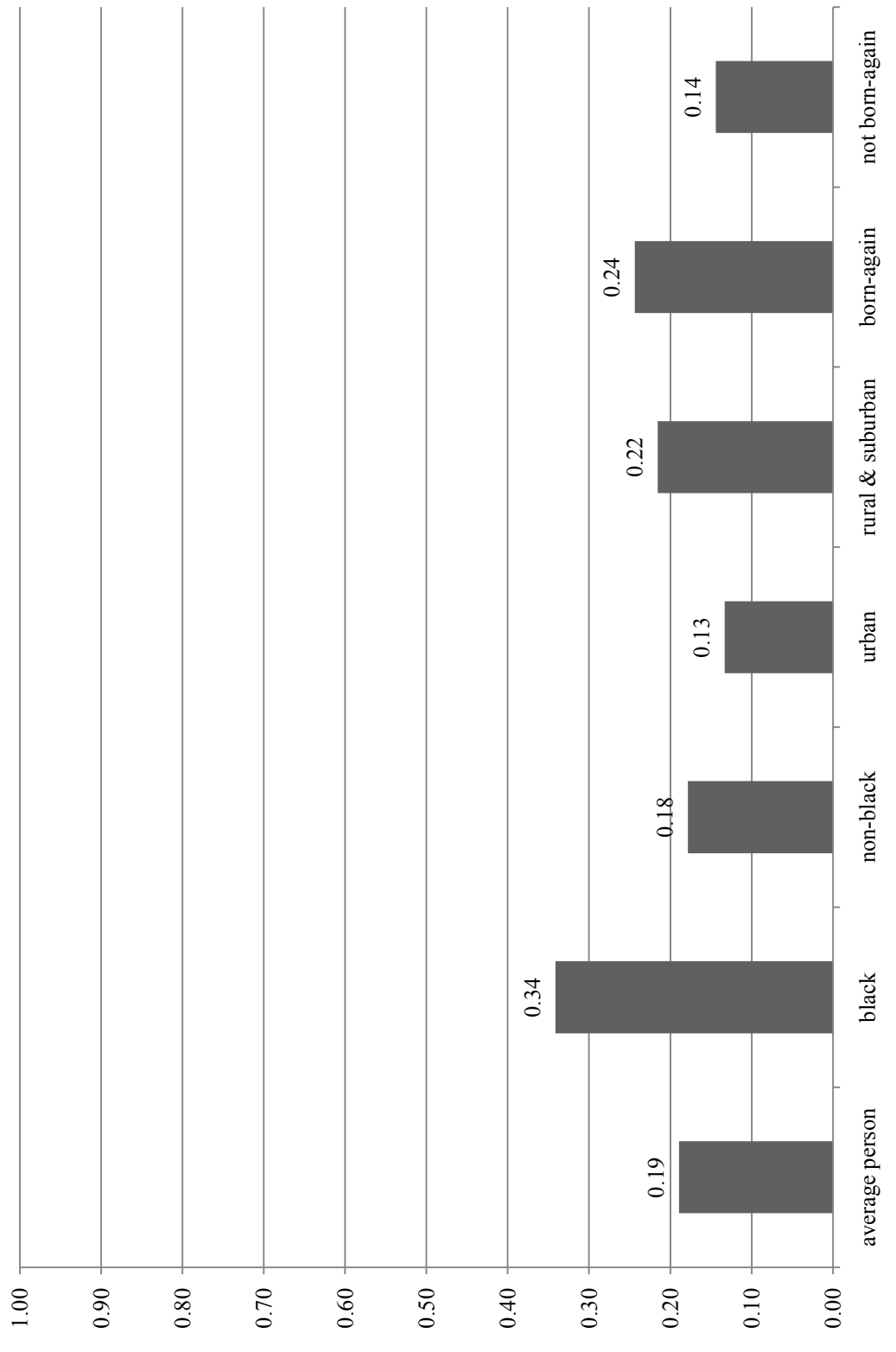


Figure 2.11: Predicted Probabilities for Agreeing That Material Wealth Is a Sign of God's Blessing by Age

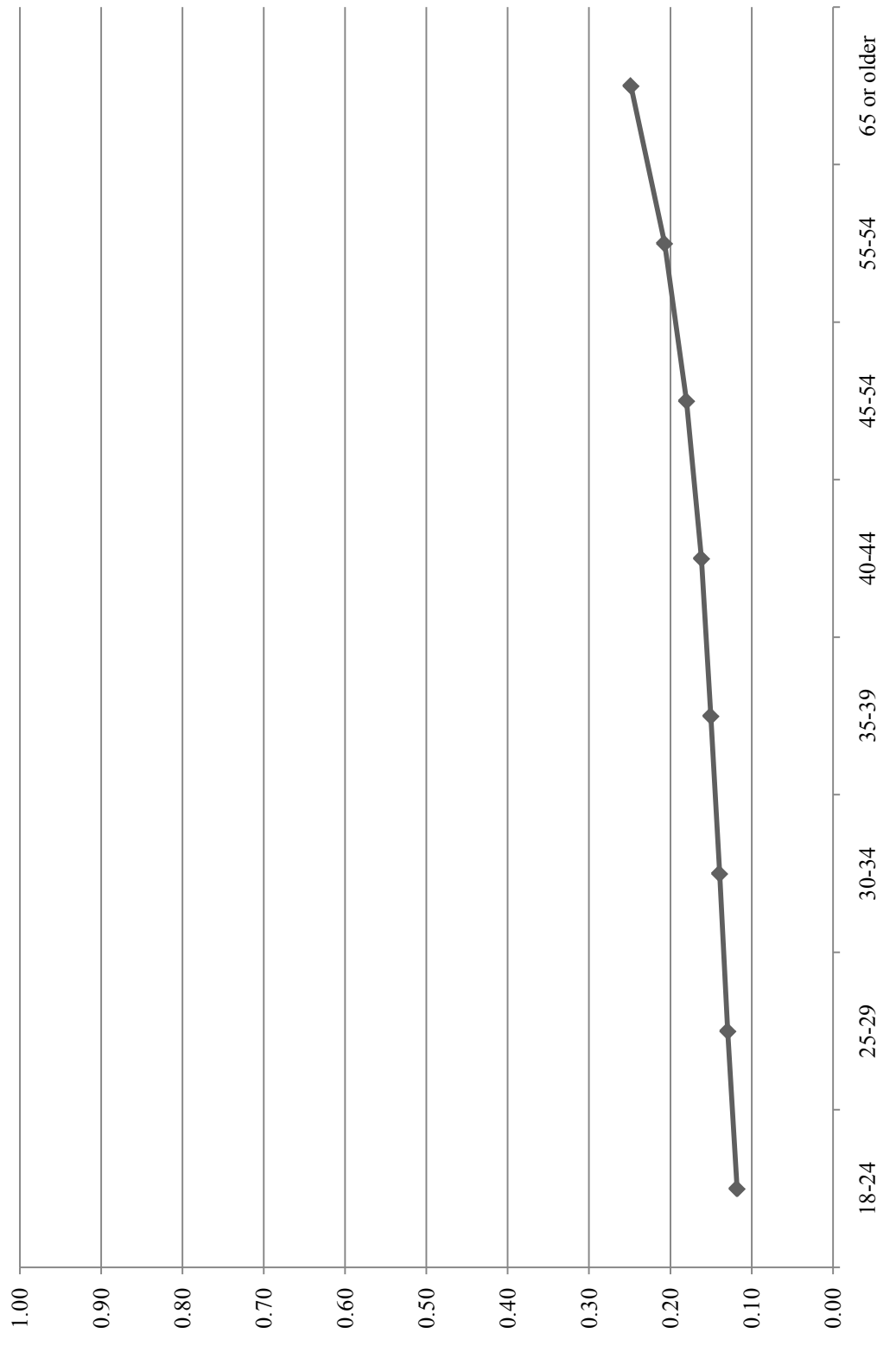


Figure 2.12: Predicted Probabilities for Prosperity Index Scores by Age

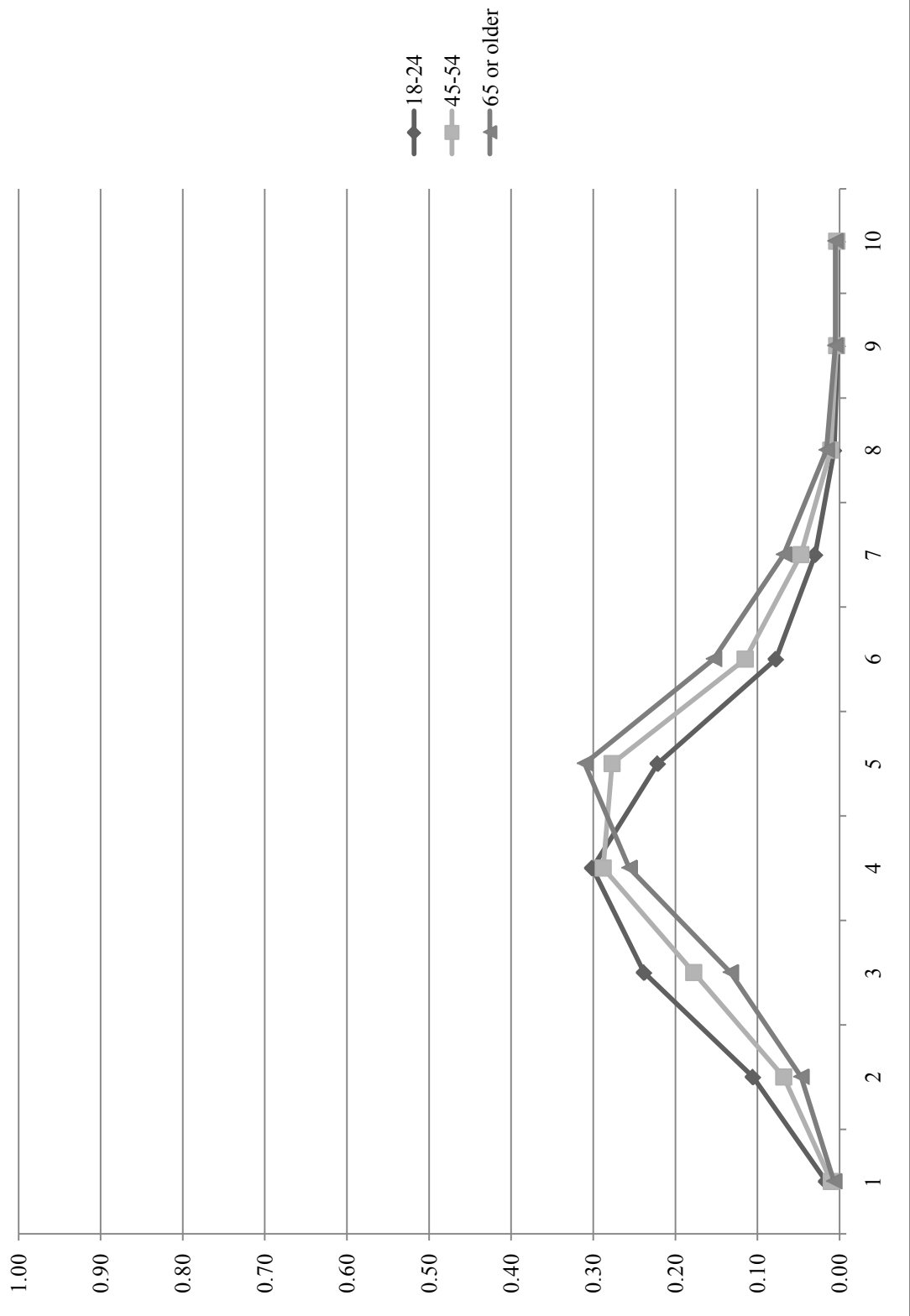


Figure 3.1: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Nonreligious Giving for the Average Person

