

Religiosity Tied to Socioeconomic Status

THE NEWS FOCUS STORY "ON THE ORIGIN of religion" (E. Culotta, 6 November 2009, p. 784) did not incorporate the growing body of psychosociological research that is revealing the crucial role of socioeconomics in the origin and popularity of religion, as well as in creationism (1–6). Some hunter-gatherers have minimal religion (7), and those who do not believe in the gods and an afterlife

References

1. G. Paul, *Evol. Psychol.* **7**, 398 (2009); www.epjournal.net/filestore/EP07398441_c.pdf.
2. T. Rees, *J. Relig. Soc.* **11** (2009); moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2009/2009-17.html.
3. P. Zuckerman, *Soc. Compass* **3**, 949 (2009).
4. P. Norris, R. Inghelart, *Sacred and Secular* (Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 2004).
5. A. Gill, E. Lundsgaarde, *Rational. Soc.* **16**, 399 (2004).
6. S. Verweij, P. Ester, R. Naata, *J. Sci. Study Relig.* **36**, 309 (1997).
7. F. Marlowe, in *Ethnicity, Hunter-Gatherers, and the "Other,"* S. Kent, Ed. (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2002), pp. 247–281.
8. C. N. Wade, *The Faith Instinct* (Penguin, New York, 2009).

have spontaneously expanded in prosperous democracies until they are the majority in some nations, such as France, Sweden, and Denmark (1, 3, 4). Because religion is not universal, as implied in the News Focus article, serious religiosity cannot be the strongly genetically programmed result of major selective evolutionary pressures such as social cohesion (8).

In modern nations, nonreligion and the acceptance of evolution become popular when the middle class majority feels sufficiently secure and safe, thanks to low income inequality, universal health care, job and retirement security, and low rates of lethal crime; this has occurred to greater and lesser degrees in most first-world countries, from Japan to Scandinavia (1–6). Religion thrives when the majority seek the aid and protection of supernatural powers because they are impoverished, as in the third- and second-world countries or, in the case of the United States (the most religious and creationist first-world country), because the majority of Americans fear losing their middle-class status as a result of limited government support, high levels of social pathology, and intense economic competition and income disparity (1–6). Prosperous modernity is proving to be the nemesis of religion. **GREGORY S. PAUL**