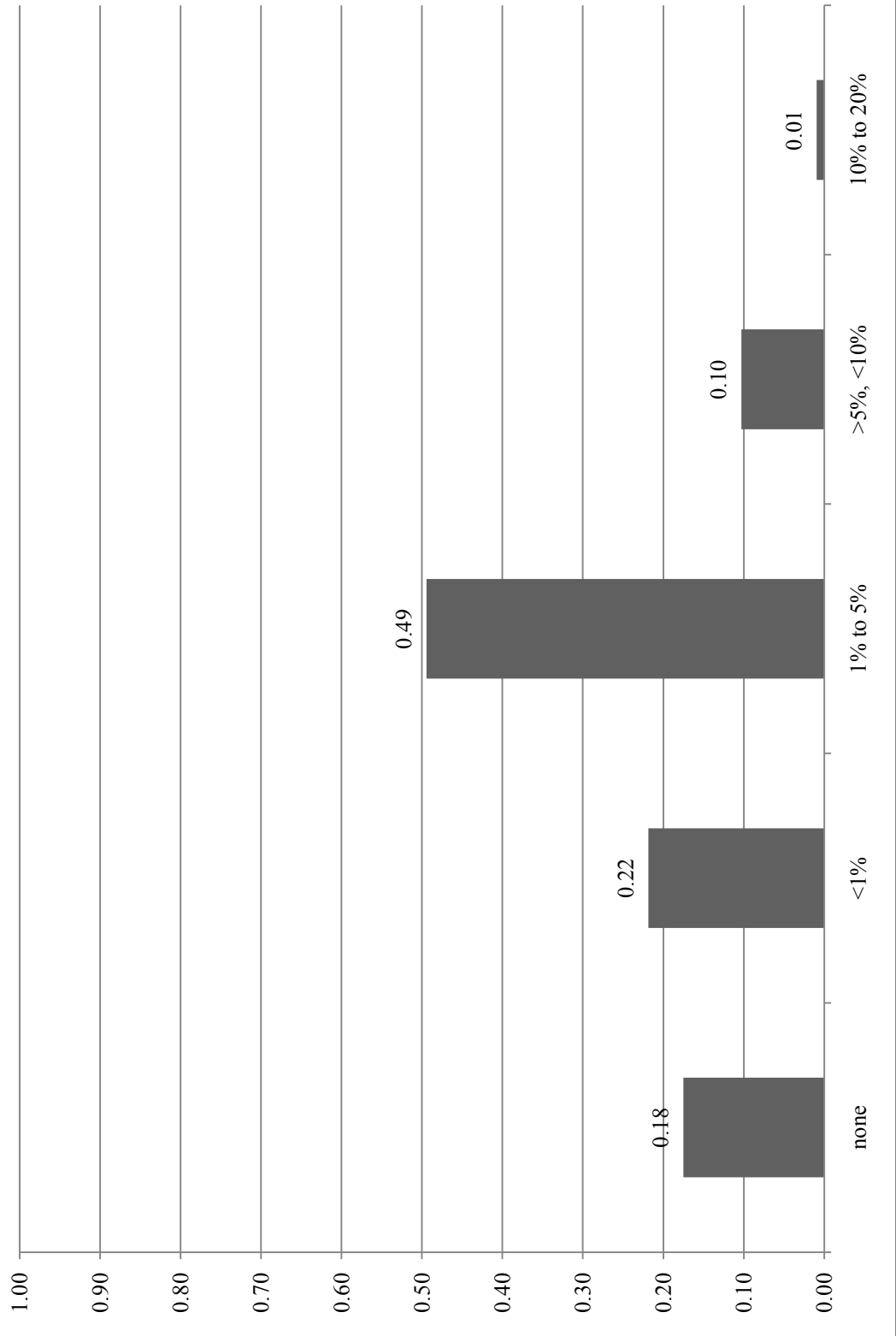


Figure 3.2: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Nonreligious Giving by Income

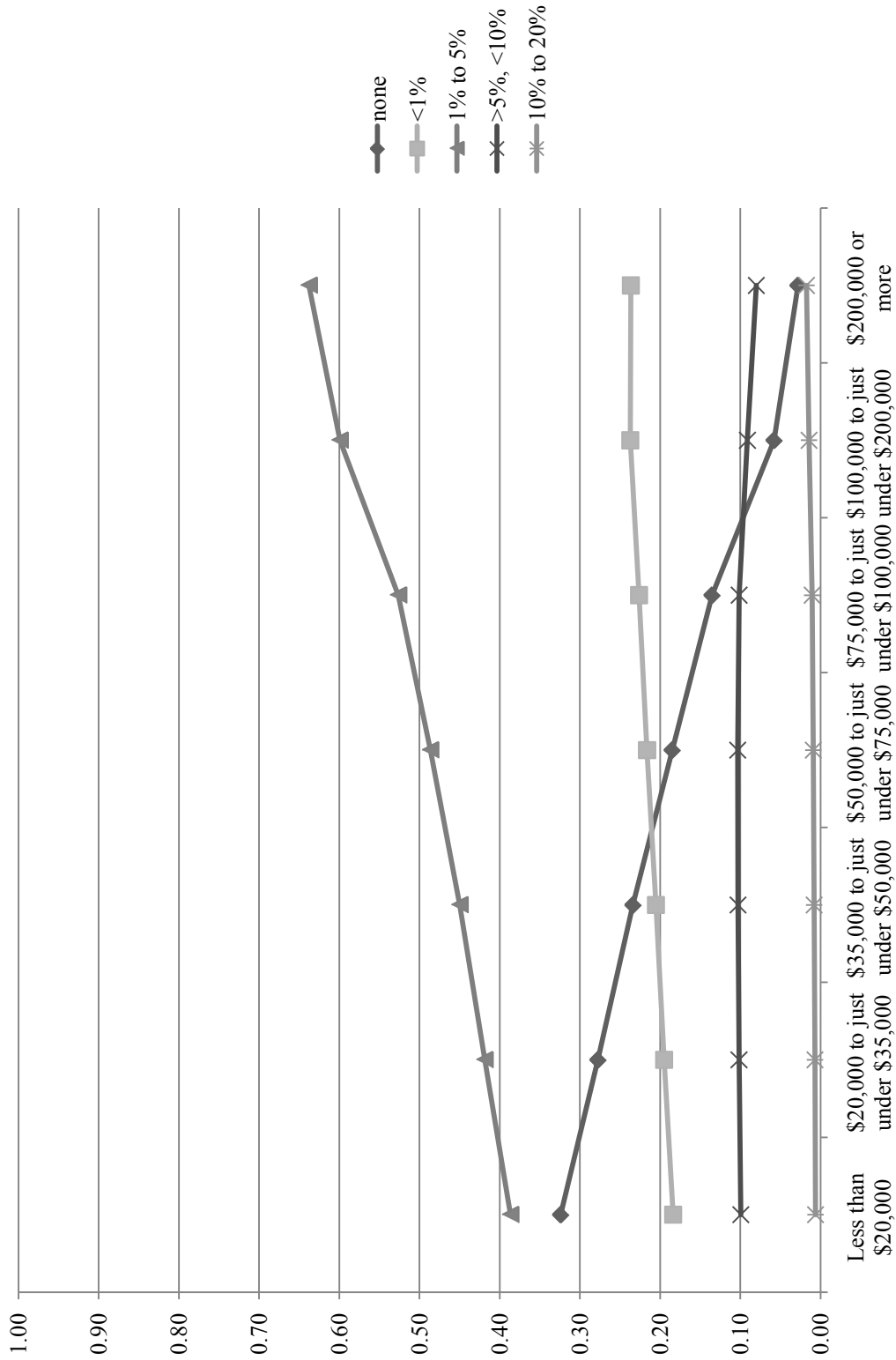


Figure 3.3: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Nonreligious Giving by Level of Education

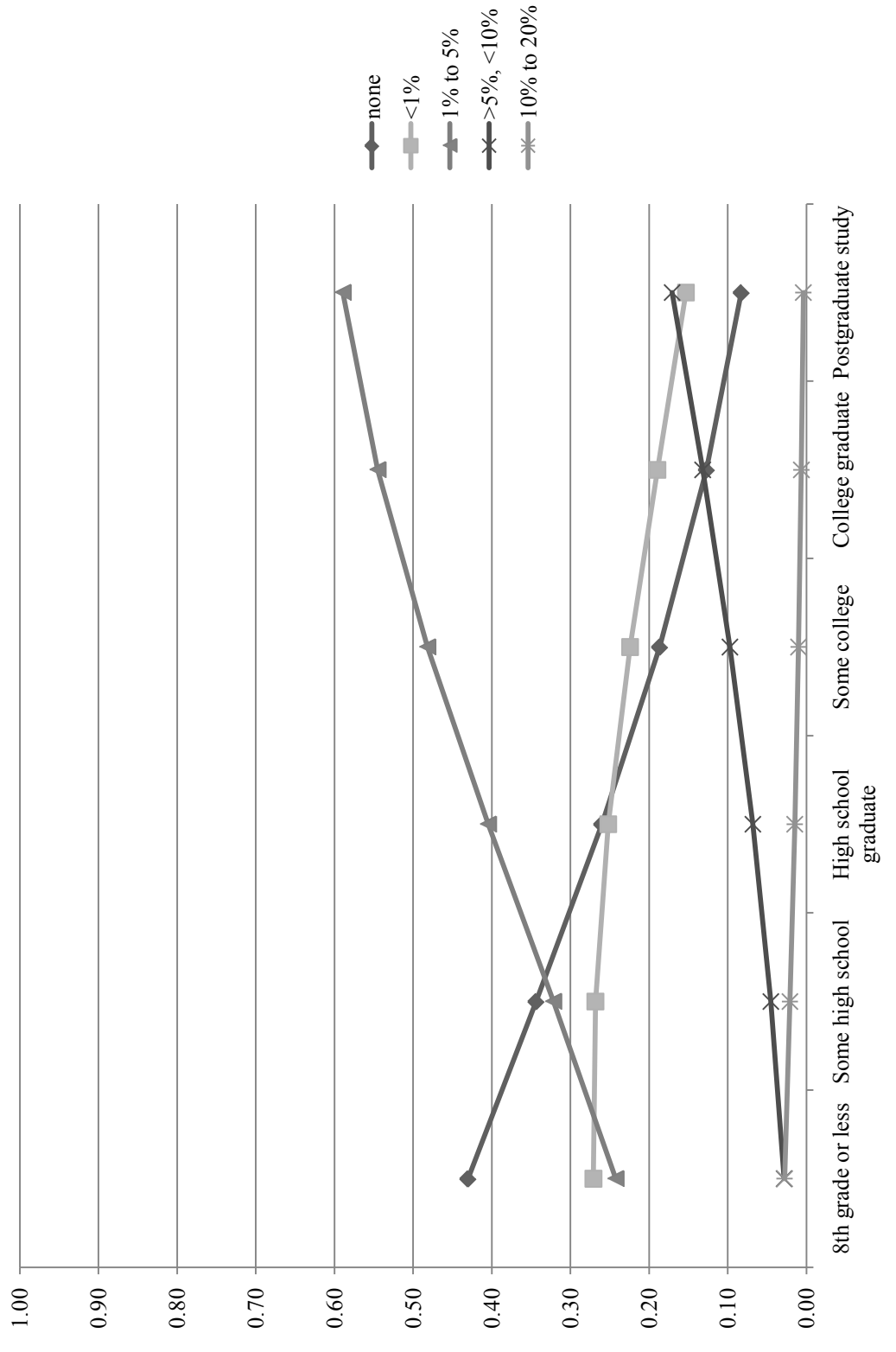


Figure 3.4: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Nonreligious Giving by Age

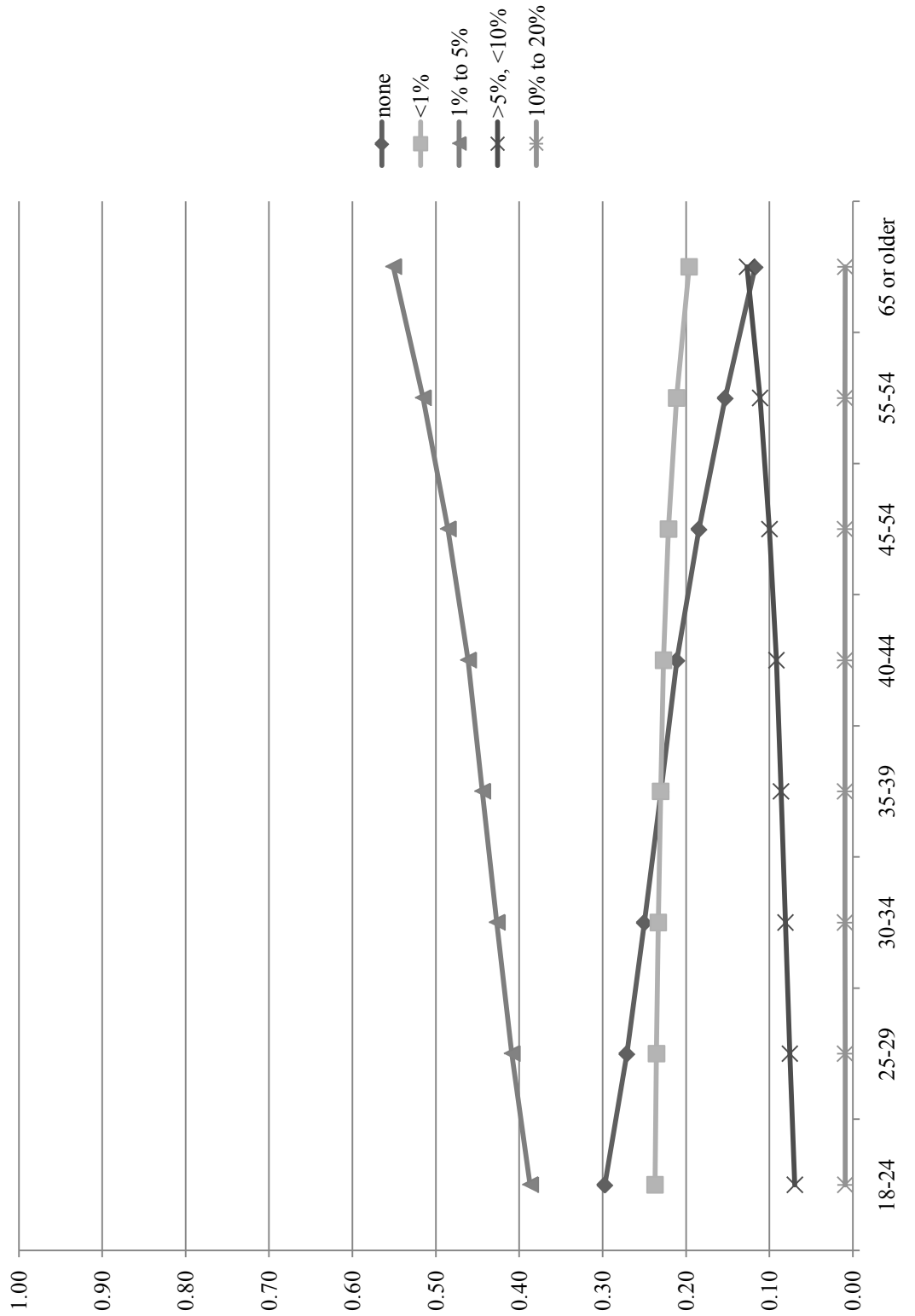


Figure 3.5: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Nonreligious Giving by Religion

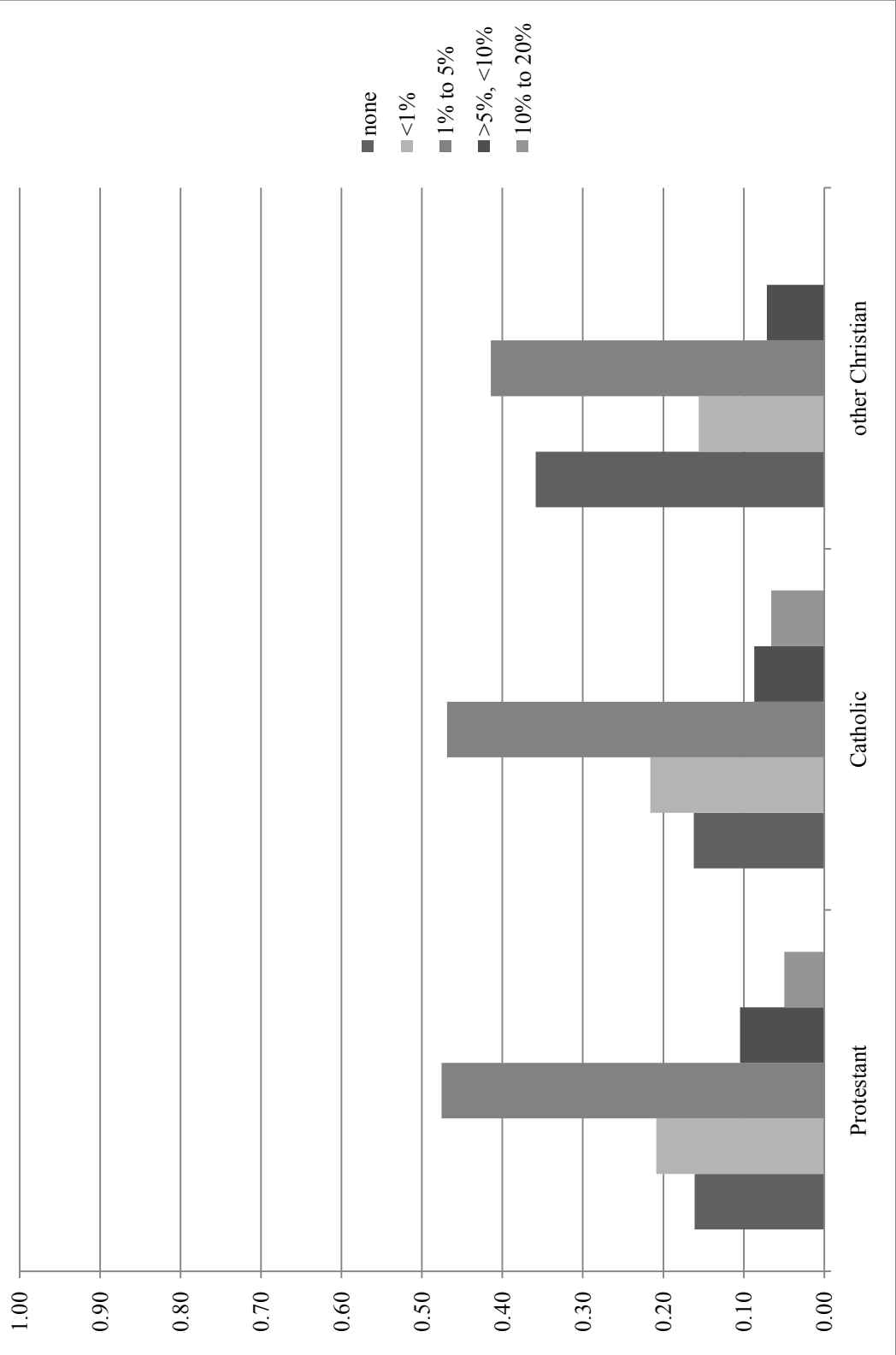
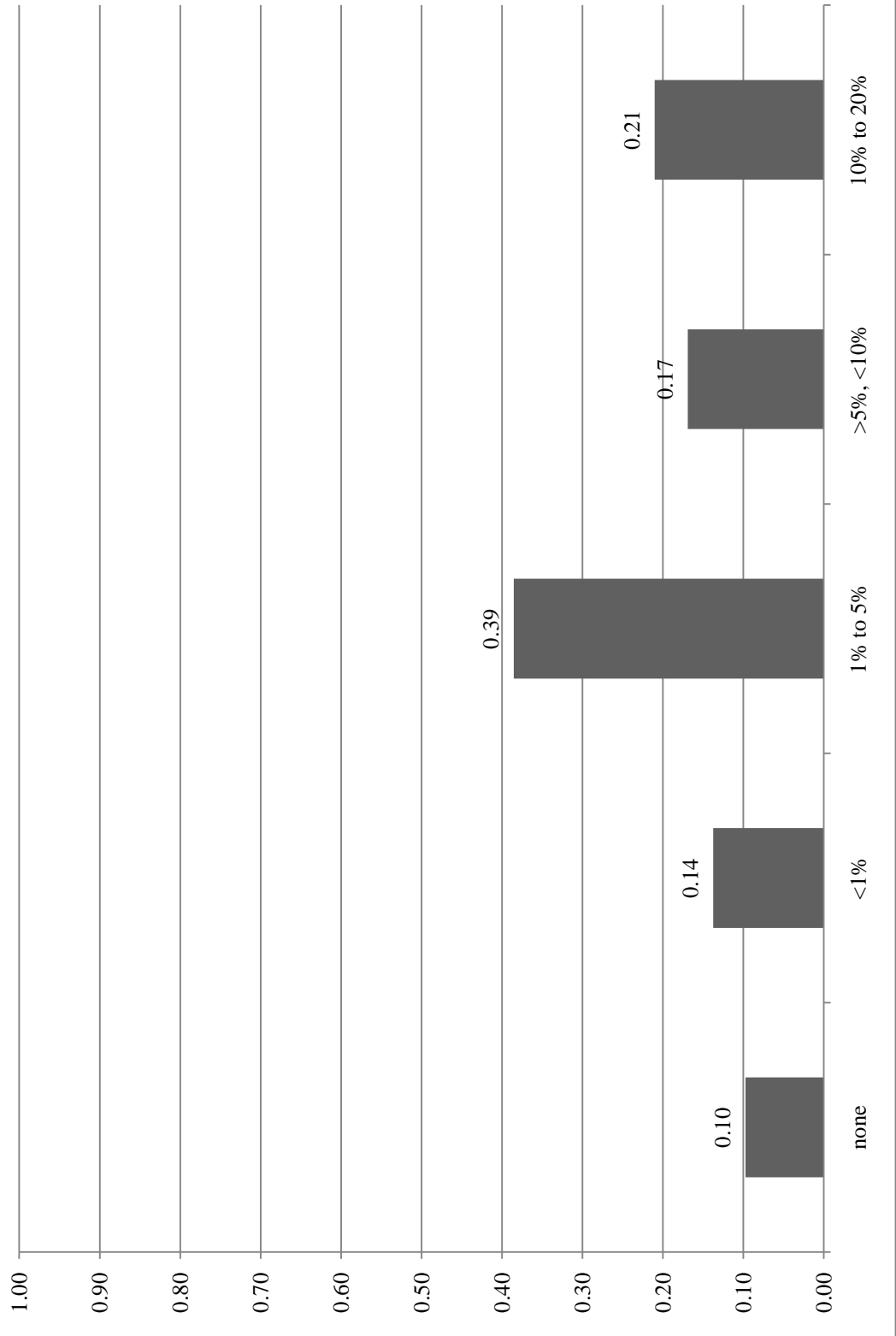


Figure 3.6: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving for the Average Person



**Figure 3.7: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving
by Level of Education**

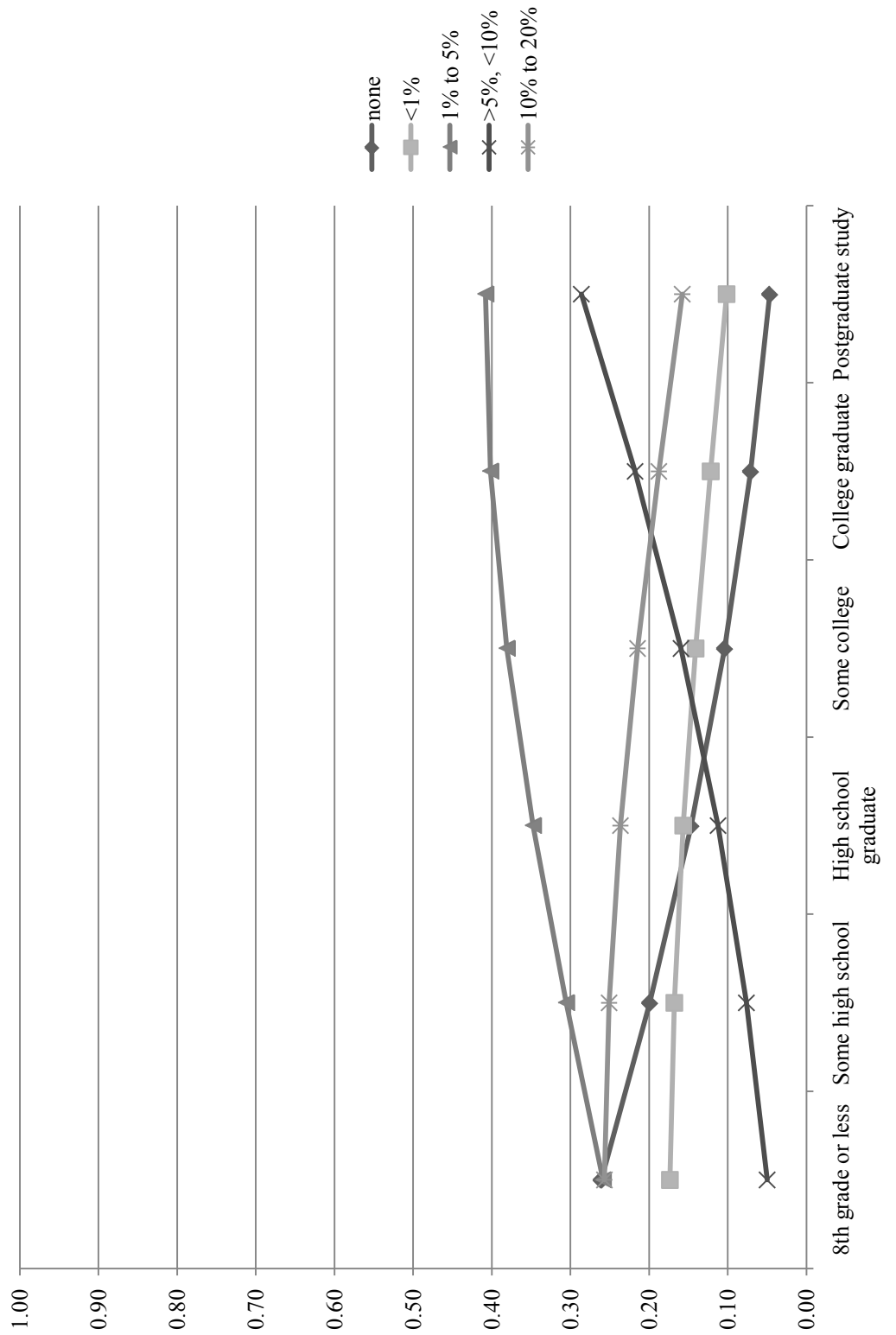
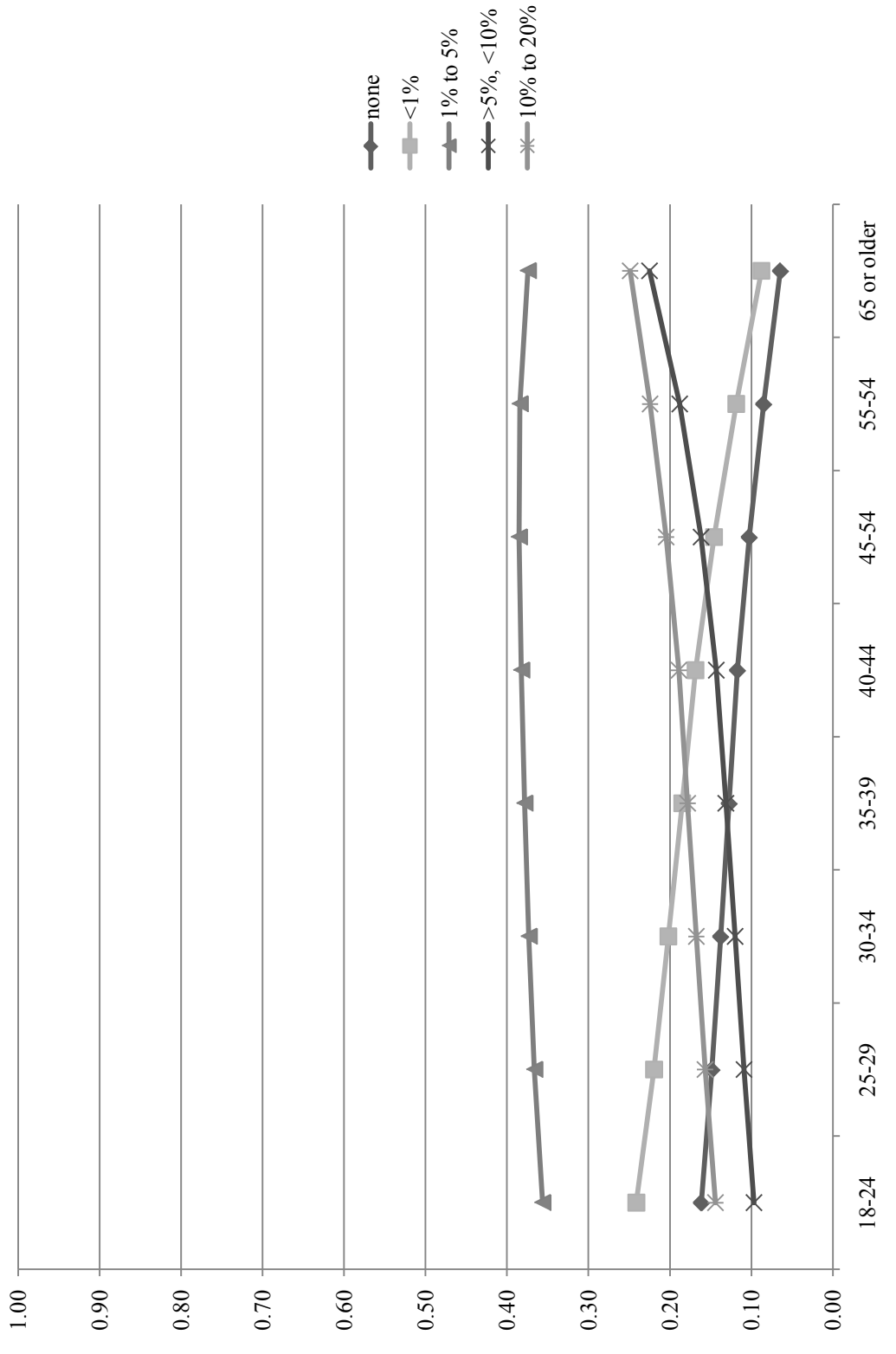


Figure 3.8: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving by Age



**Figure 3.9: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving
by Church Attendance**

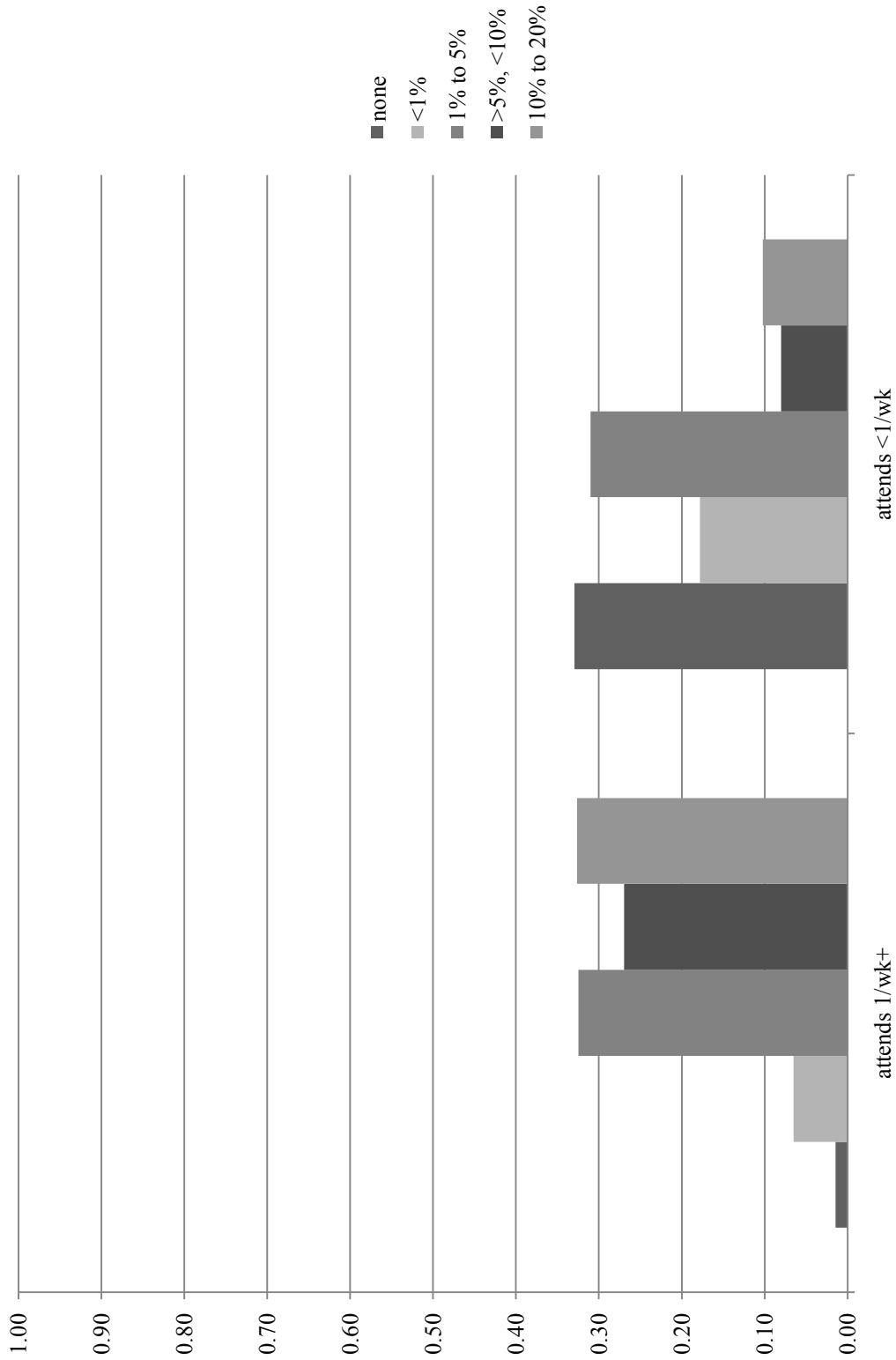


Figure 3.10: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving by Born-Again

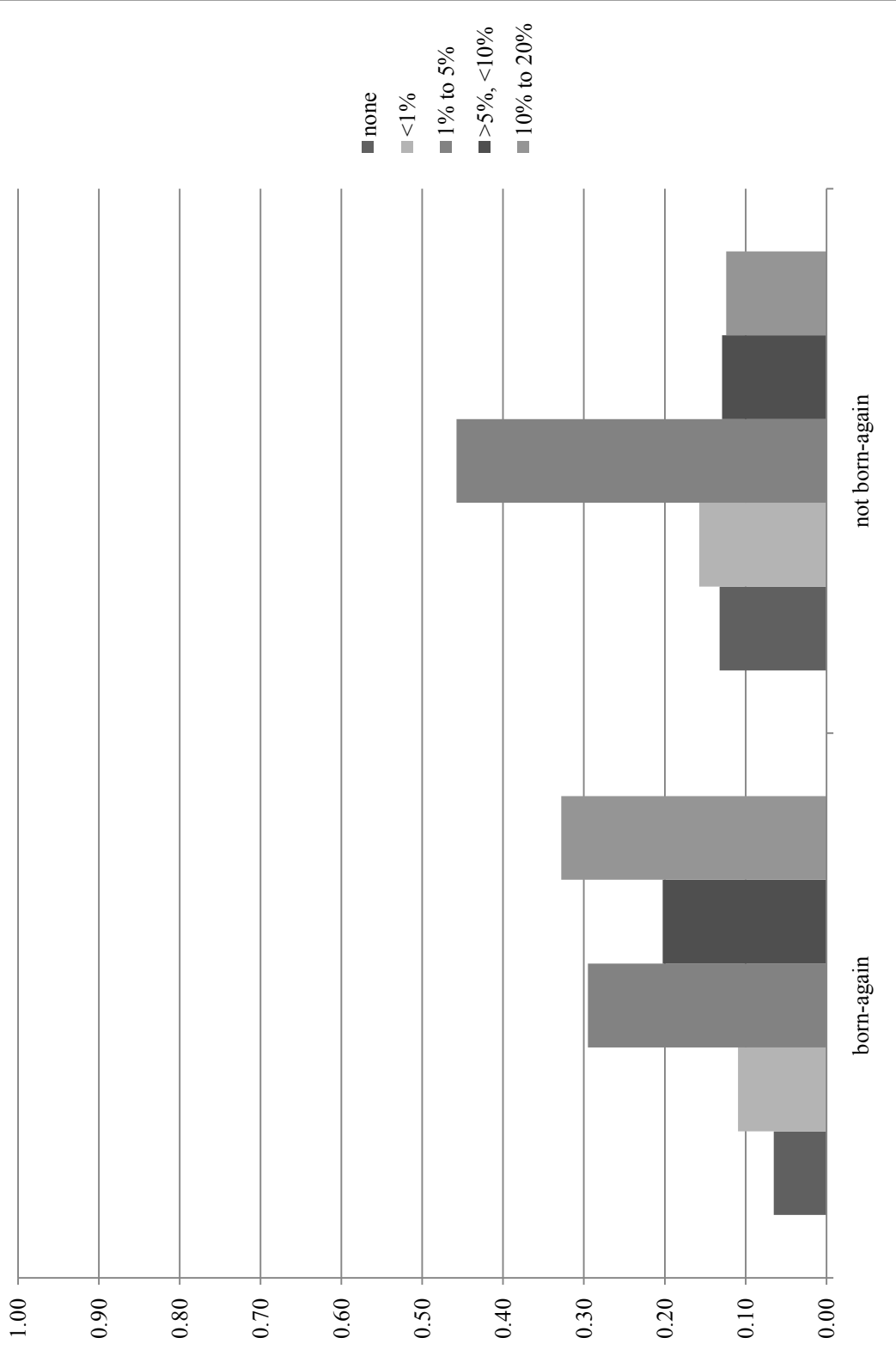
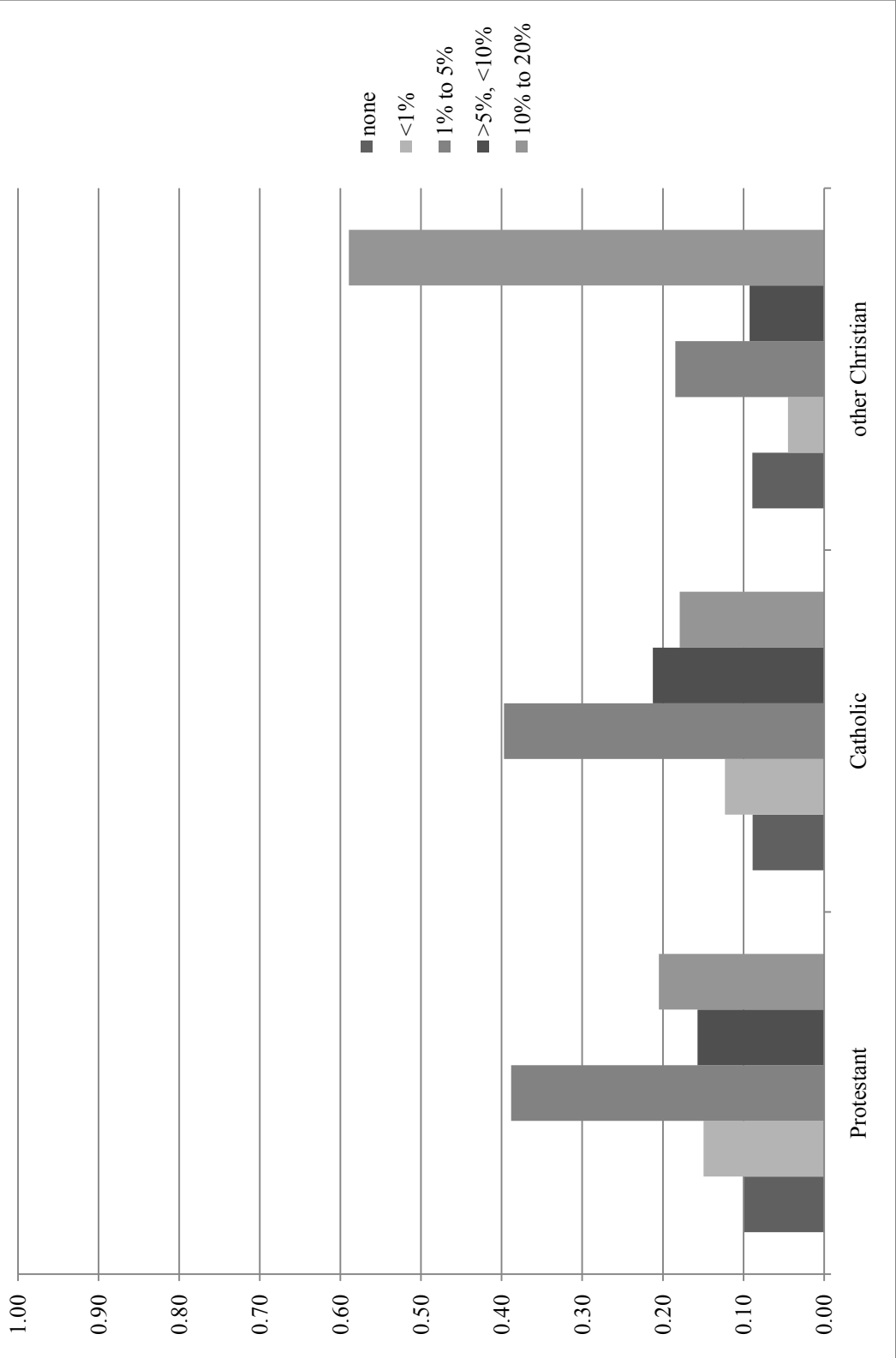


Figure 3.11: Predicted Probabilities for Percentage of Income to Religious Giving by Religion



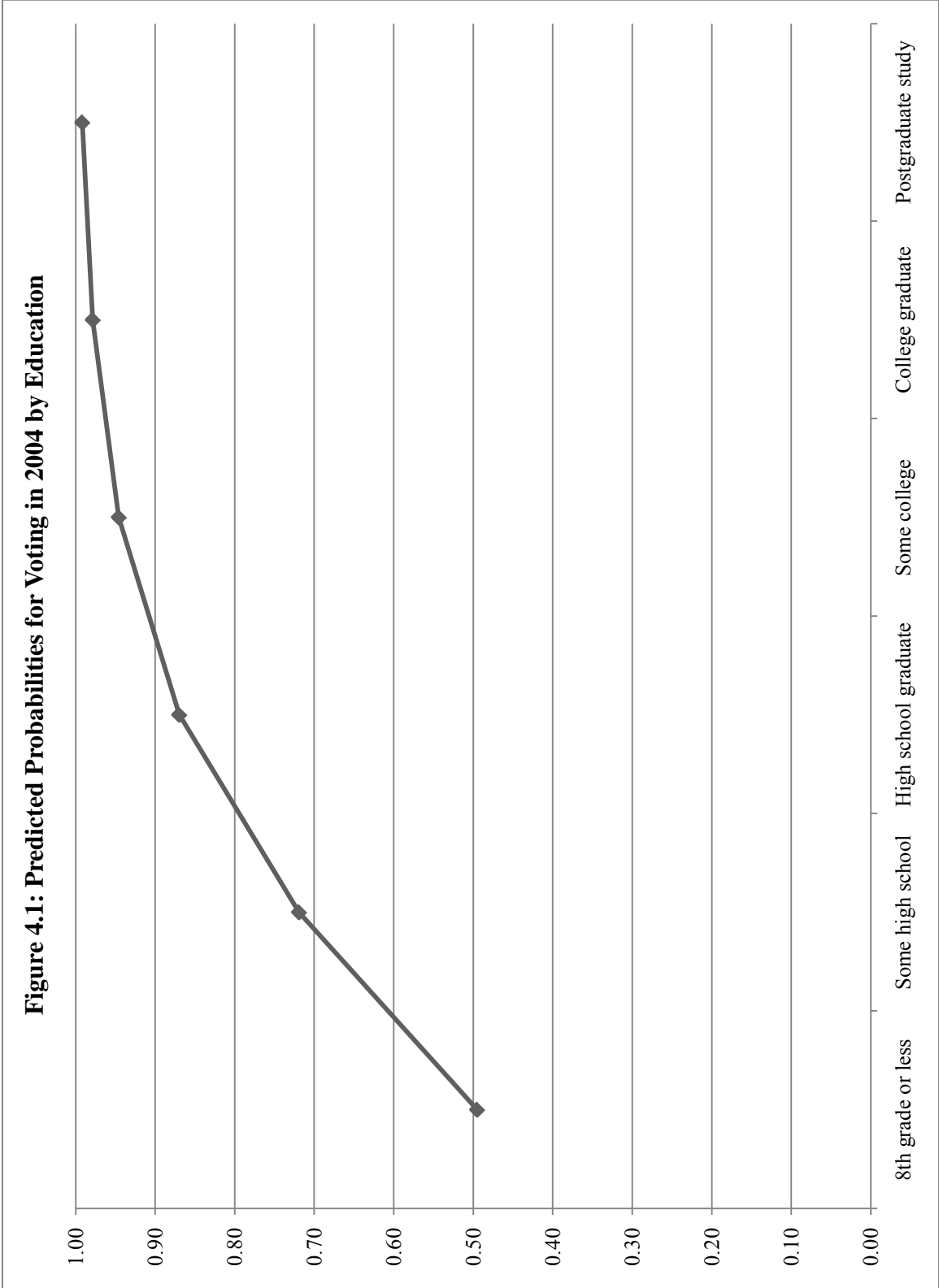
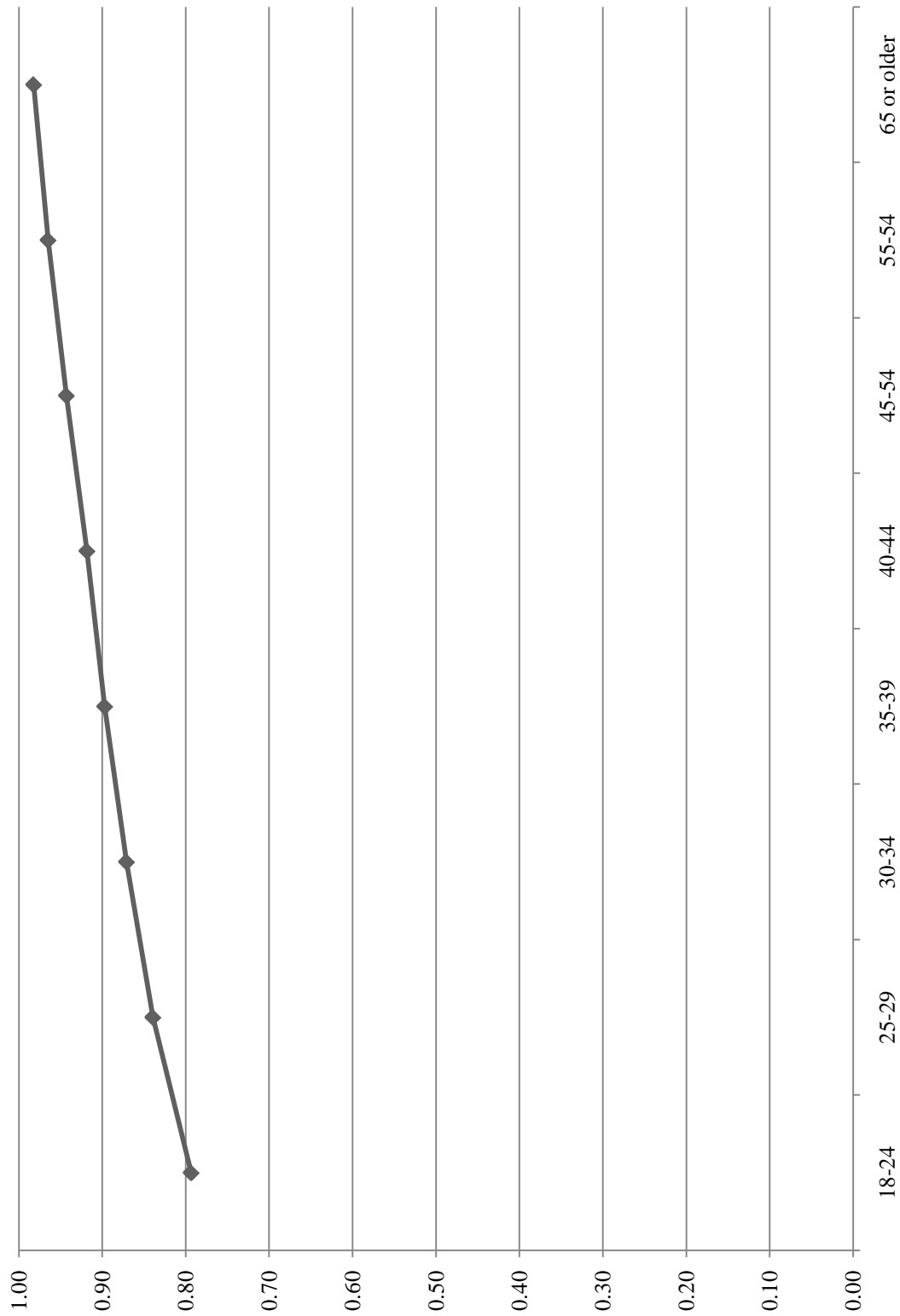


Figure 4.2: Predicted Probabilities for Voting in 2004 by Age



**Figure 4.3: Predicted Probabilities for Voting for Bush (over Kerry) in 2004
by Prosperity Index Score**

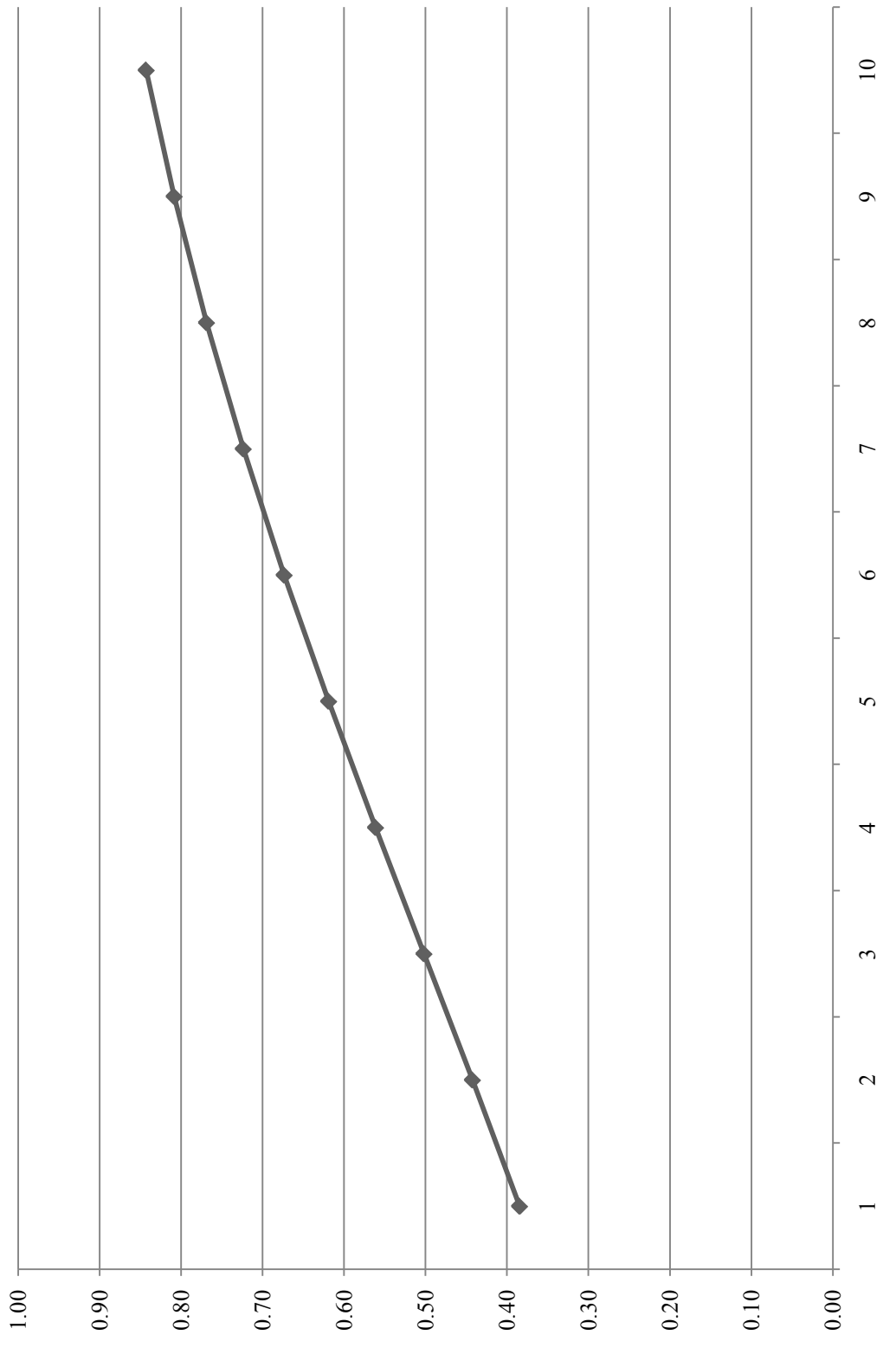


Figure 4.4: Predicted Probabilities for Voting for Bush (over Kerry) in 2004

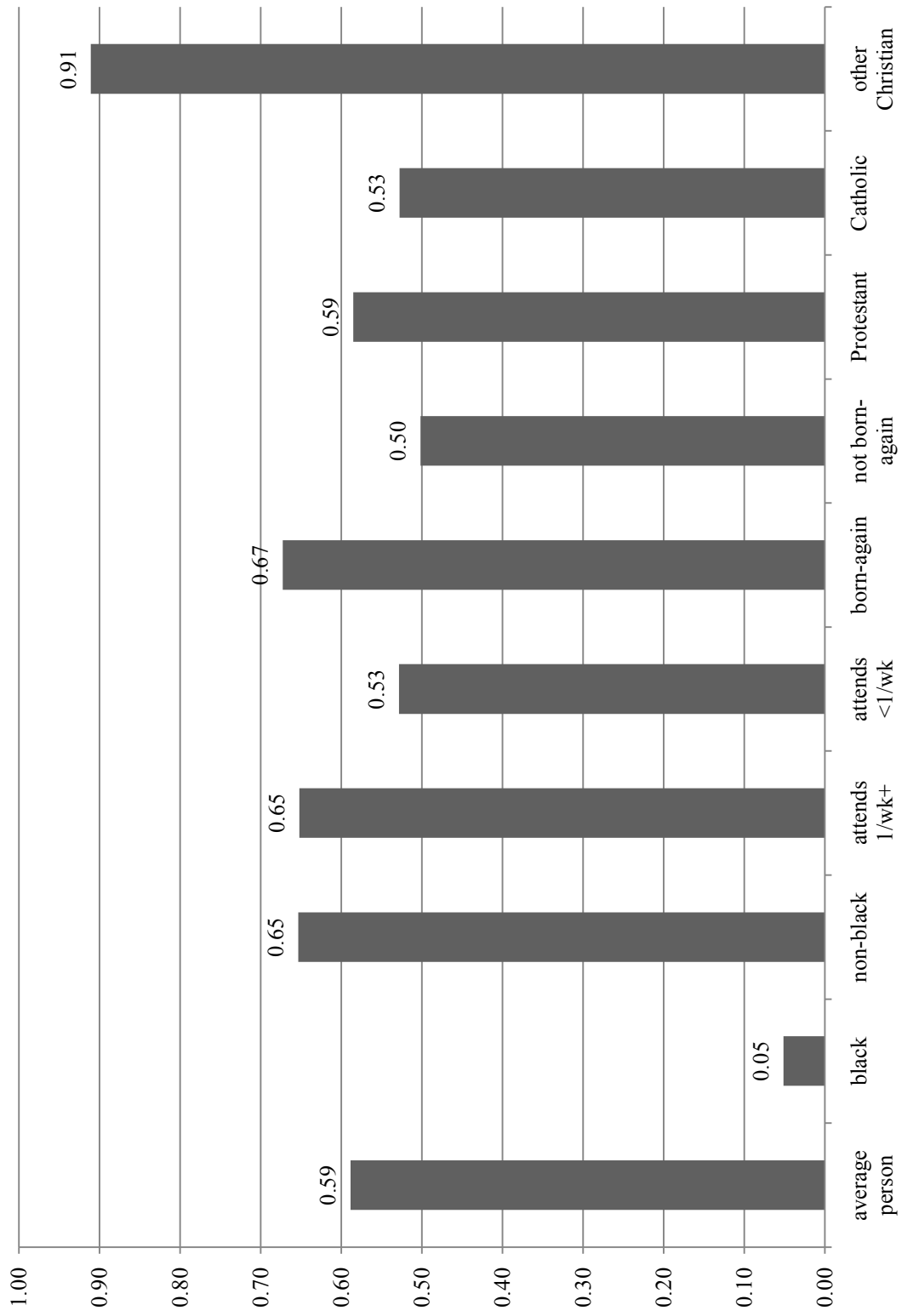


Figure 4.5: Predicted Probabilities for Voting for Bush (over Kerry) in 2004 by Prosperity Index Score for Race

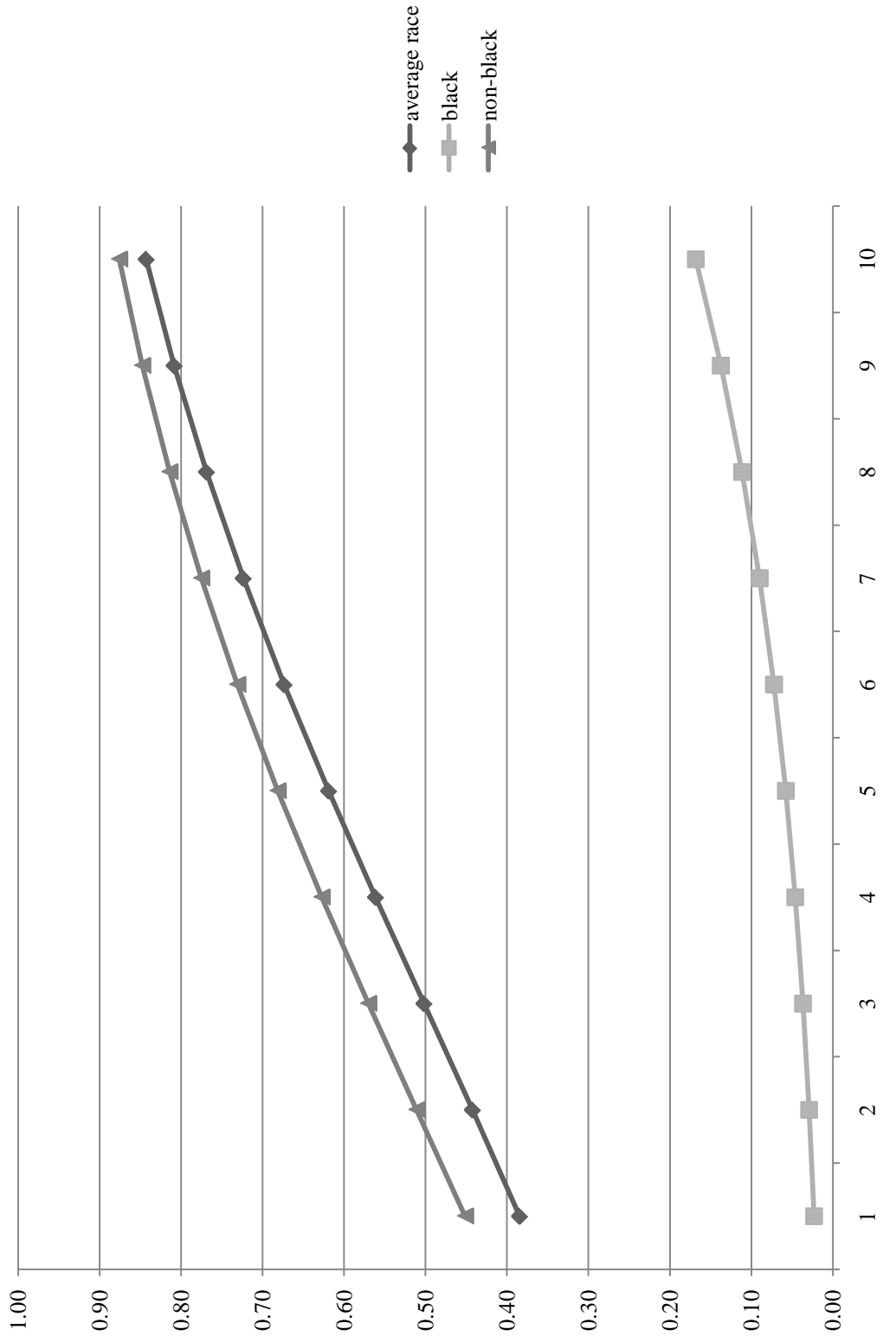
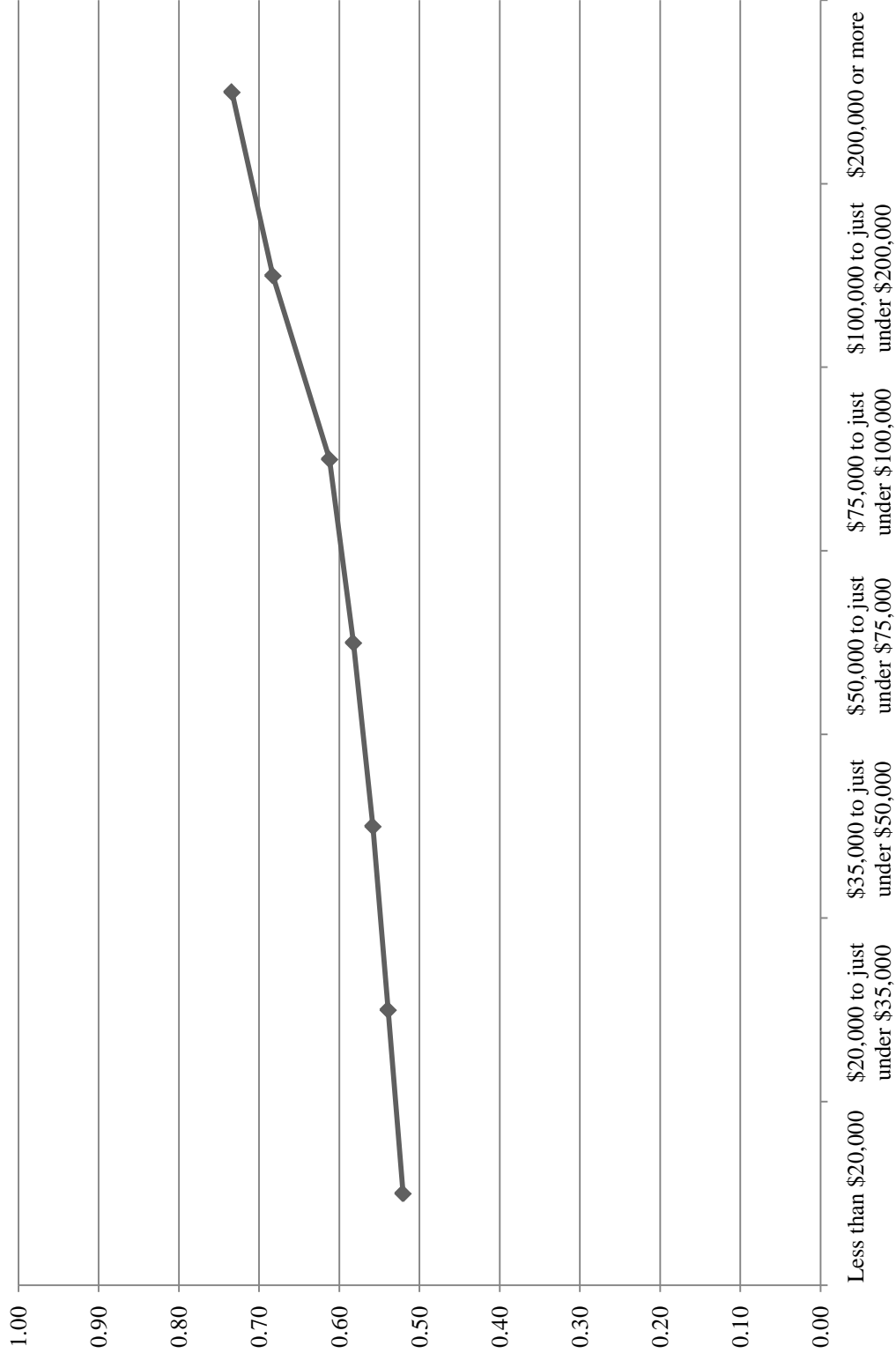


Figure 4.6: Predicted Probabilities for Voting for Bush (over Kerry) in 2004 by Income



**Figure 4.7: Predicted Probabilities for Political Party Affiliation
by Prosperity Index Score**

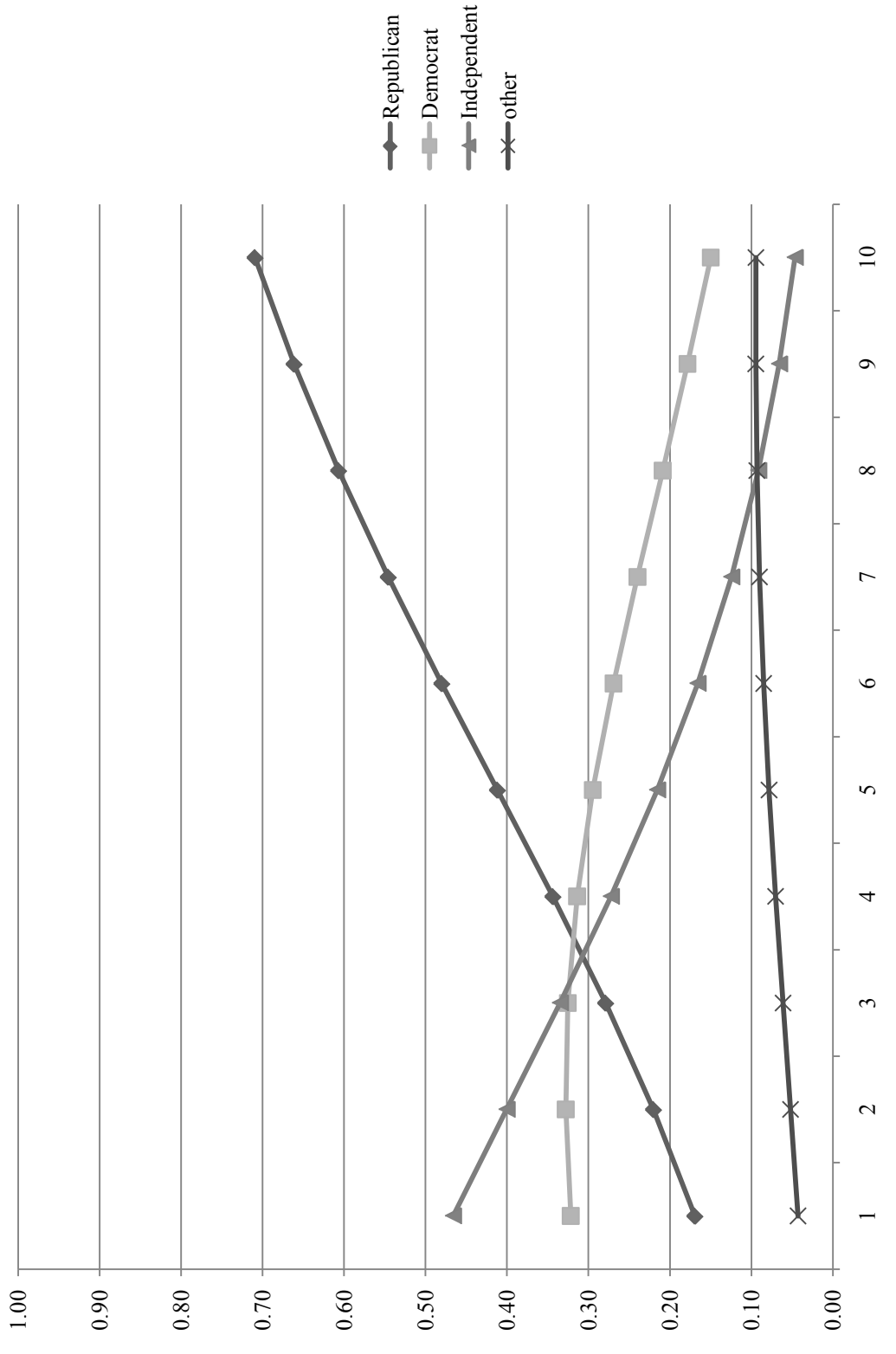
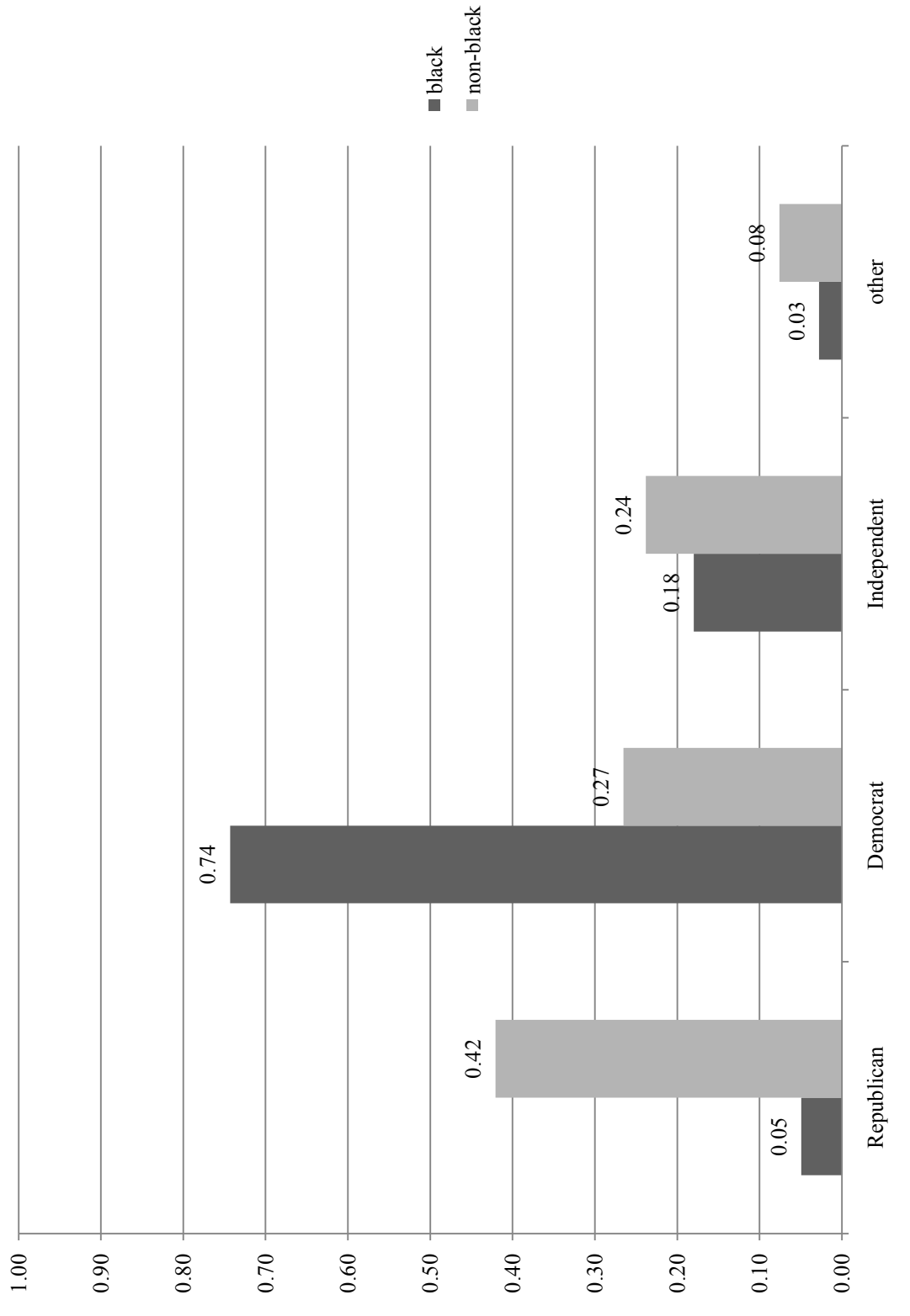


Figure 4.8: Predicted Probabilities for Political Party Affiliation by Race



**Figure 4.9: Predicted Probabilities for Affiliating as Republican
by Prosperity Index Score for Race**

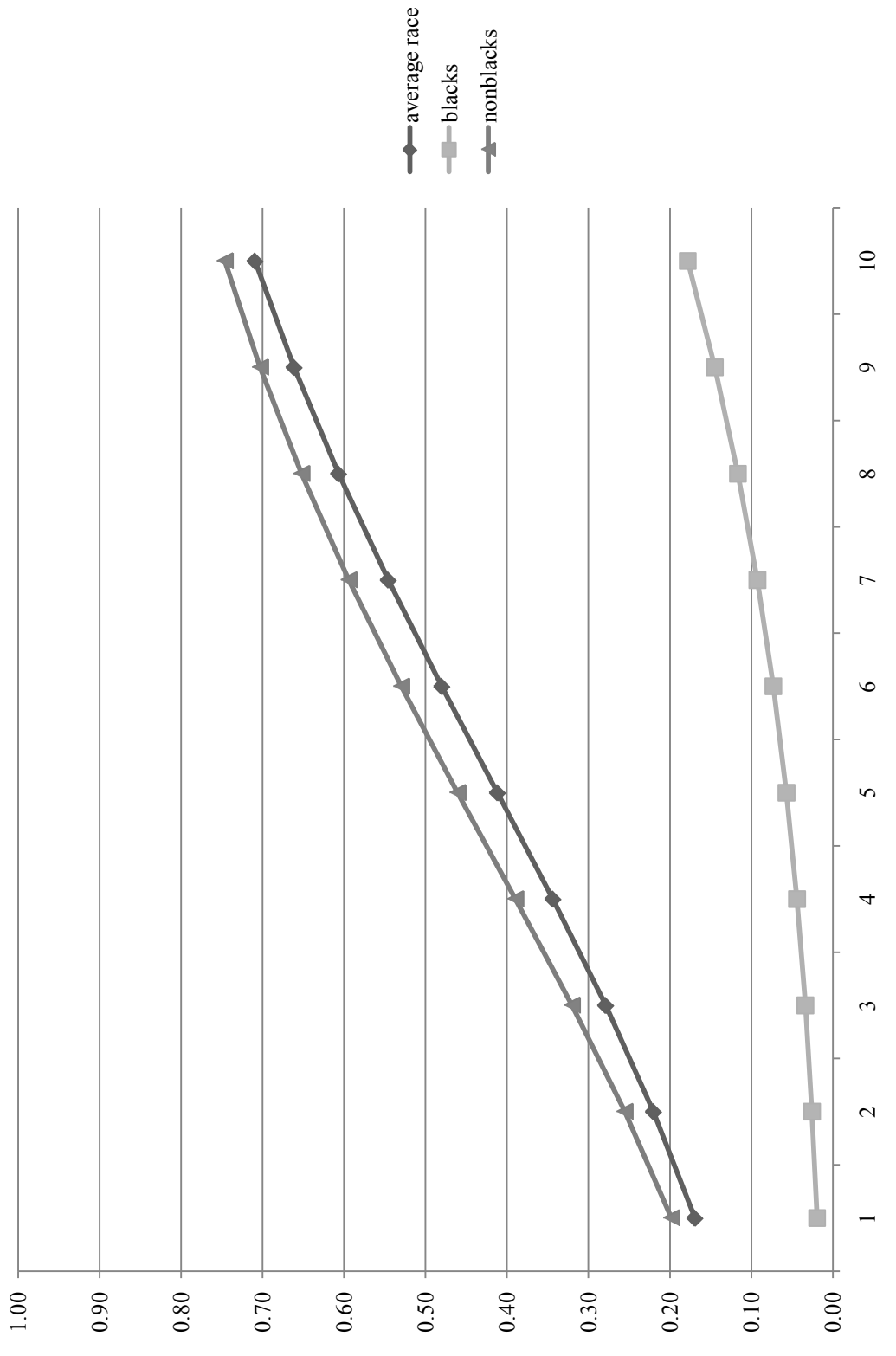
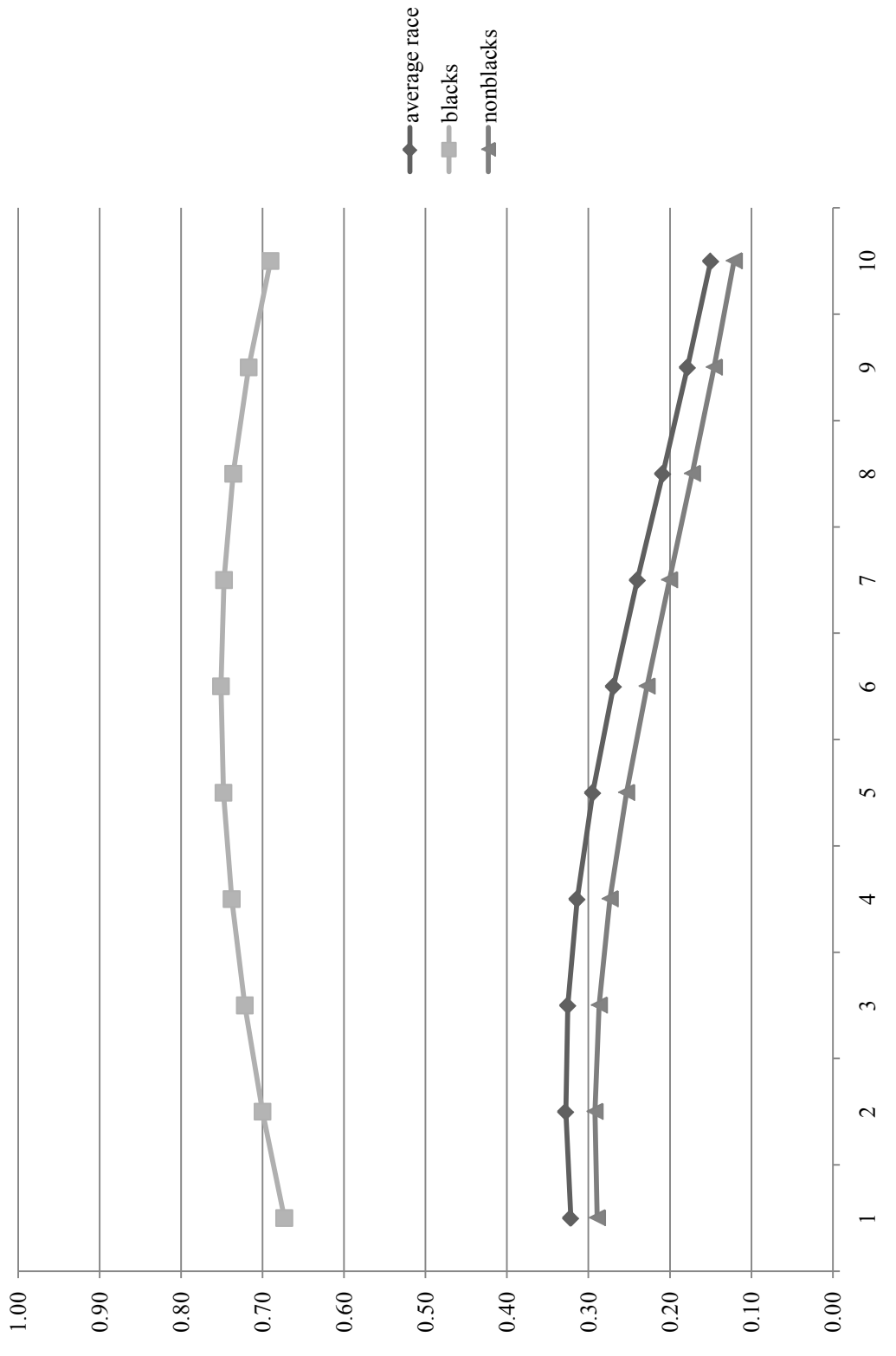
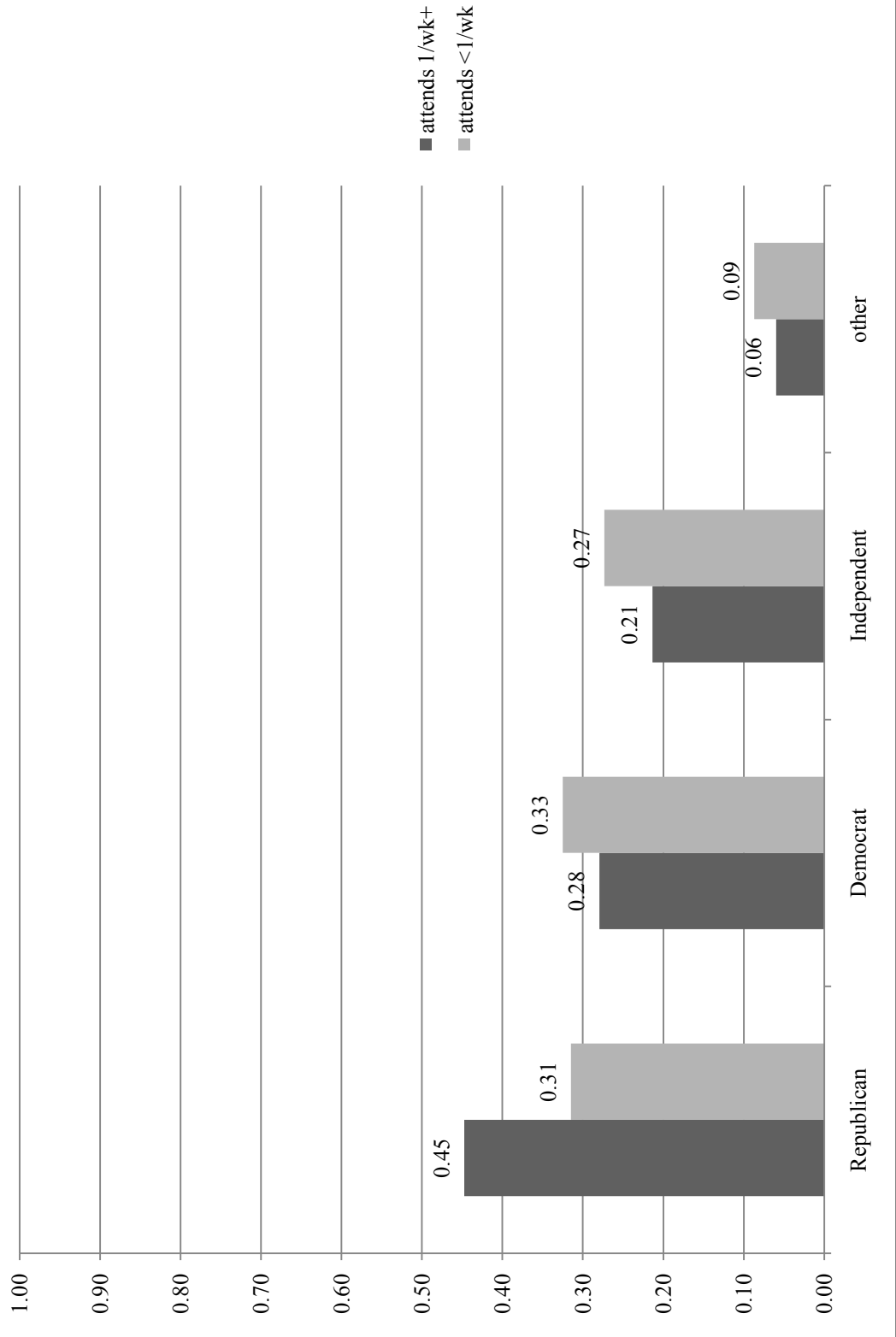


Figure 4.10: Predicted Probabilities for Affiliating as Democrat by Prosperity Index Score for Race



**Figure 4.11: Predicted Probabilities for Political Party Affiliation
by Church Attendance**



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EDUCATION

- expected July 2009 **Doctor of Philosophy** in Sociology, Indiana University
The Prosperity Gospel and Economic Prosperity
Committee: Robert Robinson (chair), William Corsaro,
Constance Furey, and Brian Steensland
Minor: Religious Studies
- 2005 **Master of Arts** in Sociology, Indiana University
“Religious Affiliates vs. Non-Affiliates:
The Varying Effects of Family on Attitudes about Homosexuality”
Co-chairs: Brian Powell and Melissa Wilde
- 2002 **Bachelor of Science** in Sociology, Belmont University *cum laude*
“The Don of the Box-Office:
American Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and the Popularity of Mafia
Movies”
Advisor: Neal King

AREAS OF INTEREST

Research

Sociology of Religion
Social Stratification
Teaching and Learning
Sexuality & Gender
Sociology of Culture

Teaching

Sociology of Religion
Introduction to Sociology
Social Psychology
Sociology of Music
Methods and Statistics
Social Theory
Social Problems

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2008-2009 **Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship** (\$22,000)
Lake Institute on Faith & Giving
Center on Philanthropy, Indiana University-Purdue University—
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- 2008 **SSSR Student Travel Grant** (\$100)
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
Annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky
- 2007 **Henry Institute Travel Grant** (\$400)
Seminar on Survey Research and American Religion
Calvin College
- 2005-2006 **PFF Travel Grant** (\$400)
Preparing Future Faculty
Indiana University
- 2006 **Hanover College Teaching Fellow**
Faculty mentor Prof. Keith Roberts
Indiana University-Hanover College Preparing Future Faculty (PFF)
Program
- 2002-2004 **Graduate Fellowship** (\$8,000)
Indiana University
- 2002 **Graduate Student Scholarship** (\$1000)
Vasa Order of America
- 2002 **Sociology Scholar Award**
Belmont University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2004-2008 **Associate Instructor**
Department of Sociology, Indiana University
 S230: Society and the Individual^{*}
 (2008, 1 section; 80 students)
 S313: Religion & Society^{*}
 (2005-2008, 8 sections; 47/67/51/47/58/15/43/16 students)
 S313: Religion & Society by independent study
 (2006-2007; 6 sections; 76 students)
 S100: Introduction to Sociology^{*}
 (2004-2005, 3 sections; 70/70/27 students)

(^{*} - Sole responsibility for designing the course, preparing lectures, and grading assignments.)

2002-2004 **Teaching Assistant**
Department of Sociology, Indiana University
 S100: Introduction to Sociology (2 sections)
 S101: Envisioning the City
 S210: The Economy, Organizations, and Work

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

2006 **Future Faculty Certification**
North Central Sociological Association

2005-2006 **Teaching Fellow**
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Hanover College

2004 **S506: The Teaching of Undergraduate Sociology**
Taken as part of the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Program
Department of Sociology, Indiana University

PRESENTATIONS

Koch, Bradley A. 2008. "The Prosperity Gospel and Economic Prosperity." Louisville, KY: *Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

Harger, Brent and Bradley A. Koch. 2008. "A Head Start at Meeting Expectations: Parental Attitudes and Needs in a College Town." Boston: *Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*.

Koch, Bradley A. 2006. "Denomination and Class: Disentangling the Effects of Education." Montreal: *Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*.

Koch, Bradley A. 2005. "Religion, Family Structure, and Attitudes about Homosexuality." Charlotte, NC: *Annual Meeting of the Southern Sociological Society*.

PAPERS IN PROGRESS

"Holy *and* Homogeneous? Disentangling Education and Stratification"

"Religious Affiliates vs. Non-Affiliates: The Varying Effects of Family on Attitudes about Homosexuality"

BOOK REVIEW

Koch, Bradley A. 2007. Review of *God, Sex, and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies*, by Dawne Moon. *Sociology of Religion* 68:114-5.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE/TRAINING

- 2007 **Workshop Participant**
Seminar on Survey Research and American Religion
The Henry Institute at Calvin College (Prof. Corwin Smidt)
- 2003 **Research Assistant**
“Erotic Curriculum”: Elizabeth Armstrong, Principal Investigator
- 2003 **Research Assistant**
“The American Family”: Brian Powell, Principal Investigator
Sociological Research Practicum

SERVICE

Departmental

- 2005-2006 **Advisory Board**
Karl F. Schuessler Institute for Social Research
Indiana University
- 2002-present **Graduate Student Association**
Department of Sociology
Indiana University
- Graduate Employee Union Representative (2004-2005)
 - Social Committee Member (2003-2004)
- 2003-present **Graduate Employee Organization**
Indiana University
- Steering Committee Member (2003-2005)
 - Fees Committee Member (2003-2004)

Professional Memberships

American Sociological Association
ASA Section on Sociology of Religion
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
Association for the Sociology of Religion
American Academy of Religion
North Central Sociological Association
Southern Sociological Society

REFERENCES

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